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**Intimate Places and Flights of Fancy:
Gender, Space, and Movement in Contemporary Costume Drama**

Julianne Pidduck

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Communication Studies

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
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ABSTRACT

Intimate Places and Flights of Fancy:
Gender, Space, and Movement in Contemporary Costume Drama

Julianne Pidduck, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 1997

If social theory and common wisdom might posit a gendered binary between the feminine principle of stasis and a masculine principle of dynamism, contemporary costume drama presents a delightfully complex and nuanced feminist philosophical dilemma. In this dissertation, I explore the tension within this genre between the intimacy of perfect interiors and precise, nuanced dialogue – and its offer of a fanciful escape into romantic and exotic costumes, landscapes, situations. My fascination with the gendered implications of these comfortable and confined interiors (“intimate places”), contrasted with dynamic journeys into the past (“flights of fancy”) frames this cycle of film and televisual texts through the problematic of space and movement. A popular and formally interesting case study, costume drama charts nineteenth-century historical spaces embedded with gender, class, and colonial relations of power. As such, this corpus offers a rich site to work through these complex interrelated axes of power through the audio-visual blocking of space and movement. In advancing this approach as an alternative to the psychoanalytic framework dominant within feminist film theory, I develop an original “topographical” approach to the analysis of audio-visual texts. Figured through a close reading of textual space and movement, this dissertation advances a detailed critical reading of this significant cultural phenomenon – and proposes innovative epistemological and methodological avenues for the study of audio-visual texts.

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PREFACE

This dissertation embarks on a paradoxical note. Beginning from a hunch about the philosophical and textual implications of a tension between feminine constraint and masculine movement, I was initially inspired by the dynamic possibilities of the moving image – the promise of screen space and imagined mobility as a site of feminist cultural innovation and intervention. Scanning the horizon for cultural texts imbued with force, purpose, motion, I found an astonishing array of kinetic, active, bustling, and busy female bodies tearing across 1990s cinema and tv screens alike. From action heroines (Linda Hamilton in *Terminator II* (1991), Sigourney Weaver in three incarnations of *Alien* (1979, 1986, 1992), Demi Moore's one-armed push-ups in *G.I. Jane* (1997), to the intrepid female protagonists of the "spaghetti strap Western" (*Bad Girls* (1994), *The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993), *The Quick and the Dead* (1995)), I have watched with amusement, excitement, and sometimes horror as female corporeal and social momentum elbows its way into mainstream audio-visual culture. However, I was troubled by a certain "obviousness," a tautology in reading gendered movement where a female body simply replaces the male narrative position of desiring-movement, agency, force.

Now, after several long years of deliberation I have arrived at a rather more modest project. Following some perverse inclination to balk at the obvious, I gradually settled on costume drama, a body of texts which on first consideration seem to have almost nothing to do with "movement." What could be more still, more boring, an absolute condensation of the stasis of the feminine condition, than these ploddingly slow liberal feminist romantic tracts? In short, costume drama has never been quite my cup of tea. That is, until I saw *Orlando* (1992). Even as my filmgoing companion squirmed in her seat at the film's long takes and avant-garde preciousness, I was riveted. Crawlingly slow, composed, Sally Potter's film bubbles over with a wry intelligence – a critique of historical social constraint which has furnished Western feminism with its historical narrative of constraint and liberation. *Orlando* engages formally and thematically with stillness and confinement in a manner which speaks eloquently to my feminist worldview. Yet its understated humour and Orlando's astonishing cinematic journey through four centuries and

several continents of English feminist and colonial history evokes an “attenuated dynamism” that complicates the rather limited notion of movement as physical displacement with which I began.

Soon feminine costume dramas seemed to be everywhere. They were not to be ignored. From *Orlando* to *The Piano* (1993), to *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), costume drama has emerged in the 1990s as a preferred site for feminist formal innovation and historical critique. As a student of film and a voracious consumer of all manner of audio-visual texts, I have been amazed by the density of these texts, their informed, innovative, and virtuoso reworkings of gendered cinematic convention – a common interrogation of narrative form, dazzling deployments of the sensualities of costume as historical critique, their explosion of rules of composition and mise-en-scène. I was hooked. Reluctantly, I shifted focus from the more obvious examples of feminine movement on-screen, opting instead for the more subtle, intensive charms of costume drama. These texts tend to confound a simple binary of gendered movement and constraint, exploring surprising registers of gendered stillness and intensive movement, the claustrophobia of “intimate places” and the possibility of escape, “flights of fancy.” From these feminist auteurist texts, I have extended my corpus to include a concurrent cycle of Austen adaptations such as *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) and a series of other literary adaptations and made-for-tv movies.

Raised on the feminist identity debates of the 1980s, however, I was early on troubled by the insistent “white,” colonialist, classist, heterosexist, and individualist pull of these texts. Through a series of study-visits to England, this research was informed by a wonderful textual richness in British film studies, as well as by dense debates over heritage cinema. An ongoing physical and e-mail shuttling between Montréal and the U.K. further prompted a growing fascination with the way desiring relationships to cultural texts are mediated by spatial allegiances (a North American fascination with European “scale” embodied in tiny, busy, detailed interiors of costume drama) – and an impulse toward the virtual exploration of “exotic” landscapes (the neo-pastoral, iconic Englishness of the countryside imaged in Austen). At the same time, I began to realise a certain self-effacing Canadian specificity to my readings of these very “English” texts.

This fascination with space and movement originated in my Prairie childhood, a certain Montréalais nostalgia for the wide-open spaces of Saskatchewan, and an interest in the chartings of power through trade routes and landscape inspired by Harold Innis's and Jody Berland's Canadian scholarship on space. After all this time, then, I arrive at the paradoxical position where I approach these predominantly British cultural texts from a fragile (nomadic) Canadian feminist standpoint. Whereas the costume drama seems to be spectacularly about history, temporality, memory, I have approached it through a primarily *spatial* frame of reference. And while this cycle of films intuitively invokes a gendered, class-based experience of stillness and constraint, I broach these qualities through the conceptual term of *movement*.

Once the list begins, the paradoxes, the strange ironies of the project spill out onto the page. Living in Québec, a society obsessed by language relations and nationalism, I return to the cultural legacy of the "mother country," yet cannot help but become fascinated by how voice, accent, the speaking relations of power, inflect the costume drama. Subsequently, I am amazed by my ability as a lesbian to read "around" the heterosexual romances which feature so prominently; instead of focusing on sexuality, narrative plottings of desire, I choose to read background relations of power, voice, different qualities of affectivity, diffuse textual desires predominantly excluded by the psychoanalytic framework which still dominates feminist film theory. Finally, somewhere in the thick of a long summer of writing, I am delighted with how the dissertation crystallises around the movement-image of "the woman at the window" – only to realise how precisely her longing, what I read as restlessness, succinctly echoes my own situation of dissertation confinement.

Coming to terms with the wonderful contradictory impulses at work in this project, I arrive at both the limits – the things left out of the project – and the strengths which arise from reading both from "inside" and "outside" dominant frames of reference: What can a preoccupation with space and movement bring to this corpus organised so clearly around history and constraint? How do my own singular (but certainly not isolated) Canadian feminist observations raise new elements which speak an English feminist language which I share and yet don't? How can I read

the historical relations of class and colonialism in these texts from my own conceptual, voyaging horizons which have been drawn by the entitlement of middle-class and colonial mobility? Such a tension between ideological and oppositional qualities also comprises the fascination of contemporary feminine costume drama – a simultaneous implication in historical relations of class and colonial oppression and brazenly subtle feminist intervention into the field of dominant cinema.

INTRODUCTION

The Bird Cage

Space, Constraint, and Liminal Movement

The experience of oppressed people is that the living of one's life is confined and shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional and hence avoidable, but are systematically related to each other in such a way as to catch one between them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction. It is the experience of being caged in: all avenues, in every direction, are blocked or booby trapped. (Frye 1983, 4)

Marilyn Frye's metaphor of the bird cage¹ describes the experience of oppression in starkly spatial terms as the structural imposition of forces and barriers which impede motion. Beginning from the problem of gender, within the terms of common wisdom and social theory femininity-as-stasis has been opposed to the masculine principle of dynamism. This dialectic informs diverse historical and social contexts from feminist writings on the constraints of bourgeois femininity (for instance, Charlotte Perkins-Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper), to Freud's gendering of the libido as "active" and "masculine," to contemporary popular feminist hijackings of the seemingly "masculine" dynamism of sports (Nike's "Just do it" ad campaign featuring women athletes) and cars (*Thelma and Louise's* headlong cross-country road trip (1991)). From Frye's bird cage to the home-as-prison, to the confined domestic spaces of sexuality and madness, to the corporeal horizons of force, agency, travel, these interlocking spatial metaphors cut to the quick of Western philosophical discourses of human freedom and agency. And in this light, the project of feminism has been persuasively posed as social *movement*,² the collective project to release women from these interlocking bird cages.

Ingrained at the very roots of Western feminism as a revolutionary movement, these spatial metaphors of constraint and escape also inform a broader social imaginary which is continually constructed and reconstructed in the texts of popular culture. The contemporary feminine costume dramas addressed in this dissertation are constructed around the intricacies of

¹ I thank Robyn Diner for suggesting this salient passage.

² bell hooks (1984) uses the term "feminist movement" in the dynamic sense "as a radical political movement" implying process, critique, dynamism, as opposed to a more common "the" feminist movement which implies something already finished, established, institutionalised.

individual and collective constraint and escape. Situated within the feminine “private sphere” of nineteenth-century leisured life, much of the appeal of these texts for 1990s female audiences revolves around the pleasures of comfortable, elegant, period interior spaces – what I call “intimate places.” Graciously housing the genre’s characteristic intensities of sentiment, mannered gesture and wordplay, these retrospectively delicious feminine realms also *limit* the female protagonists’ horizons to the domestic sphere. Predominantly intelligent women of the middle classes, these costume drama heroines can rarely aspire to the activities of commerce, land tenure and cultivation, colonial travel and conquest available to their male counterparts. Framed through the conceptual terms of space and movement, these texts may be seen to linger on the threshold between these intimate interiors and what I call “flights of fancy” – the quest for physical and social agency seemingly denied these heroines, and the more liminal journeys into luscious, costumed, historical worlds which these texts offer their contemporary preferred female viewers.

Yet, to return to Frye’s account, oppression involves different spatial constraints measured against a (problematic) ideal of unimpeded motion, mobility, agency. Written as an intervention in feminist theory, Frye’s bird cage applies not only to sexist oppression, but to oppression generally. In this light, we can open up the above gendered dialectic of movement and constraint to describe interrelated yet distinct spatial blockings of power. In her discussion of Huckleberry Finn, for example, Toni Morrison (1990) writes of “the interdependence of slavery and freedom”; not only is slavery understood as the worst form of human constraint, but Huck Finn’s own process of becoming a social individual, of gaining agency, can only be measured against the static figure of Jim the slave. “Freedom has no meaning to Huck or to the text without the spectre of enslavement, the anodyne to individualism.” (56)

Morrison’s analysis profoundly broadens a feminist critique of constraint based on the single axis of gendered oppression. Linked to historically and geographically distinct discourses of agency, freedom, mobility (for example, Huckleberry Finn’s American ethos of Manifest Destiny), the idea of unimpeded motion signifies *relationally*. To freely adapt Einstein’s special theory of

relativity,³ movement and position may only be measured by taking into account the velocity of the observer who is always-already implicated in the experiment. Further, I would add, in more social terms, “movement” matters only in relation to the social context or ground where it occurs – and in relation to other bodies (at work or at rest, immobile or in motion) within the same context. Transposing these concepts into the audio-visual language of my corpus, the physical, metaphysical, and narrative trajectories of protagonists, supporting players, and the “casts of thousands” who round out the frame (or who are excluded from it) may be read as complex chartings of social space and movement. Not merely aesthetic choices, these topographical textual trajectories are imbued with historical formal and social relations of power.

To return to the specific problem of gendered movement, Teresa de Lauretis (1984) notes a structural division of labour within traditional narrative form:

Characters can be divided into those who are mobile, who enjoy freedom with regard to plot-space, who can change their place in the structure of the artistic world and cross the frontier, the basic topological feature of this space, and those who are immobile, who represent, in fact, a function of this space. (118)

This statement initially seems to perfectly evoke the costume drama's topography of gendered interiors and exteriors. The cycle's common image of the woman at the window (for example, *Sense and Sensibility's* Elinor Dashwood awaiting the arrival of her beau) offers a succinct image of feminine constraint, the confinement of female characters in relation to the comings and goings of their male suitors. Yet, taking into account the different historical power relations that inform these texts, we can begin to complicate this picture with the subtle backgrounded movements and stillnesses of class and colonialism which fuel these nineteenth-century narratives and fill in the audio-visual scene. Recalling the previous century's complex demographic and social upheavals – not only the emergence of Western feminist discourses, but the tremendous dynamism of an ascendant middle class and the bloody, expansionist movements of colonialism – my feminist treatment of social space and movement in costume

³ For an accessible account of Einstein's special theory of relativity, see Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (1979), 120-159. See also Robin Morgan's *The Anatomy of Freedom* (1982) which creatively links “the new physics” with the project of feminism.

drama charts a whole range of spaces and trajectories which cross the paths of our nineteenth-century heroines.

Gilles Deleuze: An Epistemological “Leavener”

To further complicate this social and audio-visual scenario of multiple, layered chartings of space and movement, at this point I would like to incorporate Gilles Deleuze’s work on the cinema. Whereas the problematic of movement and constraint evoked in the bird cage metaphor functions according to a Hegelian dialectic, part of the theoretical work of this dissertation is to explore the limits of such binary models. Such an interrogation complicates a simple gendered scenario (male dynamism/female stasis) with concurrent nineteenth-century class and colonial struggles. These insights on what I call the “spatial blockings of power” in costume drama derive importantly from the scholarship of Teresa de Lauretis, Laura Mulvey, Mary Ann Doane, Raymond Williams, Edward Saïd, Henri Lefebvre, Richard Dyer, and Mikhail Bakhtin. Concerned with historical and geographical power relations embedded within the formal organisation of cultural texts, these authors have inspired my critical approach to audio-visual texts framed through the problematic of space and movement. Deleuze, for his part, posits a philosophical approach to the cinema based on a distinctive conceptualisation of “movement.”

Eschewing the dominant traditions in Western thought, Deleuze (in keeping with Michel Foucault’s later writings) advances a *productive* epistemology.⁴ Rather than the one (God/author/subject) or the two (dialectical, oppositional binaries), this theorist insists on the many, a range of irreducible singularities in constant flux, tracing distinctive desiring-movements. Within such a schema, cinema becomes “movement-image,” where the implications of “cinematic movement” exceeds the sum of its frames, its still “eternal poses” put into motion. I poach two key ideas from this work. First, to imagine audio-visual texts as the splicing together of “mobile sections of duration” or “movement-image” is to suggest a dynamic, spatio-temporal approach to

⁴ For one of the clearer articulations of Deleuze’s epistemological premises, see Deleuze and Parnet (1987).

the moving image. Second, this work implies a more metaphysical quality to movement, where “one must be capable of thinking the production of the new, that is, of the remarkable and the singular, at any one of these [cinematic] moments.” (1986, 7)

This dissertation's twinned substantive and methodological problematics of space and movement has emerged through a engagement with feminist film theories, and other scholarship on space and time, notably Deleuze. As complement and counterpoint to the above diverse critical thinkers, the “movement-image” evokes dimensions and potentialities greater than physical displacement, or even the great social “movements” of modernism. For Deleuze, cinematic movement “is distinct from the space covered. Space covered is past, movement is present, the act of covering. The space covered is divisible, indeed infinitely divisible, whilst movement is indivisible, or cannot be divided without changing qualitatively each time it is divided.” (1) Translating into my earlier terms, to treat audio-visual texts as “image-movement” challenges the very foundations of an inherited binary mode of thought such as “gendered movement and constraint.” Whereas this gendered opposition between movement and constraint provides a productive “critical” point of departure, it can never be the whole story, for the image-movements and texts in question always involve singularities, potentialities, and may take us toward new horizons. Exceeding the commonplace notion of physical displacement, Deleuze's “movement” suggests intensive and affective qualities. To approach audio-visual texts from this perspective means drawing out not only the expected narrative movements of characters, but qualities under-theorised within critical theories – particularly psychoanalysis which has been dominant within anglo-american feminist film theory. To reiterate my core dilemma of “movement and constraint,” one of the key undertaking of this type of this project's textual analysis is to play off the “critical” insights of existing feminist and Marxist theories against the productive, affective insights offered by Deleuzian thought.

As I will discuss at length in Chapter One, psychoanalytic film theory involves the imposition of a preconstituted, rigid theoretical framework upon any unsuspecting cultural text. Within this paradigm, texts are treated as symptoms of ahistorical psychic patterns; at its most

reductive, psychoanalysis reduces the complexities and productivities of culture to dreary rehearsals of a primal scenes and oedipal scenarios. While incredibly germane to developing a critical account of the subject's engagement with the cinematic apparatus, psychoanalysis works from a series of problematic binaries, notably an opposition between the active, masculine desiring gaze and narrative on-screen presence, and a static woman-as-image. While these insights provide an invaluable point of departure for this project, in placing the (white, middle-class, Western) woman at the narrative centre and in the driver's seat of the desiring gaze, costume drama pushes the limits of such theories. In contrast, I approach the corpus, each text and indeed "movement-image" or "mobile section" as a singularity, a line of force, a potentiality. Deleuze functions here as an epistemological "leavener" in tension with the inherited traditions within "critical" feminist and social theory which mobilise the powerful terms of constraint and movement mentioned above. In the process, I examine the complexities of costume drama not only in terms of what has been, but as what *could* be.

Considering that my corpus is comprised primarily of adapted "classic" female-authored texts such as the novels of Austen, the Brontë sisters, and Virginia Woolf, as well as the contemporary works of cinematic "authors" Campion, Potter and Dash, the possibility of innovative patterns and potentialities seems particularly pressing. As costume drama has become a pivotal feminine and feminist genre for the 1990s, these texts constitute one vital site where feminist ideas, passions, and worldviews are explored – not only in re-membering the past, but in imagining a future. Yet, in spite of Deleuze's productive, "leavening" properties, his scholarship has its own limits which lie in an inability (or refusal) to engage with historical power relations of difference, including sexual difference.⁵ Perusing these works, I cannot help but note the disturbing if unsurprising re-activation of certain historically-embedded patterns of gendered, class, and colonial "constraint" within contemporary costume drama. While at times "leavened" by Deleuze's "lines of flight," these texts commonly revisit an individualist, bourgeois, white and

⁵ For one influential evaluation of the feminist potentialities and limits of Deleuze's thought for feminist theory, see Rosi Braidotti's Nomadic Subjects (1994a).

Western feminist historical vision. Roundly critiqued within feminist activist and intellectual circles, this vision continues to carry significant cultural and political caché. As a key cultural, political, and intellectual contemporary aesthetic form, costume drama demands rigorous critical attention: How does it invoke both the sedimented power relations of historical cultural “spaces” – and the possibilities of “movement,” the “invention of the new”?

The Corpus: Contemporary Costume Drama

In this dissertation, I deploy these preoccupations of space and movement to address a small, dense, yet diverse cycle of contemporary costume drama through a series of close textual readings. Comprised of cinematic and televisual texts produced in the 1990s, the works under scrutiny here feature female protagonists within a nineteenth-century historical context of England and its colonies. Grouped according to particular stylistic strands, my corpus includes a series of wry romantic comedies in the Austen adaptations (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Jane Austen's Emma* (1997), *Jane Austen's Persuasion* (1995), *Pride and Prejudice* (1995)); the darker Gothic passions of *Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre* (1996), *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1993), and *Angels and Insects* (1996); and a series of feminist auteurist costume dramas which comment upon and sometimes subvert the genre's inherited literary and audio-visual forms (Jane Campion's *The Piano* and *Portrait of a Lady* (1997); Sally Potter's *Orlando* (1993), and Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*). In choosing to investigate costume drama through the “topographical” lens of gendered space and movement, my project differs from the “women's genres” or “female spectatorship” approaches more common in feminist television and film criticism. Through the treatment of audio-visual spatial blockings of gendered, class, and colonial power relations, and through my interest in the Deleuzian movement-image, I muster a series of distinctive, rich, and tactile readings of the corpus. These readings bring to the fore subtle audio-visual textures of landscape; different qualities of corporeal gesture and costume; aural inflections of music and voice; and more “intensive” qualities of affectivity which elude other types of analysis.

Both tactile and “immanent,” my particular quality of detailed textual reading folds the regularities, singularities, and complexities of these texts back into the philosophical problem of movement and constraint. Especially as these texts present one important strand in contemporary feminist cultural discourse – both female-authored auteurist texts like those of Potter, Dash, and Campion, and a commonsense liberal feminism explored in the Austen adaptations – I use their textual insights and tensions as a fertile testing ground and foil for Frye’s bird cage metaphor. A compelling combination of intimate qualities of social constraint and audio-visual journeys into the distant places and times of an imagined nineteenth century, costume drama evokes an intriguing quality of longing, attenuated movement, digression, which fits only uneasily into the gendered binary of movement and stasis. Not “static” per se (after all, there are periodic intensive flurries of movement on the dance floor, not to mention the narrative and affective movements of romance and emotion), on a formal and intuitive level this corpus confounds the very terms of gendered movement and constraint.

Costume drama has become one major category of gendered audio-visual text in the 1990s. Along with the other major Hollywood feminine box office phenomenon, the “romantic comedy,” the costume drama explores culturally-coded “feminine” spheres of sentiment, domestic space, and romance; for its part, the feminine costume drama commonly explores these elements through predominantly bourgeois historical milieux. These films feature female protagonists and are marketed primarily toward an international “upscale” female audience. Set within a broader 1990s revival of period drama, I am particularly interested in cinematic and televisual texts which explore nineteenth-century narratives through contemporary “feminine” and “feminist” perspectives. As I will elaborate in Chapter Two, my corpus includes a hybrid generic mix of melodramatic, realist, and avant-garde strands. In this light, I treat this corpus as a “cycle” rather than a “genre,” a series of distinctive yet intertextually interwoven texts and movement-images.

With two key exceptions (the original screenplays of *The Piano* and *Daughters of the Dust*) my corpus is comprised of literary adaptations. Thematically, these films explore the subtleties of romance, bourgeois domestic life, and female aspiration in a historical, often

European, context. On the strength of pure proliferation, this cycle presents an interesting and significant contemporary cultural phenomenon. From Emma Thompson's liberal feminist adaptation of Austen's Sense and Sensibility to the more "critical" feminist projects of Jane Campion's *The Piano*, Julie Dash's feminist treatment of the African diaspora in *Daughters of the Dust*, to Sally Potter's brilliant adaptation of Virginia Woolf's iconic feminist novel Orlando, these texts project historical feminist visions of different political stripes. As popular reworkings of the historical social experience of (bourgeois white) womanhood, they toy compellingly with feminine ideals of beauty, romance, and escape. In the context of postmodern European and North American culture, the feminine costume drama hearkens back to a series of seemingly pastoral moments in European social history when gender, class, and racial categories were kept very clear. Given the almost aggressively heterosexual, bourgeois, high art, "polite," and "white" qualities of these films, I find them fascinating as one of the most dense, established, and creative (not to mention commercially viable) expressions of feminist ideas and artistry in 1990s anglo-american popular (and not-so-popular) culture.

Arising in part through the ongoing popularity of the nineteenth-century time-frame for historical drama, this period presents a rich temporal frame of analysis.⁶ In the thick of the Industrial Revolution, the nineteenth century provides a fascinating backdrop for my layered investigation of space and movement as it coincides with a time of tremendous social upheaval in Western Europe, from the early days of women's liberation, to simultaneous changes in class relations and demographics, to the aggressive expansionism of imperialism. Although these profound spatial transformations are often secondary to the cycle's foregrounded feminine/feminist narrative and thematic preoccupations, I am interested in how formal and social references to class difference and imperialism form constitutive absences or even shadowy

⁶ As the historical periodisation in costume drama is notoriously imprecise (capturing a "feeling" of the past, rather than "documenting" it) this question of dates functions as pertinent cut-off for my corpus to bracket off the more "modernist" concerns of twentieth-century culture. Many of the issues raised by this thesis could productively apply to early twentieth-century narratives such as the Merchant-Ivory productions, or works like David Lean's *Passage to India* (1984) or *The English Patient* (1996).

presences within these imagined feminine historical spaces. In fact, as I will elaborate in Chapter Three, historical (and contemporary) discourses of class and colonial mobility help to inform the very parameters of Western feminist vision – our imagined historical horizons of social constraint and aspirations for mobility.

I have further restricted the corpus to a geographical context centered in England and ranging out to its colonies. Such an English imperial mapping imagines its domestic space through what Raymond Williams (1973) calls the “neo-pastoral” countryside which dominates the cycle’s seemingly peaceful and empty countrysides – landscapes seething with the lingering memories of Enclosure and the consolidation of land and authority by the ascendant middle class. Moreover, post-colonial theorists have identified how this secure, “picturesque,” transparent image of the island-home figures implicitly against contrasting discourses of colonial foreignness, darkness, exoticism. My problematic of space and movement permits me to mine this rich and varied geographical shuttle between an English “home” and “abroad” for the blocking of gendered, class, and colonial power relations. Through a treatment of landscape aesthetics in Chapter Three, I advance a reading of domestic “English” space (exemplified in the Austen adaptations) in relation to the darker, exotic realms of the colonies (*The Piano, Angels and Insects*).

In choosing to address contemporary feminine costume drama textually through the lens of space and movement, I take a “topographical” approach to these texts. Through this theoretical problematic, I advance a distinctive feminist audio-visual textual criticism that is not organised solely around sexual difference and the problem of female desire in the cinematic apparatus. Rather, I address the multiple power plays of figure, ground, middle ground organised around the spacialisation of gender, class, and colonialism. What I call a “topographical” approach to audio-visual texts, this type of textual reading derives importantly from Deleuze, de Laetis, and Bakhtin. Part of the theoretical and methodological complexity of this project involves a considered and wide-ranging “borrowing” from fields outside of film studies. Drawing from semiotics, literary criticism, and critical geography, this strategy supplements, complements, and

sometimes challenges existing film studies scholarship on spectatorship, genre, melodrama, mise-en-scène, costume. For instance, rather than frame this analysis of a “women’s genre” around the more usual question of gendered spectatorship, I address different aspects of the meaning-making powers of cultural texts. With reference to space and movement, de Lauretis’s concept of “mapping” delineates alternative signifying properties of moving images which involve not only the production of a certain “subject” (the preoccupation of psychoanalytic film studies) – but also the powerfully political representational “mapping” of the social spaces inhabited by these subjects.

Methodology and Structure

Itself concerned with the cinematic treatment of space and movement, my own methodological programme is intimately intertwined with my more substantive preoccupations around social movement and constraint. In the shift from a feminist film studies psychoanalytic (“interior”) problematic of subjectivity and desire to an (“exterior”) audio-visual charting of social space, I have developed a series of concrete (if experimental) methodological tools suited to this project. In this section, I will sketch in a preliminary account of my methodological programme; this programme is fleshed out at the conclusion of Chapter One. The experimental topographical analysis developed in this dissertation derives significantly from Deleuze’s Cinema 1: The Movement-Image (1986), Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope developed in his essay “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel” (1981), and de Lauretis’s Alice Doesn’t (1984). Bakhtin addresses the spatio-temporal articulations of literary texts through the notion of “chronotope” (literally, “space-time”). The chronotope offers a rich and productive means of classifying cultural texts through the historical renderings of social space and time; these elements can never be merely formal, but are integrally connected to the complex social fabric which produced the text. Bakhtin’s work has been tremendously productive for this dissertation, in that it provides a concrete and flexible means to analyse the spatial significances of cultural texts. For instance, Bakhtin’s chronotope of the “provincial town,” an idealised pastoral place imbued with certain

power relations and a particular sleepy temporality, powerfully evokes the spatio-temporal “structure of feeling” of the Austen adaptations.

Based in literary analysis, the chronotope raises wonderfully useful insights on the spatial blockings of power afoot in this cycle of feminine costume drama. Deleuze’s interest in the specifically cinematic qualities of image-movement helps me develop what de Lauretis calls an “audio-visual” approach to textual analysis. Deleuze borrows from C.S. Peirce’s semiotics to develop an approach to cinema which breaks with a language-based semiotics. Unlike a Saussurean model which treats language as a series of detachable meaningful units, Deleuze seizes on the intrinsically mobile qualities of film. For Deleuze, in contradistinction to earlier communication technologies, with the historical invention of camera movement and montage, Deleuze insists that “the shot [plan/ “plane”] would then stop being a spatial category and become a temporal one, and a section would no longer be immobile, but mobile.” (3) Deleuze is interested in this quality of movement, as for him it sets up film as “line of force,” as a series of affectivities and intensities, as potentiality.

In concert with de Lauretis’s Peircean “imaging,” these two bodies of work approach moving images as a series of intensities, different qualities of movement, the articulation of spatial and temporal categories. Such formulations have been pivotal for the theoretical and epistemological grounding of this dissertation. More practically speaking, I have borrowed from Deleuze’s three categories of “movement-image” to organise my close textual readings of this cycle. Thus, rather than framing the analysis thematically, or according to particular films, I adapt what Patricia Mellencamp calls Deleuze’s “topographical” approach to film criticism: “Deleuze’s way of thinking about cinema is *cinematographic*, not psychoanalytic, it focuses on topography more than narrative. Regarding Deleuze’s first observation, movement is not limited to the cause-effect logic of narrative, or to figures “moving” through space, or to cameras dollying, tracking. Action is only one kind of movement; the others are perception and affection.” (1995b, 58)

For Deleuze, the possibility of perception relies on a “gap” or interval between subject and screen. This gap is not fixed, but varies, allowing for different proximities to the image and

different critical engagements with the text. Each variety of movement-image corresponds to a specific conceptual “focal length” (long shot, medium shot, close-up) – and to a “material aspect of subjectivity.” The perception-image, aligned with the long shot, provides the conditions of visibility, and for Deleuze relates to the philosophical problem of qualities of perception. I borrow the notion of the perception-image (guided by the long shot) as a framework to consider issues of geographical and cultural framing in the costume drama. Chapter Three takes up some of the questions of the perception-image through the aesthetic and social rendering of historical landscape, the gender, class, and colonial “spatial blockings of power” at work in the costume drama.

The second category of movement-image is the action-image. Characterised by the medium shot, this plane most effectively frames narrative, human actions and reactions. As many film theorists have pointed out, the action-image or narrative form has dominated commercial film history; consequently, perhaps, much of this scholarship has focused on the operations of narrative, often at the expense of other audio-visual qualities. If the perception-image frames the physical setting and explores movement in relation to nouns or “bodies” (human or otherwise), the action-image is concerned with “acts” (verbs). For example, the active, vital qualities of the American cinema exemplified in the action film or the Western turn on the dynamism of the action-image. Chapter Four takes up the problem of the action-image in relation to the characteristically digressing plots and attenuated actions of the costume drama, with particular reference to *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust*. Working at the conceptual level of the medium shot, this analysis engages with questions of gendered narrative movement, the work of costume, the subtle corporeal actions and gestures which fuel the costume drama.

Finally, Deleuze’s third quality of movement-image is the affection-image which corresponds to the close-up. The affection-image raises subtle yet essential cinematic properties of feeling, affect, intensity. Perhaps the most difficult register of sensations to describe, “affectivity” ushers in a register of aesthetic experience which has been taken on by psychoanalysis, but which for Deleuze, exceeds the limits of oedipalised desire. In reading the

costume drama through the “close-up,” I deploy subtle, under-theorised qualities of feeling which saturate this genre. In adapting the affection-image, I address the troubled question of sentiment, gender, and genre in a distinctive, philosophical manner, delving into costume drama’s subtle and sometimes unusual affective inflections of sentiment and sensibility. The affection-image most often works with close-ups of hands and faces – the locus of emotion and expression in film and television generally, and in costume drama in particular. In Chapter Five, I take up the question of iconicity and faces (with particular reference to *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust*). Also, Deleuze’s attention to hands as a locus of expression flags the common trope of musical expression within these films (especially piano playing, as in *Sense and Sensibility* and of course, *The Piano*) as an expressive means of exceeding the social constraints of proper verbal expression. These insights about music and voice form part of a quest in Chapter Five to move beyond the visual dominance in film studies, toward different qualities of perception including sound and touch.

Having laid out this structure, I conclude by stressing its provisional, facilitating character. I have organised the dissertation in this way as a means of integrating the problematic of “space” into my methodological design. Deleuze’s “topographical” thinking allows me to address the corpus not through individual films or filmmakers (although this sort of framing becomes necessary periodically in order to investigate the wonderful textual singularities of specific works and movement-images) – but through a series of formal regularities and variations in the organisation of space and movement. This structure links my underlying methodological quest with the epistemological problem of gender, space, and movement. In the progression of this dissertation, I wish to test the capacities and potentialities of this “topographical criticism”: What can this approach (or more accurately, this diverse collection of methodological tools cobbled carefully together) illuminate in my corpus? What are the further possibilities of such an approach to audio-visual texts? In Chapter One, then, I lay the theoretical groundwork for this “topographical” charting of space and movement in audio-visual texts.

CHAPTER ONE

Film Theory and the Spatial Imaginary

This chapter scripts a whirlwind tour through film studies scholarship, highlighting certain works and suggestive passages that foreground questions of space and movement. Beginning from early psychoanalytic work on the “cinematic apparatus,” I take a detour through “images of women” scholarship en route to the feminist psychoanalytic work which has been hegemonic within feminist film studies for two decades now. Writing in a moment of flux amidst a flurry of challenges to psychoanalysis, my purpose here is to engage differently with this weighty and tremendously productive tradition. Returning to these projects through the prism of gendered space and movement, I draw out a series of recurring claims about the gendered properties of space and movement on screen and in the theatre. Drawing from “images of women” claims about the objectification and narrative constraint of the female body in media texts, psychoanalytic feminist film scholarship has focused primarily on how these processes translate into the production of the subject through sexual difference. As a shift in location of critique from screen space to the unconscious layerings of the psyche, I suggest that this latter tradition has produced a series of spatial metaphors of gendered movement and constraint organised around the locus of the female subject.

Highlighting these retrospectively fascinating passages on space and movement, I shift the focus of the debate from the problem of the subject (the gaze, gendered desire, identification) to the more social and topographical concerns of screen space (geographical and corporeal power relations of space and movement). This chapter charts a selective and precisely motivated tour through what I call the “spatial imaginary” of film studies. In concert with the dissertation's ongoing interest in reading detail, the seemingly secondary themes of audio-visual texts and theory alike, my process in this chapter is to highlight significant “subtexts” or backgrounded themes in an existing field. The purpose of the exercise is not conservative, to produce a definitive film studies history – but rather generative, a selectively rigorous engagement with existing theories in transition toward a topographical approach to the study of audio-visual texts.

In this chapter I explore the brilliant and influential psychoanalytic spatial configurations in psychoanalytic film theory as a way into my problematic of gendered movement and constraint. Baudry and Heath's insights provide excellent avenues into recurring spatial arguments in "images of women" scholarship, the psychoanalytic projects of feminist theorists Laura Mulvey and Mary Anne Doane, and Teresa de Lauretis's distinctive "audio-visual" undertaking. In the process, I borrow and to bend some of these ideas in developing my own topographical approach to film criticism. This innovative methodological programme, which I will map out at the conclusion of this chapter, reaches outside the spatial limits of the psyche, toward issues of geography, the spatial blockings of power, gendered, class, and colonial space and movement. I push the "interior" preoccupations of psychoanalysis with subject-formation and the mapping of the psyche and open them up, almost like an orange, to the related concerns of social space and movement at work in audio-visual texts.

Where the psychoanalytic tradition reads the vicissitudes of screen space and movement in relation to the virtual psychic space of the spectator pinioned in the theatre seat, I wish to project these questions *outward*. How are the spatio-temporal qualities of audio-visual texts (interior/exterior space; landscape; narrative movement) profoundly linked to the *social* horizons of gender, class, colonialism that figure in contemporary costume drama? The paradigmatic shift undertaken in this chapter necessitates a conceptual move outside of the field of film studies proper. This linkage of the "mapping" of screen space and movement with broader "social space"¹

¹ While the limits of this project preclude an extensive engagement with this work, I would highlight Henri Lefebvre's concept of "social space" as a conceptual bridge amongst different conceptual layers of space. Lefebvre's ambitious project insists on how power relations are produced *spatially* through the interrelated realms of lived space (the corporeal experience of the lived environment through practice), representations of space (aesthetics), and broader spatial logics of power (architecture, bureaucratic and demographic mappings, and the shifting geographical relations of town and country, industry and agriculture). Rooted in a meta-historical exploration of continental European history, Lefebvre's concept of "social space" suggests the importance of the formal questions of representation and aesthetics (along with other types of spatial practice) in the continual production of (and presumably, resistance to) different types of power structures. In this dissertation, then, I am partly interested in reading costume drama "topographically," through the prism of social space in the understanding that these texts participate in subtle and diverse ways in the social "production of space." This analysis foregrounds not the production of a subject-in-ideology (the project of much psychoanalytic film theory) – but rather the production of social space. (I thank Kirsten McAllister for helping me think through this section.)

has been implicitly informed by a whole body of exciting new work in critical geography. (See Massey 1994; Soja 1985, 1989; Berland 1991; Rose 1993; de Certeau 1988; Lefebvre 1991.)

In order to make this epistemological leap of faith from the psychic “interior” mapping of the subject to questions of social space, I mine key insights from existing film scholarship. This selective retrospective reading highlights a series of compelling and productive observations around cinematic space and movement – the audio-visual spatial productions of power organised around the key concepts of suture, narrative, and genre.

The Cinematic Apparatus: Mapping Ideological Looking Relations

Psychoanalytic film theory from the 1970s and early 1980s offers a compelling series of interlocking arguments that situate the ideological properties of classic narrative cinema within a conceptual problematic of space and constraint. Jean-Louis Baudry's work on the cinematographic apparatus² lays a spatial groundwork for much subsequent critical film theory, including the influential psychoanalytic feminist scholarship that I wish to address in this dissertation. This tradition describes the cinema as an ideological apparatus that holds the subject in place and binds him (for the longest time, this subject was presumed to be male) into the flow of image and narrative through the very spatial properties of formal visual codes of framing and montage. Pulling back from a consideration of film texts, or even a more conventional Marxist political economy, Baudry critiques the ideological worldview embedded in the spatial symbolic staging of cinematic looking relations. He begins with a critique of Renaissance “Quattrocento” perspective which establishes particular conventions of framing and viewing. This centered perspectival system creates a powerful metonym for a Western cultural and historical spatial imaginary – a space drawn, framed, positioned, and proportioned for the pleasure of a detached observer.³ Baudry cites the Western painting tradition which presents “a motionless and

² As an extension of Baudry's work in a different context, see de Lauretis and Heath's The Cinematic Apparatus (1980). This book examines the social and technical aspects of cinema as they coalesce in a certain cinematic metapsychology.

³ For a more elaborate discussion of these fascinating issues around visuality and culture, see Crary (1994); Panofsky (1997); and Jay (1994).

continuous whole [and] elaborates a total vision which corresponds to the idealist conception of the fullness and homogeneity of being." (1985, 535)

Stephen Heath extends this model to photography, which, he claims, represents the culmination of an historical spatial worldview embodied in Western art.

The conception of the Quattrocento system is that of a scenographic space, space set out as spectacle for the eye of a spectator. Eye and knowledge come together; subject, object and the distance of the steady observation that allows the one to master the other; the scene with its strength of geometry and optics. Of that projected utopia, the camera is the culminating realization...the images it furnishes become, precisely, the currency of that vision, that space. (1981, 30)

With the incorporation of movement through the technologies of cinematic photography and projection, the apparatus extends its claims to a certain hermetic realism. For Baudry and Heath, the "moving image" continues to turn around the focal eye/l of the spectator. Through the development of dominant codes of continuity and narrative, the cinematic apparatus sets into motion the spatial worldview of Renaissance perspectival systems. Within modernist discourses around early motion pictures, Heath notes a common correlation of eye and camera: "The eye in cinema is the *perfect* eye, the steady and ubiquitous control of the scene passed from director to spectator by virtue of the cinematic apparatus." (32)

In the epistemological leap from camera to eye, Heath links the structural questions of apparatus (perspective and framing) to post-structural processes of subject-formation. Baudry suggests that the cinema's "arrangement of the different elements – projector, darkened hall, screen" effectively restages the scene of Lacan's mirror stage. (539) The infant's experience of physical immobility coupled with extensive visible mobility coincide neatly with the spectator's movie-going experience. Through this series of analogies, Baudry's discussion of spectatorship and the cinematic apparatus constructs a series of compelling spatial metaphors. The physical staging of cinematic spectatorship positions the subject in a controlling, omniscient relation to screened images. However, in a sinister twist, the seeming plenitude of the image framed, focused, and projected for his enjoyment performs an ideological sleight of hand subjecting the

spectator to a pleasurable, hermetic world. The spectator is ideologically contained by the formal relations of the apparatus.

No doubt the darkened room and the screen bordered with black like a letter of condolences already present privileged conditions of effectiveness – no exchange, no circulation, no communication with any outside. Projection and reflection take place in a closed space and those who remain there, whether they know it or not (but they do not), find themselves chained, captured, or captivated. (538)

Heath, for his part, notes that “etymologically, entertainment is a holding-in and a maintenance – the subject occupied in time.” (54) The spectator is held in his seat and captivated, enthralled, entertained – ultimately imprisoned – by moving images. For these theorists, this is the over-determining effect of the cinematic apparatus, embedded in its spatial organization, and reinforced, as we shall see below, in the conventions of temporal continuity and narrative space.

According to this logic, one could persuasively read the contemporary boom in costume drama as a return to this model of “classic narrative cinema.” For instance, *Sense and Sensibility* presents one spectacular return to the wide-screen visual pleasures of cinema-going in the video age; like much other contemporary period drama (*Dangerous Liaisons* (1989), *The Age of Innocence* (1993), and an explosion of recent Shakespeare adaptations) these texts draw partly on the success of Merchant-Ivory’s success, offering a lush audio-visual return to the “thrill” of wide-screen cinema in the age of television, video, and other emergent outlets for feature film or serial adaptations. As I will argue in Chapter Three, these period films tend to formally reproduce authoritarian nineteenth-century dominant ideologies of patriarchal, middle-class, and colonial power embedded in the landscape painting tradition. On some level, then, I could reasonably posit the current fascination with a bourgeois, white historical experience as a sentimental return to a repressive moment; channeled largely through adaptations of “classic novels” of the period, these texts transpose *literary* codes of power and subjective authority into an audio-visual language profoundly influenced by painting traditions and the drive of narrative cinema.

However, the pertinence of Baudry’s model is called into question by the historically specific cinema-going context of darkened theatre and film projection evoked; the psychoanalytic analogy between early childhood “mirror phase” and the dream state of the unconscious rests its

case partly on this physical scene. While by no means extinct, increasingly this experience is displaced or complicated by video distribution (small-screen, interrupted viewing within a “private” or “family” context); the convergence of television, wide-screen, and video production/reception contexts; and female and feminist authorship in the corpus that explicitly challenges existing cinematic codes. The diverse make-up of my corpus, from television serials to wide-screen releases implicitly challenges the isolated analogy of the mirror phase as an analytic point of critique. As I work my way through the balance of these early psychoanalytic arguments about “classic narrative cinema,” it is interesting to keep in mind the shifting contemporary audio-visual culture which has produced my corpus: from *Sense and Sensibility's* wide-screen extravaganza to the different formal qualities of video or television production. In what ways do the claims of a critical film studies still apply to the contemporary spatial organisation of audio-visual texts, and in what ways does the corpus shift or challenge these codes?

Suture: Stitching the Spectator into Motion and Flow

From the theatrical mapping of the viewing experience in the work on the cinematic apparatus, we shift to an related yet distinctive level of analysis in the question of “suture.” In film theory’s transition from a structuralist concern with apparatus and cinematic language to the post-structuralist consideration of the subject within ideology, the concept of suture carries pivotal significance. As Kaja Silverman points out, rather than a purely formalist concern with cinematic *langue*, “the concept of suture attempts to account for the means by which subjects emerge within discourse.” (1983, 199-200) The resulting psychoanalytic investigation within film theory draws significantly from Jacques Lacan’s account of the constitution of the subject through language. The primacy of visuality in Freud (scopophilia, fetishism), and in Lacan (the mirror phase) has provided a productive analogy between cinematic experience and primary processes of subject-formation. For instance, as mentioned above, Baudry likens the film viewing experience to Lacan’s mirror phase as both combine the “immature powers of mobility and a precocious maturation of visual organisation.” (539) Lacan’s theory suggests that in the mirror phase the

infant first constitutes a unified picture of self through viewing the Other. Thus, the subject is always constituted as split from itself, as alienated, and always in relation to a (visualised) Other. (Of course, feminists have pointed out that the mirror phase's Other is implicitly gendered as female, and that this spatial/ visual analogy is profoundly *gendered* – a key point which I will return to below.)

In this persistent analogy, the cinematic experience compulsively re-enacts a particular quality of physical immobility coupled with a proffered plenitude of the moving image. Freud's work on voyeurism locates cinematic pleasure in looking within early childhood experience; psychoanalytic film theory argues that cinematic codes work to compulsively repeat and replay formative dramas of subject-formation and desire. Importing this childhood tale into the cinema, Heath recounts French semiotician Jean-Pierre Oudart's account of suture. From an initial "sheer jubilation in the image," the spectator is disturbed by the realisation of the *limits* of the frame, of the absent field outside of the image. The pleasure of plenitude, a sense of an all-encompassing eye, gives way to an anxiety about what is not seen. Within a psychoanalytic economy, the unconscious is piqued by the image's "lack," its "absences," what is *not* seen.

Dominant cinema, the argument continues, sets out to restore this lost plenitude, a process of "effacement (or filling in) of the absence, the suturing of the discourse." This suturing is accomplished through strategies of narrative continuity and coherence, and through "cutting the spectator into" the narrative through conventions like shot/reverse shot. The spectator is offered a privileged, omniscient point of view, and in the process is partially integrated into narrative identification with the characters on the screen. If filmmaking may be technically understood as a series of spatio-temporal fragments of celluloid which are edited together, then the "gaps" between these fragments are effaced, papered over by inscribing the subject into the process. The subject makes the suture, and in the process is "sutured in" to the ideological movement of narrative. Heath, again:

The major emphasis in all this is that the articulation of the signifying chain of images, of the chain of images as signifying, works not from image to image but from image to image through the absence that the subject constitutes. Cinema as discourse is the production of a subject

and the subject is the point of that production, constantly missing in and moving along the flow of images, the very assurance of the flow, with suture, as it were, the culmination of that assurance. (88)

The subject, then, is the by-product of image-flow, constituted in the gap between the edits; not merely a place, a locus in the audience, the subject gains a temporal, desiring trajectory through cinematic flow. This stitching into the flickering movement of images figures the subject as the product of a dynamic interplay between presence and absence. Explained in this way, "suture" constitutes a powerful argument for the spatio-temporal production of subjectivity as flow. This subject is brought into being and put into flow through the gaps which constitute the suture. The vehicle is in motion, but someone else is in the driver's seat. Such ideological models of subjectivity consistently beg a version of the question, "But who is driving the bus?" The villains within this meta-psychological account remain shadowy, but Heath and others generate a compelling spatio-temporal argument of how cinematic conventions channel subjects, desire, into the spectator's mistaken impression that indeed s/he is driving the bus (controlling gaze) when in fact s/he is only along on someone else's journey, with an itinerary which always produces variations on the same scenery, the same destination. Not the simple constraint of the bird cage, this work asserts the more insidious virtual movement which is always the same.

Heath poses the operations of suture explicitly in relation to cinematic movement as a technological innovation (projection), coupled with the historical development of cinematic codes of continuity and narrative. The semiotic process of suturing, in turn, "cuts" the subject into the very movement of the film. This powerful turn of theory harnesses the (ideological) processes of subject-formation, the production and reproduction of the social in and through the individual subject, to the routings of narrative, desire, the quest for lost plenitude in the image. The cinema, then, is seen as a powerful ideological apparatus which intervenes in the process of subject-formation through the manipulation of time, space, and movement. From the ideological space of the darkened theatre, the notion of suture offers a precise account of how the subject is stitched into the temporal "flow," the *movement* of images. From the hapless spectator immobilised, popcorn or no popcorn, in the cinema seat, we are brought along into virtual cinematic virtual

space and movement. Taking up the case of costume drama, Heath's theory describes how we are imaginatively projected and "placed" within the screen space of nineteenth-century England, and how in turn we are implicated into the narrative machinations of the protagonists. "Narrative," then, emerges as the next key term in Heath's account of the spatio-temporal routings of desire.

Moving Images: "Narrative Space" and "Movement-Image"

From social technologies of framing and viewing, the shift from still photography to moving images poses the problems of temporality and movement. With the flickering sequence, the spatial dimensions of frame and screen incorporate dimensions of desire in narrative. Arguing from a position which assumes the ideological nature of dominant narrative cinema, Heath raises the question of movement as a technical problem of containment: How are the unpredictable, mobile elements of movement to be contained and rerouted into new technologies of centered, controlling subjectivity? For this author, the short (if not simple) response to this problem is, "through codes of narrative coherence and continuity."

For Heath, the nascent mobile, moving, shifting potentialities of the moving image might potentially offer a disruptive excess of meaning, an overflowing beyond the controlling grid of the frame – ultimately a decentering of the all-powerful Eye. Movement, temporality, succession, narrative development all foreground the powerful motors of desire. However, the diverse possibilities for destinations, exploration, were shut down in the early years of film production as the newly-created cinematic space was yoked into a linear process of narrative. "From the very first," Heath writes, "human figures enter film, spilling out of the train, leaving the factory or the photographic congress, *moving* – this is the movies, there are moving pictures." (38) By posing the madcap, anarchic movement of figures, of crowds, Heath suggests a potentiality within the cinema for different economies of vision – what Deleuze would identify as qualities of movement distinct from narrative. Unfortunately, for this cinematic history, such possibilities are shut down through the formal (and, of course economic) monopoly of what became dominant narrative

cinema. Through codes of narrative, the moving image is consistently reconstituted around a centered subject.⁴

Beginning from the question of movement (which in a sense implies a certain kind of productivity, of possible disruption), Heath describes how film as a signifying practice constantly produces and reproduces this certain subject-position, moving the subject through well-traveled routes of desire, of absence and presence.

What moves in film, finally, is the spectator, immobile in front of the screen. Film is the regulation of that movement, the individual as subject held in a shifting and placing of desire, energy, contradiction, in a perpetual retotalization of the imaginary (the set scene of image and subject). This is the investment of film in narrativization; and crucially for a coherent space, the unity of place for vision. (53)

Heath's account of movement and subject-formation in the cinema, then, implies a kind of "running on the spot" – a compulsive repetition of the same trajectory. Beyond Baudry's account of the imprisonment of the subject within the darkened space of the cinema, Heath addresses the temporal dimension of narrative, where the subject is threaded through an expertly-plotted trajectory of "narrative space" precisely drawn along and suspended. But the sinister subtext is that the journey repeats itself compulsively, that the end-point, the culmination of desire, is always the same. So, while there is movement, it is pre-scripted, destination set. In costume drama, the narrative is explicitly organised around the obsessive drive toward heterosexual romance and marriage, and the acquisition of property; the Austen narratives with their inevitable double weddings and themes of land tenure offer, at least on the surface, the most conventional narrative satisfactions. I will continue this important discussion of the vicissitudes of narrative and desiring-movement later in this chapter with reference to the *gendering* of narrative movement – a thread which I take up again at length in Chapter Four.

⁴ While for Heath the problem is the centered subject period, feminist film theorists perceptively noted that the subject of the controlling gaze is male and the narrative somehow always unfolds for his pleasure. I would also add that this subject is white, very possibly middle class, and located in the Western world. In the progression of this dissertation, I extend Heath's account of the controlling gaze of spectatorship to uneasily sketch in other axes of power traditionally excluded from the film studies narrative.

This psychoanalytic account conveys a powerful interlocking series of spatial metaphors at the level of apparatus, in the suturing work of framing and montage, and through the spatio-temporal pull of narrative. These three accounts present a compelling spatial account of the cinematic experience, where the spectator is at once centered, held physically immobile, and offered a feast of visual pleasure which “moves” him (and to this point in the argument, the spectator is male) into the text and through “narrative space.” Paradoxically, in this model the “movement” of the cinematic image, at least within “classic narrative cinema,” serves only to further inculcate the subject into his ideological cage – simultaneously transfixing him on the spot and offering him a virtual (false) sense of movement, progression, a journey which is really only a dreary variation on the same old route, with the same destination. The “movement” here, the generative work of the system, involves the production of a social subject whose desires (and implicitly whose imaginative horizons) are continually charted, circumscribed for him – or, within the context of this dissertation, for *her*.

At this point I will reintroduce Deleuze’s work on the movement-image as a counterpoint to this psychoanalytic model of space and movement. Whereas the tension between movement and constraint in Heath’s work weighs heavy toward the pole of ideological constraint, where movement is yoked into the reproduction of inculcated, “limited” social subjectivities, Deleuze leans toward the potential of “the production of the new, that is, of the remarkable and the singular.” On a close reading, these distinctive paradigms converge in their critique of the colonisation of moving images by what Heath calls “narrative space” and what Deleuze calls the “action-image” – the saturation of screen space with movement at the level of the human figure, narrative vectors organised obsessively around oedipal desire and the perpetuation of capitalist or authoritarian power structures. However, where Heath uses classic narrative cinema as his entire sample (as, arguably, the Hollywood cinema paradigm has colonised much of the global imagination), Deleuze draws from a broader range of European auteurist cinema. In the process, Deleuze foregrounds not only the dominant tendencies, but other aspects of different art cinema and national cinema contexts. Contemporary costume drama as grouped in my corpus offers an

interesting formal case study as it includes both traditional narrative features (the Austen adaptations), avant-garde texts (*Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust*), and texts falling somewhere in-between which make formal and thematic comments on dominant narrative or romance forms (*Angels and Insects* and *Campion's work*).

My very corpus, then, presents a restless social and textual productivity within contemporary audio-visual production that both reproduces longstanding cultural forms and traditions and critiques, perverts, transforms them. In this light, Marxist and psychoanalytic perspectives contrast starkly with Deleuze's productive, anarchic universe. For Heath, to pose the problem of movement is to already to look at containment, where the burden of explanation lies with how anything ever changes (via the dialectical, negative critique of avant-garde cinema). For Deleuze, to pose the question of cinema is to evoke movement, potentiality; and the burden of explanation falls toward explaining how this potentiality, the anarchic spilling over of intensities and trajectories of movement-image, can be so routinely (if never completely) routed into the narrow confines of oedipal narratives, generic formulas, and authoritarian spectacles. My project here in considering the costume drama is to look at both kinds of "movement": Both the repetitive, controlled, controlling, compulsive movement which stakes out complex power relations in audio-visual space – and more liminal qualities, affectivities, digressions, irreducible moments of escape and contemplation which can never be entirely folded into the desiring movement of narrative, the nefarious, bone-grinding reproduction of existing power relations so pervasive in cultural texts.

Gender or "sexual difference," of course, constitutes the core of a network of spatial power relations considered in this dissertation. In the next section, I will next introduce the question of gender into this discussion of audio-visual movement and constraint through early "images of women" scholarship. Roughly historically concurrent with the ideological moment in Marxist/psychoanalytic film theory considered above, this work offers another series of intuitive and theoretical gendered spatial metaphors that are taken up again within psychoanalytic feminist film theory.

“Images of Women”: Flattening Images of Gender Roles and Stereotype

Claims about the formal ideological properties of the cinematic apparatus drawn from psychoanalytic/semiotic frameworks underpin subsequent and parallel developments in feminist film theory. In particular, the notion of the centering of a “preferred” (implicitly *male*) spectator in the driver’s seat of a cinematic vision-machine aptly shorthands a male “controlling gaze” which persists through Western art history from painting through to photography, advertising, and cinema has formed a key touchstone of feminist critiques of representation. An argument common to early “images of women” approaches as well as subsequent psychoanalytic positions, the “controlling male gaze” suggests an overarching economy of gendered constraint within cultural relations of looking. From an analysis of the economic control of representational institutions, to the encoding work of male directors,⁵ to feminist work on gender stereotyping and objectification, we can find a common thread in the theme of male framing, point-of-view, desires produced and reproduced both behind the camera and for the spectator: Heath’s “ubiquitous control of the scene passed from director to spectator.” Women, on the other hand, were seen to exist only in flattened, two-dimensional form on screen for the pleasure of the male viewer; within this critique, women lack cultural agency both extra-diegetically as producers, viewers, and within the narrative worlds of cultural texts.

Within Western feminism, the “images of women” critique of representation has gained an commonsense persuasive power over the past three decades. Originating in the early 1970s, this perspective coincides historically with the application of semiotic and psychoanalytic theories within film studies. Part of the period’s widespread critique of dominant representation, these very different approaches share common political ground. An important precursor to the feminist psychoanalytic work in film studies, the “images of women” approach raises issues of power, exclusion, and distortion in representation which are key to any progressive critique of cultural forms. As an extension of Heath and Baudry’s scholarship, these arguments can be framed

⁵ For example, see the extensive feminist auteurist critiques of directors like Hitchcock: Rose (1988) and Bergstrom (1988) – two readings of *The Birds* (1963); and Modleski (1990).

around the problematic of movement and constraint. The insertion of gender into the ideological mix produces a series of important arguments about femininity as stasis or passive element: images produced for the pleasure of the active, desiring male gaze; men as the inevitable forceful, dynamic agents of narrative, the accepted "subject" of popular culture played against women's role as static, two-dimensional object.

As part of an extensive critique of patriarchal ideologies and social structures, feminists have pinpointed media representations of women as a key component in the production and maintenance of patriarchal ideology and social structures. From the falsely glamourised feminine ideals of advertising, to the coercive messages of pornography, to stereotypes circulating in television and popular cinema, feminists have insisted that different visual media promulgate "false" or "distorted" images of women. Within this critique, images (from high art to mass-produced ones) are seen as *powerful, and central* in producing and reproducing sexist ideology. Images, then, acquire a key pedagogical role for viewers of both genders as markers and promoters of constricting gender roles. Produced by a male establishment, these images are, as Laura Mulvey so aptly notes, "cut to the measure of [male] desire." For female audiences (particularly girl children) these pernicious images are seen to offer "negative" role models.

To transpose this argument into topographical terms, the persistence of rigidly-defined gender roles suggests a narrowing of the conceptual horizons of both girl and boy children. It is instructive to consider, for instance, a 1976 feminist media manual entitled Positive Images which listed certain criteria for "non-sexist" films and videos. Such materials would, amongst other criteria:

- present girls and women, boys and men with non-stereotyped behavior and attitudes: independent, intelligent women; adventurous, resourceful girls; men who are nurturing; boys who are not afraid to show their vulnerability.
- present both sexes in non-traditional work or leisure activities: men doing housework, women flying planes, etc. (Artel and Wengraf 1990, 9)

Such definitions partly frame traditional gender roles spatially according to public/private distinctions. Further, these gender roles ascribe different codes of mobility and adventurousness to girls and boys. The limiting, repressive power of images is seen to circumscribe the viewer's

self-perceptions of corporeal and social space (where we “belong”; that is, the types of places and spaces, occupations and milieux are available to us) and movement (which movements, gestures, “poses” our bodies are capable of/ are gender-appropriate or “natural” or “desirable”).

In foregrounding these elements, I point to how this feminist critique of representation links cultural and textual economies to a broader gendered “spatial imaginary.” These texts are seen to describe and circumscribe suitable social/historical horizons and aspirations for female subjects, and to help encode an “appropriate” range of female comportment, action, realm. Part of the ideological work of representation, then, is *spatial* in the sense that it symbolically maps out social relations of power; an ongoing feminist geographical critique notes the restriction of women to the “domestic” or “private” sphere (as opposed to a masculine “public” sphere). Hardly “natural,” this spatial distinction, the physical and symbolic “containment” of women (Frye’s bird cage) must be constantly produced, and representation is one key site where this ideological work happens.

Shifting to the specifics of cinematic (or more broadly, audio-visual) representation, this spatial blocking of power can be seen to function through very specific historical codes. For instance, stereotyping and plot containment of strong women are two examples central to a feminist critique of dominant cinema which might be seen in terms of constricted feminine space and movement. Marjorie Rosen’s Popcorn Venus (1973) and Molly Haskell’s From Reverence to Rape (1974) present historical surveys of images of women in Hollywood film. Like many subsequent writers, Haskell accuses Hollywood of taking a leading role in perpetuating what she calls “the Big Lie” of sexism: “In the movie business we have had an industry dedicated for the most part to reinforcing the lie. The propaganda arm of the American dream machine, Hollywood promoted a romantic fantasy of marital roles and conjugal euphoria...” (2)

Haskell’s critique of Hollywood’s representation of women rests its case on notions of stereotyping (the virgin, the whore, the blonde bimbo), stock plot containment of strong female characters, and star images. The stereotype, like positive and negative role models, suggests a limited imaginary range of gendered comportment reflected in motion pictures. Plot containment

suggests another persistent feminist spatial metaphor. Haskell notes a predominance of “active,” “professional” 1940s heroines including Joan Crawford, Carole Lombard, Katharine Hepburn, and Rosalind Russell, who leave a legacy of “intelligence and personal style and forcefulness...far surpassing women in movies [of the 1970s].” (31) Haskell describes these dynamic stars as engaged in a push me-pull me drama of independence against the containing forces of society/narrative requirements: “Every movie where a woman excelled as a professional she had to be brought to heel at the end.” (30)

According to this critique, dominant culture works on-screen to circumscribe women’s conceptual horizons through stereotype (limited roles/ places made available) and the narrative containment of “strong women” through standard endings which punish female independence and place these heroines back in the home. These examples add a gender dimension to Heath’s ideological argument about “narrative space,” where part of the containment of narrative is to constantly route the protagonists toward the patriarchal enclosure of marriage. Female characters, according to this critique, are not afforded the physical and conceptual “mobility” (force, agency, adventurousness) seen as the province of men – and when female protagonists *do* exhibit these qualities, they are posed as a threat. This argument continues to hold weight, through feminist scholarship on *film noir* and even contemporary action film. Within this debate, the costume drama presents a fascinating case study, as these films are organised importantly around female protagonists. Unlike Haskell’s examples, these characters dwell within the nineteenth-century “private” realm traditionally accorded to white, bourgeois women and their aspirations often pull toward heterosexual marriage-as-narrative closure; however, these characters *do* exert a certain (indirect) force. The gendered movement here is subtle, but present nonetheless. Primarily affective and intensive rather than dynamic and extensive, such “movement” may be read as a potentiality or longing and confounds the binary terms of movement as physical displacement.

Haskell’s notes on gender stereotyping and plot containment exemplify a foundational moment in feminist film criticism. Themes of the potent, airbrushed and glamourised *power* of

Hollywood cinema; of the limiting, repressive pedagogical force of images as misrepresentation which somehow stunt or distort women's imaginary and actual life courses; of the containing tendencies of narratives and genre – all of these powerful ideas have taken root in a broad-based Western popular feminism. Yet, as many subsequent critics have suggested, the “images of women” model tends to posit some “true” feminine condition existing outside representation – an “authentic” three-dimensional female experience which is betrayed, mis-represented, flattened out into commercial, masculinist “images of women.” (For critiques, see Morris (1994); de Lauretis's chapter on “Imaging” in *Alice Doesn't* (1984); and Waldman (1990).) Further, this standpoint tends to fall back on an implicitly *mimetic* relationship between (static) female viewers and the seductive glamour of motion pictures. While retaining a grasp of the tremendous rhetorical power of the “images of women” critique for feminism, Griselda Pollock (1990) notes the complex interplay of representation and identity. Pollock raises the key question of subject-formation through moving images.

As we shall see, psychoanalytic feminist film theory incorporates and reconceptualises many of the familiar concerns voiced by “images of woman” critics. Picking up the threads of psychoanalytic theory introduced by Metz, Baudry, and Heath, this scholarship engages directly with Pollock's question of subject-formation in and through the specific mechanisms of cinematic representation. In this transition from the more social concerns of “images of women” critiques to the psychic sphere explored by Laura Mulvey and others, we shift from an exterior consideration of horizons and physical displacement, to the “interior” psychic economies of sexual difference. Interestingly, many of the intuitions of “images of women” scholarship built upon the gendered dialectic of masculine movement and female constraint resurface in modified form in the psychoanalytic paradigm.

Feminist Psychoanalytic Film Theory: Woman-as-Image

Baudry's and Heath's projects suggest an obsessive repetition within the drama of popular moviegoing: A repetitive primal drama featuring a centered subject-protagonist,

simultaneously “bound into” (his) seat and placed at the centre of the cinematic vision machine. A fascinating account of dominant cinema’s process of subject-formation, the ongoing “suturing” of the subject into ideology, this picture is disturbed by the arrival of the female figure on the screen, and the feminist theorist in the field. Feminist theorists reintroduced the figure of sexual difference out of film theory’s Pandora’s box of the psyche – the ghost of a “lack” which makes the machine run so smoothly. Laura Mulvey’s seminal essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” puts the question of sexual difference on the screen and in the audience squarely on the map of anglo-american film criticism. This article lays out an incredibly rich groundwork which feminist film theorists continue to mine and critique to this day.

Focusing on the gendered deployment of the gaze within classic narrative cinema, Mulvey describes how “the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form.” For her, it is this “skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure” which gives Hollywood cinema its sinister appeal, its ideological power. Gendering Freud’s notion of scopophilia, Mulvey notes a division of labour in hard-wired human looking relations, where the woman functions as (passive) image, the man as (active) bearer of the look. This sadistic masculinist look has three interlocking aspects: the look of the camera, the look of the male characters within the film, and the look of the spectator. The common object of these gazes is the woman-as-image: “In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.” (1988, 62)

More specific to the conventions of dominant cinema, woman has a paradoxical double role as object of desire and as threat of castration. She functions both as spectacle to interrupt narrative flow, and as a vanishing point in the narrative progression itself. In either case, the female form must be managed, framed, packaged through a number of cinematic conventions which “contain” her threat to the male viewer – all the while maximising her allure as object of desire. As spectacle, the woman’s body is put on display for the male viewer, while processes of fetishisation and fragmentation “manage” her symbolic risk. Always threatening to disrupt, this

castrated female presence is further contained through stock investigative narratives which routinely culminate in the marriage, death, or punishment of “active” female characters. Such notions of containment through objectification and narrative coincide with images of women scholarship. The specificity of the psychoanalytic position lies in its claims that these representational processes reflect the “patriarchal unconscious of the society that produces them” – and further, that the cinematic apparatus has perfected certain looking relations which obsessively dramatise primary and secondary processes of subject-formation such as castration, scopophilia, and fetishism. Thus, as the argument about “suture” suggests, the cinematic apparatus itself, as well as historical codes of looking, converge to produce a potent social technology which constantly reproduces a particular form of psychic subjectivity inscribed in sexual difference. This apparatus channels the libidinal energies of desire into gendered patterns of active male looking and passive female display.

As many critics have suggested,⁶ Mulvey’s model tends to reinforce a monolithic account of representation configuring femininity as a term of eternal constraint, as a figure “cut to the measure of male desire.” Tending to totalise dominant cinema and visual pleasure itself as “ideological,” the Mulveyan tradition excludes the agency of the female spectator, and other “fissures” in this monolithic patriarchal vision-machine. The controlling male gaze functions as eternal omniscient jailor to female pleasure. Adding what she claims to be the foundational term of sexual difference to the early psychoanalytic cinematic “scene,” Mulvey re-inserts Heath’s and Baudry’s spectator, now explicitly gendered male, in the driver’s seat of cinematic subjectivity and pleasure. While the cinematic apparatus is constructed, literally, “around” the masculine subject’s delicate balance of fetishism and fear of castration, the woman can only exist in the margins, or in two dimensions as a ghostly, inert image on the screen.

Extending these meditations on the textual inscription of femininity, Mary Ann Doane seeks the “place” of the female body within the gendered address of the woman’s film; part of an extensive body of work on the woman’s film, Doane implicitly also raises the question of female

⁶ See, among others, Stacey (1994) and de Lauretis (1984).

spectatorship not addressed by Mulvey. Analysing certain “paranoid woman’s films” (including *Suspicion* (1941), *Rebecca* (1940), *Gaslight* (1944)) as extreme case evidence of what she claims to be a generally “paranoid” apparatus, Doane claims that female fantasy is most compatible with persecution and hysteria. Even as the woman’s film seeks to represent the designated “female” spaces of the home, these spaces become fraught with horror through their association with the partially-hidden, hysterical spaces of the female body. Doane asserts a primal disjuncture between the sadistic, specular tendencies of classic narrative cinema, and a “certain de-specularisation...a deflection of scopophilic energy in other directions, away from the female body.” (987b, 286) Ultimately, Doane’s conclusions with regard to female desire are scarcely less bleak than Mulvey’s. While this historical cycle of films opens up the potential for female desire and identification, it “functions in a rather complex way to deny the woman the space of a reading.” (296) Even within the conceivably gynocentric frame of the “woman’s film,” for this theorist, both the female body and the possibility of female desire are crowded out of the frame. Doane’s claim that the cinematic apparatus is generally a “paranoid” system may well overstep her specialised and small body of evidence.⁷ However, her extreme conclusions can be related to a general quest for the elusive female figure on the screen, the female desiring-body in the audience – a quest which runs through much feminist film theory.

For their part, Pam Cook and Claire Johnston look at the place of a strong female protagonist in Raoul Walsh’s *The Revolt of Mamie Stover*. Like Mulvey’s analysis of *Duel in the Sun*, they choose a film with a strong female protagonist, Mamie Stover. However, they note that far from being autonomous individuals, “women in fact function as a signifier in a circuit of exchange where the values exchanged have been fixed by/in a patriarchal culture.” (1988, 26) The woman cannot be a subject of desire, but is merely collapsed into a sign of (elusive) desire exchanged among men. To push the point one step further, these authors advance an influential “symptomatic” reading of dominant cinema, where “woman” functions “as the locus of a dilemma for the patriarchal order, as a locus of contradictions.” (35) In this semiotic analysis, then, woman

⁷ I thank José Arroyo for pointing out this critique of Doane.

functions as a token of exchange, or as a marker of trouble spot – a wrench in the semiotic works of the apparatus. If she seems to move, this is not on her own volition, but as a function of a male economy of desire. While Mamie Stover seems to be present and active on-screen, her place and mobility are circumscribed within a masculine economy. Like Mulvey's assertion that the female body signifies castration Cook and Johnston assert that the woman on the screen acts as a disturbance; but she lacks substance, direction, agency, force of her own in narrative.

These psychoanalytic and semiotic accounts of the containment of women within the representational field bear more than passing resemblance to Haskell's position. The recurring feminist critique of objectification rests on the notion that cinema (like other media) *limits* the imaginary functions of women in cultural texts to mere adornment for male consumption, or as disruption/ threat who is trotted out to be contained and punished. In foregrounding the place of sexual difference within the cinematic apparatus, psychoanalytic feminist film theory notes how the very formal codes of classic narrative cinema use the female form to tease along masculine desire; within a Freudian and Lacanian economy where the libido is male, *female* desire remains a shadowy absence. This question of desire may be traced within feminist film theory, from earlier psychoanalytic projects such as Heath's, through the question of narrative movement. My own trajectory diverges from these fascinating and fierce debates around desire, as I shift the terms of engagement from the subject to the charting of gendered space and movement in audio-visual texts.

Gendered Narrative Movement, Gendered Generic Spaces

In this chapter to date, I have noted some spatial metaphors that haunt the psychoanalytic imaginary in film studies as a path toward my topographical approach to audio-visual culture. In the section that follows, I highlight some ideas from this paradigm that move beyond the general terms of movement and constraint, foregrounding cinematic qualities of gendered space and movement. Within psychoanalytic feminist film theory, spatial subtexts

emerge most commonly with reference to issues of narrative and genre. For instance, Mulvey following statement evokes Heath's "narrative space":

Playing on the tension between film as controlling the dimension of time (editing, narrative) and film as controlling the dimension of space (changes in distance, editing), cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire. (67)

More specifically, Mulvey notes the differential gendered access of spectators and screen characters to the virtual, emotional, imaginary "movement" of narrative. Evoking Freud's concept of fetishism in relation to the fragmentation of the female body, she writes that "one part of a fragmented body destroys the Renaissance space, the illusion of depth demanded by the narrative, it gives flatness, the quality of a cut-out or icon rather than verisimilitude to the screen." (63) If woman functions as icon, as spectacle within the film system, then the male character works in the three-dimensional, temporal space of narrative. Men, in short, move, while women don't.

In contrast to woman as icon, the active male figure...demands a three-dimensional space... He is a figure in landscape... The male protagonist is free to command the stage, a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the look and creates the action. (63)

Mulvey's argument about the gendered split between bearer and object of the gaze, between active and passive designated roles, then, extends into the field of narrative and film space. This structural split between the dynamic masculine hero of narrative and the static female function of display hearkens back to themes in "images of women" scholarship; both imply a structuring narrative code limiting female agency, physical freedom of movement, and desire in cultural texts.

In her essay "Desire in Narrative," de Lauretis extends Mulvey's intuitions about gendered narrative movement, positing the question of narrative as a key aspect to a critical feminist film practice. Within a larger problematic about "femininity as constraint," spatio-temporal codes of narrative form one key preoccupation which runs through this dissertation. (In Chapter Four I take up this problem at some length with reference to the singular allegorical narrative structure in Sally Potter's *Orlando*.) Briefly, costume drama offsets any simple notion of "narrative movement." Lacking the forceful, active drive of the Western or the action film, the genre's plot-lines and

chartings of desire tend to be complex, attenuated, digressing. Feminist film theorists writing of “women’s genres” have treated these digressing narratives as exhibiting a gendered treatment of space and time. For instance, in “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’” Mulvey (1988b) links this gendered economy of narrative movement to codes of genre. “Masculine” genres such as the Western offer a wide open, “active” treatment of space, whereas “feminine” genres like the melodrama are relegated to the interior spaces of domesticity, family relations, and sexuality. Organised around issues of gendered narrative movement and spatial-temporal codes of genre, these suggestive binaries offer the bare bones of an argument about the gendering of representational space and movement on which I will build my case.

In this article, Mulvey addresses issues female pleasure and spectatorship so notably absent in the earlier piece with reference to King Vidor’s *Duel in the Sun* (1946). She cites this film as an exception to the bold rules of gendered narrative movement set out above. With its anomolous “active” female protagonist, *Duel in the Sun* offers a heroic figure of female identification. Mulvey asks herself how this aberration, the active female protagonist, shifts the signifying system of gendered space and movement.

While the film remains visibly a “Western,” the generic space seems to shift. The landscape of action, though present, is not the dramatic core of the film’s story, rather it is the interior drama of a girl caught between two conflicting desires... Now the female presence as center allows the story to be actually, *overtly*, about sexuality: it becomes a melodrama. (74-75)

In this neat turn of theory, Mulvey begins to map out gendered spatial coordinates of genre. The Western, a genre all “about” allocation of space, history, vigorous movement, corresponds to the “public” exterior spaces of masculinity. When the female protagonist moves into this space, it is altered, transformed into the quintessential “female” space of melodrama, sexuality, interior space. In this vein, a considerable body of feminist scholarship on the “woman’s film” and melodrama has explored the correlation between femininity and constrained, interior spaces. With their female protagonists and “female” spheres of action (the home), these films, it has been argued, present the possibility for female identification.

Reiterating the opposition between Westerns and melodrama, Doane elaborates on the gendered spatial and the temporal dimensions of genre: "While the wide open spaces of the Western suggest a range of options and freedom of action, in the melodrama alternatives appear to be closed off and limited by a constricting domestic sphere." (1987, 73) The latter "feminine" economy of spatial and conceptual constraint figures in Doane's psychoanalytic framework as the "impairment of masculinity" or castration. As in Mulvey, this formulation situates male and female characters within a dynamic tension of (male) agency and (female) stasis/castration. Doane describes a system of oppositional roles which may be occupied by characters of either gender (male characters can also be "castrated"). Yet, as Doane points out, the passive quality of the female characters of the melodrama corresponds to the "lack of social power and effectivity so characteristic of the cultural positioning of women." (73) She implicitly links the spatial articulations of genre with the semiotic and marketing envelope of genre – and with the horizons of female experience and aspiration. Such a formulation of gender, genre, and film space presents an interesting point of departure for rethinking gendered cinematic space.

Toward a Topographical Feminist Film Theory

I have lingered on Doane's, Heath's and Mulvey's scholarship as these theorists tend to work with strongly spatial ideas which help me map out certain interlocking spatial concepts in psychoanalytic film theory: suture, narrative, genre. However, these frameworks are themselves "constraining" for a feminist project as they are organised around a rigid gendered active/passive binary. In a more precise elaboration of the intuitions circulating through "images of women" scholarship, feminist psychoanalytic film scholarship juxtaposes the spatial and temporal forms of cinema and genre, the "hardwiring" of the psyche, and the social problem of the cultural "place" of women. Implicitly, this body of work extrapolates *outward* from questions of aesthetic form into the density of social relations. And there is something profoundly suggestive, intuitively on the mark about this attribution of representational and actual "constraint" to women. Yet one important critique insists that these psychic economies of agency and constraint seem almost set

in stone. There is a hesitation between the *cultural* attribution of constraint to femininity, and a more primal, unconscious coding.

For this project which posits (or seeks) feminine “movement” it becomes necessary to challenge the dualistic structures which inform psychoanalytic film criticism. As mentioned in the Introduction, costume drama makes a fascinating case study in this respect, as it presents an audio-visual system which is neither truly “still” (as Doane seems to claim) – nor “active” in the obvious sense. Deleuze’s more nuanced qualities of “movement” (and implicitly, desire) offer a different framework for costume drama’s intensive and affective qualities of (gendered) movement which differs from Doane’s reliance on a more obvious register of narrative and physical displacement. I wish to open up the question of movement and desire here, to read the more subtle liminal desires at work in costume drama which are not merely about female social constraint and masculine movement, about heterosexual romance, marriage, and patriarchal property relations. Rather, there are other axes of power, of desire, of movement at work here.

In this light, contemporary costume drama may be described as an imagined historical bourgeois feminine experience of genteel social “constraint”; this gendered “constraint” however gains meaning only in relation to horizon or a threshold or possibility of “movement,” “dynamism.” These retrospective contemporary feminist texts, then, are shot through with retrospective feminist longings for movement, escape, what I call “flights of fancy.” Consider, for example, the following snapshot: A demure lady (probably Emma Thompson) poses motionless beside the window of a chromatically precise, tasteful drawing room. Delicately pulling aside a pale chiffon curtain, she peers hopefully outward to the green field outside, anticipating the arrival of her handsome suitor on horseback (likely Hugh Grant). This vignette aptly shorthands one recurring treatment of space, agency, and gender that recurs throughout the Austen adaptations and the other texts of the corpus. On first glance, this movement-image instantiates Doane’s claim about the social constraint of women rendered spatially in film in relation to the comings and goings of male characters. Yet the story here is more complex, as this image of the woman at the window implies not only an eternal passivity (Doane’s woman held prisoner) – but also a feminist intensity

of longing. A longing for heterosexual union and romance, yes, but also for something more intangible, an escape, a breath of fresh air, a country walk, a sea voyage...

To read this sequence from a classic psychoanalytic point of view, we would note the positioning of the woman in the frame for the perusal of the male spectator. Perhaps we might also push the critique one step further, noting the diegetic importance of the woman's gaze in the shot. Is there an implication of a feminine desire here, and if so, is it "active" or merely another manifestation of the woman-in-waiting? Another frame of reference, the notion of the "woman's genre," might foreground the gendered address of this sequence, the "match" between the spatio-temporal economy in-frame and the imputed "domestic" context of the female spectator. All of these most viable observations offer different insights organised around the problem of the subject, questions of desire read through the gaze and sexual difference. But what is left out of this picture? Returning to the woman at the window, what else can we observe?

Baudry's claims of the "controlling gaze" come to mind here – the desiring, perhaps acquisitive gaze developed historically in art and science through visual technologies of knowledge and power. Not merely the gaze of heterosexual desire, Emma Thompson sees not only the immanent arrival of her suitor, but also the inviting landscape outside. As I will elaborate in Chapter Three, within the revisionist 1990s feminism of *Sense and Sensibility*, this image was developed explicitly as a comment on women's social constraint and exclusion from land tenure. Further, in the historical context of the nineteenth century, questions of land ownership, the very aesthetic construction of pastoral English landscape, were linked not only to gender, but to shifting class relations, and, more remotely, to the desiring gaze of British imperialism. This gaze then, this audio-visual moment of reflection, includes dimensions of power other than that of heterosexual desire. In this light, through the different stages of this dissertation I will return periodically to this shot, reading it not merely as "constraint" – but as a retrospective feminist quest for access to middle-class rights of passage, ownership, mobility that are explicitly denied the female characters of these texts. In the process I develop a more nuanced topographical

approach to film criticism which seeks to fill in the background articulation of difference social spaces and trajectories of desiring movement and constraint.

In this dissertation, I would like to pull on these suggestive threads drawn from Heath, Mulvey, and Doane, loops in the dense knitting of psychoanalytic film criticism, and use them as a passage into a different paradigm. These incidental yet evocative treatment of film space leads the discussion outside of the frame of the unconscious (the structural, structuring play of presence and absence; a superbly orchestrated mobilisation and frustration of desire) into the materiality of geography and history. Clearly, the psychoanalytic tradition in film studies investigates cinematic subject-formation as a process which informs and perpetuates social relations of gendering; still, this paradigm tends to remain hermetically sealed within the temporality and spatiality of the psyche. In my own work, I wish to turn this model inside out, to begin to apply these suggestive spatial metaphors to a set of interlocking problems of representational space and movement.

Rather than treating film space and time as functions of prescriptive ideological narrative routings of desire (as do Heath and Mulvey), I wish to bring into relief the dense details, the “contents of the form.” The above preliminary reading of the woman at the window sketches out the rich textual possibilities of a reading based on space and movement which uses the tension between male movement and female constraint and opens it up, complicates its smug binary. With reference to a dense, interrelated corpus of contemporary costume drama, then, how precisely are these gendered qualities of space and movement rendered audio-visually, and how do they relate to other overlapping backgrounded relations of class and imperialism? Considering the multiple “spaces” evoked in this corpus, a startling and rich array of topics suggest themselves – themes of considerable contemporary theoretical interest in the fields of critical geography and literary criticism which are only beginning to be broached in film theory: Issues of phenomenological, corporeal, social location; the treatment of landscape; the relation between figure and ground; profound issues of geography and history which have remained so stunningly outside the grasp of psychoanalytic criticism.

In displacing my frame of reference from subject-formation in favour of the problematic of “space,” I will examine the textual renderings of multiple social differences through the layered problematic of space and movement. This helpful groundwork which points out the gendering of narrative agency and genre implies a broader spatialisation of difference in cultural texts. The very motor of “movement” (physical displacement, psychological character development, narrative drive) that informs Western narrative only gains resonance *in relation to* other characters and social groups (women, ethnic, racial, working class “others”) figured as stasis, as markers in the protagonists’ narrative journeys through space and time.

I propose to explore these dense and interlocking theoretical problems of cinematic space and movement not in their entirety, but through the lens of gender. This approach seeks to avoid positing yet another sweeping paradigm. I start from the assumption that the social relations of “time” and “space” are always-already shot through with the relations of difference – not just sexual difference, but also differences of geography, culture, race and ethnicity, and class. “Space” and “time” are considered through the textual implications of (gendered) constraint and movement. In selecting the term of “movement” rather than “time,” I limit the temporal scope of this investigation to the spheres of narrative or corporeal movement (Deleuze’s action-image).⁸ In this way, I explore these questions through a specific generic instance, the contemporary costume drama, a cinematic and televisual explosion brimming with questions of imagined historical geographies, of troubled textual and social spaces.

In one final theoretical passage before mapping out my more pragmatic methodological programme, I wish to address de Lauretis’s work on “imaging” as as a spatially-organised, “audio-visual” account of moving images. De Lauretis brings in a social semiotic frame of reference which opens up questions of space and movement differently from the dominant psychoanalytic account.

⁸ The broader implications of time or temporality for this detailed investigation of the costume drama are immense, and beyond the scope of this project. This rich topic could imply, for instance, questions of memory, historicity, not to mention the more subtle philosophical questions of duration raised by Deleuze in Cinema 2: The Time-Image (1989).

Mapping the Audio-Visual: Teresa de Lauretis

In *Alice Doesn't*, Teresa de Lauretis critiques the binaries intrinsic to psychoanalytic and semiotic film theory as ultimately unhelpful to vital feminist interventions in the field of representation. In particular, she addresses the problems inherent in critical approaches based in ideology theory which necessarily posit mutually-exclusive categories of "illusion" and "reality." For this author, the whole interlocking system of structuralist thought as applied to film theory derives from a linguistically-based semiotics. Tracing early arguments within Italian and French film theory, this author notes how film has been conceived as functioning like a language. However, the oppositional structure of Saussurean linguistics (unlike a more nuanced Peircean system employed by de Lauretis) seems inadequate to understanding the (non-binary) "audio-visual qualities of the cinema," what de Lauretis calls "the articulation of meaning to images, language, and sound." As part of a larger argument advancing "imaging" as an alternative to this system, de Lauretis posits the cinema not as a "signifying system or *langue*," but as a "signifying practice." Shifting from structuralist psychoanalysis and semiotics, she revisits the rich (and problematic) semiotic category of "iconicity" as another "audio-visual" rather than language-informed approach to cinema.⁹

In her discussion of iconicity, de Lauretis notes how for Mulvey, the image is associated with ideology, with illusion.¹⁰ In place of the illusion/reality dialectic proposed by Mulvey's aesthetics, de Lauretis proposes a more fluid model of "mapping" which embraces the illusionary process of filmmaking as analogous to human perception. Drawing from E.H. Gombrich, de

⁹ The notion of iconicity, drawn from Peirce, recurs in Deleuze. In fact, Peirce's non-linguistic semiotics can be seen as an implicit connection between de Lauretis's audio-visual approach to the cinema, and Deleuze's theory of "movement-image." Both of these theorists are fundamental to my own topographical film criticism.

¹⁰ Doane's "Film and the Masquerade" extends Mulvey's suggestion that woman functions iconically in the cinema. She correlates the two-dimensional, enigmatic hieroglyphic with woman-as-image: "The woman, the enigma, the hieroglyphic, the picture, the image – the metonymic chain connects with another: the cinema, the theatre of pictures, a writing in images of the woman but not for her." (1982, 75) Like hieroglyphics, the pictorial language of cinema, and particularly the woman-as-image" is at once the most legible, the "most readable of languages"; however, at the same time, this iconic image "is theorised in terms of a certain *closeness*, the lack of a distance or gap between the sign or referent." It is from here that Doane makes the leap to suggest that the female spectator experiences an uncomfortable proximity to the image. I will return to this fascinating discussion in Chapter Five with reference to affectivity and the "proper" distance between (feminist) theorist and screen.

Lauretis describes "illusion as a process operating not only in representation, visual and otherwise, but in all sensory perception, and a process in fact crucial to any organism's chances of survival." (61) For his part, Thomas Sebeok (1994) takes a Peircean approach to iconicity as a relation of contiguity; drawing from Peirce's three main iconic categories (images, diagrams, and metaphors), Sebeok notes the inclusion of mental maps, of topographical models, as part of the process of iconic signification amongst animals. Part of the semiotic process of "mapping," then, involves the location of the organism within its environment – a symbolic "mapping" incorporating, significantly, not only visual stimuli, but all of the different senses. As a challenge to the Althusserian notion of illusion as ideology (counterposed to the problematic category of "truth" or "reality") which *disorients* the viewer, in this "mapping" or "imaging" process of illusion-production is fundamental to the organism's sense of "location" – its spatial sense of body and environment.

De Lauretis draws the "mapping"¹¹ capacity of icons into her analysis of the cinema as an audio-visual (social) signifying practice. Like Baudry and Heath, de Lauretis asserts the social and symbolic importance of perspectival systems within Western art, framing them as "a confluence, in a particular historical moment, of artistic practices and epistemological discourses that coalesced to define a certain vision as knowledge and standard of meaning: the knowledge and the meaning of the object of vision (the sensible world) are given, represented, in the subject's vision." (66) Finally, de Lauretis suggests that "in our century, cinema has been the instance of another such confluence. It has performed a function similar in all respects to that of perspective in the previous centuries and, what is more, continues to inform the social imaginary, working through other media and apparati of representation, other "machines of the visible," as well as through social practices." (66)

¹¹ The notion of mapping is common now in different fields of social theory. For instance, in his spatial analysis of culture, Fredric Jameson coins the term "cognitive mapping." (1988) This influential work should be distinguished from de Lauretis's semiotic mapping in that Jameson seeks reference points for his mapping in an abstract notion of the totality (the cultural forms of late capitalism). De Lauretis, as I understand her, works more on the ground level of the semiotic, sensible world.

Echoing the accumulated wisdom of theorists like Baudry, Heath, and Mulvey, de Lauretis describes the cinematic apparatus as harnessing a powerful combination of representational processes, notably the two motors of desire (narrativity) and scopophilia. For de Lauretis, “cinema’s privileged relation to desire is built on

the operations of narrativity [which] construct a full and unified visual space in which events take place as a drama of vision and a memory spectacle. The film re-members (fragments and makes whole again) the object of vision for the spectator; the spectator is continually moved along in the film’s progress (*cinematography* is the inscription of movement) and constantly held in place, in the place of the subject of vision. If narrativity brings to cinema the capacity for organizing meaning...the inheritance of Renaissance perspective, that comes to cinema with the camera, could perhaps be understood as *Schaulust* (scopophilia), Freud’s word for visual pleasure... The scopic drive that maps desire into representation, and is so essential to the work of the film and the productive relations of imaging in general, could be itself a function of social memory... Together, narrativity and scopophilia perform the “miracles” of cinema. (67)

In posing the Quattrocentro perspective, and in its turn the cinema, as paradigmatic signifying practices which emerge within particular historical and geographical conjunctures, de Lauretis moves away from theorising representation as a rigid synchronic *system* of interlocking binaries – and toward seeing representation as a social signifying process or practice, always in flux. This move is pivotal to an interventionist tradition of critical feminist filmmaking and film theory (for instance, Claire Johnston’s “feminist counter-cinema”). I linger in particular on de Lauretis’ notion of “mapping” as a bridge toward the spatio-temporal signifying practices of cinema. In moving toward “imaging,” de Lauretis seeks to ground the spatial and temporal metaphors of psychoanalysis not only within the closed box of the psyche, but in relation to the social environment. With her Peircean return to the question of the referent, de Lauretis wishes not only to “map” the world of the psyche, but understands the process of imaging as a symbolic relation to the sensible world – a problematic category bracketed out of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Saussurean linguistics.

Along with Deleuze and Bakhtin, de Lauretis has been pivotal to my development of a topographical criticism. The productive and pragmatic quality of her thought shifts from the “mapping” of a set system to produce social subjects along preconfigured (ideological) lines,

suggesting a much more dynamic, interactive engagement between social subjects and the spatio-temporal chartings of cultural texts. In fact, my borrowing of Bakhtin's dialogic work on the chronotope reiterates the idea that part of the meeting between social subjects and cultural texts involves a negotiation of place, space, and time – after all, the processes of narrativity, spatial representation, audio-visual movements and stillnesses, inclusions and exclusions, all speak to how social subjects imaginatively orient themselves in their sensible and mediated worlds.

“Topographical criticism,” then, implicitly incorporates the notion of mapping in that it suggests the importance of space and movement as multi-faceted, layered qualities of cultural texts which signify, which “move” social subjects. Rather than a meaning-based linguistic semiotics, my topographical approach perceives audio-visual texts as producing and reproducing different “maps” and “journeys” (even if, as Heath claims, these narrative journeys tend to be drearily, monotonously, repetitive) that “place” and “move” social subjects, individuals and groups of spectators. To approach contemporary feminine costume drama in this manner means that the stakes diverge from a purely psychoanalytic project. Rather than (or perhaps in addition to)¹² an account of the gendered gaze, of the possibilities for female identification and narrative implication, a “mapping” suggests the socio-historical charting of a specific place and time – what Lefebvre calls the “production of (social) space.” In this spirit, I address the corpus through contemporary audio-visual conventions and the retrospective social concerns of different “feminist” projects reinventing nineteenth-century gendered experience, evoking affective spatial properties of interiority, sentiment, confinement. My very problematic of movement and constraint, reverberating through the corpus through moments like the “woman at the window,” emerges from a Western feminist legacy of “social movement.” At the same time, the “journeys” offered by these historical texts and adaptations chart not only the social spaces of gender, but also the shared historical spaces of class relations and imperialism. How these popular and prolific texts

¹² In differentiating my topographical approach from existing psychoanalytic problematics organised around the gaze and the subject, it is important to keep in mind that such questions are by no means mutually exclusive. A discussion which moves beyond the capacities of this dissertation, these different paradigms within feminist film theory need to continually engage in dialogue.

“remember” nineteenth-century gendered space importantly inflects a popular feminist version of social history – an account or “mapping” which until recently has tended to erase histories of struggle other than feminism.

Finally, de Lauretis’s “audio-visual” approach to the cinema informs my topographical analysis in that it undoes the obsession with visibility in psychoanalysis and Western culture generally. Beyond Mulvey’s account of different controlling gazes, feminist theorists have explored the importance of voice, of enunciation, as registers of cinematic signification. Certainly the costume drama’s heavy narrative emphasis on dialogue, speech, eloquence, and silences, prompts an attention to the aural registers of expression and power. Highlighted in Chapter Five, questions of music, sound, and voice recur as important aspects of my analysis throughout the dissertation. Further, to augment the non-visual account of audio-visual texts, I explore issues of tactility, of touch and sensation which are important to this genre in particular, and to cultural texts generally. A common saturation with textures, fabrics, details of décor and costume suggests an ambience which escapes a more common narrative reading, or even the insights of *mise-en-scène* criticism. I address these questions throughout the textual analysis through my “tactile” descriptive passages which draw out the complexities of movement-image, of décor, of screen space and montage. In Chapter Five, I return to this point more directly through an examination of the recurring tactile and affective significance of hands and touch in the corpus.

This discussion of the audio-visual, “tactile” qualities evoked in the textual analysis of this dissertation forms a bridge from this chapter’s broader theoretical concerns toward the more pragmatic concerns of my “methodological programme.” In the remainder of the chapter, I return to a discussion of the assemblage of tools, which, taken together, comprise my topographical approach to film criticism.

Methodological Programme: Tools for Topographical Criticism

Methodological considerations are inseparable from this project’s substantive themes of space and movement. In laying out an account of a subtextual “spatial imaginary” in film studies

literature, I have sought hypotheses and insights from which I can construct my own topographical approach. These strong spatial claims about gendered movement and constraint present a point of departure for the upcoming textual readings. In choosing to address space and movement, with their fluid, multiple possibilities for critical film analysis, I move away from preconstituted debates around the psychic aspects of subjectivity and oedipal (narrative) desire. One of the key tenets of this project is the plotting of textual avenues toward the nuances of space and movement in cultural texts. In this quest for openness, a more interactive engagement with the complexities of cultural texts (rather than the imposition of a single “method” or frame of analysis), I have brought together an assemblage of tools, what I call a “methodological programme.”¹³

Topographical criticism, described as a programme rather than a single method, shifts away from the formalism implied in a single methodology (such as, for instance, psychoanalysis). This said, the actual work of charting the complexities of audio-visual space, the fleeting qualities of movement in this corpus, demands specific concrete tools and a facilitating structure which lends coherence to my substantive inquiries. In Laleen Jayamanne's (1995) terms, I stage an “encounter” between the hypotheses of film theory (many of which have been introduced in this present chapter) and the dense, intertextual, and singular audio-visual textures of my corpus. In the following elaboration of this programme, following the broader orientation of my project, I work from the specific toward the general, from the intricacies and intimacies of close textual readings toward the broader questions of movement and constraint which guide, but (hopefully) do not strangle the investigation. This methodological account proceeds from the specifics of my innovative “tactile” or “immanent” textual analysis (a commitment to singularity and “reading in detail”); to intermediary issues of corpus selection and coherence and “meaningful units” of analysis (chronotope and movement-image); to the broader question of dissertation structure (the guiding framework of Deleuze's three movement-images).

¹³ I would like to thank Martin Allor for suggesting this helpful mode of framing.

Reading in Detail: Tactility, Immanence, and Dialogism in Textual Analysis

While structuralism has afforded a powerful vocabulary to describe an idealised virtual subject's identification with certain symbolic structures of filmic narrative organisation, this paradigm all-too-often excludes the details, the "contents of the structures." Mise-en-scène criticism offers a more precise lens to examine the décor within the frame, yet often this approach treats such audio-visual details as mere functions, as props, for the all-important narrative progression.¹⁴ Thomas Elsæsser (1987) claims that in the melodrama, décor and mise-en-scène externalise the inner lives of the characters; in costume drama, at times it seems that the characters are blocked around the set design and perfect details. Linger within the frame, I note that costume drama thrives on the cult of the detail: The delicate blue pattern on the china teacup perfectly matching the blue of the heroine's eyes as she is framed by a simple hardwood doorframe in thoughtful repose (*Sense and Sensibility*); hairstyles as markers of gothic severity and repression (*Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, The Piano, Angels and Insects*); lace edgings and flounces pronounce the embarrassed demure exuberance of a sexuality which dare not surface (the Austen cycle); costume as a dramatic signifier of gendered movement and constraint (*Orlando, The Piano*).

Throughout the history of Western æsthetics, Naomi Schor (1987) identifies the denigrated detail with the symbolic place of the feminine. From Plato into mid-eighteenth century æsthetics, the detail has been viewed with suspicion as subservient to the more noble (and masculine) category of "form." In this vein, we may add the oppositional pairs of form/detail, general/particular, style/substance to my earlier discussion of the gendered binary of movement and constraint. The costume drama presents an interesting case which inverts – and hopefully confounds – these unequally-weighted oppositions. For the form and substance of the general case (genre) of costume drama can only be arrived at through the detail.¹⁵ Working carefully

¹⁴ For a distinctive account of audio-visual detail, see Richard Dyer's account of what he calls "non-representational signs" in the musical in his "Entertainment and Utopia." (1992, 17-34)

¹⁵ Besides Schor's invaluable *Reading in Detail*, Roland Barthes (whose work has been invaluable to my own approach to textual analysis) has made an art of reading the detail. (1974, 1981, 1982)

through the audio-visual renderings of space and movement in the corpus, I come to realise that, more than the muscular “drive” of narrative, details are what “matter” here: The flick of a fan, a sidelong glance, the unspoken confidence, the shriek of a peacock in the garden, that soft suggestive pouch at the crotch of Hugh Grant’s soft trousers.

Costume drama compels me toward detail, drawing me into the frame, the precise blocking of the actors, the layering of image, music, dialogue, and the omnipresence of the unspoken. Such a “detailed” textual analysis challenges the inherited wisdom of structuralism, which would insist that the details are only orchestrated to complete the movement of narrative – what Heath calls “narrative space.” Without denying costume drama’s narrativity, this genre lingers on multiple audio-visual, tactile textual pleasures which work in relation to, but are by no means exhausted by, narrative – nor by the prefigured obsessions of psychoanalysis, which sees a phallus behind every door, and misses a great deal in-between. Implicit within this attention to the trivialised “feminine” realm of the detail which triumphs in the costume drama, is a claim that such tactile and audio-visual details form an important aspect of the generic and singular desiring economies of all audio-visual texts. Even the more “active” (masculine?) genres such as the Western or the action film are based on certain iconographies (that wide-open sky, the precise angle of the hard-boiled detective’s felt hat).

In the case of the costume drama, much of the pleasure, the very sought-after (“rare” and hence marketable) quality of the cinematic/televisual experience rests upon the “structure of feeling” created by the orchestration of audio-visual detail, whether realist (the Austen adaptations) or avant-garde (*Orlando*). This is a cinema of sentiment, of protracted stillnesses and longings, and these moments are framed, blocked, rendered, through the precise placement of objects and blocking of bodies, a warm, “natural” quality of lighting, the extravagant under- and overstatement of costume, timing and turns of speech, and orchestration of music with dramatic action. This cultural economy of detail in the costume drama reinvents the bourgeois sphere of interiors and femininity for a contemporary, largely female, audience. This genre renders visual the historical private place of the novel, interior spaces replete with longings for romance and

intensity of feeling. Whether these “details,” these luscious textures and deliberate moments, are somehow intrinsically “feminine” (the problematic of scholarship on “women’s genres”) is not my primary concern here. Rather, I am interested in the multiple articulations of detail, the “contents of the form” – how these subtle elements (a servant hovering in the background with a tray) “fill out” the topographical blockings of these texts.

To extrapolate from these considerations toward the practical nuts and bolts of methods, this approach to textual analysis is both “tactile” and “immanent.” By “tactile,” I mean that I evoke the audio-visual and sensual textures of these texts – subtle qualities which may well escape more formulaic forms of close textual reading such as psychoanalysis. I have developed this approach over the last six years¹⁶ through the inspiration of Roland Barthes (1974; 1981); and through other post-structuralist literary theories which read details back into the frame in order to address issues of colonialism and class (Spivak 1985; Saïd 1992). Many film studies scholars have fine-tuned the art of close readings of moving images; in this dissertation, I am indebted to Elsaesser’s “spatial imaginary” in his work on melodrama (1987); to Richard Dyer’s work on the musical and “whiteness” (1992; 1995; 1997); and finally, to Victor Perkins’ commitment to close textual reading expressed in *Film as Film* (1991).¹⁷ All of these scholars have helped me develop an eye for the subtleties of audio-visual detail which may be read inward toward understanding the film as a functioning text, or outward toward other social and theoretical concerns – in this case, space and movement.

Highly detailed, densely descriptive and writerly, this type of textual analysis relates to other methods including auteurism,¹⁸ humanist phenomenology (Andrew 1984, 1985; Bazin

¹⁶ I first developed idea of “tactile” and “immanent” criticism in my Master’s thesis (Pidduck 1993) through the close reading of a cycle of contemporary “fatal femme” films including *Basic Instinct*. The notion of a close, productive reading of a cycle of films which informs my present methodological programme springs importantly from this work, developed under the guidance of Martin Allor.

¹⁷ Victor Perkins’ expertise has been most helpful also through his M.A. course in textual analysis at the University of Warwick which I followed in 1995. Finally, many of my fundamental skills in textual analysis emerged through courses taken with Marc Gervais at Concordia in the 1980s.

¹⁸ The much-critiqued question of auteurism does figure in some ways in this dissertation in my extensive consideration of the works of Dash, Potter, and Campion. In some sense, the feminist auteurist filmmakers of the 1990s, these women’s films suggest conscious, careful, explicit formal challenges to inherited patriarchal cinematic traditions. The first explicitly feminist avant-garde

1967),¹⁹ psychoanalysis (Doane 1988; Heath 1981; Silverman 1989), semiotic or mise-en-scène criticism (Elsaesser 1987; Thompson and Bordwell 1976). However, in its sensibility which is both immanent and dialogic, this project is unique. Organised neither around the author (auteurism), nor around an abstract disembodied “ideal reader” (phenomenology), nor around a set semiotic or psychoanalytic framework, my analysis engages with the productivities and singularities of the corpus and its movement-images. Broadly speaking, such an “immanent” strategy challenges the creeping rationalism characteristic of formalist approaches to textual analysis – the “scientific” claims of certain types of formalist semiotics and psychoanalysis. In contrast to many types of textual analysis that seek to keep the pleasures of the moving image at bay, under control, I engage with the texts at a very close proximity, highlighting their affectivities and multiple intensities. This approach derives from Barthes’ sensual textual analysis, from Stephen Shaviro’s (1993) maverick “masochistic” film theory; and, most importantly, from Deleuze’s commitment to non-rational forms of thought. (1988) (In Chapter Five, I return to the question of affectivity in some depth through the discussion of affection-image.)

Finally, I must differentiate my own form of textual analysis even from these latter more “immanent” or “affective” projects in a commitment to a certain “dialogism,” what Jayamanne calls an “encounter” between texts and feminism. Barthes, Shaviro, and especially Deleuze have been inspirational for me in order to critique and break away from theories and methods which have haunted feminist film studies for too long (notably psychoanalysis). Yet these works themselves must be adapted for my own purposes, as they do not engage with issues of sexual difference, or other social power relations of difference. For his part, Barthes engages with ongoing formal and aesthetic concerns, advancing his own playful, productive approach to textuality; Shaviro’s work

works to circulate widely amongst both feminist and broader arthouse audiences, these texts constitute an important aspect of my corpus; see the readings of *The Piano* in Chapter Three and Chapter Five, and the discussion of *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust* in Chapters Four and Five.

¹⁹ Vivian Sobchak’s influential phenomenology merits mention here. (1992) Part of my intended research to extend this thesis involves an engagement with Sobchak and other phenomenological projects.

ultimately revolves around his own masculine “masochistic” subject-position. Finally, Deleuze tends to read his corpus – auteurist, almost exclusively male-authored cinematic “classics” – in relation to his ongoing philosophical, metatheoretical project which does not recognise the problem of sexual difference.

My own work, while at times “personal” and whimsical, emerges from feminist social and theoretical debates. I share certain formal and aesthetic interests with these writers, but my textual ventures are guided by contemporary debates within feminist theory – notably the urgent task of challenging binary models of feminism (gendered movement and constraint) to engage with other axes of oppression which help produce such models (in this case, overlapping frames of spatial power and subjugation and mobility related to class and colonialism). As I combine the anarchic, desiring productivity implicit in a Deleuzian or Barthesian textual analysis with such overall feminist and Marxist “critical” problems of difference and the social blocking of power, the structuring challenge for this methodological programme is to create a framework which facilitates “movement” while insisting on rigour and coherence. This integration between substantive and methodological concerns, then, continues in the next section as I discuss my corpus construction, and the selection of “meaningful units of analysis.”

Corpus and Coherence: The Cycle

My commitment to a productive, dense, layered, and generative textual analysis necessitates a small, “contained” corpus. Contemporary costume drama furnishes an apt case study, not only for the substantive reasons mentioned so far (a digressing temporality neither properly “active” nor “passive”; the proliferation of audio-visual details and textures; geographical and historical settings riddled with gender, class, and colonial struggles over interior and exterior space) – but also as these texts form a dense, and intertextually-coherent corpus. The term

“cycle” neatly shorthands this quality of coherence.²⁰ Listed in the Appendix, the 1990s cinematic and televisual texts of my corpus feature female protagonists and are set in the imaginary space of nineteenth-century England or its colonies. While I refer throughout the dissertation to debates within film studies over genre (melodrama, “women’s genres,” etc.) this is not my primary frame of reference. Whereas “period drama” might be approached as a genre, I am interested in the “cycle” of costume drama configured significantly (if not exclusively) around female protagonists, and more loosely, “feminine” (interior) spaces. This corpus connects thematically through an audio-visual exploration of historical settings, themes of romance, intrigue – “costume” and “drama”! – and social constraint. Moreover, these texts are linked through the contemporary economic logic of “niche-marketing” toward an “upscale”²¹ feminine audience of English-speaking Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand (in short, England and its former colonies).

The “gendering” of these texts, their implicit mode of address is one factor which distinguishes my corpus from the contemporary proliferation of “period drama.” The time-frame of the nineteenth century further delimits the corpus. Certainly, with regards to gendered historical image-space, other possibilities abound, notably the Merchant-Ivory cycle (*Room with a View* (1986), *Howard’s End* (1992)); further, in relation to my interests in class and colonialism, twentieth century settings prove more engaged with these problematics (for instance, the class relations of constraint and affectivity in *Remains of the Day* (1993) or the exploration of colonialism in *A Passage to India* (1984)). Although such early twentieth-century narratives relate to my corpus through similar British “quality” star codes (the ubiquitous Emma Thompson and Hugh Grant) and the exploration of pastoral British historical image-space, I have chosen to concentrate on nineteenth-century texts. As to some degree these twentieth-century texts have

²⁰ In his discussion of British heritage cinema, Andrew Higson (1993) makes a strong case for the overwhelming intertextual in-breeding of this art cinema which involves star codes, visual style, and production context.

²¹ In their wide-ranging analysis of “Lifetime” (an American women’s cable network), Byars and Meehan (1994-1995) describe the genesis of the “upscale” female market within American marketing of the 1980s and 1990s. Catering to professional women, “Lifetime” constitutes part of a more general trend toward niche-marketing, and narrowcasting in cable television. The commercial logic of the “upscale female market” speaks to the circulation of costume drama through cable narrowcasting, cinematic niche-marketing, and the broader availability of more obscure “art cinema” texts for home consumption.

been taken up within British debates over “heritage cinema” (Higson 1993, 1996; Dyer 1993, 1997; Monk 1994, 1995), I have focused my interest the more distant previous century. Not merely an abstract limit, the texts based in this century coincide with certain post-Industrial Revolution cultural and social changes which seep into the texts. For, as Grewal and Kaplan (1994) insist, the century’s emergent feminist discourses which equated “mobility” with liberation, the acquisition of masculine rights of subjectivity and citizenship, align historically with simultaneous middle-class and imperialist codes of expansion, acquisition, colonisation. In terms of gendered space and movement, the corpus suggests a range of retrospective audio-visual frames which explicitly and implicitly reference the period’s fraught and shifting power relations.

The gendered “intimate spaces” that interest me in the corpus coincide with a demographic and social shift toward modernity, interiority, and spatial privacy. Literary historians claim that these historical shifts coincide with the development of the novel. Most of the texts of the cycle have been adapted from these novels and reproduce, through audio-visual codes, elements of their nineteenth-century bourgeois “interior” structure of feeling. (See Morse 1990; Watt 1963). Further, the period’s shifts in class-based structures of land tenure and control, which may be read through the aesthetic traditions in landscape painting, provide a productive formal framework for an evaluation of the texts’ retrospective rendering of pastoral image-space. Finally, as Saïd (1992) suggests, the nineteenth-century time-frame coincides with a host of different levels of imperialist discourse. Within the influential imaginary sphere of the English novel, the more obvious later texts of contact and conflict (Conrad, Kipling) were predated by earlier works like Austen’s which helped establish a “structure of attitude and reference” for imperialism. Such gendered works helped generate lasting British imperialist discourses of “home and abroad” – domestic, pastoral, Englishness, as opposed to the foreign, unknowable spaces of the colonies.

While I could have instructively applied my problematic to other historical texts of the period (notably North American settings), in order to retain a rigorous reading of these dense interlocking historical power relations, I have limited my corpus to texts situated between England and its colonies (with England in the centre, the imperial locus of the controlling gaze). As the one

text which stands outside this geographical/ discursive framework, I have included *Daughters of the Dust* as it constitutes a key contemporary feminist costume drama; further, this film engages in a direct formal debate with inherited aesthetic traditions of colonial representation from a related yet distinct stance. Along these lines, a more widespread pattern of retrospective formal and social critique emerges within the corpus, where certain twentieth-century literary and cinematic works emerge as specifically class-based, colonial, and contemporary feminist commentaries on nineteenth-century texts (Jean Rhys's response to *Jane Eyre* in *Wide Sargasso Sea*), and literary genres (*Angels and Insects*' wicked send-up of realist costume drama's codes of sexuality, class, and imperialism).

In production and distribution terms, my insistence on both "cinematic" and televisual examples, while risky according to academic disciplinary boundaries, makes sense within the context of technological convergence. Feature-length films destined for theatrical distribution (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, and *The Piano*), weekend wonders and direct-to-video products (*Moll Flanders*, *Portrait of a Lady*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*), more modest arthouse productions (*Orlando*, *Daughters of the Dust*), and made-for-tv movies (*Angels and Insects*, *Persuasion*,²² *Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre*), and tv serials (*Jane Austen's Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice*) circulate widely in different national contexts through home video distribution, and through cable narrowcasting. Differences in form (wide-screen high-end cinematic releases, precious art cinema, made-for-tv movies and serial dramas) erode in the great equaliser of home video distribution and consumption.²³

As I will discuss at further length in Chapter Two, this cycle can be read intertextually through a common interest in the adaptation of "classic" literary texts; through recurring star codes (the prevalence of British "quality" actors like Hugh Grant and Emma Thompson); and

²² Originally made-for-tv movies in the U.K. these two films were released in North America as arthouse films which circulated through repertory cinema circuits, and through the niche-marketing channels of multiplex cinemas. These channels, along with film festivals, also constitute the distribution patterns of *Orlando*. Many of these texts have since been re-broadcast on specialty cable channels in North America such as PBS or TV-Ontario.

²³ For a discussion of the commercial context of the "global audio-visual" through which contemporary costume drama circulates, see Ellis (1992), and Schatz (1993).

through their common preferred feminine and feminist audiences. Part of my critical interest in this cycle springs from the “iconic” status of many of the literary source texts within Western feminist spheres. Contemporary adaptations of novels by Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, and A.S. Byatt evoke a specific cultural currency, incorporate qualities of specifically feminist address; in addition, feminist filmmakers Sally Potter, Julie Dash, and Jane Campion have gained feminist auteur status. For this reason many of these texts have gained passionate (if hardly homogenous or uncritical) followings in international Western feminist circles. My corpus suggests a dialogic, “preferred” address toward feminist audiences, engagements with discourses, ideas, cultures which feminism has claimed as its own.

These texts circulate amongst a dispersed but nonetheless connected context audience of Western, English-speaking feminism – what Linda Hutcheon (1994) calls a “discursive community.” This virtual audience is constituted and continually linked, materially and discursively, by the circulation of different cultural and political objects and media.²⁴ The films and videos which constitute my corpus are produced from and speak toward an international feminist audience, a fluid “discursive community” which shares certain cultural reference points without being homogenous.²⁵ Further, according to current patterns in niche marketing, one aspect of the intertextual coherence of this cycle involves a range of supplemental costume drama merchandising: “Classic” novels by Jane Austen are reissued in hard cover with the film still on the cover; film scripts are published along with the writer’s or director’s notes, lusciously illustrated with production stills and film stills; boxed souvenir packages of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* are sold including coffee table book on “the making of...” videos in addition to the

²⁴ Along the lines of the “discursive community,” Nancy Fraser (1993) writes of the “subaltern counterpublic” as a space providing “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, so as to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.” (14) This framework suggests a distinctive, dispersed context of circulation and discourse which I wish to point to here. For Fraser, this feminist subaltern counterpublic may be traced through diverse media and physical sites including journals, bookstores, publishing companies, film and video distribution networks, lectures, festivals, etc. In this light, this dispersed group which I evoke as the “preferred” audience for this corpus, exists in physical places, and is linked by different media and discursive networks.

²⁵ For a discussion of the modified Foucauldian premises of the “discursive community,” see Hutcheon (1994, 89-115).

video itself, and so on. Recognising the importance of this intertextual merchandising, my corpus includes not only the audio-visual texts themselves, but also source novels and supplementary literatures (directors' notes, film scripts, printed press materials). In considering these diverse elements I do not seek to "check" the adaptation against the original, but to explore the vicissitudes of corpus circulation and address.

To suggest the "preferred" feminist status of these texts is not to uncritically celebrate the arrival of feminist auteurs on the scene, nor to hail the advent of female and feminist niche markets. In recognising this inflection (which is to some degree built into the textual address of my corpus), I want to interrogate the spatial ground which is being claimed in the name of a Western feminist imaginary. Within a context where these feminist-authored or feminist-inflected texts begin to circulate widely and influentially, my project of tracing the "spatial blockings of power" at work within these retrospective histories becomes essential. In this light, the tremendous commercial and feminist imaginary caché of my corpus as an exponentially increasing production context is both fascinating and disturbing. I approach the corpus with the intuition that these predominantly white, middle-class, Western, and heterosexual narratives, now popularised and profitable, have a tendency to reinstate certain dominant power relations, all in the name of feminist liberation and "movement." But rather than dismiss this corpus as élitist and colonialist, I find it essential to engage with its complexities – not only its dreary audio-visual recapitulation of nineteenth-century power relations, but also the "lines of flight," the potentialities at work.

Frames of Analysis: Chronotope and Movement-Image

From the dialogic intertextuality of this cycle, I arrive at the more pragmatic questions of how to structure the analysis. Diverging from a more common framework for textual analysis which coheres around questions of narrative and respects the boundaries of individual texts, my topographical approach is organised around the notion of spatio-temporal "regularities" and singularities ("lines of flight") which may be read across the cycle. The cycle's "intertextuality" may be read not only according to niche markets, star codes, and so on, but also through recurring

articulations of space and time. In this light, I approach audio-visual genre (or in this case, the more limited case of the cycle) as the intercutting of formulaic or familiar sites according to recurring sites, or “chronotopes.” Following this assertion, I consider the cycle “discursively,”²⁶ as an assemblage of spatio-temporal fragments which cohere into specific texts and yet which bleed into smaller, more stylistically cohesive cycles (the Austen adaptations) – and the broader cycle of costume drama. Consequently, my meaningful units of analysis are not single texts, but recurring significant spatio-temporal fragments. In general, I do not seek to treat individual texts exhaustively (this is impractical given the density of my method) but to highlight recurring movement-images as “discursive regularities” across the cycle. (The important exceptions to this rule is the treatment of *Orlando* in Chapter Four, which considers the problem of narrative movement by tracing the entire plot progression, beginning to end.)

With reference to Bakhtin and Deleuze, I consider these spatio-temporal fragments as either “chronotopes” or “movement-images.” The tension between these two terms and their accompanying epistemological frameworks implies a tension which runs through this dissertation – the pull between regularity and singularities. Bakhtin’s “chronotope” describes specific spatio-temporal articulations within historical literary genres: “In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterises the artistic chronotope.” (1981, 84) More than a trope for literary analysis, though, the chronotope is emphatically *social* – an open figure operating in a dialogic relationship between the representational time-space of literary creation and the world of social subjects living in particular historical times and places.

The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process

²⁶ “Discourse analysis” derives broadly from a Foucauldian framework. Within a project grounded in textual analysis, this discursive framework allows me to read movements and tendencies, “regularities” across the cycle. This way, my intensive readings trace out tendencies and recurring treatments of space and movement not in single films, but across this broader significant body of interrelated texts.

of its creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers. Of course this process of exchange is itself chronotopic: it occurs first and foremost in the historically developing social world, but without ever losing contact with changing historical space. We might even speak of a special *creative* chronotope inside which this exchange between work and life occurs, and which constitutes the distinctive life of the work. (254)

Of course, as I have been suggesting, chronotopes are dense with gendered social/aesthetic significance in complex interaction with their racial and class connotations. The chronotope, then, forges a link between text and world not which is not premised on the subject (the primary focus of psychoanalytic theory), but on the social and artistic renderings of space and time through generic and audio-visual codes. This is to suggest that not only do we “read” films through the profoundly gendered processes of subjective identification, fetishism, desire – but that genres and particular texts signify through their renderings of familiar and unfamiliar, public and intimate places; through their spatial and temporal routings of narrative, movement, digression. As Bakhtin insists, the chronotope’s textual renderings of space and time have everything to do with genre. Grounded in a Marxist aesthetics that understands power relations as embedded in the very *forms* of cultural texts, the chronotope implicitly explores the cultural choreography of historical relations of difference (particularly class, but also the social spaces of country and city). In this dissertation, I extend this flexible and suggestive work to consider the overlapping spatial treatments of gender, class, and colonialism.

Developed within a literary context, the chronotope seems especially apt for this project given the nineteenth-century novel “sources” for much of my corpus. The spatial imaginary of the novel, based upon an emergent notion of interior subjectivities and places, connects importantly with the social articulation of space. Bakhtin’s analysis, sharpened by Raymond Williams’ readings of the country and the city in the English novel, provides a topographical frame for analysis which translates brilliantly into audio-visual terms. In Chapter Two I map out the corpus through a “chronotopic” analysis of the Austen adaptations. Premised on a suggestive spatial distinction between gendered interior and exterior settings, this reading creates a rich preliminary grid for my topographical criticism. The realism of the Austen adaptations offers an aesthetic

touchstone, a “dominant” form of period drama against which I configure the other general textual groupings – “gothic” space²⁷ and allegory.²⁸ My chronotopic analysis of the Austen texts suggests certain spatial regularities, what I call “spatial blockings of power,” which may be read across the corpus: Not only questions of gendered interior/exterior space, but also the interrelated audio-visual mappings of class and colonialism which are cut into the cycle’s very chartings of space and movement.

If the Marxist impulse of the chronotope suggests generic and historical regularities in the cultural chartings of space, Deleuze’s “movement-image” offers a more philosophical inflection of reading which leans away from identifying critical “regularities” in social space, toward “singularity,” potentiality, and lines of flight. The image of the “woman at the window” which recurs through the Austen cycle and throughout the corpus marks a “hinge” in this epistemological and methodological tension. According to a chronotopic reading, in a film like *Persuasion*, this significant moment marks the confinement of the female protagonist within the space of the home. Considered as a “movement-image,” a similar sequence in *Sense and Sensibility* gains a different inflection which highlights the intensive qualities of this moment, potentiality, or longing. This example indicates my process of topographical textual analysis: I analyse key recurring moments (the woman at the window; the country walk; the woman at the piano) both in their specific incarnations in individual texts, and across the broader scope of the corpus. In this way, I highlight both the regularities or “spatial blockings of power” in evidence across the cycle – and

²⁷ The notion of “gothic space” as employed in this thesis marks out one general stylistic and thematic trend in the corpus that may be read spatially. Influenced by the literary genre of the Gothic and the related audio-visual conventions of Expressionism, gothic space evokes the dark, polluted, hidden spaces of sexuality, madness, and unbounded romanticism which emerged during the social constraints of Victorianism. Within this cycle of films, the strongest examples of gothic space include Campion’s *The Piano*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Jane Eyre*, and in a hybrid, partly ironic sense, *Angels and Insects*. As I will discuss in the latter half of Chapter Three, the dark spaces of the Gothic tend to be evoked in this cycle of films in relation to the exoticism of colonial space. Of course, *Angels and Insects* is the obvious exception to this rule, and a later made-for-tv movie, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1996) provides another fascinating text that may offer new and exciting dimensions to the analysis of gothic space.

²⁸ As I will discuss in Chapter Four, *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust* imply an allegorical spatio-temporal and narrative economy. In some sense both a pre-modern and postmodern form, allegory ushers in a type-token or “exterior” model of character and subject that differs from the interior, psychological subject of the modernist novel; allegory also implies a different narrative modality which is more didactic or social rather than rooted in discrete individual character development, conflict, and resolution.

the singularity of individual texts and movement-images which complicate, contradict, or somehow digress from these regularities. This topographical approach to textual analysis straddles a commitment to the delightful economy of the audio-visual detail so prevalent in costume drama, and a broader “critical” perspective on how these details form into (and challenge) prefigured patterns of social movement and constraint.

As noted in the Introduction, I have used Deleuze's three categories of movement-image to create a loose facilitating structure for my three core chapters of textual analysis. These categories have been adapted to structure my analysis. Based on three varieties of montage (or assemblages of movement-image), the movement-images operate at distinctive conceptual proximities from the text, suggesting distinctive yet interrelated levels of analysis.

These three kinds of spatially determined shots can be made to correspond to these three kinds of varieties: the long shot would be primarily a perception-image; the medium shot an action-image; the close-up an affection-image. But, at the same time...each of these movement-images is a point of view on the whole of the film, a way of grasping this whole, which becomes affective in the close-up, active in the medium shot, perceptive in the long shot – each of these shots ceasing to be spatial in order to become itself a “reading” of the whole film. (1986, 70)

The perception-image or long shot explored in Chapter Three corresponds to the problem of framing and perception, condensed in this project to a detailed reading of landscape; this “perceptive” frame of reference provides a broader mapping of the interrelated gender, class, and colonial spatial blockings of power at work within the frame of the costume drama. At the next level of analysis, my reading of the action-image in the corpus evokes the realm of character actions and reactions, of agency, corporeal movements and stillnesses; Chapter Four treats action-image not only through the important question of narrative movement, but also in relation to attendant corporeal questions of costume and gesture. Finally, the affective, intensive, and contemplative sphere of the affection-image evoked in Chapter Five re-reads the corpus through “affective” readings of faces and hands in close-up – and through a discussion of voice and tactility as non-visual “intimate” aspects of audio-visual texts.

This structure seeks to integrate a spatial conception of audio-visual texts into the very design of the project. Experimental and flexible in form, the three movement-images help to delineate distinctive modes of textual reading and topographical thought. Given the centrality of methodological questions to this project, the integration of substantive questions of space and movement into the tools employed to analyse the corpus, I include ongoing progressive meditations on method at strategic points throughout the dissertation. In choosing to write the method into the very fabric of the textual analysis, I treat the “topographical analysis” itself as a quest, a movement, a progression which is tested throughout the different moments of the dissertation.

* * *

This present chapter has undertaken the immense project of mapping out a theoretical framework for my argument and establishing the methodological programme. Chapter Two shifts focus, delving into the specifics of costume drama. In a blending of corpus and method, I map out contemporary costume drama through the modalities of gendered space and movement – specifically, through Bakhtin’s “chronotope” applied to the textual regularities of the Austen adaptations. This chronotopic reading provides the methodological and substantive basis for the following chapters of textual analysis which take up particular types of readings across the diverse texts of the corpus.

CHAPTER TWO

The Woman at the Window: Chronotope and the Austen Adaptations

Gender, Genre, and Women's Spaces

Home...brings out the characteristic attempt of the bourgeois household to make time stand still, immobilise life and fix forever domestic property relations as the model of social life and a bulwark against the more disturbing sides in human nature. The theme has a particular poignancy in the many films about the victimisation and enforced passivity of women – women waiting at home, standing by the window, caught in a world of objects into which they are expected to invest their feelings. (Elsaesser 1987, 61-62)

Elsaesser's observations on the melodrama suggest a powerful spatial framework through which to consider costume drama. Recurring through many of the texts of the corpus, the image of the woman at the window offers an evocative point of entry into the gendered spaces of this genre. In this chapter, I will map out the corpus in some detail through the frame of gendered space. Examining the Austen adaptations through the spatio-temporal concerns of chronotope, I extend and instantiate through example the theoretical and methodological arguments from Chapter One. The Austen adaptations constitute a culturally and aesthetically influential, intertextually cohesive cycle which presents a feminine account of early nineteenth-century England. Following the general orientation of this dissertation from the particular to the general, from this dense case study, I work outward in the course of the dissertation to explore the distinctive stylistic and spatial strands in the corpus: From the pastoral "realist" and lightly ironic chronotope of Austen evoked in this chapter, I move in Chapter Three toward the dark, cluttered, gothic spaces of *The Piano* and *Angels and Insects*, to the flatter, more open "allegorical" and self-reflexive spatiality of avant-garde feminist costume drama explored in Chapter Four's treatment of *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust*.

To contextualise this cycle of contemporary costume drama, several works on melodrama and the woman's film incorporate a spatial frame of reference. In a more neutral account of the gendered spatiality evoked in the passage from Elsaesser cited above, Christine Gledhill describes the spatial configurations of the 1940s "woman's film." For this author, this

gendered sub-genre was “distinguished by the large space it opened to female protagonists, the domestic sphere and socially mandated “feminine” concerns. The fact that the home and personal relationships provide common ground to the family melodrama and the woman’s film has given substance to the assumption that the latter constitutes a sub-set of melodrama, tailored specifically for female audiences.” (1987, 10) From soap opera to melodrama to romance, the diverse historical body of texts that have been called “women’s genres”¹ foregrounds the domestic, intimate spaces of family, romance and sexuality – spheres commonly associated with “feminine” experience. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1987) equates the production of the melodramatic space of bourgeois domesticity historically with the eighteenth-century novel. Shifting from earlier epic, tragic forms featuring and addressing nobility, the melodrama, like Austen’s novels, is preoccupied with the emergent “middling power relations” of the family and the small town.

If cultural forms can be seen to re-present the historically and geographically specific gendered spatial categories of Habermas’s “public,” “private,” and “domestic” or “intimate” spheres, the spatial codes of genre, like those of political theory, are profoundly gendered. Within the field of contemporary costume dramas and historical literary adaptation, texts that feature female protagonists generally “limit” their sphere of action to these “private” spheres. In the field of costume drama, I would argue that films such as *The Madness of King George* (1994) organised around male protagonists divide their actions between the boudoir and the corridors of power. Lingering on romance and intrigue, costume drama would seem to evoke what has been coded a more “feminine” sphere. Yet, delving into the wonderful intricacies of cultural texts, we can identify the crudeness of such spatial mappings. Zooming in on the undertheorised lived space of the “domestic sphere,” the woman’s film lays out what Mary Ann Doane calls “a topography of spaces” within the home. Doane’s topography includes the unseen spaces of the

¹ The notion of “women’s genres” has been an important field of debate within feminist film and television studies. (See, for instance, Gledhill’s entire excellent collection *Home Is Where the Heart Is* (1987); Kuhn (1984); and Brunsdon (1990a; 1991). While I have identified the costume drama as a 1990s “women’s genre,” I only refer to this influential body of work tangentially (as in the present reference to “women’s space”). Organised primarily around psychoanalytic questions of female desire and historical female spectatorship, my own project explores topographical aspects of audio-visual texts.

attic (*Jane Eyre*, 1944; *Gaslight*, 1944) or the hidden room (*The Secret Beyond the Door*, 1948); the staircase (*Notorious*, 1946; *Caught*, 1949); and, finally, the window (*Rebecca*, 1940).²

Within the “woman’s films” as a whole, images of women looking through windows or waiting at windows abound. The window has special import in terms of the social and symbolic positioning of the woman – the window is the interface between inside and outside, the feminine space of the family and reproduction and the masculine space of production. (1987b, 288)

Coupled with Elsaesser’s image of the window cited above, Doane’s remarks point to the cultural resonance of particular rooms, nooks, and crannies within the “feminine space” of the home. Unpacking the blanket social term of the home and thinking about this symbolically dense place³ as a series of interconnected, culturally coded sites, we arrive at a productive beginning point for thinking about how this choreography of interiors works audio-visually.

If a film is made up of a series of spatio-temporal fragments, or spatially framed “scenes,” the audio-visual text could be analysed as a series of “locales”⁴ spliced together within particular generic conventions for particular narrative, affective, and cultural resonances. However, where Heath’s work on “narrative space” or Bordwell and Thompson’s work on Ozu (1976) suggest a rigid, closed structural coherence of these fragments achieved through suture and narrative closure, they neglect the polyvalent “contents of the form” – the cultural connotations of these spaces. At this point, Bakhtin’s chronotope is helpful in conceptualising not only the broader spatio-temporal workings of genre, but also in pinpointing the “micro-chronotopes” (my term) at

² Doane’s corpus of “paranoid women’s films” of the 1940s corresponds roughly to what I call “gothic spaces” which resurface, modified, in my own corpus: *The Piano* and *Angels and Insects*. The opaque, dark, cluttered, and frightening spaces of the gothic contrast with the natural, “wholesome” lighting in the Austen adaptations.

³ To clarify my use of terms here, there is a core distinction to be made between the terms of “space” and “place.” Broadly speaking, “space” is the more general, generic term while “place” connotes specificity, positionality. Doreen Massey differentiates the terms as follows: “‘Space’ may call to mind the realm of the dead or the chaos of simultaneity and multiplicity. It may be used in reference to the synchronic systems of structuralists or employed to picture the n-dimensional space of identity. Likewise with place, though perhaps with more consistency, it can raise an image of one’s place in the world, of the reputedly (but as we shall see, disputed) deep meanings of ‘a place called home’ or, with much greater intimations of mobility and agility, can be used in the context of discussions of positionality.” (1994, 1) In this dissertation, I use “space” to refer to the more structural production of cultural and social regularities (cf Henri Lefebvre’s “production of space”); “place” is deployed more sparingly to reference more specific spatio-temporal sites within the audio-visual texts, corresponding roughly to the analytic level of micro-chronotope.

⁴ Elspeth Probyn’s intriguing use of the term “locale” is germane to this analysis. As part of a triumvirate of related terms (local, locale, location), she describes “locale” as designating “a place that is the setting for a particular event. I take this ‘place’ as both a discursive and non-discursive arrangement which holds a gendered event, the home being the most obvious example of this.” (1990, 186)

work within each genre. As mentioned in Chapter One, the “chronotope” describes the literary articulation of space and time. For instance, toward the end of his essay on the chronotope, Bakhtin rounds out his meta-historical journey through major novelistic forms with a discussion of recurring narrative situations including the Encounter, the Road, the castle, the provincial town, the threshold, and the spaces of parlours and salons (associated with the writings of Stendhal and Proust).

As I will demonstrate in the following Austen analysis, Bakhtin’s work, though rooted in the textual qualities of literary space and time, translates brilliantly into what de Lauretis calls the “audio-visuality of the cinema.” The spatio-temporal qualities of cultural expression do not merely facilitate narrative movement (as Heath’s work on “narrative space” insists). Rather, *to read literature or audio-visual media through the chronotope is to suggest that spatial and temporal relations are constitutive of the work of representation.*

It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events. And this is so thanks precisely to the special increase in density and concreteness of time markers – the time of human life, of historical time – that occurs within well-delineated spatial areas. It is this that makes it possible to structure a representation of events in the chronotope (around the chronotope)... Thus the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a center for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. (Bakhtin 1981, 250)

Implicit here is the fantastically, dramatically contested and complex nature of these chronotopic sites. In Deleuzian terms, historically, culturally, and generically articulated, these micro-chronotopes are sedimented with affective qualities, and with the territorialising work of difference. Within the costume drama, these chronotopes operate through both gender and genre: the profoundly gendered spaces of the boudoir, the kitchen, the entranceway.⁵ To extend Doane’s suggestive “topography of spaces,” the contemporary cycle of costume drama presents an intriguing array of recurring spatio-temporal sites and situations, from the parlour sites of witty repartée to the rolling countryside which presents an inviting place for a romantic walk.

⁵ Clearly, these spaces are articulated generically, as there is an important distinction to be made between the role of the window-as-interface in the horror genre and in melodrama.

Interiors, Exteriors, and the Hydraulic Economy

In this chapter, I read the Austen cycle using my own adaptations of Bakhtin's chronotope. This preliminary topography of the Austen cycle will help lay out some spatial commonalities amongst the costume drama cycle, providing a mental picture to build from in subsequent chapters. The aesthetic coherence of these texts (both feature films and made-for-tv movies) is a testament to Austen's strong authorial voice – and to the dense British stylistic traditions of period drama and costume drama. To differentiate between these two terms, "period drama" could be seen to encompass the general body of audio-visual texts set in historical "periods." "Costume drama" suggests a particular instance of period drama, a sub-genre digressing slightly or greatly from the demands of realism, delving variably into the realms of delight in play with costumes, fantastical settings, romance and melodrama. Within different affective, stylistic, and political shadings, the distinctive chronotopic moments of the cycle share an interest in "costume" (and attendant pleasures of disguise, fancy-dress, the gendered bourgeois body) – and "drama" (the play of romance, affectivity, desire and disappointment).

In relation to the rest of the corpus, the Austen texts represent a "dominant" narrative tradition in adaptation which ranges across television mini-series, first-run features, and made-for-tv movies. What I call the "Austen cycle" might in fact be seen as a sub-cycle of the broader corpus, an intertextually dense grouping of texts with a strong industrial and aesthetic coherence. Organised around the ongoing adaptation of Jane Austen's early nineteenth-century novels, these works might be seen to stand in for a certain dominant "nostalgic" version of an English cultural and historical past both in the U.K. and abroad.⁶ As Clare Monk (1995) argues of the Merchant-Ivory cycle, the Austen adaptations function as "gendered texts" through their core

⁶ Within Film and Television Studies in the U.K., this tradition has been framed by a debate around "heritage cinema." Notably, Higson (1993) lambasts the Merchant-Ivory films as well as texts like *Chariots of Fire* (1981), *Another Country* (1984), *A Passage to India* (1985) and so on as mobilising an ideological, nostalgic Thatcherite version of the British (usually, in fact, English) "national past." While Higson's argument focuses on these films of the 1980s, the Austen adaptations fit comfortably into this established realist tradition of British historical filmmaking and television drama.

feminine protagonists, the domestic, romantic sites and situations depicted – and more generally through Austen's iconic status as a feminine and feminist novelist.

The Austen cycle in question here includes the British made-for-television movies and television serials *Persuasion*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Jane Austen's Emma*, and Hollywood wide-screen releases *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Emma*.⁷ In spite of the blend of televisual and cinematic texts at work here, I treat this cycle as an aesthetically coherent body that mobilises many of the spatial and narrative features of the "classic narrative cinema" which has become the object of critique for film theorists like Heath and Mulvey. While the television serial form⁸ differs somewhat in narrative structure from that of a feature film, the chronotopic forms are remarkably consistent across the cycle. This established cultural and audio-visual tradition makes a pertinent spatial and cultural centrepiece from which to consider the rest of the corpus – particularly avant-garde works like *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust* which play off this familiar imperial, pastoral, and gendered "structure of feeling."⁹

The literary roots of Bakhtin's thought match the chronotope well to the analysis of literary adaptations. However, I have made certain modifications in my borrowing of this concept. First, Bakhtin explicitly links the chronotope to genre and the spatio-temporal operations of genre, which Doane in turn correlates with gender. However, adapting Bakhtin's open concept, I use chronotope not as a means of delineating genre, but more precisely to identify certain recurring tropes *within* costume drama. The second qualifier I would make in the translation from Bakhtin's

⁷ Douglas McGrath's *Emma* may be the single text that does not "fit" this coherent narrative and spatial vision, with its atypical, more Hollywood-driven casting of American Gwynneth Paltrow as *Emma* and digressions into surreal image-space. For this reason, this text figures less prominently than the other four in the following chronotopic analysis. Produced within a North American context, this production differs from the more established British period tradition, and also from Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility*. The spatial, stylistic sense of McGrath's film is decidedly more postmodern, slightly allegorical in the sense that the flattened interiors and exteriors are rendered much more like tableaux (like *Orlando*) than according to the theatrical, dramatic depth model of classic narrative cinema.

⁸ For an analysis of the formal temporal qualities of television serials, see Caughie (1991).

⁹ Raymond Williams, of course, coined the term "structure of feeling." Eschewing the more commonsense, "private" term of "experience," Williams describes the structure of feeling as follows: "We are defining these elements as a 'structure': as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension, yet we are also defining a social experience that is still in process, often ideas not yet recognised as social but akin to be private, idiosyncratic and even isolating." (cited in Sawchuk 1995, 7-8) Williams's processual, at once "private" and "social" account of the imbrication of people's lives with power relations and affective structures speaks eloquently to my project here.

literary realm to my own audio-visual corpus involves the problem of temporality. In this chapter, I will focus primarily on the *spatial* qualities of costume drama, leaving a more detailed chronotopic discussion of temporality, movement, and narrative for Chapter Four.

The following chronotopic analysis works from the basic spatial differentiation of interiors and exteriors within scriptwriting: The standard forms “INT” or “EXT” designate the fundamental practical distinction of inside or outside location of the shot or scene. In this initial analysis, I deploy the tension between interiors and exteriors as a starting point for what I describe as a “hydraulic economy”¹⁰ which functions in part through the contraction and extension of space within the shot and through montage. The notion of the hydraulic economy derives in part from Elsaesser’s analysis of melodrama with which I began this chapter. For this author, melodramatic *mise-en-scène* externalises the inexpressible claustrophobia of the characters through the “sublimation of dramatic conflict into decor, colour, gesture and composition of frame, which in the best melodramas is perfectly thematised in terms of the characters’ emotional predicaments.” (52) This analysis suggests a disjuncture between the narrative plane and the medium’s audio-visual excess. For Elsaesser, the “unspeakable” hysteria and unhappiness produced by the constraints of middle-class American life in the 1950s were externalised into expressive *mise-en-scène* and dramatic musical scores. He describes the social and dramatic pressures of bourgeois life erupting in the liminal zone of visual image and emotional release.

In a resonant argument, Richard Dyer (1992) highlights the “release” of dance numbers in the musical in relation to the audience’s sense of mundane, everyday space. This argument, re-articulated in terms of racialised cinematic space in his later work on “whiteness,” speaks

¹⁰ The notion of the “hydraulic economy” is borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari. In their “Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine,” these authors state that “the hydraulic model of nomad science... consists in being distributed by turbulence across a smooth space, in producing a movement that holds space and simultaneously affects all of its points, instead of being held by space in a local movement from one specified point to another.” (1987, 363) The strangeness of the terminology aside, Deleuze and Guattari’s work, as I understand it, evokes an understanding of matter based not on solids and stasis, but on movement, fluidity, becoming. Not a closed system of mechanical causality, the hydraulic model implies an open, radically exterior system affecting all elements simultaneously. Slyly juxtaposed with the commonly psychoanalytic film studies scholarship on melodrama, I use the hydraulic economy as a hybrid term between Deleuze and Guattari’s radical exteriority, and the depth model of interiority and expression evoked by Elsaesser, Doane, and others.

poignantly to Elsaesser's description of the dramatic and visual "pressure" exerted on the characters of melodrama through *mise-en-scène*. Elsaesser's description of the melodrama as an *audio-visual genre* coupled with Dyer's kinetic economy of social constraint and release provide a distinctive and rich theoretical base from which to consider contemporary costume drama. The present cycle of films shares the melodrama's preoccupation with the realms of feeling and romance in a "compressed" social context. Within the formal and social limits of politesse and attenuated gesture, what cannot be expressed in words is often displaced either into *mise-en-scène* and/or a dramatic use of music (and occasionally dance numbers) in the soundtrack.

Although not framed explicitly around the problematic of gender, Elsaesser's account of the social pressures evoked by melodrama speaks directly to my own project of figuring costume drama through the lens of (gendered) space, movement, and constraint. As discussed in Chapter One, Doane articulates generic spatio-temporal codes with gendered address. In contradistinction to the bold narrative strokes of conflict and action typical of the Western, costume drama, like the melodrama, expresses the interior lives of its characters. These gendered texts specialise in the symbolic spaces of a closed, cluttered, sometimes claustrophobic world. Within these careful, china shop spaces, the range of action is limited, the characters acted upon.

The social pressures are such, the frames of respectability so sharply defined that the range of "strong" actions is limited. The tellingly impotent gesture, the social gaffe, the hysterical outburst replaces any more directly liberating or self-annihilating action, and the cathartic violence of a shoot-out or a chase becomes an inner violence, often one which the characters turn against themselves. The dramatic configuration, the pattern of the plot makes them, regardless of attempts to break free, constantly look inwards, at each other and themselves. (Elsaesser, 56)

Like the melodrama, the costume drama commonly evokes interior spaces, subtle gestures, and attenuated action. Elsaesser's twin workings of cramped space and the sudden dramatic use of emotional effects in music as part of the melodrama's exploration of social and emotional pressures may be extended to consider the "hydraulic economy" of interior and exterior space and chronotope in the Austen adaptations.

The Woman at the Window: Chronotoping Austen

In this light, I might describe a recurrent spatial play in the Austen adaptations between the more formal, cluttered, and mannered treatments of interior space (dense dialogue and human interaction) and outside sequences (country walks, picnics, coach rides, expansive orchestral scores) as offering an audio-visual release. Of course, in keeping with the broader argument of this dissertation, this hydraulic chronotopic economy is profoundly *gendered*, at least within a particular historical class formation. Anne Elliot, the heroine of *Persuasion*, says it best, when she describes the devotion of the “weaker sex” to the men who come and go from their lives.

We do not forget *you* as soon as you forget us. We cannot help ourselves. We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey on us. You always have business of some sort or another to take you back into the world.

Jane Austen’s characters derive from the landed gentry of early nineteenth-century southern England whose lives of relative ease and comfort unfold in the duty-bound interiors of the country estate and the landscaped gardens that surround them. In their audio-visual incarnations, Austen’s stories linger in the precise details of interior and exterior decoration and the subtleties of conversational dexterity. The “situations” of Austen’s heroines (invariably her plots are built around strong central female characters), the Misses Dashwood and Bennet, Anne Elliot, Emma Woodhouse, exemplify one paradoxical historical feminine experience. Equipped with relative wealth and privilege, correct social graces and good education, these women’s horizons are constrained to the house and garden. Banned by good manners from any “useful” occupation and even of inheriting their own fortune, their time (and the film time) transpires in polite conversation, and, most importantly, in matchmaking and romance. The men who travel between these country villages and “business” concerns in London offer the only destination for our heroines. The paradox of so much intelligence spent on such minutiae makes for the charm and the claustrophobia of the Austen adaptations.

Perhaps the image that best expresses this paradoxical position of comfort and constraint is the image of the woman at the window. This recurring image condenses the costume drama’s

spatial and temporal “structures of feeling” of waiting, of longing – and also the self-conscious, framed and reframed beauty of the moment. For example, consider one sequence in *Sense and Sensibility* where Elinor Dashwood (Emma Thompson) sits at a writing desk facing the window. The muted golden English sunlight streams in through the thick period glass, illuminating her face in a soft glow; her startlingly blue eyes exactly match her simple dark blue dress with its modest gauzy white veil over the bosom. Meanwhile, through the window (a pre-framed vignette set in the green landscaped and lush garden) the younger Dashwood sister Mary comes into view with Edward Ferrars (who is just becoming Elinor’s love interest) in tow. Holding long sticks, they pantomime a fencing match, and Ferrars demonstrates the “lunge” for the precocious Mary, who promptly guts him when he’s not prepared. Elinor glances up to watch them, smiles fondly as witness, and turns back to the task at hand.

A scene that establishes Elinor’s and Edward’s respective characters, this sketch may be used to indicate the importance of stylised qualities of interior and exterior space at work in the costume drama. Elinor, the responsible older sister, sits demurely inside, attending to the tasks at hand for the small family living in genteel poverty. Nonetheless, she often hovers by the window, hoping for Edward’s arrival. Hers is the role of waiting, the good-natured, understanding waiting of the “good sister.” Her younger sister, Marianne, the temperamental “sensitivity” of the dyad, is less inclined to wait. She ventures out unwisely into the dangerous open ground of demonstrative courtship. Ultimately, events return Marianne to the “proper” confines of femininity, of interior waitings, or approved, chaperoned “outings.”

Sense and Sensibility’s male characters, on the other hand, true to de Lauretis’s gendered economy of stasis and movement, tend to come and go, moving freely through the countryside. It is fitting, somehow, that Elinor watches her beau through a window, even as he is first glimpsed thundering on horseback across country toward the Dashwood home. Similarly, Willoughby arrives heroically on horseback to rescue Marianne in a rainstorm after she has sprained an ankle. Colonel Brandon, for his part, is a “man of the world” who has served in the colonies, and who, like the other men, is regularly called off to London, or to other properties, to

attend to his manly “business.” This thumbnail sketch highlights general trends in Austen’s gender roles – the woman at the window, the man on horseback. Keeping in mind this preliminary image of gendered constraint and movement, in the following analysis I will undertake a more complete exploration of the play of spaces within Austen. In the process, I highlight in a preliminary manner some interlocking spatial blockings of gendered, class, and colonial power at work within these texts.

The Provincial Novel and the Knowable Community

The Austen novels take place within an early nineteenth-century southern England pastoral, “idyllic” country or village setting. Austen writes in the early decades of the Industrial Revolution, at a time when deep-seated changes in gender and class formations were unfolding in the fabric of English country life. Set in the midst of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, Austen’s pastoral settings of country life exhibit a nostalgia for earlier pastoral times; this hearkening back to imagined idyllic times recurs in the audio-visual lushness of 1990s period drama. For Bakhtin, the idyllic chronotope features an organic unity of “folkloric” time, the binding of daily and seasonal cycles with the events of human life; this form involves “an organic fastening-down, a grafting of life and its events to a place, to a familiar territory with all its nooks and crannies... This little pastoral world is limited and sufficient unto itself, not linked in any intrinsic way with other places, with the rest of the world.” (225)

One specific type of idyllic chronotope, the “provincial town” (characterised in Bakhtin by Dostoevsky, but comparable with Austen in a British context), features this cyclical, everyday time: “Time here is without event and therefore almost seems to stand still. Here there are no “meetings,” no “partings.” It is a viscous and sticky time that drags itself slowly through space.” (248) This is a cloistered chronotope of comfort and security, what Williams calls a “knowable community,” where Austen’s characters lead lives within a limited spatial frame. Busy with picnics, petty intrigue, and the life of the heart, very rarely are their lives directly touched by worldly events (such as the aftermath of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars, the Enclosure Acts, or

colonial expansion). In crass terms, however, as Williams and Saïd argue, this leisured life derived directly from the exploited labour and plundered lands and wealth of the working class and colonised peoples. Thus, as I will argue in Chapter Three, part of the reterritorialising “work” of Austen and in turn of contemporary adaptations of her novels, is to push these histories into the background, or out of the frame altogether. As Williams writes so poignantly of the landed literary protagonists living it up in the city:

What they brought with them, and what they came to promote, rested on the brief and aching lives of the permanently cheated: the field labourers whom we never by any chance see; the dispossessed and the evicted; all the men and women whose land and work paid their fares and provided their spending money. (1973, 54)

While Bakhtin foregrounds the “common” peasant qualities of the idyllic chronotope, he sharply notes a departure from this tradition in the the provincial town's later bourgeois “family novel of generations”: “From the narrow feudal locale, the “unchanging natural surroundings” of earlier forms, at best the idyllic unity of place [of the family novel] is limited to the ancestral family *town* house, to the immovable part (the real estate) of capitalist property.” (232) Implicit in Bakhtin are historical struggles over land ownership in the countryside and their relationship to European literary treatments of space and time. Williams explores similar issues within the the rendering of urban and rural space within the British literary tradition. Echoing Bakhtin, Williams notes how the provincial town of early nineteenth-century southern England offers pastoral settings explicitly set apart from the commerce and mayhem of the city. Featured briefly but emphatically in Austen as the site of high society (as her provincial characters timidly taste the snobbery, artifice, and crass wealth of the city), urban spaces signify the vices of modernisation and industrialisation. The quiet country town, in contrast, hearkens back to Bakhtin's ancient idyllic tradition, re-rendered within Austen's novels and their adaptations into an ideal of English country life.

As Williams points out, this neo-pastoral ideal functions historically within English literature since the seventeenth century as an escape, an innocent retreat from ambition, disturbance, war, and later, the vicissitudes of industrialisation. An early exchange between Elinor

Dashwood and Edward Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility* perfectly describes the idyllic quality of country life at the heart of Austen.

Edward: "All I want, all I have ever wanted, is the quiet of a private life. But my mother is determined to see me distinguished..."

Elinor: "What do *you* wish for?"

Edward: "I've always preferred the Church. But that's not smart enough for my mother. She prefers the army, but that's a great deal too smart for *me*."

Elinor: "Would you stay in London?"

Edward: "I hate London. No peace. A country living is my ideal. A small parish where I might do some good. Keep chickens, give very short sermons."

From the general chronotopic setting of the provincial town within the surrounding "pastoral" countryside, I can distinguish a number of what I call "micro-chronotopes" that suggest precise narrative situations within the broader chronotopic context. Bakhtin does not distinguish in register of generality, using the term "chronotope" to describe everything from aesthetic genres or settings ("the pastoral"), to narrative structure ("the journey") to fairly specific narrative situations and scenarios ("the parlour"). For the sake of precision, I find it helpful to distinguish between general settings and overarching structures ("chronotopes") and the particular settings and moments that unfold within them ("micro-chronotopes").

The good Edward (one of Austen's ideal males) introduces the significant micro-chronotope of the country church in Austen – a kind of moral centre for the ethical considerations of correct comportment which preoccupy these novels. Nested in the countryside, the church offers a sacred confirmation of a "natural order" which emanates from the land, an historically specific system of ownership, the country estate. In explicit contrast to the excesses of urban life and industrialisation, the normative civilising power of this feudal structure rests in the moderate, wise hands of the country gentleman who rules wisely and well. Mr. Darcy, Colonel Brandon and John Knightley embody this ethic in Austen. Williams attests that "the social order is seen as part of a wider order: what is now sometimes called a natural order with metaphysical sanctions." (29) The rightful ownership and control of the natural bounty of the countryside is vested in the gentleman who, now and then, spectacularly, shares the fruits of the land with his poorer vassals. Thus, the sacred and economic sanction of the wedding which spills out of the quiet country

church and into the countryside. In this vein, the micro-chronotope of the wedding feast (the continuation of the line, the blessings of the people on their lord) marks the joyous, triumphant ending of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* with their double weddings, and *Emma's* huge party at Donwell Abbey.

Within this neo-pastoral setting, Austen's focus on face-to-face relationships and moral conduct takes place within what Williams calls a "knowable community" of landed gentry.

It is outstandingly face-to-face; its crises, physically and spiritually, are in just these terms: a look, a gesture, a stare, a confrontation; and behind these, all the time, the novelist is watching, observing, physically recording and reflecting. That is the whole stance – the grammar of her morality. Yet while it is a community wholly known, within the essential terms of the novel, it is an actual community very precisely selective. Neighbours, in Jane Austen, are not the people actually living nearby; they are the people living a little less nearby who, in social recognition, can be visited. (166)

The micro-chronotope of the visit explores these intricate class relations of the provincial town. Part of the moral correctness of Austen's heroines involves charitable outings to their ailing or less-well-off neighbours. On an insincere mission of mercy, Emma Woodhouse grudgingly visits Miss Bates and her deaf mother who have lost their money and position; Anne Elliot more graciously visits the ailing Miss Smith in Bath. In addition, Austen's main characters will often visit the homes of more proletarian folk (like the salt-of-the-earth farmer Robert Martin in *Emma*, or the Hartvilles of Lyme in *Persuasion*). Visits to impoverished and wealthy neighbours and relations explore the complex class relations of the day. Where the most élite circles, as figured through their elaborate but artificial manners, are seen to be pretentious and stuffy, the plain country folk's modest sitting rooms and wholesome kitchens are looked upon approvingly. Themselves a vanguard for the emergent middle class, Austen's heroes and heroines benefit from a less snobbish attitude toward these working classes.

The "doubling" qualities of these two latter micro-chronotopes of the church (the sacred) and the visit (class relations and community) pinpoint Austen's characteristic ironic sensibility. The deep-seated cultural roots of these sites are mobilised, yet the romanticism of the pastoral and of the sacred are attenuated through a light ironic touch. In the case of the church, the pastor

often appears self-important and insincere (*Emma's* Mr. Elton, and the bumbling and ridiculous Mr. Collins of *Pride and Prejudice*). The merciful visits of Austen's heroines gain a doubled nuance, as evidenced within Emma Woodhouse's insincerity and impatience with Miss Bates and her mother. Austen's lightly ironic sensibility, a slight distancing from the full romantic implications of the chronotopes distinguishes the author's characteristic voice, which is preserved in the adaptations.

Exteriors: Great Houses, Gardens, and Country Walks

Williams's most apt discussion of the "knowable community" as the general social milieu for Austen's novels can be productively further broken down into different zones of action that are implied in the novels and "dramatised" in the spatial plotting of the adaptations. Carefully selected¹¹ and periodised settings of the Austen adaptations and within much of the corpus centre significantly around one country estate: *Emma's* Hartfield or *Persuasion's* Kellynch-hall. These "Great Houses" are frequently pictured from the outside with their impressive, landscaped grounds, in establishing shots reminiscent of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century paintings. These houses are connected to and apart from the town proper. For instance, in *Emma*, Austen describes Highbury as "the large and populous village almost amounting to a town, to which Hartfield [Emma's home], in spite of its separate lawns and shrubberies and name, did really belong." (39) The Great Houses contrast interestingly with the more simple abodes of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*. In *Sense and Sensibility*, for instance, when the Dashwoods are demoted to genteel poverty they take up residence in Barton Cottage, an adjunct to Barton Park. In spite of ongoing snobbish put-downs by the Ferrars about how "charming" a cottage can be, Barton Cottage figures as a remarkably homey space. Unlike the stifling oil paintings and heavy furnishings imbued with the weight of patriarchal history of the Dashwood family seat, the cottage is clean, bare, free of clutter, full of windows streaming with sunshine. The front door

¹¹ For instance, see a precise and loving account of the "finding" and transformation of Austen's Highbury of the A&E version of *Emma* in Birtwistle and Conklin (1996) "Finding Highbury" and so on (27-45).

always stands open to welcome visitors, and there is here an idealised porousness between the cottage interior and the lovely Devonshire countryside.

The chronotope of the “Great House” figures symbolically across much of the corpus as the “family seat” at the familial, romantic, and economic nexus of feminist retrospective histories which foreground sexist laws of land ownership and inheritance – and a range of statements about romance, class mobility, and delight in the trappings of luxurious imagined pasts. Austen’s characteristic light ironic ambivalence treats the Great House variably as home (*Emma*), the place of desire for aspiring middle-class girls of a marriageable age (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*), and/or as the seat of rotting, corrupt, greedy aristocratic power relations (*Persuasion*). Focused around the film site of the Great House, these gender and class tensions around ownership and entitlement recur in the more avant-garde, “critical” texts *Angels and Insects* and *Orlando*.

If the provincial town with its semi-detached country estate sets the stage for the general chronotope, the Great House may in turn be subdivided into micro-chronotopes. The characters’ comings and goings are routed through the main entrance of these houses, against the impressive backdrop of the house, complete with servants standing at attention. Not merely a static site, the front entranceway may be read *dynamically* as a narrative threshold. For Bakhtin, the threshold is “highly charged with emotion and value...whose fundamental instance is as the chronotope of *crisis* and *break* in a life.” (248) Within a cycle of films primarily grounded in local country settings, organised around the viewpoint of female characters who are both actually and metaphorically “house-bound,” the threshold, the place where arrivals and departures occur, is a focal place.

Against the sleepy old maids’ existence, for example, of the Misses Dashwood (*Sense and Sensibility*), the arrival of suitors Edward Ferrars and John Willoughby are highly anticipated events. As I will suggest below, if the window represents another threshold – the transparent barrier between inside and outside from which the women watch for their beaux – the doorway represents the actual physical arrival, the crossing from the roughly gendered “male” exterior

space into the “female” enclave of the home. Imagining the cycle in spatial terms, the threshold, whether window or door, forms a “hinge” in the hydraulic economy between interiors and exteriors. (Throughout this dissertation, particularly through the figure of the woman at the window, and in the tension between interiors and exteriors, I explore the recurring significance of thresholds across the cycle (doors, windows, mirrors); these micro-chronotopes themselves may be read as key markers in different types of film theory, notably Lacan’s “mirror stage.”)¹²

Meanwhile, just outside, gardens and grounds offer scenic, pruned settings for country walks, picnics, and secluded conversations. While there is no precise boundary between “grounds” and the countryside surrounding, the grounds mark an intermediary space of landscaped, formal gardens, and stables (domesticated nature), in contrast with the “natural” settings of picnics and country walks. The country walk recurs throughout Austen as a convenient excuse for informal, intimate, and private conversation away from the prying eyes and ears of the village and estate. This trope presents the possibility for gossip and exchange between friends (girlish confidences, as in *Emma*) and the chance for courtship. (Within the romantic tradition, Williams notes the transposition of “the hyperbole of feeling” associated with courtly romance into the neo-pastoral country walk.) Interestingly enough, the country walk and the treatment of countryside as offering social safety and privacy disrupt the broad binary of “private” interior space and “public” exterior space: The characters must go outside in order to be alone with their thoughts (in nature). The most striking example of the retrospective “constitutional” value of the country walk occurs across the mini-series *Pride and Prejudice*. Each of this series’ six episodes begins with heroine Elizabeth Bennet on a stroll through the pleasant countryside. This revisionist blocking ambitiously projects its feminist protagonist outside the window into the inviting green fields outside.¹³ As I will discuss in Chapter Three, certain of these country walks present

¹² For a fascinating Lacanian psychoanalytic account of the complexities of gaze, door frames and window frames in Fassbinder’s films, see Silverman (1989).

¹³ Fuller (1996) notes the “robust modernism” of this version of *Pride and Prejudice* in contradistinction to the 1980 version which was scripted by Fay Weldon. In his article about Emma Thompson’s Oscar-winning script for *Sense and Sensibility*, Fuller emphasizes the importance of the scriptwriter in the adaptation process. On this note and in terms of the stylistic/authorial coherence and intertextuality of the 1990s Austen adaptations, scriptwriter Andrew Davies must be mentioned as the writer of both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Austen’s Emma*.

thematic and stylistic departures from the more cloying interiors of traditional adaptation, and may be read as an audio-visual bursting forth – at times, a feminist retrospective projection of the female body into physical movement, out into the “natural” world of knowledge and land tenure.

Besides these private walks, Austen novels commonly include group expeditions (notably the painful “long walk” in *Persuasion*), and picnics – a micro-chronotope that translates admirably into the 1990s lush wide-screen audio-visual experience. Drawing from the ancient tradition of Dionysis, the feast, Bakhtin’s agricultural idyll of plenty “creates a...common bond between the phenomena of nature and the events of human life.” (227) For Williams, within the English literary tradition, the pastoral “ethic of plenty” revolves around the feast and the dining table: “a willing and happy ethic of consuming.” (30)¹⁴ As opposed to a more structured “inside” dinner table, the picnic offers a slightly more spontaneous common event (one that is therefore, possibly socially disruptive, as in Emma’s cutting comments to Miss Bates at Box Hill), which can easily include all of the major characters. Figuring increasingly in contemporary period drama from *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993) to Merchant-Ivory, much more than mere backdrops for narrative situations and dialogue, these lush exteriors constitute an important part of the “structure of feeling” – the retrospective “pastoral” appeal of period drama for contemporary audiences.

While the picnic and the country walk represent a meandering spatial and temporal experience of a leisured class, the micro-chronotope of the road, implying a set destination, punctuates the normally localised events of Austen’s country gentry. In these adaptations, such moments of passage (for Bakhtin, narrative functions essentially through segmentation and passage), the road figures regularly as an in-between space, a respite from the densities of the social interactions at the various houses. Framed in long shot, the coach or open carriage is silhouetted on the “high road” in an empty yet picturesque countryside, seemingly existing only as

¹⁴ Williams argues that the feast, the celebration of plenty within the neo-pastoral tradition, becomes increasingly premised on the erasure of the agricultural labour that produced it. Thus, there is a slippery slope from the celebration of the fruits of the land to a grotesque gluttony. *Angels and Insects’* extraordinary picnic full of strawberries and cream takes this tradition, absolutely elegant in Austen, over the top into a bizarre experience of greed – all to be spoiled by the ants. I will return to this film in Chapter Three. Further on the topic of picnics, see Chapter Five’s discussion of hands, food preparation, and community in *Daughters of the Dust*.

a pleasing backdrop to this journey. During these sequences, the orchestral score comes up, giving the viewer audio-visual breathing space. These brief structuring journeys of passage (between houses or country villages, or between the “knowable community” and the city), like the country walk, also offer opportunities for intimate or uncomfortable exchanges at close quarters: trysts and commentary on other characters not present. For instance, in *Emma*, Mr. Elton engineers a coach ride alone with Emma to declare his love. In this case, the closeness of the quarters makes for an awkward situation, as Emma does not return his feelings. In *Persuasion*, Captain Wentworth exclaims his pent-up feelings for Anne Elliot over the sleeping head of Henrietta Musgrove during a carriage ride. Intercut with (brief) shots of the wide-open countryside, these carriage rides may often extend (and even aggravate) the compression and claustrophobia of the genre’s mannered interiors.

Writing about the chronotope of the road as related to the general narrative function of the encounter, Bakhtin notes that “on the road (“the high road”), the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people – representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages – intersect at one spatial and temporal point.” The chronotope of the road, then, entails the elements of chance meetings and “the collapse of *social distances*.” (243) Insofar as Bakhtin’s work notes regularities across different cultural traditions, what is striking about Austen’s roads is their emptiness. Sites neither of opportunity nor of danger (often women travelling in the countryside are seen to be at peril), these roads traverse socially emptied, prettified “natural” settings of eternal spring and fair weather, unmarred by the presence of wild beasts, bad weather, or especially other social classes.¹⁵ An exceptional event illuminates the rule in *Emma* when Harriet Smith and Miss Otway are accosted by a band of ragged gypsy women and children.¹⁶ Ill-equipped to fight off these “little grubby hands,” Miss Otway almost immediately turns an ankle,

¹⁵ I will return to the question of this “transparent” picturesque landscape of the romantic painting tradition in more detail in Chapter Three. It is interesting to contrast Austen’s “natural” settings (pleasing open fields, the country road leading the eye to the horizon) with the gothic threatening woods and brooding moors of the Brontës.

¹⁶ Notable as an exception to the ethnic homogeneity of Austen’s world, the gypsies function merely as a plot point of brief unknown threat, soon forgotten. Like the working class walk-on characters discussed in Chapter Three, the gypsies pose merely a brief digression in the ordered, elegant narrative trajectory of the protagonists through “their” countryside.

leaving the ladies to be rescued by the dubiously gallant Frank Churchill.¹⁷ Similar to Marianne Dashwood's ankle-turning episode in the rainstorm, where she is saved by the dashing Willoughby (and later saved again, from herself, by the slightly less dashing Colonel Brandon), these adverse events in the countryside do not contradict the eminent, well-established homogeneity and safety of Austen's "knowable community" (the village and the space surrounding it).

Interior Spaces: Confinement and Repartée

From about the 1770s came a change in the interior layout of the large country house... Increasingly the comfort, enjoyment and privacy of the family became paramount... Indeed Jane Austen's lifetime witnessed a feminization of the home in spirit as well as visual detail. From being a rather masculine area of pomp and display, in which women's concerns had little place, it became the setting for cosy domesticity where men might look to women for their soothing and civilising influence. (Maggie Lane, Jane Austen's World, 1996, 106)

In keeping with the hydraulic economy introduced above, I note a general (if never absolute) tension in this cycle between the pleasing, pastoral countryside and its cramped, more audio-visually dense interiors. Interior spaces in the Austen adaptations are characteristically rendered replete with tasteful nineteenth-century furnishings, heavy oil paintings, expensive ornaments. Part of the precise "period" detail which lends weight to the adaptation's aura of "realism," such staging evokes a sumptuous scene of a longed-for experience of gracious nineteenth-century living, surely one of the great selling points of historical film – the precise match between the blue of the china cup, the wall, and Emma Thompson's eyes. Yet at times, this panoply of detail, can create a sense of claustrophobia – in this case, the weight of history, oppressive patriarchal laws of inheritance, especially the strict codes of proper comportment which Austen at once problematises and upholds. In the adaptations, this lovely miniature world of grace, beauty, and social constraint transpires through the subtle densities of dialogue, gesture, glance. These "interior" worlds may be roughly juxtaposed with the more open and

¹⁷ See Birtwistle and Conklin (1996, 128-129).

spontaneous interactions in the outdoors (although of course these boundaries are fluid, as the mannered dialogue often continues apace outdoors, even if the film language opens up).

In a preliminary rough sketch, we can situate all this detail within the walls of the major “homes” that house much of the drama in Austen. Within Western cultural traditions, home and hearth are associated with the feminine, although in Austen they are pointedly “owned” by men. In this sense, the home may be seen as a place of refuge and safety – or alternately, as a place of confinement. This is the tension amongst the Austen adaptations, and across the cycle as a whole which I explore below through the ambiguous image of the woman at the window: She is at once resplendent and comfortable, perfectly framed in safety, and a prisoner in someone else’s home, forever doomed to await the arrival of her suitor in order for her life to proceed. For Gaston Bachelard, the phenomenological significance of the house is seized through the primary function of inhabiting, the cherishing of “our corner of the world”: “All really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of a home: in the most interminable of dialectics, the sheltered being gives perceptible limits to his shelter.” (1969, 5) From this premise (the house as a kind of primordial womb), Bachelard undertakes a “topoanalysis” which charts the phenomenological significance of different nooks and crannies within the space of the home – an account reminiscent of Doane’s “a topography of spaces.” Such approaches are evocative in my topographical charting of micro-chronotopes in Austen’s interiors.

If the road is the place of encounter within many ancient cultural forms, Bakhtin notes the appearance of the space of parlours and salons in Stendhal and Balzac as a distinct site of encounter first appearing in European literature. “From a narrative and compositional point of view, this is the place where encounters occur (no longer emphasizing their specifically random nature as did meetings “on the road” or “in an alien world”). In salons and parlors the webs of intrigue are spun, denouements occur and finally – this is where *dialogues* happen, something that acquires extraordinary importance in the novel, revealing the character, “ideas” and “passions” of the heroes.” (246) Whereas few encounters with characters outside of Austen’s selective knowable community occur on the road, the drawing room hosts the core of the

narrative “action,” which transpires significantly as dialogue. The drawing room (or alternately the library or the parlour) is the most public room of the great houses, offering a comfortable and presentable space in which to receive visitors.¹⁸

A few more remarks are in order about the audio-visual blocking and orchestration (Elsaesser’s term) of the intricate network of dialogue, gestures, glances, and silences that make up this genre. The micro-chronotope of the drawing room may involve key private conversations between two or three particular protagonists (for example, Emma, Mr. Woodhouse and Knightley commonly speak together in a comfortable setting in front of the fire). In more extended parties (tea, evening visits), in order to make the scene work the filmmakers must play carefully between general conversation and subtle, semi-private “asides” or commentaries on other characters present. In *Emma*, Emma and Frank Churchill constantly engage in gossip of this kind, especially about Jane Fairfax, who turns out to be Frank’s secret love. These confidences are framed in close two-shots, often with the two characters sitting in a love-seat. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Lucy Steel quietly announces to Elinor her secret engagement to Edward on a rainy afternoon of sewing and card-playing at Barton Park under the watchful eye of Mrs. Jennings. The constant surveillance of other characters creates an intense pressure for Elinor, or in this case, to hide her feelings – and this suppression of feeling amidst a ruthlessly attentive crowd forms a vital component of the hydraulic economy at work here. Interior spaces in Austen are constantly patrolled (“the walls have ears”).

One precise extension of the drawing room sequence is the micro-chronotope of the music recital, an (in)formal pianoforte concert where the (usually female) protagonists can display their instrumental and vocal skills. Within the extremely constrained, mannered, spatially and socially cluttered structure of feeling of the costume drama (and Austen in particular), the recital offers a socially sanctioned opportunity for the characters to express their deepest (and often

¹⁸ The spatial function of the drawing room as a place of encounter and exchange may be taken by other rooms, depending on the adaptation (and presumably the particular rooms at the disposal of the filmmakers). For instance, in *Persuasion*, the library provides the key meeting point for different characters, whereas in the *Jane Austen’s Emma* the library is a slightly more private sanctum reserved for the family.

hidden) feelings. Particular characters are designated as the “romantics” who express the powerfully restrained (and for that reason, very compelling) emotions which lie just under the surface of these films – feelings and yearnings that cannot be expressed within the rigid confines of social decorum. These characters include Marianne Dashwood (*Sense and Sensibility*), *Emma*'s Jane Fairfax, and Anne Elliot, the heroine of *Persuasion*. As I will elaborate in Chapter Five, music (condensed into the image-movement of the woman at the piano) offers a release from the dense dialogue that characterises the genre. At the same time, in keeping with the spatial/narrative hydraulic economy, the formality of the recital heightens the tension between social decorum of dialogue and physical composure, and the intensity of feeling and longing expressed in the music. In *Persuasion*, for instance, Anne Elliot sits with her cousin and suitor Mr. Elliot as Captain Wentworth (her true love) stands awkwardly on the sidelines; seeing his true love with another man, the Captain stalks off, only to be intercepted by Anne, who begs him to stay for the “beautiful love song” that follows. Although the Captain defers, this scene marks the first dramatic break in the star-crossed lovers' composesures, as they begin to recognise their mutual affection.

This is the peculiar structure of feeling of Austen's romances, always profoundly complicated by the niceties of social convention, opportunistic scheming, and the cultural and class-based reticence of the characters. Dyer (1992) highlights the structural and emotive importance of musical “numbers” as narrative breaks from the characters' worldly dilemmas: Through music and dance, the characters are able to momentarily step out of themselves and express the utopian hope for a better existence. In the costume drama, music generally, and these recitals in particular, offer a measured, attenuated mode of expression (quite distinct from the carefree exuberance of Hollywood musicals). In contrast to the apparently more spontaneous conversation and courtship prompted by the romantic countryside and country walks (commonly punctuated with swelling orchestral scores, or carefree, festive ditties), these interior deployments of diegetic music offer an æstheticised (and scrutinised) form of entertainment. Similarly, the micro-chronotope of the ball, with its carefully orchestrated dance numbers (featured in *Emma*,

Pride and Prejudice, and also across the corpus in *Angels and Insects*, *Orlando's* ice waltz, and *Portrait of a Lady*) offers a visually lush, formal site for coupling and the alternately painful and playful intricate switching of partners of which Austen is so fond.

Another key interior micro-chronotope that foregrounds formalised conversation is the dinner table or, slightly less formally, the luncheon. While the picnic offers a natural pastoral setting for the feast, the dinner table presents a more formal, choreographed micro-chronotope of plenty. In contrast with the picnic's more spontaneous celebration of food and drink, the dinner table is physically structured to emphasise power relations, with the patriarch at the head of the table, the servants bustling behind (after bringing on the food, servants tend to miraculously disappear at picnics). With its extravagant display of wealth, silverware, goblets, etc., the dinner party emphasises the fortunes of the host – and in the process, marks the lesser fortunes of certain guests. Finally, the dinner or luncheon provides a focused site of group discussion. For instance, in *Persuasion*, the dinner at Uppercross highlights the theme of seafaring adventure as Captain Wentworth and Sophie discuss whether or not women should be allowed at sea (a key exchange which I will return to in Chapter Three).

This latter sequence well illustrates the profoundly chronotopic nature of adaptation, a theme which I can only touch on here. This scene in question first gives us an insight into Captain Wentworth's character, and brings issues of romantic attachments into the story's recurring fascination with seafaring and adventure. Austen's novel only briefly situates this exchange at a dinner table, focusing primarily on the said and the unsaid and much interior monologue. In the made-for-tv movie, in contrast, many of the reticences, pauses, and key exchanges are rendered not through the incessant commentary of Austen's narrator or the characters' interior monologue, but through the nuance of light, gesture, glance. In the novel, these exchanges about the navy and seafaring adventure take place over the course of an evening, in different rooms (rooms alluded to but not detailed). The film/tv adaptation in turn condenses the key exchanges into the micro-chronotopic situation of the dinner, dramatising a palpable early nineteenth-century bourgeois fascination with sea travel, around the intimate table. Here, the director captures the

circle of intent faces, the warm glow of candelabra in the centre that both divides and unites the dinner guests around a common passionate center.

Behind the drawing room, ballroom, or dinner table so central to Austen's settings (and costume drama more generally), behind-the-scenes locations such as the kitchen figure only occasionally. Elinor's visit to the kitchen to announce the Dashwoods' departure from the family seat in *Sense and Sensibility* stands out as a rare glimpse of the kitchen. In this scene, the servants are all seated with their backs to the camera, providing an audience for Emma Thompson. The fruits of the labours of the kitchen are appreciated in the elaborate feasts located in the dining room. But in general, the servants do not have names, nor do they have a represented "place" to work or to live; they appear in the background of drawing room conversations and dinner, pouring tea and wine, and carrying things. Servants in period drama generally do not talk, they bustle. They rub up against the protagonists in transitional spaces like hallways and stairways – spaces shared by gentry and servants.¹⁹ In general, though, it is telling to note the relative absence of the stock "upstairs downstairs" plot structure in Austen – a form which explicitly foregrounds class relations. Brilliantly rendered in the Merchant-Ivory production *Remains of the Day* (1993), the absence of this explicitly spatialised narrative trope within this cycle signals the relative invisibility of questions of class within the imagined histories – and the relative invisibility of working class people within these films. The notable exception is the film *Moll Flanders*, which chronicles the fortunes of a its dirt-poor, oppressed heroines. The Brontë sisters' heroines tend to occupy an inbetween position of genteel poverty, custodians of an education which elevates them above mere "servant" status.

Recalling the careful blocking (and exclusion) of the working class in the outside shots, servants within interior space similarly serve as aesthetic props to frame the actions of Austen's protagonists. One or two examples might help explain what I mean by this. Within the narrative

¹⁹ *Angels and Insects*, a contemporary ironic take on this genre, brings into relief the position of the servants, who, all clad alike like worker ants, hurry emphatically past Robert Adamson in the stairways. In constantly returning to these transitional passages, the narrow back stairways, *Angels and Insects* brings the labours of the servants into relief, through the eyes of the sympathetic middle class Robert and Matty Crompton. I will return to *Angels and Insects* in greater detail in Chapter Three.

ebb and flow of Austen's intrigues, smaller conversations and schemes build up to larger dramatic wide-screen "events" like balls, dinners, weddings. As part of the build-up toward important events (the Elliots' departure from Kellynch-hall; *Emma's* wedding feast), the slower tempo of dialogues and measured exchanges of characters gives way to a busyness of servants, a speeding-up, a running to and fro (accompanied by quick, up-tempo music). In this sense, the expert pouring of the tea (a gloved hand reaching into the screen) punctuates and facilitates the tiny, pointed actions of Austen's protagonists. On a slightly broader scale, within Bakhtin's structure of segmentation and passage, the narrative segments (dinner, drawing-room chat, balls) are ushered in on the uniformed coattails of servants: The camera follows the maid bearing the tea tray up the stairs and into the sitting room.

* * *

Organised around a fluid and productive distinction between inside and outside, this preliminary chronotopic analysis begins to touch on the subtleties of audio-visual space and movement, spatial relations of foreground and background, inclusion and exclusion at work in the costume drama. I take up these observations further, the charting of what I call the "spatial blockings of power," the interlocking spaces and mobile trajectories of gender, class, and imperialism, in Chapter Three. At this point, though, I will complete my chronotopic analysis of interiors to further consider the gendered spatial implications in Austen, and in the cycle generally: From the topography of interior and exterior places explored in the chronotopic analysis, I wish to "frame in" once more, to a related discussion of "interiority" which correlates eighteenth- and nineteenth-century domestic bourgeois spaces with discourses of privacy and the rise of the novel.

Bedrooms, Confidences, Interiority: A Room of One's Own?

Leading into a discussion of the question of gendered interiors and privacy, the final micro-chronotope that I will discuss is the bedroom. This micro-chronotope has two major manifestations in Austen: First, the sick bed dramatises the melodramatic function of illness within

the genre, either related to issues of inheritance (at the outset of *Sense and Sensibility*) or as the site of (female) extreme distress or hysteria seen as illness (for example, Marianne Dashwood's breakdown, or Jane Bennet's timely illness). Profoundly female and private, the bedroom also offers an intimate setting for confidences amongst the ladies, particularly for the sisters' private discussions in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*. In Austen and most of the texts of the corpus (with the notable exceptions of *Angels and Insects* and *The Piano*), the bedroom is notable for its absence as an explicitly sexually charged location. Sex, in Austen, is reserved for after marriage (only after the end of the story). Instead, the bedroom houses female innocence, all flounce and lace and whiteness and giggling as in Marianne and Elinor Dashwood's shared bedroom. Men's bedrooms do not figure here in the same way. A site of confidences, the bedroom also houses the mirror, the "dressing up" table – the construction of the public (pretty) self; male characters, in contrast, arrive on horseback ready-made, already-pretty.

The dressing room might be seen as a female inner sanctum. The quality of privacy, of feminine interiority implied by this reading of the bedroom may be extended as an affective spatial ambience which runs through much of the corpus. Such "interior spaces," corresponding to certain social transformations in eighteenth-century Europe, have been read through the history of the novel. Suggesting a complex interrelationship between the social, economic, and architectural advent of bourgeois private spaces, the feminine "private" practices of reading, and a certain type of subjectivity organised around the bounded individual psyche, this scholarship proves intriguing for this project. Not only do many of the texts of my corpus derive from novels, but as I will argue below and in Chapter Five, this "interior" structure of feeling – what Virginia Woolf calls "a room of one's own" – informs not only the spatial imaginary of my corpus, but also of a certain type of feminist vision rooted in such an imagined nineteenth-century gendered experience.

Drawing from Ian Watt's seminal *The Rise of the Novel*, Margaret Morse (1991) notes the association of the eighteenth century English realist novel with a significantly leisured female readership. Increasingly located in the designated "feminine" private sphere, and concerned with

leisure, literacy, privacy, and upward mobility by means of personal relationships, the emergent cultural space of the novel corresponds to the ascendancy of individualism and interior subjectivity. Austen's novels are exemplary for their foregrounding of domestic, leisured space, a conceptual separation from worldly matters of state.

A major feature of the novel...is its valuation both of the detailed presentation of everyday life in all its particularity with "optical accuracy," and concern with the individual life in all its singularity against that background... This preoccupation with realism, defined in this manner, marks a change in values and patterns of awareness in English society, distinguished first by a diminishment in scale from broad public concerns to private life and personal relations, and then by valuation of the autonomous individual as opposed to the social order and its hierarchy. (159)

This passage evokes the myriad of "realist" detail at work in the Austen adaptations. It is fascinating to trace this quality of leisured interiority here, as the essentially "private" reflective experience of reading gets "adapted" into audio-visual form.²⁰ The inner sanctum, the micro-chronotope of the woman's bedroom, implicitly pushes the rather crass preliminary (gendered) interior/exterior or public/private spatial disintinctions toward the problem of privacy and interiority. If, in a general sense, the space of the home has been associated with women, in delineating the "topography of spaces" within the cinematic mapping of Austen's "Great Houses," the space becomes fragmented, fraught with an array of relations of difference. Although Austen's universe explicitly privileges the perspective of its (bourgeois) female protagonists and their romantic and social intrigues, these dynamics are explicitly housed within a class-based and patriarchal system of ownership and inheritance. Thus, while women work behind the scenes to match-make and to consolidate power, the actual *control* of these precise spaces stuffed with expensive belongings is ambiguous. For instance, while Emma Woodhouse stands at the core of the narrative action, her father, Mr. Woodhouse, though doddering, remains the owner of Hartfield Hall. These implicit power relations become much more complex with the politics of extended families and marriage.

²⁰ Since the "invention" of reading to oneself, the activity of reading has been a solitary one; on the other hand, the consumption of audio-visual materials transpires in much more ambiguous settings, from the public experience of wide-screen cinema-going, to smaller "cineplex" experiences, to the distinct family or home contexts of broadcast or narrowcast tv and video. These questions, which may only be raised rhetorically here due to space constraints, form an interesting framework from which to consider the questions of adaptation, privacy, and the changing social spaces of cultural consumption.

Finally, as suggested in the above chronotopic analysis, the class relations that run through these novels and audio-visual texts, providing both a subtext and the invisible support for this conspicuous wealth, further complicate these dynamics.

The period drama presents us a network of rooms stuffed with a subtle, carefully delineated network of alliances, confidences, arrivals and departures, all blocked out through a spectacular audio-visual choreography of spoken asides, musical interludes, eloquent glances, and the deliberate and bustling movements and stillnesses of its speaking and non-speaking actors. Austen's characters, then, must conspire to find quiet places to think or to rendez-vous with their (deliciously unavailable) objects of desire across a crowded room. So near and yet so far. Paradoxically enough, then, within a realist novelistic tradition associated with interiority and "private" space, "personal" space is at a premium. And the characters' tangible longing for one another, the distance facilitating desire, is compressed, so close that they can almost touch across the carefully-furnished, and even more carefully-patrolled settings.

In the Austen adaptations, certain micro-chronotopes coupled with dreamy extra-diegetic music or ambient sound (in any case, an absence of the omnipresent drone of dialogue) represent precious moments of reverie. The dressing room presents one place where characters may be briefly alone with their thoughts or in the company of a confidante. These moments of solitude, however, are constantly at risk of interruption by a servant or some concerned or meddling third party. In relation to the "hydraulic economy" of the Austen texts, the emotional and social pressures experienced by the characters are heightened by a constant patrolling and violation of space. In Austen, doors are very rarely locked. Confidences constantly risk betrayal, and hidden deep feelings are always at risk of brimming over. For instance, in *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne weeps uncontrollably in her bedroom after receiving Willoughby's letter of rejection. Elinor offers some comfort, but soon their quiet moment is interrupted by the meddling Mrs. Jennings. As guests of Mrs. Jennings, both in Barton Cottage and in her London house, the girls are obliged to be polite. In fact, the obligation that comes from inhabiting someone else's space is a constant in this film, where the Dashwood women are never in their "own" homes,

except through the contract of marriage. Bedroom mise-en-scène implicitly marks the heroine's station in life, her inner state. Mrs. Dashwood moves from the evening blue elegance of her married life (pictured in a rare moment of private grief after her husband's death) to the spare, scrubbed space of Barton Cottage. Like Charlotte Gainsbourg's pale Jane Eyre and Kristen Scott-Thomas's severe Matty Crompton in *Angels and Insects*, Anne Elliot, prematurely aged and dour, is shot in several key brief instants in her spare, gloomy, empty room (a room as empty and bare as her grieving soul), staring at her (ageing) reflection in the mirror.

As I will elaborate in Chapter Five, the spatio-temporal dynamics of gendered interiority and deep feeling, compression and release, figure importantly in the affective economy of most costume dramas. While it may be tempting to read the mise-en-scène of the bedroom, the moment at the dressing table mirror, through a psychoanalytic framework (the room as the psychic projection of the character's inner state, the mirror phase), I have chosen a different lens addressing social space and affectivity as saturating all aspects of the chronotope enveloping the character. My topographical approach tends to read the "interior" spaces of the costume drama with an emphasis on "the woman at the window" rather than the "woman at the mirror"; this deliberate choice does not negate the possibility of reading the narcissism or identification in the mirrored gaze, but rather seeks to supplement or even trouble this more usual reading with other events in the room, or just outside the window.

The association of "private" space with the inner space of the character does not follow some absolute formula of psychic repression, but reads *outward* toward other social dynamics subtly present in the frame or just outside. Costume drama's affective compression cannot be separated from a socio-economic retrospective feminist critique of gendered space. From Austen's "economically disadvantaged" heroines, to the governess figures of Jane Fairfax (*Emma*) and Jane Eyre, to the disinherited heiress in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, to *The Piano*'s mail order bride, to Orlando's loss of her estate upon becoming a woman, the themes of personal space, privacy, and entitlement run deep through the costume dramas' retrospective feminist framings of gendered space.

This concludes the chronotopic reading of the Austen cycle. A preliminary account of the spatio-temporal qualities of this cycle, the points raised here about interiors and exteriors, landscapes, and voice lay the groundwork for Chapter Three's discussion of mobility, class, and landscape. Other micro-chronotopes, as indicated in the text, recur across the corpus, and will form the core of subsequent readings in different chapters. Austen's tidy early-nineteenth-century novels of social intrigue and pastoral landscapes appear subtle compared to the later full-blown Romanticism of gothic romances embodied in the writings of the Brontë sisters. Embodied variously in the corpus in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *The Piano*, *Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre*, and *Angels and Insects*, gothic space is dark, cluttered, wild and dangerous where Austen's knowable community is safe, bright, and transparent. Gothic texts brim over with repressed Victorian sexuality, with family secrets, hysteria, the "madwoman in the attic." In Chapter Three I will investigate several of these works in relation to their "sublime," forbidding landscapes, and their treatments of colonial space – the foreign within or just outside the frame. The third strand of aesthetic space-time at work in my corpus is described in Chapter Four as exterior and allegorical. *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust*, two quite distinctive works, are loosely affiliated and distinct from the rest of the cycle through their distance from the modernist-novel tropes of interiority and realist narrative form.

I use these three spatial categories as guidelines in the next three chapters as a means of distinguishing between spatial worldviews and sensibilities. In the remainder of the chapter, I will read across these distinctive qualities of the corpus. Using the common figure of the woman at the window, I further explore questions of interiority and constraint as they recur across the corpus.

The Woman at the Window: Constraint and Longing

Indeed, when we studied women's achievements in radically different genres, we found what began to seem a distinctively female literary tradition, a tradition that had been approached and appreciated by many women readers and writers but which no one had yet defined in its

entirety. Images of enclosure and escape, fantasies in which maddened doubles functioned as asocial surrogates for docile selves, metaphors of physical discomfort manifested in frozen landscapes and fiery interiors – such patterns recurred throughout this tradition, along with obsessive depictions of diseases like anorexia, agoraphobia, and claustrophobia. (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, xi)

The familiar imaginary realm evoked by Gilbert and Gubar in their seminal The Madwoman in the Attic is undoubtedly the Brontë's gothic world of torment, demons, and turbulent passions. However, they identify such claustrophobic tendencies as a part of nineteenth-century English-language women's writing generally. Expressing a strong impression of social constraint, this text brings me back to a broader treatment of the seminal costume-drama moment of the woman at the window as a way to read from Austen outward toward the rest of the corpus. Throughout this chapter, I have deployed the image of the woman at the window as a marker of women's peculiar position within contemporary costume drama. Austen's heroines look *out* from the safety (or prison) of their homes, waiting for the arrival of their husbands-to-be. This image allows for a moment of exquisite stillness, often offset by a mournful or melodic melody line (in *Persuasion*, a flute theme recurs). In keeping with the structuralist correlation of femininity with constraint introduced in Chapter One, these moments may well be read as moments of constraint. For instance, one striking shot in *Persuasion* frames Anne at an upper window of her father's house in Bath. Slightly blurry (in the way that Anne's desires are always slightly blurry, sublimated), she gazes down at the street for Captain Wentworth. In the foreground of the window is a dramatic wrought-iron grid which symbolically imprisons our heroine; shot from the street below, this message becomes even more emphatic when Mr. Elliot, the preferred (and ultimately inconstant) suitor appears at her side. Hardly subtle, this moment of audio-visual claustrophobia is doubly marked, as it is edited into the promotional trailer for the video.²¹

This poignant impression of constraint recurs at different moments across the corpus, both within the diegesis, and at times within the secondary literatures surrounding the texts. In

²¹ As I argue in my discussion of the "fatal femme" cycle (Pidduck 1993), still image and audio-visual sequence selection in promotional materials has a certain intertextual "accenting" effect which highlights certain moments and qualities of texts outside of their narrative context.

Sense and Sensibility, Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor, and Marianne constantly peer anxiously (or in anticipation) out the window.²² In *The Piano*, after her arrival at Stewart's house in New Zealand, Ada gazes intently out the window into the teeming rain outside. Imprisoned by Victorian conventions of marriage and sexuality and the tangled New World bush outside, she longs for her piano which languishes on the beach. In another Campion work, *Portrait of a Lady*, this theme of constraint – an audio-visual rendering of Marilyn Frye's bird cage – emerges most dramatically in a discussion between Isabel Archer and her cousin Ralph Touchett just before her wedding to the odious Osmond.

Ralph: "You were the last person I expected to see *caught*."

Isabel: "I don't see why you call it 'caught'"

Ralph: "Because you're going to be put into a cage."

Isabel: "If I like my cage why should that trouble you?"

This exchange takes place in a dark stable shot in chiaroscuro with vibrant blue filters; Isabel's proud retorts are backlit by an orange glow through the stall bars behind her head. Reminiscent also of the image of Anne Elliot mentioned above, the prison bar image also occurs in this film with a dramatic shot from Isabel's balcony which zooms through a heavy wooden carved railing enclosure down to the green manicured gardens below.

The metaphor of the gilded cage informs the entire artful mise-en-scène of *Portrait of a Lady*, particularly in the Italian sequences around Osmond. Thematically and in its visual language, this film most starkly expresses a melodramatic motif of constraint, of being "caught" by romance, marriage, and economic and legal relations of dependency. Granted an inheritance, freedom, and the possibilities of travel and adventure by her uncle at her cousin's wish, Isabel relinquishes her economic independence, returning from her trip around the world to be cruelly "caught" in Osmond's clutches in a perfect, precious, and oppressively tasteful environment. A different incarnation of *The Piano's* oppressive, moody, tangled mise-en-scène, Campion's visual

²² In his critical discussion of the film, Fuller notes the "key motif in the film is that of women looking out of windows, as if seeking escape... Crucially, all these scenes were written by Thompson as gestures against confinement. It is Lee, of course, who turned them into windows within windows, a cinematic equivalent of double-glazing. The spectator is asked to identify with those characters who are passive (Elinor, Edward, Colonel Brandon) and passive-aggressive (Fanny and Imogen Stubbs' slyly watchful Lucy Steele) as they observe the damage done by the active characters (Marianne, Willoughby, and the gossiping pair, Sir John and Mrs. Jennings)." (1996, 22)

language in this later text also emphasizes Isabel's constraint with the use of frames within frames, its slow, stilted speech patterns, and torturously long takes which at once allow us to take in the elaborate decor and emphasize the stifling quality of its staging. In the radically different context of *Daughters of the Dust*, Eula Peasant, mother of the unborn child of unexplained parentage, often gazes out the window of her shanty during the film's early sequences. Within a text shot primarily outside on beaches and in sunny glades, Eula's "confinement" – by her pregnancy, her husband's rage, and the unspoken censure of the community – stands out.

Women pictured looking out windows and other frames of constraint, then, figure prominently across the corpus in a seemingly perfect expression of Mulvey's and Doane's hypotheses of female constraint and passivity. Costume drama, then, could be persuasively described as a genre exploring the spatial and affective vicissitudes of bourgeois feminine constraint. Constraint notwithstanding, I would argue that there is something intangible and ambiguous here which exceeds this reading, especially as we consider other examples from the Austen cycle and across the corpus. To return to Elinor Dashwood at the window, although this image foregrounds the separation between interior and exterior space, the window appears much more porous. The camera pans from a medium shot of Edward and Fanny across the library to frame Elinor's from behind at a writing desk looking out the window to the green, green garden. Cut to a frontal view as she looks up from her writing to see Edward outside with Margaret. A pot of small yellow wildflowers brightens up the writing desk. Shot from the *interior*, from Elinor's point of view looking out, the window offers an opening to the outside. The exterior scene *beckons*. Partly the mimed humour of Edward and Margaret's fencing match, a light wry touch that runs through Thompson's script standing in for Austen's own ironic writerly voice, sets *Sense and Sensibility* apart from the stark "compression" that characterises *Persuasion* or even Campion's gothic aesthetics. In contrast, in this sequence, Elinor sits comfortably, taking pleasure in her moment of quiet. Consistent with the painstaking blocking and choreography of each shot in costume drama, this shot captures a moment of reverie expressed through a harmony of colour and composition: Thompson perfectly framed against the doorframe, the little drama framed in the

window. Unlike the quiet desperation for escape, for the possibilities of travel and adventure which haunt Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*, *Sense and Sensibility* evokes comfort, the lingering appreciation of things beautiful. These cloying interiors can also be places of comfort, home, gentle humour, quiet.

Even as I extrapolated from the claustrophobic image from *Persuasion* toward related moments in other texts of the corpus, I can trace echoes of this more liminal moment in other Austen adaptations and across the cycle. For instance, *Jane Austen's Emma* begins with a poacher's nighttime raid on Hartfield's chickens. From the dark, humorous confusion of the poachers, the shotgun blast of the servant in his night shirt, cut to Emma's bedroom as she is awoken by the commotion and runs to the window. We first glimpse the heroine of the tale as she is framed bleary-eyed in her window, lit by the full moon. This quick opening shot suggests a quizzical aspect to Emma's nature, and situates her in her window looking down on the events below; the humour of the moment is cemented in the loud cock crow which coincides with the close-up on Emma's face, conveying a rude awakening, a sense of anticipation, a flurry of activity about to unfold. Far from the quality of constraint of the sequences mentioned above, this sequence situates Austen's heroine in the Great House, in a relation of curiosity about, perhaps mastery of, the world outside. A final example from Austen extends this alternate aspect of the woman at the window. On an unwitting tourist visit to the despised Mr. Darcy's manor Pemberley, *Pride and Prejudice's* heroine Elizabeth happens to look out the window to the expansive grounds below; the pastoral quality of the scene unfolds in a bird call which echoes over the lake below and across the quiet countryside. Recalling Mr. Darcy's rejected proposal of love and marriage, she reflects to herself, "Of all of this I might have been mistress." As I will elaborate in Chapter Three, the position at the window also implies in the revisionist feminist Austen a yearning for ownership and control explicitly denied them within the patriarchal confines of their time.

Finally, consider an image from *Orlando* which was selected as a still in the film's press materials. This image features Tilda Swinton in Orlando's Elizabethan garb gazing intently out a window; framed in medium shot, her pleated collar and doublet appear dark, and her face and

folded hands on the window sill are beautifully lit by the natural light emanating from outside the window. What she gazes at is out of frame, but there is an intensity, a posed and reflective quality to this image which suggests anything but constraint. Rather, as I suggest in Chapter Five, much of the rhetoric of the image in *Orlando* specifically relates to an idealised feminist utopian impulse, a kind of self-reflexive “becoming.”

Through moments like the woman at the window, costume drama privileges a certain type of reverie, introspection, a kind of intensive affective “interiority” – and a quality of longing, a gazing toward the space outside, and toward the future. As I will elaborate below, my Deleuzian affective approach to “movement” pinpoints this affective quality as a type of subtle movement which is absolutely key to the “structure of feeling” of costume drama; recurring not only in Austen, but across much of the corpus, such intensive, subtle affective moments must not be read (merely) as feminine “stasis” or confinement, but suggest a certain kind of longing intensity, or, in Deleuzian terms, potentiality. I will return to this question presently, but first would like to take a methodological digression to reflect on an implicit shift in this analysis, the transition from Bakhtin’s chronotope to Deleuze’s movement-image.

From Chronotope to Movement-Image

To round out this chapter’s reading of the Austen adaptations through the chronotope, the tension between the sequences in *Persuasion* and *Sense and Sensibility* shorthands subtle but significant qualities of adaptation, or two different moods at work in Austen translated into audio-visual terms. Both are narratives of impoverished female relations seeking love and position, although *Persuasion* is a much darker text, haunted by the heroine’s outsider status. With its large family of female protagonists, *Sense and Sensibility*, however, like *Pride and Prejudice*, explores similar circumstances of impending old-maidhood and downward class mobility, but situates it in the “idyllic” Barton Cottage. This more “open,” lighter treatment of light and shading shifts the atmosphere from the more brooding tendency in British television adaptation. Such a subtle distinction points to two key issues. The first regards the question of chronotope and

singularity, where Bakhtin seeks both general principles in the organisation of space-time across different literary genres, and at the same time insists on the singularity of certain authors. While Bakhtin cuts a broad historical swathe across European literature generally, my chronotopic investigation has suggested subtle spatial inflections at work within Austen, which in turn are teased out into different audio-visual chronotopic inflections.

The distinction amongst the Austen texts emerges partly from the production context. *Sense and Sensibility's* high-end, wide-screen cinematic qualities, along with Ang Lee's auteurist touch and Thompson's script suggest a lightness of mood which digresses from the dominant sombre British mode of adaptation.²³ The issue of singularity, of literary authorial practices inscribed into the complex film and television production contexts, raises certain issues about my chronotopic method developed to date. I have sought to highlight a certain hydraulic "structure of feeling," an economy of spatial compression and release within this cycle. Still, as the diverging moments of the window micro-chronotope demonstrate, there is variation even within the relatively homogenous cycle of Austen adaptations, different spatio-temporal inflections (after all, "chronotope" simply means the organisation of time and space) which point to diverging qualities at work within the overarching dissertation problem of gendered movement and constraint.

At this point of singularity, the divergence of a path between constraint (the home as prison, shot from the outside) and longing or poentiality (a certain comfort zone, shot from inside the house looking out) I push the limits of Bakhtin's literary chronotope for this project. Building upon this author's Marxist presuppositions, to this point in the chapter I have sought to look at the spatial blocking of gender and class as they are layered and interrelated within the costume drama. This is already a daring extension of the chronotope. But somewhere in this extension the chronotopic analysis becomes "topographical" since my tools for film analysis may begin from Bakhtin, but they do not end there. At this juncture, I would like to re-introduce Deleuze's movement-image to facilitate some more tenuous, philosophical ruminations on the implications

²³ I thank the audience members at the 1997 Screen Studies conference for pointing out this distinction to me.

of the “woman at the window.” The above analysis of the Austen cycle presented one primarily spatial use of the chronotope; in the section that follows, I would like to seize on Deleuze’s more dynamic orientation toward “movement” to augment this reading.

What happens then, if we consider the recurring image of the woman at the window not as “micro-chronotope” but as “movement-image”? To this point I have retained the rather awkward phrasing of the “micro-chronotope” as a reference to Bakhtin’s Marxist insights (as well as Williams, whose British literary criticism beautifully complements Bakhtin’s work). These historical-material approaches to literary time and space foreground how cultural texts are sedimented with historical power relations embedded into their very aesthetic forms. Through Williams and Bakhtin, we gain a sense of the essential continuity and struggle implicit within the changing inflections of the “idyllic”: From the common celebration of the labours of agriculture, the shared fruits of the land, to Williams’s neo-pastoral, the erasure of the labours of the peasants into the “natural order” of landed gentry, the carefully aestheticized (and emptied) landscapes of the later Romantics. I will return to these questions in greater detail in Chapter Three in a discussion of landscape and gender, class, and colonial mobility.

Deleuze’s work on the image-movement offers different insights on film form, space, time, and movement, which complement the chronotopic analysis. This author in fact posits a paradigmatic shift in the formal (and thus, for Deleuze, philosophical) properties of film as an inscription of movement. Whereas Bakhtin foregrounds literary space and time as they facilitate narrative movement (much as Heath and Elsässer do in their meditations on “narrative space” and *mise-en-scène*, respectively), Deleuze broadens his analysis of “movement” beyond these parameters. Methodologically, like Bakhtin, Deleuze isolates and “reads” fragments of time-space. But rather than situate these fragments only in relation to the text as a functioning whole (something essential to a rigorous film analysis, which is why I’ve included a more comprehensive analysis of Austen), Deleuze reads these moments both *intensively* as “singularities,” as I have done above with the woman at the window movement-image. To evoke this sequence as movement-image is to read “movement,” temporality back into the frame. Not simply arrested in

static space, this woman now is launched in time which implies desire, direction, the potential for movement, a longing perhaps. In keeping with this stillness which is not stasis, Deleuze and Guattari write of speed and slowness as qualified movements, speaking to this moment which might be intensive waiting, or preparation for a leap.

In this sense, in keeping with my dissertation project of probing and prodding the terms of (gendered) stasis and motion, the implied stillness or even constraint of the woman at the window may be read also dynamically as potentiality. For her part, Meaghan Morris notes how the oppositional terms of movement and stasis prove inadequate to the the postmodern terrain of tourism and the motel: "The touristic, the neighbourly, and the proprietorial are related not by opposition (mobile/fixed, touristic/everyday, itinerant/domestic) but along a spectrum divided by degrees of duration, intensities of 'staying'." (1988, 8) From this examples dramatically removed from the costume drama, both Deleuze and Guattari and Morris highlight the limits of binary thinking. Such approaches allow me to open up the a series of desiring trajectories which may be at work in the movement-image of the woman at the window as it works across the diverse moments of the corpus.

The Woman at the Window: What *Do* Women Want?

Supposing that the image of the woman at the window, suggesting perhaps longing or yearning, may somehow "stand in for" (aspects of) my corpus, what kind of a reading would such an affective and metonymic substitution imply? What then, does she long *for*? And by extension, what (diverse things and qualities of) "desire" might bring female spectators to these films? A misleadingly simple one-word answer to this question would be "romance." Certainly Austen privileges perfect love and marriage as the (only) antidote to the dilemmas and desires of her heroines. The classic closure of marriage and the accompanying rights of lineage and inheritance underpin the celebrations of the wedding feast at Donwell Abbey which clinches both Emma adaptations, and the joyous double wedding finales of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Romance is the narrative quest propelling the Austen adaptations, as well as *Jane*

Eyre: At first glance, the woman at the window awaits her suitor's dashing arrival. He, presumably, will take her somewhere better.

Yet even within the Austen adaptations there is a note of uncertainty, of ambivalence about romance: The prison of the unhappy marriage (the Palmers in *Sense and Sensibility*); the arranged marriage (the social pressure for Anne Elliot to marry her deceitful cousin, or for Elizabeth Bennet to marry the simpering Mr. Collins); a misplaced passion leading to a lifetime of misery (Marianne's near-miss with Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility*, or the wicked spectre of Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*). The image of emotional and economic constraint, of imprisonment, as poignantly suggested by Anne Elliot's predicament in *Persuasion*, reverberates across certain other texts of this corpus. Jane Campion's *The Piano* and *Portrait of a Lady* hauntingly and perceptively explore the experience of female entrapment. *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* for their part script different accounts of madness, illness, misery.

These examples draw out a strong thread running throughout the corpus – a thread that explores the risks, traps, and ideals of heterosexual romance. These texts are indeed centrally configured around the “narrative space” of the romance narrative. And if the nineteenth-century novel remains centered within the drawing room, and on the pre-nuptial rights of courtship, *The Piano*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *Angels and Insects* push this quest further into the realm of sexuality, with the sexually charged boudoir coming into the picture. However, I would suggest that explicit narrative issues of romantic closure – the quest for sexual and sensual fulfillment – do not exhaust all dimensions of the longing or yearning (or the imprisonment, perhaps) suggested by the movement-image of the woman at the window.

As movement-image rather than micro-chronotope, this moment involves not only a narrative space and time, but also a more philosophical promise, the suggestion of “movement,” of “potentiality.” Much of the temporal structure of costume drama involves waiting, a hesitation and putting-off of action or declaration. The object of desire is both constantly deferred by digressing narrative progression and over-present in this moment, in every moment: The precise blocking of the shot; the precise framing of each shot, the natural golden lighting. The window

foregrounds aesthetic framings, and also the threshold between inside and outside, between Elinor's moment of reverie and the events outside. For this moment, the balance of comfort lies in the room with Elinor, looking out. This is the zone of detailed, luscious interiors, the objects in the room, their pleasing arrangement and delicate lighting (the pattern of the wallpaper) can become our diffuse objects of desire. To open up the question of desire and visual pleasure beyond narrative drive, many of the elaborate costume dramas celebrate, lavish in the material elegance of these detailed interiors. So, while there is a desire for fulfilling, tender, passionate heterosexual romance, there is also a longing for a certain comfort zone, for beautiful *things*, for that exquisite moment of leisure. The bird in its cage oh-so-elegant, let me be her.

* * *

From the bird cage to the moment of potentiality to the gilded cage, is there yet another way to read this movement-image? Could the station at the window also be read as a position of mastery? In Home and Harem, Inderpal Grewal cites a passage in George Eliot's Middlemarch where Dorothea Casaubon looks out her window to the field workers below. Dorothea experiences an epiphany, realising that she is no mere spectator in class relations, but that her "luxurious shelter" derives from these people's labours. Looking down on the countryside from her window, Dorothea participates in the nineteenth-century mentality: "I am the monarch of all I survey." Grewal uses this literary moment to crystallise a class and colonial critique of nineteenth-century British feminist discourses which tend to place (middle-class) women outside of class-based and colonial power structures. Grewal argues that such a worldview combines in feminine discourses of the period to create "a subject position for middle-class Englishwomen that is gendered through discourses of class and imperialism." (1996, 24)

Finding herself in the strange but not unpleasant position of the controlling gaze, Dorothea, perhaps like some of the heroines of my corpus, looks out appreciatively at the lands just outside the window. In *Pride and Prejudice*, this acquisitive quality of the gaze is made manifest when Elizabeth Bennet visits Mr. Darcy's estate Pemberley after she has refused his offer of marriage. Looking out an upper window, the lands are laid out resplendent below, and she

muses to herself, "Of all this I might have been mistress." The pleasing landscape just outside that window is the countryside transformed by the Enclosure Acts,²⁴ as former Commons spaces were rapidly appropriated by the emergent middle class. Anne Elliot, for part, gazes further afield, contemplating the adventures of the high seas, the exotic riches of the colonies somewhere further afield. This desiring gaze participates, however uncertainly, in the great class and colonial projects of nineteenth-century England.

These different moments suggest that the desiring gaze of the woman at the window could behold many objects. Along these lines, Caren Kaplan critiques a series of spatial metaphors very dear to the heart of Western English-speaking feminism.

In the winter of 1936-37, Virginia Woolf [author of *A Room of One's Own*] wrote: "As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world." In the decades since Woolf wrote these words, Western feminists have extended them to justify the dream of a global sisterhood of women... Juxtaposing these two images, a world of women and a room of one's own, underscores Woolf's modernist concern with space and location, with articulating the need for physical place as a matter of material and spiritual survival as well as with the expansion and contraction of colonial worlds. (1994, 137)

In the next chapter, I will read the costume drama's audio-visual treatments of these issues of gender, class, and mobility and authority through the lens of landscape. Shifting from this chapter's exploration of Austen's "knowable community," I gradually shift the analysis outward in Chapter Three, reading different aspects of the landscape and the *hors-champ* of imperialism back into this tidy little frame. In the process, I move from Austen's domestic dramas into the more dangerous, dark, and fraught gothic worlds of *The Piano* and *Angels and Insects*.

²⁴ Michael Turner offers the following succinct description of enclosure: "The term enclosure mainly refers to that land reform which transformed a traditional method of agriculture under systems of co-operation and communality in communally administered holdings, usually in large fields which were devoid of physical territorial boundaries, into a system of agricultural holding in severalty by separating with physical boundaries one person's land from that of his neighbours. This was, then, the disintegration and reformation of the open fields into individual ownership." (1990, 213)

CHAPTER THREE

A Walk in the Country: Landscape, Mobility, and the Hors-Champ

From the last chapter's intimate, contemplative place of the woman at the window – perhaps a version of Woolf's "room of one's own"? – I now shift my focus outward to the historical landscapes just outside the window. From this comfortable or confined interior, I wish to trace the trajectory of this desiring gaze – a gaze at once sexual, sensual, and looking outward toward the possibilities of land, adventure, and mobility offered by the changing context of an industrialising society expanding its interests into foreign lands. From a more static chronotopic analysis which charts the "social spaces" of realist costume drama through the case study of the Austen adaptations, I expand my frame of reference toward the more liminal question of "movement" and social mobility – not only gendered movement and constraint, but the concurrent trajectories of class and colonial mobility. I read these overlapping patterns, what I call "spatial blockings of power," through aesthetic codes of landscape, and through the differentiated figurative movements and stillnesses which pass through these exterior spaces. In the translation from "space" to "movement," I implicitly shift register from Baudry's "captured" subject toward a more dynamic notion of how these texts "move" us as social subjects through imagined historical landscapes.

In this first of three chapters of layered topographical textual analysis, I read the corpus through the lens of Deleuze's "perception-image." Correlated with the long shot, this movement-image describes a "set [*ensemble*] of elements which act on a centre, and which vary in relation to it." (1986, "Glossary") Deleuze describes the perception-image through space and movement as a dynamic set of elements which are framed in relation to one another. Less interested in human figures as character or subject (the realm of narrative, medium shot, action-image) the perception-image perceives blocks of space and movement (nouns) organised into tableaux or milieux.¹ This proves a helpful way of thinking about audio-visual setting as blockings of objects

¹ The use of the Deleuzian terms of "set" and "milieu" as opposed to the chronotope of the previous chapter signals a subtle shift in the analysis. Moving from the more spatial, literary mapping of chronotopes of the

and spaces that form certain generic patterns – chronotopes, perhaps – yet are at the same time fluid, always in variation. The term “set” implies selection, which occurs through the process of framing. And to extend the notions of set and framing, I use the perception-image to insist on *the interdependence of audio-visual elements at work within the frame* – not only the most obvious aspects of narrative movement (romance or other dilemmas of movement and constraint organised around a female protagonist) but also more subtle details of spatial blocking, movement and stillness, voice, and music. “Milieu” or perception-image provides a springboard to consider “background” spaces and movements within costume drama, specifically class and colonial relations evoked in historical codes of landscape representation.

Further, the set or milieu signifies not only through what is in-frame – but also to the out-of-field, or the *hors-champ*. “The out of field refers to what is neither seen nor understood, but is nevertheless perfectly present...All framing determines an out-of-field.” (16) Comparable to the filmmaking term “space-off,”² I employ the *hors-champ* in this case to evoke the more metaphysical problem of what is absented from the conscious frame of narrative space, but which figures significantly nonetheless. In the case of costume drama, I deploy the *hors-champ* to address the problems of colonial space.³ In Saïd’s terms, imperialism forms a “structure of attitude and reference” for the English novel; this structuring absence leaves subtle traces which I

last chapter, here I move into the more Deleuzian and audio-visual problem of space rendered through movement, mobility. Where the “ground” of Bakhtin’s Marxism in a sense “supports” this analysis of the “spatial blockings of power,” I use the Deleuzian terminology in the close textual readings to follow in concert with my borrowing of his three varieties of movement-image – in this case the perception-image.

² In fact, de Lauretis uses the term “space-off” to frame the feminist project, working both within the frame of hegemonic (masculinist) discourses, and also from without, from the “space-off.” She defines space-off” as “the space not visible in the frame but inferable from what the frame makes visible... Now, the movement in and out of gender...is a movement between the (represented) discursive space of the positions made available by hegemonic discourses and the space-off, the elsewhere, of those discourses: those other spaces both discursive and social that exist.” (1987, 26) Like de Lauretis’s incisive discussion of narrative raised in Chapter One, the notion of the space-off brilliantly sketches in the stakes of much of my own reading strategy of seeking almost-forgotten details within the frame, and drawing in the “constitutive absences” from without. However, where de Lauretis remains within the binary mode of gendered inclusion and exclusion and the subtle play between frame and space-off, I incorporate a critique of other power relations into my readings.

³ Another mobilisation of the *hors-champ* which might itself form a “constitutive outside” to my own project is the spectre of lesbianism. Within a corpus of contemporary feminist texts, particularly revisionist works like *Orlando*, *The Piano*, and *Daughters of the Dust*, what Terry Castle calls the “lesbian spectre” remains spectacularly absent, except for Orlando’s brief tryst with Sasha, and the ambiguous relationship between Yellow Mary and Trula in Dash’s film.

read back into the frame below in relation to the period's aesthetic conventions of landscape representation (the beautiful and the sublime; romanticism and the gothic; and the miniature and the gigantic) which are themselves reworked in contemporary costume drama. This chapter is organised around the long-shot or perception-image, a framing suggesting a series of readings of landscape and the social blockings of power across the corpus.

The Cinematography of History: Escape into the Past

Many critics have argued that a major aspect of the period drama's appeal is a fascination with revisiting the past. These "pasts" of choice, however, are heavily coded through the cultural and commercial requirements of a contemporary global social imaginary. As Higson (1993) points out, contemporary British "heritage cinema" trades on the appeal of a particular version of the British national past which sells as a form of retrospective tourism in the international image market. In the process, this historical nation "is reduced to the soft pastoral landscape of southern England untainted by the modernity of urbanization or industrialization." Contemporary costume drama tends to reinvent iconic settings such as Austen's genteel Georgian society, or the Brontës' Yorkshire moors and forbidding, isolated Great Houses. From their former predominantly "domestic" European audiences, as Higson points out, British period drama is increasingly targeted toward "international" audiences. What these films share for their appeal, I would argue, is an offer of escape into particular imagined historical places and times. With reference to Merchant-Ivory's influential signature style, Higson points out that these spectacular period spaces are accentuated by

long takes and deep focus, and long and medium shots rather than close-ups and rapid cutting. The camera is characteristically fluid, but camera movement is dictated less by a desire to follow the movement of characters than by a desire to offer the spectator a more aesthetic angle on the period setting and the objects that fill it. Self-conscious crane shots and high-angle shots divorced from character point of view, for instance, are used to display ostentatiously the seductive mise-en-scène of the films. (117)

If the very cinematic and televisual textures of period drama invite us to absorb the luscious sound- and image-scapes which unfold before us, what do these scenes convey? While critics

like Higson and Martin Hipsky (1993) lambast realist period drama as offering the worst kind of regressive, snobbish conspicuous consumption of an ideological English aristocratic past, British feminist film scholars have taken a more nuanced view. Pointing out that these are indeed “gendered texts,” certain scholars insist on the importance of escapism, of what I call “flights of fancy” for female spectators in different historical periods. For instance, Christine Gledhill (1987) characterises historical melodrama as a “return to a golden past.” The “golden past” evokes a dominant quality of English pastoral countryside which dominates the Austen cycle, and which in some sense serves as an aesthetic and socio-historical reference point for the rest of the cycle. As Sue Harper suggests of the wartime British Gainsborough historical melodrama,⁴ “the affective, spectacular aspects of mise-en-scène are foregrounded to produce a vision of “history” as a country where only feelings reside, not socio-political conflicts.” (1987, 179) (See also Monk 1995).

Pam Cook, for her part, writes of historical costume drama through the metaphor of travel, “through and between different identities in a constant movement of exile and return.” (1996, 4) This author highlights the fluid possibilities of escapism as offering the chance to shift identities and identification. Whereas, following classical psychoanalytic film theory, Cook uses notions of travel to address the problem of the subject, of identification and (gendered, national) identity. In keeping with my interest in “space,” I read these questions of movement, escape, travel – in relation to the historical landscapes through which the contemporary (female) spectator is invited to travel.⁵ This dissertation draws implicitly from the fluidity of such scholarship on the fantastical potential for travel, but seeks to ground these “nomadic” accounts of virtual mobility not in a theory of the subject *per se* (as do Cook or Braidotti (1994a)), but in reading the diegetic treatments of landscape and mobility within the text. Where I highlight questions of mobility and

⁴ Gainsborough’s wartime productions, including the infamous *The Wicked Lady* (1945) have offered a very productive site of feminist scholarship on historical British female spectatorship. See Harper (1987) and Cook (1996).

⁵ The question of “travel” through culture evokes a series of important debates within cultural theory generally, and amongst feminist scholars. See, for instance, Clifford (1992), Wolff (1995), Grewal and Kaplan (1994), Grewal (1996), Rich (1986), Pratt (1992), Blunt and Rose (1994).

movement in and through the text, I focus primarily on the almost “technical” audio-visual problems of the moving and still parts of the set *within the frame*. In raising the complexity and the singularity of these patterns of space and movement, I suggest but do not dwell on their contemporary social implications.⁶

The following analysis of landscape in contemporary costume drama takes an intermediary position between the flat-out ideological critiques of “heritage cinema” and the more whimsical feminist readings. Rather than dismiss the extravagance of the “nostalgic”⁷ landscapes outright, or insist on the intrinsically “progressive” qualities of texts gendered feminine, I ask a different question. Choosing to look closely at the audio-visual rendering of landscapes, of social spaces and the differential chartings of movement through these spaces, I seek to highlight textual complexities – political and aesthetic dimensions which exceed a positive/negative binary. In the process, I foreground the specifically audio-visual qualities of this contested historical cinematographic terrain. Centered in an idealised nineteenth-century neo-pastoral rural England, contemporary costume drama draws the contemporary (feminine) viewer into an imagined past. This past functions importantly through the interior spaces of the Great Houses described in Chapter Two – but also through a return to lush, wide screen and small screen landscape cinematography.⁸ Part of an ongoing audio-visual engagement with the “cinema of attractions,” landscape-as-spectacle provides an essential dimension to the pleasures of period drama.

Much of the focus on the historical pleasures of the corpus explored to date in this dissertation has been around interior spaces and their correlation with (bourgeois) femininity. However, as the initial portion of the chronotopic analysis of Austen suggests, part of the hydraulic economy of confinement and escape running through this dissertation explores the

⁶ Issues of historical spectatorship and the implications of the costume drama cycle for a contemporary international Western feminist audience were raised productively at my dissertation defence. Terms such as “nostalgia” and “the tourist gaze,” or even a longing for a “colonial past” offer productive avenues for the extension of these textual readings into the context of contemporary, postmodern cultural consumption.

⁷ Often these historical texts are discussed through the often derogatory term of nostalgia. More concerned with a temporal, historical gazing on history, I leave this debate aside for this project. For key texts in this debate, see Higson (1993), Radstone (1995), Stewart (1993), and Sawchuk (1995).

⁸ Much less present in “classic” 1930s and 1940s adaptations which, due to technological limitations, were largely staged indoors, these exterior spaces offer an important aspect of the audio-visual economy of this corpus.

delicate tensions between “inside” space (both the bourgeois interiors evoking femininity, and the interlocking historical discursive production of interiorised subjectivity) – and the “outside” spaces of garden and countryside. In this chapter, I wish to elaborate on this suggestive framework of inside/outside, incorporating other elements just “exterior” to the general narrative economy of the costume drama. Significantly, class relations are always subtly present within this genre, but they play out in particular ways through audio-visual codes of visibility and audibility. Further, the Austen cycle’s photography of “domestic” English landscapes according to inherited romantic traditions of the “picturesque” implicitly incorporate nineteenth-century oppositions between transparent domestic spaces and dark, “foreign” (colonial) ones.

In examining the contemporary costume drama’s diverse audio-visual renderings of landscape I highlight a series of interlocking spatial blockings of power. In the process, I apply critical literary, visual arts, and geographical scholarship to contemporary adaptations of nineteenth-century image-space. Given the importance of the female protagonist to my corpus (and to costume drama generally, as a “woman’s genre”), a critical examination of landscape poses several interlocking questions: In the process of imaging selective gendered histories, how is a nineteenth-century female/feminist quest for “liberation” staged in relation to concurrent power struggles of that time-frame? Further, as introduced at the end of Chapter Two, how are these interlocking relations of power explored and expressed (and modified) within a contemporary global postmodern audio-visual economy? In this chapter, I read these questions through a series of iconic landscapes in evidence in contemporary costume drama, including Austen’s “neo-pastoral” early nineteenth-century world, and the later gothic landscapes of *Angels and Insects* and *The Piano* which venture out into the colonial *hors-champ*.

A Walk in the Country: The Past as Landscape

To be face-to-face in this world is already to belong to a class. No other community, in physical presence or in social reality, is by any means knowable. And it is not only most of the people who have disappeared...it is also most of the country, which becomes real only as it relates to the houses which are the real modes; for the rest of the country is weather or a place for a walk. (Williams 1973, 166)

As Williams suggests in this passage, the pleasant country walk belongs to Austen's worldview of the "knowable community." One of the recurring movement-images in the Austen cycle, the walk in the country offers a synthetic frame through which to consider the treatment of landscape. To begin, let us consider the sequence in *Sense and Sensibility* introduced in the previous chapter, where Elinor and Edward walk out from Norland Park. Transpiring significantly within the open countryside, this first private tête-à-tête develops both characters and sets the tone for their ongoing reserved courtship. The pair are first pictured walking in a gentle green field with the Great House in the background. The line of the hill draws the eye toward the house, nestled cosily behind a stand of trees. The film's first extended exterior sequence, this segment of movement-image precisely sets the painterly neo-pastoral aesthetic of Gainsborough into motion. Perfectly framed in the foreground, the protagonists' walk neatly creates a sense of depth; their trajectory toward frame-right and toward the camera marks an imaginary diagonal leading back to the house, which serves as a vanishing point. This sequence presents a textbook example of how realist period drama characteristically adapts British landscape painting traditions to inscribe inherited formal codes into audio-visual language.

Marianne's romantic piano score follows the pair outside, layering and completing the green perfection of the shot, the precise banter. This semi-diegetic music rounds out the soft, affective nuance of the scene. This moment evokes Elsaesser's description of music and sound in melodrama as "orchestration." "*Sound*, whether musical or verbal, acts first of all to give the illusion of depth to the moving image, and by helping to create the third dimension of the spectacle, *dialogue* becomes a scenic element, along with the more directly visual elements of the *mise-en-scène*." (51) While Elsaesser focuses primarily on 1950s melodrama's hyperbolic use of music, this cycle's rendering of landscape in costume drama is vitally coloured and orchestrated by the use of dialogue, ambient sound – and perhaps most spectacularly, the

swelling orchestral scores which help create an impression of open space, possibility, expansiveness.⁹

Following the couple's initial trajectory, the camera accompanies Elinor and Edward on their walk in a medium travelling shot. Then, a cut to a long shot prompts a subtle temporal ellipse, even as the conversation continues seemingly unabated to bridge the edit. Edward and Elinor now proceed on horseback at a leisurely pace (toward the foreground, frame right, on the same diagonal as their walk) and the landscape opens up to their progress. Norland has receded further behind them, and in the foreground a shepherd and running sheepdog move to the left, in a brief counter-current of movement which further emphasizes the protagonists' own progress (a classic cinematic technique for blocking out movement). The sheep in the foreground scatter with the riders' approach.¹⁰ The shepherd, his dog, the sheep (Dashwood sheep, most likely) serve as an interesting detail completing the perfect blocking of the shot. Even as tiny riders in the background of the frame, their voices are projected across the landscape.

Elinor: "You talk of feeling idle and useless. Imagine how that is compounded when one has no hope or choice of any occupation whatsoever."

Edward: "Our circumstances then are precisely the same."

Elinor: "Except that you will inherit your fortune. We cannot even earn ours."

Edward: "Perhaps Margaret is right. Piracy *is* our only option."

This moment marks a subtle but important shift of location from Austen's novel, where the conversation about Edward's prospects occurs at breakfast between Edward and Mrs. Dashwood. In the adaptation, the scene is exported from inside into the more audio-visually interesting country walk, and this entire second exchange is added on to the first discussion of Edward's "prospects." In the promotional materials released around the film Emma Thompson widely acknowledged modifying Austen's sacrosanct text to include a more explicit contemporary

⁹ A dramatic example of such orchestration, the soaring romantic song which recurs at the end of *Persuasion* as Anne and Frederick sail off into the sunset. This particular moment with Elinor and Edward is slightly more attenuated, cautious, their shy exchange supported by Marianne's piano. I will return to the role of music in this cycle in Chapter Five.

¹⁰ The image of scattering sheep recurs twice prior to this sequence in the film's early moments: The arrival of John and Fanny Dashwood to claim Norland by (unjust) inheritance; and Edward's initial arrival at Norland on horseback. This scattering of the sheep (chickens, geese or cows have also been used in other films) offer a classic sign of change, of disruption of the status quo.

feminist sensibility. This leap from the literary substance of Austen's dialogue into the movement-image of the walk marks both the contemporary cycle's renewed interest in iconic English landscapes, and a liberal feminist "update" of Austen's narrative. Compared to earlier Austen adaptations, Thompson's script and Lee's direction tend to push the narrative and scenic focus of the film outside, allowing both for a greater lush wide-screen cinematic cinematography – and a more audio-visually interesting character mobility for both masculine, and, to some degree, feminine characters.¹¹

Interestingly enough, Elinor and Edward's near encounter with the shepherd coincides with this significant "feminist moment" in Thompson's script which inserts the bourgeois feminine predicament and property relations directly into the diegesis. Audio-visually, this exchange superimposes a feminist commentary on land ownership and laws of inheritance over the mute countryside. Laid out like a feast in the background, the Norland estate is the prize at stake in Elinor's wry commentary. *Sense and Sensibility*, like the other Austen adaptations, has an implicit (and occasionally, at moments like this, explicit) liberal feminist agenda. In keeping with an interest in physical mobility and expanded spatial horizons for women, Thompson's script deliberately foregrounds a critique of laws of inheritance; similarly, in *Persuasion* and *Angels and Insects*, a female desire for physical mobility, for travel and adventure in escape from cloying bourgeois and gendered convention, becomes an explicit and recurring theme.

Class, Gender, Mobility and Landscape

Provincial middle-class culture [of the early nineteenth century] seemed as much concerned with strengthening ties within the family and controlling women's independent behaviour as with sexuality. Growing constraints on the physical and social mobility of women, especially young girls, is a motif across a range of activities. Into the early nineteenth century, a great deal of enjoyment was still gained through walking, often combined with dropping in to chat with neighbours or relatives. (Davidoff and Hall 1987, 403)

¹¹ In her diaries published in coffee-table format with the film's screenplay, Emma Thompson writes of the problem of audio-visual physicality for the Dashwood women: "Pulled out of reverie by James [Schamus, co-producer] asking, yet again, what physical activities can be found for Elinor and Marianne. Painting, sewing, embroidering, writing letters, pressing leaves, it's all depressingly girly. Chin-ups, I suggest, but promise to think further." (1995, 208)

This moment of explicit feminist tinkering with the text foregrounds certain tensions in the very fabric of the costume drama – the interlocking spatial blockings of power relations, and the layering of voice (associated with a certain type of narrative and subjective authority) with the visual dynamics of movement-image. Themes of mobility and land tenure rooted in fraught class and gender relations can be read through aesthetic codes of landscape. A substantial body of work in art history and geography¹² examines how from the mid-eighteenth century, capitalist and patriarchal relations of ownership inform the British landscape painting tradition. For instance, referring to Gainsborough's (1727-1788) painting "Mr. and Mrs. Andrews," Gillian Rose (1993) writes: "Their ownership of land is celebrated in the substantiality of the oil paints used to represent it, and in the vista opening up beyond them, which echoes in visual form the freedom to move over property which only landowners could enjoy. The absence in the painting's content of the people who work the fields...denies the relations of waged labour under capitalism." (91)¹³ This dominant aesthetic tradition informs the majority of exterior shots across the Austen cycle. Through the recurring the micro-chronotope of the country walk, the protagonists move across scenic landscapes which open up for their pleasure.

Rose goes on to point out the further *gender* relations of landscape implied in this painting, noting Mr. and Mrs. Andrews' differential implied access to physical mobility. Mrs. Andrews, for Rose, appears rooted to the spot, under the shadow of the oak tree's symbol of generations.¹⁴ "Like the fields she sits beside, her role was to reproduce and this role is itself naturalized by the references to trees and fields." (93)¹⁵ Reading this critique against this sequence in *Sense and Sensibility*, though, we find a deliberately egalitarian blocking of Elinor and Edward's exchange as the couple walks and rides side by side. From the more authoritarian

¹² See, for instance, Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. (1984). For feminist scholarship on landscape representations, see Bright (1989); and Wells (1994).

¹³ Cited by Rose, John Berger (1972, 106-108) also writes about this famous painting, suggesting that, connected with this period's cult of the appreciation of Nature came the middle class's interest in documenting their landholdings through commissioned landscape paintings such as this one.

¹⁴ As I will discuss in Chapter Four, the symbolism of the oak tree as "enduring old England" recurs, slightly ironically, in *Orlando*.

¹⁵ Rose also notes the common correlation of these "domestic" English representations of landscape with the female body – a gendering of nation and domestic space. I will return to this point below in the discussion of imperialism.

exchange between mother and prospective son-in-law, Thompson's Elinor banters with Edward as they move "freely" across the countryside. Here they may fleetingly escape the cloying social niceties of interior space, embodied in the meddling Fanny and the concerned Mrs. Dashwood who watch them from the door. Through the characters' voices and physical trajectories, this movement-image at once visually includes Elinor in the proprietarian surveying of Norland's grounds – and sharply records her exclusion from her apparent birthright.

Thompson's liberal feminist "updatings" of the novel present a subtle shift in emphasis, adding a more sharply critical element to Austen's attenuated romance and social commentary. This sequence transports Elinor outside into Norland's welcoming grounds, gesturing toward the promise of physical mobility and the enjoyment of one's property perhaps longed for in the moment of reverie by the window, and explicitly denied through dialogue. Within the narrative trajectory of Elinor and Edward's egalitarian romance, the fragment of dialogue quoted on page 116 illuminates both a shared frustration with the limits of conventional bourgeois life – and differential gendered horizons of possibility. As a "sensitive male" who respects people's feelings rather than position, Edward appears to suffer almost as much as Elinor from the oppressive codes of comportment and propriety. In its ambiguity, this dialogue offers at once an explicit feminist critique, and links Elinor and Edward's "situations" of social constraint and propriety. In contrast to Mr. and Mrs. Andrews in their expansive open field, the contemporary egalitarian blocking of Elinor and Edward's walk is marked off implicitly against other backgrounded spatial relations of power, in this case, the rural working poor.

To extend this discussion of gendered mobility and adaptation, in another departure from Austen's text, Thompson scripts Margaret, the youngest Dashwood sister as a headstrong, rebellious tomboy. She is continually pictured running, playing in the fields outside of Barton Cottage, mucking about in the pond. With her treehouse, her atlas, and her curious exploration of the landscape, Margaret adds movement, dynamism, displacing the still, interior chronotopic focus of the text into the realm of physical activity outside. Margaret functions within Thompson's

proto-feminist script as a prompt for feminist statements of explanation¹⁶ – and to draw the action and focus of the film out of doors, into the inviting green landscape. Often Elinor, Marianne, or Mrs. Dashwood watch Margaret ramble around outside (as in the fencing sequence with Edward mentioned above) or at Barton Cottage. In an audio-visual sense, Margaret presents a dynamic, moving detail in the otherwise posed, still shots. (As I will discuss in Chapter Four, young girls across the cycle including Margaret Dashwood, the child in *Daughters of the Dust*, Jane Eyre's young charge, Flora in *The Piano*, and Moll Flanders' daughter, represent the feminine future, physically embodying a kinetic physicality which breaks free from the stillness of their elders.)

Elizabeth Bennet's country walks which begin each of the six episodes of *Pride and Prejudice* offer the most sustained example of this phenomenon of the feminine country walk. According to Davidoff and Hall's quote at the outset of this section, the access to physical mobility of young girls of the leisured class in the countryside during Austen's period was in flux. The production decision to script Elizabeth as an apple-cheeked walking enthusiast cheerfully pronouncing the constitutional benefits of the outdoors continues this insertion of feminine mobility into the adaptation. In a sharp retort to concern about her health, Lizzie states, "I think I've stayed indoors too long. Fresh air and exercise is all I need. The woods around Rosings are so beautiful at this time of year." On a later expedition to Derbyshire (Mr. Darcy's home county), Lizzie's aunt and uncle admonish her on the beauties of this region: "Surely other counties have nothing to compare to the untamed beauty of the peaks. Nature and culture in harmony you see, Lizzie. Wildness and artifice, an all in the one perfect county." Spoken in voice-over during a carriage-ride through beautiful countryside, this sequence beautifully illustrates the aesthetic discourses of the day rendered in adaptation: The pre-eminent voice, the perfect romantic landscapes emptied of working people or any other displeasing details. Denis E. Cosgrove (1984) writes of the nineteenth-century romantic sublime as a landscape aesthetic which celebrated the pleasures of "wild" nature as connected to an experience of individualism. Elizabeth Bennet's

¹⁶ For example, early in the film, Elinor must explain to Margaret why John and Fanny Dashwood will inherit Norland: Margaret: "Why are they coming to live at Norland? They already have a house in London." Elinor: "Because houses go from father to son, dearest – not from father to daughter. It is the law."

penchant for walking, combined with the celebration of the “wildness and artifice” of the Derbyshire countryside, perfectly evoke this worldview.

Through the movement-image of the country walk, we can begin to see how a commonsense liberal feminist updating of the codes of period adaptation build upon a certain class formation's conceptions of space and movement. To return to the detail of the shepherd: In audio-visual terms this man, the sheep, the dog are relegated to be part of the welcoming landscape which lends a backdrop, a countercurrent flurry of movement, to the steady progression of the film's (bourgeois) protagonists. The hydraulic economy of confinement and escape, the costume drama's paradoxical longing for movement coupled with a strange languour and comfort described in the last chapter is staged in relation to this neutral, dumb space – always available to open up to the eye, to the wanderings and wonderings of Austen's protagonists. As Williams notes, the perhaps disingenuously digressing narrative movement in these texts (and in bourgeois period drama generally) masks the tremendous acquisitiveness, the emergent middle class's restless buying and selling of land and appropriation of the Commons.

For Saïd, this bourgeois dynamism of Austen's post-Industrial Revolution context evokes a class-based, and ultimately imperialist quest for ownership, knowledge.

The novelistic hero and heroine exhibit the restlessness and energy characteristic of the enterprising bourgeoisie, and they are permitted adventures in which their experiences reveal to them the limits of what they can aspire to, where they can go, what they can become. Novels therefore end either with the death of a hero or heroine (Julien Sorel, Emma Bovary, Bazarov, Jude the Obscure) who by virtue of overflowing energy does not fit into the orderly scheme of things, or with the protagonists' accession to stability (usually in the form of marriage or confirmed identity, as is the case with novels of Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot). (71)

Within the context of the novel, Saïd notes a kind of narrative energy, the longing for mobility, individualist becoming – in part, the quality of becoming sought within a liberal feminist tradition. In this way, the gendered (and simultaneously class-based and imperialist) qualities of stasis and mobility embedded in and explored through literary and audio-visual texts of culture inform our social spatial imaginary of individual, collective, and differential horizons of possibility.

Persuasion: Class, Mobility, and Lines of Flight

Another example of class treatments of mobility in Austen occurs during the sea walk at Lyme in *Persuasion*. Anne and Henrietta stroll at a deliberate pace toward frame right along the sea wall; this long shot frames them against the sea's luminous, wide-open horizon. A glorious day of brilliant sunshine sparkles to an a lively extra-diegetic piano score, their every step both freer, and somehow more loaded with things unsaid (away from the prying eyes of Kellynch-hall and Uppercross, Anne is more relaxed, yet fears that Louisa Harville may be sinking her hooks into Captain Wentworth). In this sequence, there is a remarkable moment where the camera, almost bored with the slowness, the agony of this romance which cannot seem to get started, deserts the narrative to follow a raggedy young boy's headlong run as he passes them, moving swiftly to the right ahead of them all the way along a pier. The camera, digressing for a moment on this "detail" of pure movement, briefly lights on another journey distinct from the narrative. In keeping with this film's foregrounding of the sea and its possibilities for respiration, equality, movement, this shot marks out the breadth of the space as the boy runs past a tiny wooden sailing ship, opening up Lyme's idyllic seascape. The panning shot ends abruptly as the boy passes Captain Wentworth and Louisa walking in the other direction (presumably on a romantic walk). At this point, the camera halts, deserting the boy to run off-frame, and follows Wentworth and his companion toward their encounter with Anne. At this juncture, the camera's liminal movement gets drawn back into the narrative.

An aside about tempo and movement is fitting here. Austen's deliberate country walks and dinner table conversations function visually (and audibly also) against carefully backgrounded landscapes and people. Except for the occasional ballroom sequence, the novels' narratives consist largely in careful conversation, precise diction, Austen's protagonists may never move too quickly. There is an aching stillness to the genre generally, where we can enter and leave the formal blocking of the library conversation as the camera follows a servant carrying a tray into the room. In this way, the adaptation spatialises the novel's rather disembodied conversations, and inserts movement, passages between scenes. In class terms, the entire setup, the beautifully-

choreographed feasts are anticipated through the frenetic bustling of servants; even the pointed dinner conversations are facilitated, “moved along” by the gloved hand which reaches into the frame at the right moment to pour, to clear away. In a sense, all of these precise, leisurely narrative moments are brought to us, both literally and formally, by the backgrounded labours of working people. This passage on tempo and the blocking of movement presents an intriguing perspective on the audio-visual scripting of difference – on how relations of power, inclusion and exclusion work generically¹⁷ through the choreography and blocking of differentiated bodies in social space.¹⁸

* * *

Like the movement-images of the woman at the window described in the previous chapter, I have selected these two country walks to illustrate certain spatial regularities in the Austen cycle’s audio-visual treatment of landscape and class. At the same time, the digressing quality of this second shot marks a subtle but important distinction in the textures of the two films. To insist, once again, on the irreducible singularity of the movement-image. *Sense and Sensibility* presents a generally much more open, inviting, sun-bathed cinematography than the more morose *Persuasion*. Apart from the sequence at Lyme, where the film opens up and the characters begin to move and speak more freely, *Persuasion* tends more toward a spatial representation of compression. For instance, during the “long walk” sequence, the landscapes appear cluttered (in contrast with the idyllic, open seascapes which bookend the film).

Further, through its visual language, *Persuasion* presents the occasional pointed counterpoint, where servants and working people “look back” at their masters, offering a fleeting gesture toward other points of view on the actions of the characters. For instance, when the vain

¹⁷ Again, where costume or period drama transpires within a constrained spatio-temporal economy, an orchestration of lingerings and digressions, the action film mobilises with the spectacular treatment of speed and force (the car chase, the explosion, the gunfight). Part of an ongoing tradition of the “cinema of attractions,” John Woo’s contemporary work (*Face/Off* (1997)) perhaps most dramatically exemplifies a 1990s action film. (José Arroyo’s work on the contemporary Hollywood cinema has been instrumental in thinking through these generic questions of tempo and movement. See, for instance, Arroyo 1996)

¹⁸ Richard Dyer’s ongoing interest in space and movement in the musical has been central to developing this analysis on movement and the spatial blockings of power. See, for instance, “Entertainment and Utopia” (in Dyer 1992), and, for an analysis of race and movement in the American musical, “The Colour of Entertainment” (1995).

and élitist Sir Walter Elliot departs the front formal entranceway of Kellynch-hall for Bath, the footmen are formally lined up along the walk to witness his leaving. Here, rather than a more customary framing of Sir Walter's departure in medium or long shot, the camera pans along the faces of the footmen. One by one, these brief portraits offer a glimpse of other lives, other possible perspectives on the action, the irrelevance of Sir Walter's movements against the static sameness of the servants' lives. One master departs and inevitably another one arrives. If, in a sense the close-up registers a personality, an individual, a subjectivity through the face, *Persuasion's* attention to the watching faces of the labourers brings the working people forward out of the landscape.

This moment, like the fleeting second too long spent on tracing the headlong run of the boy at Lyme, mark off deliberate imaging decisions on the part of the filmmakers: What is to be included in the frame, and what excluded; such decisions push the limits and nuances of audio-visual presence and power relations. Within the Austen cycle, particular shots such as these in *Persuasion* (as well as the opening sequence of *Jane Austen's Emma* which I will return to below) briefly foreground the presence of the working poor who are almost entirely excluded by Austen herself. Like the scattering sheep, this boy's headlong run (what/ who was he running from or to?) functions within the visual economy of the shot as a counterpoint of movement in the rather plodding narrative progression and class-designated perambulation of the protagonists. Within the audio-visual economy of televisual or cinematic texts, such details, besides offering a quality of "realist" social context, provide a depth and visual texture to the image which must not derail the narrative progression. In the end, these subtleties of imaging, against a virtual visual erasure of working people from the scene (as in Gainsborough's painting or *Sense and Sensibility*) pushes against another representational limit at work in the bourgeois novel form and in these contemporary adaptations – the limit of audibility.

Language and the Limits of Audibility

These three moments mark off the limitations of class representation: Elinor and Edward's walk with its voice-over covering the landscape details the conquest of language, dialogue, narrative; the mute responding "look" of the footmen at Kellynch-hall; and the sea walk in *Persuasion*. All offer unique inflections of movement-image, yet each also presents a dramatic (and relatively representative) case of Heath's "narrative space" where brief liminal "lines of flight" are inevitably folded back into the plodding, bourgeois romantic narrative. To raise the question of dialogue as a privileged register of narrative in period drama, we shift from relations of visibility (presence and absence, even the inflection of the detail) – to the aural register of audibility. For the condition of full subjectivity, of narrative presence, for Austen, lies in the command of a class-based art of conversation, whether conducted in the drawing room or in the garden outside. Austen's characters are centered in narrative space, both visually and audibly, through their mastery of the necessary repartée. Living at the cusp of the Industrial Revolution, Austen documents the concerns of an emergent, leisured middle class who seemingly have little else to do but talk.

For Williams, in Austen's knowable community, the novelist/narrator and her characters "are all felt to belong to the same world." In this domestic novel, belonging can be expressed primarily through language; in audio-visual texts, these subtleties of belonging are more diffuse, operating through gesture, dress, comportment – as well as through modulated tones, precise diction, and eloquent expression. As Elsaesser points out, cinematic orchestration incorporates the spoken word, "the plasticity of the human voice" as a scenic element. Elinor and Edward's walk offers an excellent example of the creative cinematic blocking of a talk-heavy narrative. Marianne's beautiful, modulated, feeling piano score offers a texture of "sensibility" (perhaps an equivalent to Austen's ongoing interior monologues which are all about what is felt and not said) to Elinor and Edward's clipped, precise, educated tones. Considering the subtleties of volume and quality of sound, the piano tones (a recurring diegetic and extra-diegetic component of the Austen

adaptations and other films of the cycle) lay out an unobtrusive, precise, melodic quality of sound which corresponds to the modulated, middle-class tones of the protagonists.

What I am describing here of course is an educated quality of upper- and middle-class English speech. Austen's language is brought to life by "quality" English actors – surely one of the great pleasures of costume drama. By definition, peasants, common people, are completely excluded from this discourse. Unlike the novel, they must be included to some degree within the visual frame as part of the landscape, whether as a detail to round out the realist texture of the frame, or as an æsthetic detail. With reference to George Eliot, Williams describes the strict linguistic codes of the novel which renders rural people as background or landscape: "There is a new break in the texture of the novel, an evident failure of continuity between the necessary language of the novelist and the recorded language of many of the characters." (169) If the eighteenth and nineteenth-century English novel corresponds to the production of a bourgeois form of interiority and subjectivity, the rise of the middle-class *language* of this subject, its parameters, revolve around a certain form of articulateness, a facility with the class-based discourse of the novelist.

Austen's "knowable community" is limited in part by the language of the novel, in part by the social location of its narrative. In contrast with William Cobbett, another writer of Austen's era and region, who situates his work on the road, at the meeting point of different classes, "Jane Austen, from inside the houses, can never see [classes], for all the intricacy of her social description... But where only one class is seen, no classes are seen." (117) The parameters of discourse and social critique in Austen revolve importantly around the chronotopic make-up of the genre: A certain quality of drawing room dialogue; the exchange between carefully-differentiated representatives of the ascendant middle class and aristocracy. For Williams, Austen's milieu functions through dialogue, a set of carefully constructed "face to face" relations. In spite of the errant digressions into audio-visual detail indicated above, the contemporary Austen adaptation remains true to the class confines of this "knowable community."

As I have demonstrated through the above readings of the woman at the window and the country walk, within the novels and in the adaptations in turn, what Austen's characters can see of the world outside is limited by the frame of the windows through which they gaze. This window frame, with the inviting green outside, perfectly reproduces the form of the romantic landscape painting – the landscape which the emergent middle class struggles to control. Their face-to-face relations (and behind-the-scenes machinations) in turn function through the limits of audibility and the spoken subject. To *belong*, to participate fully in this world is to have a mastery of a certain quality of educated language.¹⁹ Austen's female protagonists "own" the modulated voice control and the vocabulary to participate within the "face-to-face" confines of the knowable community. Yet, access to a broader physical mobility eludes them. In a sense, speech, the *lingua franca* of most period drama marks the limit of power afforded the bourgeois female subject within the confines of domesticity, within the bird cage and inside the window.

As Elinor and Edward's exchange highlights, to own and to move freely through this landscape is the contested birthright and the life-work of Austen's female and male characters alike. And while the male characters are themselves confined by the niceties of nineteenth-century bourgeois society, the possibilities of inheritance, work, travel provide them a broader horizon of possibility. To some degree, within a contemporary liberal feminism, Austen's middle-class female protagonists are brought to life once again seeking the lateral (physical) and vertical (social) mobility of their male contemporaries.

¹⁹ In contradistinction, in *Jude* (1996), Thomas Hardy's hero Jude Folly always sees the world of propriety, of education, fine manners, and perfect fencing dialogues, from the outside. The eternal outsider, a self-educated working man who dreams to study at the university, Jude gets bumped along the road from one place to another. He is persistently situated *outside* the window from the pouring rain outside. With reference to language and learning, there is a remarkable scene in a pub in Christchurch (a stand-in for Oxford), where Jude, upon learning that he will never be admitted to the university, stands on a table and loudly recites the latin which he has so painstakingly learned. Significantly, Nicholas Winterbottom's chosen cinematography of class critique incorporates bleak, winter, grey landscapes, along with the lumbering beginnings of industrialisation in the train which rushes Jude to Manchester. Kate Winslet (Marianne of *Sense and Sensibility*) plays Sue in this adaptation, Jude's cousin who becomes his lover; with her ease in the world of learning Sue proves a class-based foil to Jude's desire for education.

***Emma* and Austen's "Social Context": The Consolidation of Power**

In a final example of the detail of class relations in Austen, *Jane Austen's Emma* begins with an attempted theft of the Woodhouse chickens by some local ruffians. More of a comic moment than a real threat to the authority and sanctity of the landed gentry, this action provides a narrative device rather than a substantive disruption of the "knowable community" – a humorous point of departure for the "real" story. But *whose* status quo is being disrupted here? In the two paragraphs on "Social Context," the companion volume to the adaptation notes the film's deliberate use of certain shots and events to foreground the social context. For instance, scriptwriter Andrew Davies

chose to start the film with an incidental detail from the book: the image of a group of chicken thieves breaking into the Woodhouse's poultry house. On the way to Miss Taylor's wedding the next morning, Mr. Woodhouse is unsettled by the break-in and wonders how safe his world is. We should not forget that the French Revolution is still very recent history to Mr. Woodhouse's generation. As they ride to the church, they pass tumbledown cottages that aren't fit for habitation, but we see families in them. "I would have been in one of those cottages," says Andrew, "and so would most of the audience. I think it's an interesting aspect of this book, the fears and evasions of the aristocracy and gentry, living in such close proximity to the great unwashed." (Birtwistle and Conklin 1996, 13)

It is interesting to mark here once again the bending of the text in adaptation, the use of certain background images as rounding out a retrospective social context. After all, Jane Austen wrote *Emma* in 1816, a time of tremendous social upheaval: Less than two decades after the French Revolution; in the thick of the Industrial Revolution with its attendant momentous changes in the lives of working people: urbanisation, industrialisation, poverty; and closer to the "homes" of Austen's protagonists, of course, the Enclosure Acts which permanently wrested the Commons from small farmers, making them more dependent on the landed gentry.²⁰

Within the limitations of the adaptation, *Emma's* screenwriter fleetingly brings the working people of the era fleetingly into focus. Another class commentary within the novel highlighted here

²⁰ Undertaken in the period from 1750 to 1830 (the period in which Austen was writing) enclosure worked to the detriment of the peasants and to the benefit of the middle classes who were able to buy up, and hence control, the land. For the impact of such land reforms in the countryside, see E.P. Thompson's seminal *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963).

involves Robert Martin, a yeoman farmer on Knightley's estate whom Emma Woodhouse judges to be an inadequate match for her friend Harriet Smith. Within the novel, part of Emma's humbling education is her realisation of the damaging class bias at work within her matchmaking.²¹ Director Diarmuid Lawrence notes that the eminent worthiness of Robert Martin (a representative of the salt of the earth working folk) is reflected in his house: "The house is very pleasant; most of us would be very happy to settle somewhere in Wiltshire in a house like that." (Birtwistle and Conklin, 13) This account of class relations in *Emma* goes on to discuss how Knightley and Robert Martin (his tenant farmer) are friends. Part of the adaptation's characterisation of Knightley involves him helping Martin (and his unnamed labourers) bring in the harvest. For screenwriter Davies, this scene helps to create a sense of community: "I thought it would be nice to think of Knightley as a person whose authority was so secure that he could roll up his sleeves and join in with the men," says Andrew. This sequence culminates in the end of the film with Knightley hosting a harvest supper which brings the entire community together." (13) According to The Making of Jane Austen's Emma, the "social context" of the early nineteenth century was created through these sequences: Chicken thieves, "cottages unfit for habitation," a cosy tenant farmer's house, country gentleman and workers bringing in the harvest together.

Yet even these self-consciously revisionist qualities of the screenplay help reinforce a dominant neo-pastoral account of this era. Whether the erasure of working people from the countryside, or their appearance as aesthetic detail, as brief narrative digression, or as texture of the landscape – within the audio-visual medium, these aspects of the representation of servants and rural labourers certainly do not disturb the "natural order" implied by the neo-pastoral. In fact, as mentioned in Chapter Two, the culmination of *Emma* in the micro-chronotope of the wedding feast brings together the patriarchal and capitalist rights of succession through holy matrimony. Knightley as the benevolent country gentry embodies the "correct" authority of the neo-pastoral

²¹ Austen's novel implicitly suggests the "appropriate" matching of people of similar circumstance: Harriet Smith, the bastard daughter of some gentry, is below Emma's station, and that of the men she sets her up with. The natural bond between Robert Martin and Harriet Smith subtly reinstates the class order. Emma's error was not in matchmaking per se, but in misjudging Harriet's "correct" station in life and envisaging her as her own equal.

setting. Williams insists that the dominant English cultural tradition of the neo-pastoral is embodied in the “entitled” figure of the English country gentleman. Austen’s romantic heroes John Knightley, Colonel Brandon, Edward Ferrars, and Captain Wentworth certainly fit the bill. This “natural order” gets ritualistically repeated through the narrative closure of the country feast/wedding chronotope, which concludes *Sense and Sensibility*, *Jane Austen’s Emma*, and *Pride and Prejudice*. In this vein, Saïd observes that

In the main...the nineteenth-century European novel is a cultural form consolidating but also refining and articulating the authority of the *status quo*... In Austen, Balzac, George Eliot, and Flaubert – to take several prominent names together – the consolidation of authority includes, indeed is built into the very fabric of, both private property and marriage, institutions that are only rarely challenged. (1992, 77)

Interestingly enough, although the Austen adaptations to differing degrees are configured around a feminine or feminist sensibility, their retrospective, even critical, accounts of the nineteenth-century bourgeois feminine condition are collapsed into fairytale endings with the consolidation of patriarchal property relations. Not only do our heroines get their man, but they get *all that land* too. Austen’s novels dictate happy endings. I would suggest that the aggressive proliferation of Austen adaptations on the international market represents a recurring neo-pastoral vision of the nineteenth century. It is disturbing to see how the influential Austen cycle superimposes a liberal feminist vision on the backdrop of this restlessly replayed consolidation of patriarchal and bourgeois authority. As I have demonstrated, this process does not unfold in a univocal or straightforward manner: Either deliberately through the filmmakers’ decisions, or through happenstance, each text, or even certain fleeting image-movements *within* texts, carry certain singularities, imply “lines of flight” outside this consolidation. Given this variation and complexity, though, we can still identify certain regularities – what I have called “limits” within the discursive and institutional framework of Austen adaptations – tending to recreate a certain dominant neo-pastoral worldview so incisively described by Williams in *The Country and the City*.

* * *

In the next section, I will examine *Angels and Insects*, a contemporary critical reworking of the nineteenth-century costume drama. An adaptation of A.S. Byatt’s contemporary novella

“Morpho Eugenia,” Philip Haas’s film foregrounds and satirises certain gender, class, and imperialist conventions embedded in the costume drama. The first of the gothic texts to be read in this chapter, this idiosyncratic text weaves a sardonic critique of the “natural order” implicit within Austen’s aesthetics. Offering a return to the questions of imaging, voice, and the spatial blockings of power explored above, *Angels and Insects* creates a social critique by polluting the pastoral romantic space hegemonic in period drama with the opaque, exotic horrors of gothic space. This chapter juxtaposes the pleasing open country landscapes of the Austen cycle with the oblique, troubled gothic milieux and landscapes of *Angels and Insects*, *The Piano*, and, to a lesser degree, *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. This series of close textual readings work recursively through certain texts and aesthetic regularities. These readings are organised around “spatial blockings of power” – recurring preoccupations with landscape aesthetics, voice, and the charting of gendered character mobility in relation to the audio-visual treatments of working class and colonial peoples who fill in the frame. *Angels and Insects* might be seen as a textual “hinge” in this dense and rangy chapter. Offering a refreshing and idiosyncratic comment upon the class relations implicit within realist period drama, this text draws the analysis into the realm of gothic space, and toward the *hors-champ* of imperialism.

***Angels and Insects* : The Perversion of the Natural Order**

When I was in the Amazons...I was haunted by an image of an English meadow in spring – just as it is today, with the flowers, and the new grass, and the early blossom, and the little breeze lifting everything, and the earth smelling fresh after the rain. It seemed to me that such scenes were *truly* Paradise – that there was not anything on earth more beautiful than an English bank in flower, than an English mixed hedge, with roses and hawthorn, honeysuckle and bryony. (A.S. Byatt 1992, 30)

This is how the meek hero of *Angels and Insects*, expresses his sentiments about the English countryside upon his return to England after a ten-year expedition studying insects in the Amazon rainforest. After losing all his notes and specimens in a shipwreck, William Adamson arrives on the charitable doorstep of his benefactor Lord Harald Alabaster in 1859. A wealthy country gentleman with a keen interest in the natural sciences, Harald employs William to classify

his extensive collection of exotic dead flora and fauna. Before he knows it, William finds himself married to one of the many Alabaster daughters, the seemingly rare, exotic, and beautiful Eugenia. But as time passes at Bredely, our quiet hero begins to notice disturbing parallels between an ant colony he is studying and certain perverse Alabaster family traditions.

This gothic caricature of the Alabasters as a decadent and perverted clan who reproduce through brother-sister incest cuts right to the quick of the “civilised natural order” associated with the country estate in British literature. As mentioned above, for Williams, in the neo-pastoral tradition dating from the late seventeenth century onward, in implicit contrast to the life of the court and city, the country gentleman becomes “an ideal of a rural society, as against the pressures of a new age.” According to this organic worldview (perfectly inscribed in the Austen adaptations), “the social order is seen as part of a wider order: what is now sometimes called a natural order, with metaphysical sanctions.” (28-29) Through a meek lower middle-class hero, a well-travelled man of science, *Angels and Insects* satirizes the costume drama from just outside the parameters of its “knowable community.” From the vantage point of the servants’ back corridors, through the eyes of its educated employees (Adamson and governess Matty Crompton), the perverse underbelly of the aristocracy is revealed.

In the thick of the age of imperialism, world exploration, and the conquest of nature, novella and adaptation in turn aim the era’s scrutinising power/knowledge discourses back on those in the historical seat of power. Returning to his native land, Yorkshire commoner Adamson (“everyman”) speaks eloquently in the above passage of having missed the beauty of the English countryside. But his nostalgia is shortlived as the decadence of the country gentry is gradually revealed. The spoilage and injustice at the root of this seemingly idyllic country life emerge through a systematic pollution and perversion of the genre’s classic micro-chronotopes: Picnic, feast, country walk, and finally, in a more complicated way, the boudoir, which comes into frame. Ultimately, the ants invade the picnic (for what is a picnic without ants?), swarming over the pastries and picnickers.

A classic “cream tea” in the garden becomes an orgy of over-eating, as the pregnant Alabaster women stuff themselves with rich, creamy desserts. The perfection of the luscious feast on a perfect summer afternoon is revealed as grotesque gluttony. Class and gender conventions that together serve to perpetuate the family line and estate are hilariously manifested in the Alabaster mothers’ unbounded procreation. Gorging themselves on the (unearned) fruits of the land, these attractive “butterflies” become, in the twinkle of an eye, queen bees who produce a whole series of identical pale, blue-eyed Alabaster babies. In the process, the era’s class-based and racial discourses of eugenics are reversed. Here it is the aristocracy which “breeds like flies.” Meanwhile, as the designated husband, William cannot help but notice that the male Alabasters are completely useless, drones. Meanwhile, the entire process of reproduction is facilitated by the behind-the-scenes scurrying of the servants and labourers.

In turn, tinged with the scientific project of discovery, the micro-chronotope of the country walk becomes more purposeful, sinister. Adamson’s “rambles” involve systematic exploration, record-keeping, tabulation of the natural environs; gradually the hermeneutic quest for patterns and order in the natural world is over taken by William’s unhappy discovery of the “natural habits” of the Alabasters. William is persuaded by Matty Crompton to undertake a systematic close study of the natural life of the ant colony.²² As they observe the tiny activities of the ant colony, the idyllic natural order, through analogy, appears more and more ruthless and ominous, echoing the primal forces at work in the supposedly “civilised” world.²³ At first the red ant colony co-exists happily with the black ants, but suddenly one day without apparent reason they mount an attack and kidnap the black ant babies for servants. All of these tiny dramas are painstakingly recorded and narrated in William and Matty’s book. The miniature world of the ant colony yields several layers of social critique normally outside of the scope of the conventional costume drama.

²² With reference to my overarching interest in gender and mobility, even while William despairs about the loss of his field notes of “exotic” Amazon insects, Matty crisply notes how her horizons are limited by gender: “My sphere is naturally more limited. I naturally look closer to hand.”

²³ Another famous cinematic moment which makes an analogy between the tiny insect world and the twisted human world, this time the bizarre and decadent world of the suburbs, is the opening shot in *Blue Velvet* (1986) where the camera pans down into the earth from the man watering the lawn.

For Susan Stewart, “the miniature presents us with an analogical mode of thought, a mode which matches world within world.” (74) The detail of the miniature suggests a microcosm, an allegory, a series of frames within frames at work within *Angels and Insects*: The ant colony, the country estate, and finally, the colonial “exotic” world of the Amazon basin. Which demonstrates the authentic “natural order”? As Stewart suggests, the play of the miniature creates an ambiguity of reference points: “Situation within situation, world within world – there is a vacillation between the text as microcosm and the situation of the reader as microcosm. Which contains which is unresolved until closure.” (45) In *Angels and Insects*, the microcosm of the insect world and the macrocosm (the vast uncharted “outside” of the colonial space of the Amazon which bookends the film) provide interlocking allegorical frames of reference for the drama at Bredely. In this case, tiny and gigantic worlds merge visually and symbolically through their lush, restless cycles of reproduction and decomposition. Ultimately, through the film’s sardonic mobilisation of “natural history” discourses, the behaviour of the aristocracy is revealed to be the most bizarre. The rotting core of their antiquated form of life is made manifest by the beetles which suddenly appear in Bredely’s every nook and cranny, the ants invading picnic. Itself an audio-visual documentation of Adamson’s butterflies and ants, the film turns the “natural history” scientific inquiry back on itself, shifting from sobre science into an eerie gothic mode at once disturbing and wickedly funny.

Analogies between worlds are fashioned through costume and movement. The servants bustle and rustle and work constantly, mechanically. Scores of women dressed alike in sombre “work” dresses and insect-like hair constantly shuffle silently through the back halls of the house. The facilitating, quasi-invisible omnipresent servants of conventional period drama are metamorphised here into a methodical, faceless throng which buzzes behind Bredely’s perfect façade. Conventionally backgrounded as a moving or still counterpoint to narrative movement, the body which completes the picture or facilitates dialogue, the servants of *Angels and Insects* overpopulate the backroom spaces normally hidden from view. They swarm. Buglike braided

swirling hairdos and “drone” work clothes visually accentuate the allegory of the ants’ continual motion and unswerving purposefulness.

Hardly a humanist critique, these servants are not given speaking parts. But they have some eerie behind-the-scene power to stage events, to convey information. After William is led back to the house to discover Eugenia in bed with her brother Edgar, Matty explains the indirect power of the servants.

“There are people in the house, you know, who know everything that’s going on – invisible people, and now and then *the house* simply decides that something must happen – I think your message came to you after a series of misunderstandings that at some level were quite deliberate –”

This statement marks the narrative articulation of the critical blocking of class in *Angels and Insects*. The exaggerated quality of the servants’ bustling marks a formal aesthetic strategy of social critique, a strategy also used in *Orlando*, as I will discuss in the next chapter. Through such choreography, the generic patterns of cinematic movement, stillness – the carefully coded power-based occupation of space and inflection of movement – is fast-forwarded, played to the hilt. The result is a riveting and hilarious disruption of the “tasteful” leisured qualities of chronotope detailed above in relation to the Austen adaptations. In this way, audio-visual conventions of class representation are altered. No longer providing the perfectly-timed white gloved hand to pour the tea, the foreground or background object to lend depth or balance to the frame, the rustling movements of the servants reminds us constantly of their silent, listening presence.

Ultimately, though, as in Austen, the film’s heroes and heroines are the “inbetween” middle-class educated characters of William Adamson and Matty Crompton. Following her earlier statement, Matty frames all three class formations within an economy of visibility: “There are people in houses between the visible inhabitants and the invisible, largely invisible to *both*, who can know a very great deal, or nothing, as they choose.” In this regime which equates power with visibility, educated lower-middle-class employees William and Matty provide a shuttle between the privileged lives of the landed gentry and the servants. As the film’s chronotopic balance shifts from exclusive drawing room exchanges to the back stairways and small behind-the-scenes passageways (visually reminiscent of so many interlocking ant tunnels), the balance of social

critique shifts. With reference to Austen, Williams suggests that “where only one class is seen, no classes are seen.” If the privileged point of view of Austen’s protagonists is through the window from inside a particular type of house, the frame of reference shifts in *Angels and Insects* to behind-the-scenes – a perspective echoed in the viewpoint of the governess in *Jane Eyre*.

Unlike the upstairs/downstairs chronotope of *Remains of the Day* (1993) or the BBC television serial *Upstairs Downstairs*, however, this behind-the-scenes blocking does not provide a humanist critique of class relations; the servants are not drawn in as full, speaking, feeling subjects. There is rather something more of the horror film, the gothic, the uncanny here, where the very space of the home becomes increasingly overrun with insects – signs of the decay of the aristocracy. Through the aesthetic strategies of microcosm, parodied movement, and the brilliantly excessive use of insect-like costumery, *Angels and Insects* mounts a superbly pointed critique of conventional costume drama and certain nineteenth-century discourses of the “natural order.”

At the same time, we might trace the limits of *Angels and Insects*’ idiosyncratic social critique through the class-based codes of audibility raised by Spivak and Williams in relation to the English novel. As in the previous discussion of class in *Persuasion*, where *Angels and Insects*’ visual language of costume and gesture may suggest subtle critiques of class relations, and the chronotopic blocking may suggest different viewpoints on the narrative action, the balance of authority, the speaking authority, rests with Adamson the man of science, and Matty Crompton, the educated governess. While *Angels and Insect* mounts a critique of class relations, the servants, by definition, are denied “speaking parts” (and full subjectivity) within a genre whose narrative focus is on a certain quality of dialogue. Like *Jane Eyre*, or even Austen’s impoverished heroines, ultimately William and Matty carry the cultural capital, the gift of the gab, to narrate their own stories. And like Austen and the Brontës, in the final analysis the aristocracy is seen to be on its decadent slide, giving way to the meek yet vigorous ascendancy of the middle class. Matty and William, like Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, sail off into the sunset to their happy futures, leaving the “invisible people” of Bredely and Kellynch-hall precisely where they’ve always been.

Meanwhile, *Angels and Insects* concludes with the middle-class hero and heroine's dreams of mobility and adventure fulfilled as they set sail for Brazil. Obligated to leave the social constraints of the rotten "natural order," they set their sights on the open sea, the knowledge and adventure offered by the tropics. At this point in the chapter, we depart the fraught codes of space, movement, and voice embedded in the "domestic" landscapes of the Austen cycle and disturbed in *Angels and Insects*. Following the trajectory of William and Matty, we trace the restless wanderings of the middle-class heroes (and, in a revisionist way, heroines) into the *hors-champ* of the colonies. This theme of the social mobility of the middle class as escape from the constraints of the Old World social order recurs in *Persuasion* where Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth are forced to seek their fortunes further afield. Unlike the other Austen narratives, this text ends not on an idyllic English country wedding feast, but on a ship sailing Westward toward the promise of foreign lands. Following this trajectory, the balance of this analysis of perception-image through landscape shifts from the "domestic" contexts of Austen and *Angels and Insects*, toward the the *hors-champ* of imperial space presented in the other gothic texts.

Aesthetics and the Imperialist *Hors-Champ*

In this section, I will examine how the cultural and economic context of imperialism seeps into nineteenth-century literary spatial conventions of gender and class – and how these conventions are translated into the audio-visual context of contemporary adaptations. The dialectic of inside/outside (the desiring hydraulics of compression and release) can be unraveled and opened up in relation to the audio-visual treatment of class within these texts. When we look at the persistent (if tangential) references to imperialism and the colonies within Austen and across the corpus, we arrive at another set of overlapping discourses of movement and constraint – a more remote spatial quality of the *hors-champ* evokes the ghostly presence of imperialism just outside the domestic frame of the domestic English period drama.

As mentioned above, Saïd (1992) notes how imperialism provides a structure of attitude and reference for the English novel. Although most spectacularly evident as the terrain of the mid-

nineteenth-century novels of Kipling, Conrad and Forster set in the colonies, Saïd notes how the imperialist context also insidiously informs the earlier, explicitly “domestic” texts of Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Mrs. Gaskell.

In projecting what Raymond Williams calls a “knowable community” of Englishmen and women, Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Mrs. Gaskell shaped the idea of England in such a way as to give it identity, presence, ways of reusable articulation. And part of such an idea was the relationship between “home” and “abroad.” Thus England was surveyed, evaluated, made known, whereas “abroad” was only referred to or shown briefly without the kind of presence or immediacy lavished on London, the countryside, or northern industrial centers such as Manchester or Birmingham. (72)

In contemporary costume drama, this implicit juxtaposition is imaged through the chronotopic *mise-en-scène* of the iconic “domestic” English interiors and exteriors discussed above. The insights of post-colonial scholarship extend the preceding analysis, insisting that the aesthetic traditions informing the romantic cinematography of country walks in Austen rest not only on domestic class and gender relations, but also on a broader imperial mapping of home and abroad.

To read the treatment of landscape in contemporary costume drama, it is important to extend a critical gender and class consciousness to see how they interrelate with remarkably resilient imperialist discourses. From Austen to “critical” contemporary feminist texts like *Angels and Insects* and *The Piano*, inherited aesthetic traditions are replete with implicit references to imperialism. Certain moods, geographical and historical cultural moments, a series of persistent oppositions recur: Light/dark; the picturesque and the sublime; the miniature and the gigantic; the domestic “knowable community” and the exotic mysterious “other.” These influential aesthetic and cultural distinctions may be read through recurring representational codes of landscape which situate the domestic English countryside against the mysterious, dark, and expansive New World landscapes of the colonies. Landscape painter J.M.W. Turner’s influential representations of the windswept, expansive romantic sublime in landscape represents an implicit counterpoint to the “picturesque” aesthetics dominant in Austen. As Paul Gilroy (1993) points out, ships and

seascapes have a special place in Turner's *oeuvre* – a nineteenth-century vision of the wild, turbulent, unknown worlds beyond the British shores.

Ships and Imperialist Movement

Ella Shohat (1991) examines the connotations of travel and the exotic as they are embedded into conventional cinematic language. From spinning globe logos to the use of maps, she notes how travel and exploration are stitched into the history of film as a social technology. Along these lines, the Austen adaptations and the other films of the corpus, seemingly so rooted in a “domestic” gendered and class experience of stasis, demonstrate a remarkably persistent pattern of references to the colonies, travel, and maps. *Persuasion*, *Angels and Insects*, and *Moll Flanders* most explicitly employ the symbolism of the sea and to travel as escapes from the traps of conventional English bourgeois morality. Significantly, all three films are bookended by images of ships on the high seas. The ship, a romantic symbol of adventure, enterprise, and escape, forms a recurring image in the corpus standing in for the broader possibilities of imperialist mobility beyond the “limits” of bounded domestic space and social convention. As suggested in the above account of the sea walk at Lyme, the claustrophobic interiors of *Persuasion* gain their meaning in relation to the idyllic, sun-dappled, and expansive seascapes which frame the domestic narrative.

In a departure from the novel's domestic early pages, *Persuasion* opens on a rowboat coming ashore from a navy ship. This scene signals a break in the Napoleonic wars, and the return of English sailors to port, as well as a recurring fascination with the sea as an escape from the class-bound etiquette of polite society. Intercut with the navy sequence is the arrival of a carriage to Kellynch-hall, and Sir Walter Elliot's declaration that he “will not have a naval man” under his roof (Sir Walter is obliged to rent out Kellynch-hall due to financial mismanagement):

I have two strong grounds of objection [to the navy]. First, as being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of; and secondly, as it cuts up a man's youth and vigour most horribly; a sailor grows old sooner than any other man... [For instance], a certain Admiral Baldwin, the most deplorable looking personage you can

imagine, his face the colour of mahogany, rough and rugged to the last degree, all lines and wrinkles (Austen 1992, 19)

This pithy quote which the filmmakers selected to open the film introduces a series of oblique nineteenth-century references to “dark” and “light” associated with class, gender, and, of course, colonialism and ethnicity. A vain, silly, selfish man obsessed with personal appearances (as opposed to what in Austen is paramount, “good character”), Sir Walter’s opening remarks establish a conflict within the Elliot family between antiquated class snobbery, and a more vigorous, exciting, “honest” life seemingly offered by travel. Admiral Croft (pictured in the opening navy sequence), his wife Sophie, and her brother Captain Wentworth present the breath of fresh air – a down-to-earth, generous and warm group who offer Anne a refuge, and the possibility of a better life. Navy *officers*, then, are a welcome addition to Jane Austen’s knowable community. Captain Harville and his wife represent the idyllic, salt-of-the-earth types (parallel to the role of farmer Robert Martin in *Emma*) whereas Captain Benwick is a self-educated man with the soul of a poet. Ultimately, Britain, an island, needs protection, and most of all needs the raw materials of colonial expansion.

Besides their pointed function as class commentary, this network of kindly sailors offer a link with the exotic and exciting possibilities of the colonies – riches, adventure, war. Captain Wentworth, after all, joins the navy because he lacks the capital to marry Anne Elliot; upon his return ten years later, he has a fortune of £20,000 garnered from bringing privateers to the West Indies. Saïd points out that such good fortune strikes a recurring chord within the nineteenth-century English novel. A career, a source of wealth for British younger sons, and escape from scandal – the spoils of empire help facilitate the narrative trajectories of English literature. As Gayatri Spivak points out, in Jane Eyre, Jane’s fortuitous inheritance from a forgotten uncle in the colonies facilitates the heroine’s self-sufficient reunion with Rochester.²⁴ For their part, Austen’s male characters from *Persuasion*’s sailors, to Colonel Brandon of *Sense and Sensibility*, have all

²⁴ This “hidden wealth” plundered from the colonies parallels and extends the domestic British economic subtext of buying and selling which Williams describes in The Country and the City.

reaped the experience of the wide world which afford them a certain “worldly” status of masculinity – not to mention the tidy sums so precisely documented by Austen.

In *Persuasion*, all the romance and promise of empire is consolidated into the idyllic image of the sailing ship which bookends the film. From the navy frigate which brings the eligible sailors home to port at the outset, to Captain Wentworth’s ship bearing the happy newly married couple off into the sunset, the sea offers a horizon of freedom and possibility to *Persuasion*’s protagonists. Never appearing within the pages of Austen’s novel, the romantic closure of the contemporary adaptation brings Anne Elliot on board Captain Wentworth’s ship (whereas at the close of Austen’s novel she is implicitly relegated to port, with the threat of another war looming).²⁵ In the film’s concluding movement-image, to the tune of the love aria, the gendered dilemma of desire and movement is resolved in an (almost) egalitarian marriage which includes Anne in Frederick’s adventures. The romantic possibility of travel for women arises directly in a dinner conversation in the film. Mrs. Croft, the idealised helpmate of Admiral Croft, recounts her seafaring adventures.

“In the fifteen years of my marriage, though many women have done more... I have crossed the Atlantic four times, and have been once to the East Indies, and back again; and only once, besides having been in different places about home – Cork, and Lisbon, and Gibraltar. But I never went beyond the Straights – and never was in the West Indies. We do not call Bermuda or Bahama, you know, the West Indies.”

Mrs. Croft’s account of her travels marks the arrival of the female adventurer on the high seas, the realisation perhaps of the impulse for mobility implied in Chapter Two’s reading of the woman at the window. Not merely contained in her domestic environment, the emergent feminine and feminist subject craves mobility, travel, and adventure – although of course, only at the side of her

²⁵ *Persuasion* ends on a domestic note with the following passage on the fortunes of sailors: “Anne was tenderness itself, and she had the full worth of Captain Wentworth’s affection. His profession was all that could ever make her friends with that tenderness less; the dread of a future war all that could dim her sunshine. She gloried in being a sailor’s wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance.” (249) The sombre mood of this closing passage, where Anne stays in port as her husband once again sets sail, reiterates the binary of female stasis and male adventure pinpointed by feminist narrative critique. Significantly, in the contemporary proto-feminist adaptation, the filmmakers choose a revisionist ending that includes Anne in her husband’s travels. Generally the most dour and moody, the most “constrained” of the Austen cycle of adaptations, *Persuasion*’s audio-visual language only opens up, strikingly, in the sea sequences which bookend the film, and during the visit to Lyme described above.

mate. Anne Elliot's eventual inclusion in her lover's seafaring adventures echoes Elinor's more sedate country walk and horseback ride with Edward through the countryside. This dream of an egalitarian romance of shared expeditions is shared by Elinor and Edward, Anne and Frederick, and William and Matty.

In the above discussion of the Austen adaptations, I highlighted the overlapping class, gendered, and imperialist tropes of mobility and aspiration – tropes which at times are transformed in adaptation to more explicitly include female protagonists in their mate's aspirations of class mobility. *Angels and Insects* extends its protagonist Robert Adamson and Matty Crompton's class and gendered horizons through a seafaring journey; similarly, Moll Flanders' and Hibbit's miserable fortunes are ultimately only transformed by a journey to the New World, a fortunate shipwreck. For, even as Austen's domestic films make significant reference to the colonies, the constant traffic of people and goods across oceans informs these narratives, including Moll's eventual promise of fortune and release from Old World class and gender constraints.

As I will describe in the next chapter, *Orlando's* allegorical meta-historical feminist journey of becoming digresses at one point to the mythical kingdom of "Khiva." Meanwhile, Campion's *The Piano*, to which I will return at greater length below, situates a gothic love triangle in the wilds of colonial New Zealand. And finally, the same director's more recent *The Portrait of a Lady*, bound up in the different possibilities of England and Florence for a young rich American, features a brief but significant voyage around the world. Set apart visually by its black and white, hand-held home-movie camera quality, this journey signifies the possibilities for self-improvement and adventure lost in Isabel's absolutely claustrophobic marriage to Osmond.

On a different note, contemporary critical texts engaging with the nineteenth-century costume drama and English novel tradition from the distinctive vantage-point of the colonies problematises such privileged Western individualist notions of travel-as-liberation. For instance, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the colonial mirroring of Jane Eyre, suggests a different image of the ship – as transporting the heroine away from her own home toward a terrible unknown place. Finally, as

I will discuss in Chapter Five, *Daughters of the Dusts* ghost ships insist on the violent passage of slavery, the forced immigration of Africans to the New World. Meanwhile, the promise of another passage, to the mainland, and North, is received with ambivalence in this film. These examples demonstrate how contemporary feminist reworkings of costume drama incorporate the colonial context into their narrative space.

From this discussion of ships and the imagined voyages of English protagonists, we now move into the *hors-champ* proper. To continue this chapter's reading of perception-image through the lens of landscape and the "spatial blockings of power," the forthcoming analysis of *The Piano* will take up the wild, unknown colonial landscape of New Zealand. Inherited aesthetic discourses of landscape, including the picturesque and the sublime, scale and proportion, inform cultural renderings and readings of "Old World" and "New World" landscapes. Southern England's gentle, rolling green hills which frame Austen's "knowable community" present an historically specific aesthetic notion of domestic English national space. According to a landscape painting tradition where trees and fields are laid out in pleasing proportion to familiar villages and homes, the countryside of the Austen adaptations offers pleasant places to walk: Not too steep, not too scary, and always a well-kept path through the woods. This is the British meadow evoked so fondly by William early in *Angels and Insects*. Moving outside of this "knowable community," though, we have more daunting landscapes – the much grander scales of the "New World," the gigantic, the exotic, the unknowable, dark spaces of the colonies.

The Picturesque and the Sublime: Colonial Landscapes and Gothic Space

Following Edmund Burke's classic distinction in "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful" (1987), in contrast to the "beautiful" or "picturesque" domestic English landscape of the Austen adaptations, colonial landscapes evoke qualities of the "sublime."²⁶ For Burke, the sublime incorporates aesthetic values of obscurity, power, privation,

²⁶ I thank Kim Sawchuk for introducing me to these intriguing questions of scale, interior and exterior landscapes, and the sublime.

vastness, and infinity; in aural terms, the sublime corresponds to suddenness and loudness. All of these qualities combine to produce an individual reaction of passion, terror and pain. In contrast, the picturesque or the beautiful is characterised by lightness, smallness, smoothness, gradual variation, delicacy, and fair colours; beautiful sounds exhibit qualities of “softness, the winding surface, the unbroken continuance, the easy gradation of the beautiful in other things.” (122) Beautiful objects evoke a more social or collective response of pleasure. To recapitulate:

For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates, it often makes a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure. (124)

If we contrast the scenes of the Austen cycle discussed above (walks in the pleasant countryside, establishing shots of Great Houses nested in their open green fields) with the landing sequence of *The Piano*, these two extremes are brought into relief. Evoking distinct painting traditions (Turner is perhaps the quintessential English painter of the sublime), these inherited aesthetics situate the films' narratives very differently. While Campion's film subsequently draws us into the tangled, muddy, impassable jungle, these bookending beach scenes imprint the vastness of the landscape, the ephemeral and insignificant nature of the comings and goings of the *paheka* (the Maori word for white settlers).

The gigantic scale of the New Zealand landscape rendered in *The Piano* corresponds to a more general scaling of the “frontier” and the New World (of the colonies) as immense, obscure, unknowable, dark. As Grewal (1996) notes, the aesthetic dialectic between the beautiful and the sublime can be linked to an imperial worldview. A correlating set of oppositional aesthetic values imply interlocking value judgements on class, gender, ethnicity, and imperialism. Transparency and darkness; smallness and vastness; domestic and foreign; the knowable and the exotic; the virtuous and the sensual. Whether present in the frame (the New Zealand bush of *The Piano*, or the West Indies setting of *Wide Sargasso Sea*) or merely implicit as an hors-champ (Captain

Wentworth's domain in *Persuasion*; the mysterious source of windfall wealth in *Jane Eyre*), the colonies seep into the aesthetic and narrative coherence of the nineteenth-century costume drama.²⁷ These aesthetic discourses of landscape may be read in relation to the intelligent reworking of gothic space and the romance in *The Piano*. A filmmaker with a singular vision, Campion's modern gothic feminist love triangle struggles to frame the Ada McGrath's Old World female libido, into the vast and unknown new landscapes of the colonies.²⁸

Landscape, Scale and Significance in *The Piano*

Campion plays with scale and significance in her landscapes, contrasting the tiny figures of Ada and Flora with the expanse of the New World wilderness. Traditional proportion, the perspectival anchoring of the establishing shot, the classical separation of foreground, figure, background, evaporate here without a whimper. Consider, for instance, the opening sequences of *The Piano*. Placed in front of the foreground, out-of-focus hand(s) obscure the shot.²⁹ Ada's (Holly Hunter's) small hands form one important frame of reference for her own miniature interior unspoken world – a world expressed not through the voice so essential to costume drama's narrative tradition, but through the alternately gentle and raging voice of the piano. Ada's hands, constantly in motion (against her pale, curiously frozen, still face) animate the stilted, confined,

²⁷ The aesthetic framework of the sublime reverberates through any number of historical "New World" narratives – not only British costume dramas, but American classics recently rendered as films, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), *The Crucible* (1996), and *The Scarlet Letter* (1995). Drawn from different moments in American history, these diverse narratives share an iconic treatment of the early American landscape as vast, terrifying, "sublime." With its huge waterfalls and stunning shots of green forested hills around the Great Lakes, *The Last of the Mohicans*, particularly, renders some awe-inspiring scenery. To think about scale and vision of rugged "natural" landscape is to evoke a disparate list of wide-screen extravaganzas including *The Mission* (1986), *Koyaanisqatsi* (1983), and *Fitzcarraldo* (1982).

²⁸ Methodologically I change registers here slightly. From the stylistic coherence of Austen adaptations (Austen's authorial voice transcribed into a concise, stylistically comparable cycle) to the uniqueness of Philip Haas's *Angels and Insects*, I treat Campion (as well as Sally Potter and Julie Dash) as filmmakers with distinctive aesthetic styles. However, rather than relying overly on biographical auteurist data in and of itself I focus on audio-visual styles as they relate to overarching dissertation concerns with space and movement. The tightly established Austen-style adaptation offers a good touchstone here, as the avant-garde and feminist films work implicitly and explicitly in relation to (and in critique of) these over-determined nineteenth-century cultural forms.

²⁹ As mentioned in Chapter One, part of Baudry's, Heath's (and Metz's) ideological reading of classic narrative cinema evokes the notion of the "perfect distance" between spectator and screen. Held in a set proximity to the narrative and visual codes of the cinema, the spectator is captive by a particular affective and interpellating spatial relationship to the flickering images on the screen. This claustrophobic shot destroys the realist illusion of the controlling gaze, drawing the spectator in "too close" to the screen – placing us in uncomfortable proximity to Ada's hands, unable to see past her fingers.

curiously still yet disturbed world of the wife sent to an unknown husband in an unknown land. These restless hands manifest both a grudging gesture toward communication in a world where she has decided not to speak in the recognition that women's voices are not heard – and the manifestation of an iron-clad, unbending will to express, through piano, and through emphatic, brusque, sometimes rude gestures.

As Stewart suggests, scale functions integrally in relation to the body. At the two extremes of proportion are the miniature and the gigantic.

Although the miniature makes the body gigantic, the gigantic transforms the body into miniature, especially pointing to the body's "toylike" and "insignificant" aspects. Our most fundamental relation to the gigantic is articulated in our relation to landscape, our immediate and lived relation to nature as it "surrounds" us. (71)

Like and unlike *Angels and Insects*, these two extremes of scale cohabit uneasily in *The Piano*. Ada's diminutive corsetted body against the huge unknowable expanse of New World landscape of nineteenth-century New Zealand charts the uneasy path of a critical retrospective narrative of female sexual exploration set against the problematic traces of a colonial past. In *Angels and Insects*, the conceptually merging macrocosm and microcosm remain spatially separate: Brazil figures only at a distance through William's recollections and as a final destination, much like the proffered ocean horizons in *Persuasion*. In *The Piano*, the two scales of close-up (hands) and long-shot (landscape) rub up against one another: Ada's desire articulated through her hands; the tangled, immense landscape; and the Maori, belonging to the landscape (and whom the landscape "belongs" to) who watch, mimic, comment upon the narrative. (I will return to the question of the Maori, voice, and landscape at greater length below.)

First viewed from the beach where Ada and Flora are unceremoniously dumped, the landscape of nineteenth-century New Zealand dwarfs the mother and daughter. The initial beach scene yields the film's most dramatic play between the tiny and the immense. Significantly, the arduous sea voyage from Scotland to New Zealand, the large sailing ship, does not appear in the film. In contrast to the common romantic treatment of the sea and its voyages in many other films (symbolic arrivals and escapes, as in *Persuasion*, *Moll Flanders*, *Angels and Insects*), *Campion* is

interested in land, landing, the tangled tales of the New World. Significantly, Ada does not choose to migrate, she is *sent*. So much for the freedom of the open waves, the promise of the new land. Ada and Flora's arrival through the crashing waves of this remote beach is precarious. First, a shot of four pairs of hands silhouetted dark against the moody sky, reaching upward to catch Ada, Flora, their possessions (especially the bulky, heavy piano) into the pitching rowboat. Several quick cuts, a confusion of water and movement, the roar of the surf.

Wading through the surf, Flora collapses to vomit in the white sand. Cut to a strange shot, Ada's point of view as she looks down on her two tiny feet with their tightly buttoned high black boots in the surf, the water washing around them. (The ignominy of this unladylike arrival, wet boots and long skirts dragging in the sea water, introduces a kind of running gag in *The Piano*, the absurdity of nineteenth-century European costumery in this brave new world. Many minutes of film footage matter-of-factly chronicle Ada and Flora's careful slogging, as they drag their long skirts through the mud that engulfs the small Scottish settlement.³⁰) From this tight shot of wet feet, the sphere of Ada's bodily discomfort, a quick close-up of her face (framed in the perennial, severe bonnet) as she looks up at her surroundings. Then, she is framed in a long shot, her diminutive figure dark against the broad white beach, a looming outcropping of black rock, the moody sky behind. In an extraordinary sequence, the piano is unloaded in the foreground, appearing in the frame from above, its dark, large weight bearing down symbolically on Ada's tiny figure in the background.

Immediately following, a significant, recurring long shot (variations of which appear on the film poster and in the published screenplay): Tiny figures of sailors, women, boxes strewn seemingly at random by the tide across the broad beach; colonisers and their belongings mere diminutive specks on the horizon of white sand beach bordered by a hulking outcropping of black rock. Then, a long still shot from the beach of the waves crashing in. Significantly, this entire

³⁰ This very corporeal account of gendered and class-specific imperial movement in some ways undercuts the perceived effortlessness of colonisation, shifting the tale instead to more of a settlement narrative. The (partly comic) fascination with mud and the elements is reminiscent of Robert Altman's revisionist Western *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971). I will return to questions of corporeality and movement in relation to *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust* in Chapter Four.

landing sequence incorporates only ambient sound: The grunts of the men lifting, and, most of all, the insistent, overwhelming roar of the Pacific Ocean. (Flora and Ada are silent, strained throughout, except for Flora's vomiting.) No tranquil island paradise, this new land is dangerous, unknown, potentially perilous.

Between the miniature realm and the gigantic, and the constant creeping presence of the jungle, what is lacking here is the comfortable realm of the medium shot, which, as Deleuze notes, frames the body-in-action, narrative – in the case of the costume drama, often marked in dialogue (matched shots of speaker-response interrupted in this film by Ada's refusal to speak). Even costume drama's sophisticated play of gesture (the sidelong glance, the significance of a raised eyebrow and things unsaid) gets troubled in *The Piano*. With her superb repertoire of choreographed gesture, play, dance, Campion works significantly around words (both with Ada's silence in this film, and Janet Frame's paralysing shyness in *An Angel at My Table*); yet the stilted pantomime of Ada and Stewart's failed courtship occurs against the constant commentary, doubling, miming of the Maori who constantly surround them.

Welcome to the Jungle: Opacity, the Gothic, and Imperial Aesthetics

One of the few films of this current cycle of costume dramas not adapted from a literary "classic,"³¹ *The Piano* retrospectively explores a Victorian sexuality which haunts the nineteenth-century literary tradition. Writing about the impetus for *The Piano*, Campion (1993) states her affinity for Emily Brontë's gothic sensibility: "I feel a kinship between the kind of romance that Emily Brontë portrayed in Wuthering Heights and this film. Hers is not the notion of romance that we've come to use, it's harsh and extreme, a gothic exploration of the romantic impulse. I wanted to respond to those ideas in my own century." (140) Campion situates the drama within New Zealand's colonial landscape in a time-frame parallel to *Wuthering Heights* (published in 1847).

³¹ A.S. Byatt's contemporary novella "Morpho Eugenia" explicitly comments upon nineteenth century literary codes and conventions, and in this sense is closer in spirit to *The Piano*, or even *Orlando*. (Interestingly enough, in a rare reversal of the adaptation, Campion published not only the script of her surprise hit, but also published the story as a novel.)

Aside from the epic scale of the beach shots which bookend the love triangle, the balance of the film transpires in the dark, tangled, atmospheric bush. According to the film's production notes, Campion sees this setting as offering intensity and intimacy to her narrative of Victorian sexual awakening.

Following from the remarkable shot where the skiff carrying Ada and Flora to shore is filmed first from under water, the director, cinematographer, and art director sought together to create an "underwater," "bottom of the fish tank" look in the forest as well. This quality of light and composition creates *The Piano's* cluttered, dank, brooding atmosphere. Campion comments:

The bush has got an enchanted, complex, even frightening quality to it, unlike anything that you see anywhere else. It's mossy and very intimate, and there's an underwater look that always charmed me. I was after the vivid, subconscious imagery of the bush, its dark, inner world. (139)

In keeping with Campion's explicitly Brontë-esque sensibility, this treatment of the bush reinvents the gothic within a New World landscape. For instance, Stewart's cabin is initially framed in the driving rain with the muddy, spare foreground scored with the harsh verticals of charred, dead tree trunks – colonial desolation of the land made manifest.

Against the transparency of the romantic landscapes framing the Austen adaptations, Campion's frames are cluttered. The camera foregrounds its own "watching." As in the opening sequence with the hands, objects loom in the foreground to obscure our view of the action.³² Campion's long-shots never simply situate the action, but rather problematise the situation. Our first clear view of Ada (in Scotland, the Old World which never really comes into view) finds her briefly crouched at the foot of a huge tree; as she rises, the camera rises with her, and travels up the tree trunk, pivoting to look down on her as she walks away, toward frame right; panning along a huge overhanging bough, the camera tracks her from above.³³ (The equivalent in the Austen

³² Campion consistently employs foregrounds objects as screens which reflect on the diegesis and eerily cloud our vision. This strategy can be traced from the out-of-focus hand in the credit sequence, to a pattern in the film's core where whenever Stewart goes into Ada and Flora's room, he brushes up against petticoats and corsets which hang everywhere. Also strikingly in evidence in *Portrait of a Lady*, this style of framing is reminiscent of gothic and German Expressionist aesthetics generally, and of Australian filmmaker Peter Weir (especially his *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) and *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1983)).

³³ Campion commonly uses these strange, oblique angles. This film language has the effect of unsettling the classic "establishing shot" – a ripple in the expected framing of "perception-image." Of course, the use of

adaptation would be if the establishing shot of Norland Park with the sheep were taken from the tree itself, looking down on the sheep. Unimaginable.)

For Grewal (1996), both the novel and the romantic æsthetics of landscape help to produce an English nationalist discourse of “home,” of domesticity. This æsthetics of the beautiful, connoting transparency and precise relations of scale and “correct” proportion were historically positioned against discourses of darkness, opacity, the exotic, the vastness of the sublime: “The aesthetic of the beautiful was implicated in very many discourses, all of which were governed by the politics of transparency and opacity, of knowledge and darkness, that indicated a wish to establish a homogeneous populace in England and a known, unthreatening one in the colonies.” (28) These aesthetics extended to the demarcation of pleasing, “picturesque” domestic English landscapes, as opposed to the dark, unknowable closed-off attics of gothic literature, and in turn the exotic, looming landscapes of the colonies (“darkest Africa”). Thus, “public” discourses of power and knowledge were intricately bound up in the “private” or “personal” realm of aesthetics, of beauty, of the body.

The interrelated “illuminating lights” of science and imperial exploration constitute an important aspect of the nineteenth-century ethos. These oppositions of light and dark, in turn, correlate to a whole series of interlocking discourses around class, race, and colonialism.³⁴ Grewal links what Foucault identifies as “the fear of darkened spaces, of the pall of gloom that prevents the full visibility of things” with the opaque aesthetics of the gothic: “Gothic opacity, as the darkness of the prerevolutionary era, was both perceived in and sustained by travel and exploration, for it was recuperated in the representations by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European travelers of regions and cultures of Asia, Africa, and the Americas.” (26) Through the reworking of the sublime and of the dense darkness of New World spaces (the ubiquitous forest),

oblique, self-conscious, or skewed camera angles forms an important part of gothic (or in film terms, “expressionist”) aesthetics. Such angles recur also in Zeffirelli’s *Jane Eyre* and *Angels and Insects*.

³⁴ See, for instance, Dyer (1997).

many contemporary historical films, including feminist texts such as *The Scarlet Letter*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *The Piano* tend to perpetuate these imperialist aesthetic tropes.

As mentioned above, the Austen cycle references the British empire through a series of recurring narrative devices (the windfall of wealth from the colonies; sea travel as liberation), but leaves the problematic materiality of the colonies outside the frame. From Austen's drawing rooms and parlours, the colonial world seems unrepresentable, except as a function of the demands of romantic narrative, the restless, expansionist desires of the middle-class protagonists. To draw this looming *hors-champ* a little closer to home, *Angels and Insects* allegorically brings the so-called exploration of the exotic to bear on the soft underbelly of English "domestic" aristocratic life. Significantly, the film begins in a classic jungle shot in the wilds of the Amazon: Painted bodies gyrate wildly around a fire in the night to the booming beat of a primitive drumbeat. The film's parodic treatment of nineteenth-century discourses of science and nature creates anthropological parallels between peoples and customs, humourously challenging the opposition between "civilisation" and the "exotic." Yet, even as the film's costuming and choreographed movement foregrounds questions of class, power, and colonialism, the New World here remains outside the film's main frame of reference; it can only be accessed through William's recollections and remarks. *The Piano*, on the other hand, exports the retrospectively critical European novel of female sexual discovery into the fraught landscape of the New World.

The Contact Zone: Landscape and the Maori in *The Piano*

If there is something dark and unrepresentable about colonial space for the nineteenth-century novel, *The Piano* takes the action directly into the belly of the beast. Grappling with New Zealand's troubled history of settlement, this film seeks a more complex representation both of colonial landscape, and of its original inhabitants, the Maori.³⁵ Campion includes the Maori in an

³⁵ In the screenplay notes on the film, the Maori presence is framed in the name of realism: "Essential to the truth of the period was the inclusion of a Maori "story." Campion felt keenly aware of their place in the film, and the need for Maori advisers and writers to help create such a story." Campion comments, "Even though it's a European story, which is what I am – European – I determined that it would involve having Maori

essentially European story through an ongoing subtle commentary of mimicked gesture, subtitled Maori jokes and commentaries on the *paheka*, and a series of structured cross-cultural comparisons around sexuality, nature, and gender.

For Bakhtin, an important aspect of the novel of travel is the chronotope of the encounter which, like all thresholds and meetings, “is marked by a higher degree of intensity in emotions and values.” (243) Developed within a European Marxist framework where the social significance of heterogenous encounters revolved primarily around class difference, Bakhtin’s observation applies perhaps most forcefully in colonial encounters, which are always tinged with coercive relations of power and violence. Speaking specifically to the colonial encounter, Mary Louise Pratt uses the term “contact zone,” “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.” (1992, 6) Current critical scholarship turns a discerning eye on the “contact zone” in cultural texts of all types including film. In this vein, Lynda Dyson critiques *The Piano* as a “narrative of reconciliation” with New Zealand’s troubled colonial past. For Dyson, the Maori in the film become mere background to the white settler narrative, offering a “primitive” natural order against which to frame the emergent white settler culture.

This romantic melodrama is set in a landscape where “natives” provide the backdrop for the emotional drama of the principal white characters. The Maori are located on the margins of the film as the repositories of an authentic, unchanging and simple way of life: they play “nature” to the white characters’ “culture.”... “Indigenous” people and their cultures have been privileged as the keepers of spiritual and authentic values. Their perceived mystical attachments to the land and to nature are idealized, symbolizing all that has been lost through modernity. (1995, 268)

For Dyson, Baines, the sympathetic Scot who has “gone native,” represents a contemporary New Zealand myth of reconciliation between conflictual Maori and European national origins. Ada’s sexual union with Baines, and their ultimate rejection of bourgeois

people in the film. Cross-cultural collaborations are sensitive, and for me it was a pretty scary endeavour.” (Campion, 142-143).

European culture in jettisoning the piano offers a distancing from Stewart's slash-and-burn approach to colonialism. The eroticisation of European males who have discovered nature, spirituality, and sensuality through absorption of indigenous cultures is a recurring trope in cultures from the contact zone. The tattoos on Baines's body and his familiarity with Maori language and customs place him in a privileged relationship to this "primitive" culture which is seen to be uninhibited about sexuality and corporeality. In contrast with Ada's husband Stewart's perverse, inhibited Victorian morality, Baines appears erotic, sensual. One sequence pictures him sensually cleaning the piano with his shirt, in the nude. Beautifully lit from above with natural sunlight, this scene evokes a "natural" sexuality implicitly linked to Baines's connection with the Maori, and with nature. Parallels to Keitel's New World white man can be found in Daniel Day Lewis's character in *The Last of the Mohicans*, or Gary Oldman's preach in *The Scarlet Letter*. In all three cases, an imputed sensitivity to the environment and his ongoing communication with the "natives" sets this sensitive male figure apart as a love object and also as a colonial ideal from the other European men who appear boorish in comparison. In *The Scarlet Letter's* liberal feminist vision (spear-headed by Demi Moore as producer and star), as well as Campion's more ambivalent feminist scenario, I would suggest that these qualities in leading men (gentleness, vulnerability, sensitivity) offer 1990s masculine ideals.

Yet, unlike *The Scarlet Letter* (and many other North American settlement narratives), in *The Piano*, the Maori are constantly present, watching, sometimes commenting upon, the European characters. Even as the camera's constant motion foregrounds its own presence, the Maori continually pull at the belongings and clothes of Ada and Flora. In the beach scene where Ada and Flora first encounter both Stewart and Baines, and the Maori, there is a remarkable play of gesture – a doubling of the narrative action. Even as Anna Paquin's Flora constantly mimes Ada's gestures (the birdlike manner in which she cocks her head to one side), as Ada and Stewart first meet, a Maori stands just behind each of them. As Ada signs to Flora (acting as interpreter), the Maori man behind her shadows her signs; as Stewart (wearing a black top hat) speaks to her, the Maori man behind him (wearing a more beat-up tall black hat) mimics his

brusque, impatient mannerisms, making fun of him. In fact, Stewart becomes the butt of a number of jokes, as the Maori sometimes ignore his orders, referring to him as “old dry balls.”

The desolation of the colonial process is represented fleetingly through the scorched earth surrounding Stewart’s house; the reference to the Maori burial grounds on a disputed parcel of land; and in a bartering sequence where the Maori angrily throw the buttons offered them in Stewart’s face. In this way, the profound violence of land-greedy settlers comes briefly into focus. Yet, as Dyson insists, the Maori are generally relegated to the shadows of the white settler narrative. Even within the film’s visual economy, its play of light and shadow, Dyson notes how the whiteness³⁶ of Ada and Flora’s faces (“like angels,” say the Maori on first seeing them) stands out against the dark landscape.

Whiteness as purity is a recurring motif in the film. While the Maori are at one with the bush (to the extent that they are even visible) the film continually privileges whiteness through the play of light against dark, emphasizing the binary oppositions at work in the text. The whiteness is enhanced by the use of filters, which means that while the darker skin tones of the Maori are barely discernible in the brooding shadows of the bush, the faces of Ada and Flora, framed by their bonnets, take on a luminous quality. (272)

Reading the treatment of landscape in *The Piano*, the New World opacity of the bush, highlighting its exotic and sexual qualities does reinstate certain colonial tropes of landscape, and deliberately so, according to the film’s notes. Campion’s at times creative strategies of sketching in a watching and occasionally commenting Maori presence in the film through gesture and subtitled dialogue sets *The Piano* apart from the astonishingly flat stock roles of “indigenous” peoples in films such as *The Scarlet Letter*. This said, there seems to be a limit here to the participation of non-Europeans in this gothic romance as full-fledged protagonists; this “limit” in some ways recalls the simultaneous presence and relative invisibility of class in the Austen films and *Angels and Insects*. Hailed primarily as the story of a Victorian woman’s sexual awakening, *The Piano* moves the gothic romance into the “New World.” Yet Ada’s ambivalent overlapping

³⁶ In *White* (1997), Dyer writes about the aesthetic and cultural implications of “whiteness.” For instance, he examines how lighting techniques for photographic and cinematic media privilege white skin to “stand out” against dark backgrounds. Different skin tones, often have tended to blend into the background, even as non-white characters have taken “supporting” or background roles. This sequence in *The Piano* offers a classic example of such lighting/ foregrounding techniques within contemporary feminist costume drama.

quests – for passion, for agency, perhaps a new country, as the film's narrative centre renders the Maori into the background.

To conclude this diverse tour of the different singular treatments of colonial space in the gothic texts of the corpus, I will briefly touch on *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and what Gayatri Spivak calls the “tangential narratives” of imperialism. Reminiscent of the audio-visually “tangential” status of working class people in Austen and the Maori in *The Piano*, Spivak's notion of the “tangential narrative” bridges this chapter's discussion of landscape, detail, presence and absence, with the central narrative preoccupation of Chapter Four.

Gothic Space and the “Tangential Narratives” of Imperialism

Charlotte Brontë's celebrated gothic novel Jane Eyre has become an English-language feminist classic. An oft-adapted story, the most recent version is Franco Zeffirelli's 1996 British-French-Italian co-production starring Charlotte Gainsbourg as Jane and William Hurt as an unlikely Rochester.³⁷ In contrast to the transparency of the beautiful and the picturesque, gothic space is characteristically opaque, replete with closed doors, skeletons in closets, horrific basements, and “madwomen in the attic.” Unlike the partially opened doors, the secrets-behind-hands (but not behind doors) of the Austen adaptations, gothic space in the *noir* text is filled with shadows, staircases, unexplained moans and screams from behind closed doors. Zeffirelli mobilises the well-honed cinematic language of *noir* to create the eerie gothic space of Thornfield: oblique high and low camera angles which diminish or stretch the characters oddly in space; wide angle shots which push, pull, and distort interior space; moody lighting, and a haunting of stairways and shadows.³⁸

³⁷ Zeffirelli's 1996 version is only the last of a long line of four adaptations, including Robert Stevenson's classic 1944 film starring Orson Welles as Rochester and Joan Fontaine as Jane. Needless to say, compared to Welles (or another classic Brontë dark male, Laurence Olivier's Heathcliff) “sensitive” actor William Hurt makes a milktoast Rochester.

³⁸ This gothic or *noir* treatment of space of course derives from German expressionism, and has been used in a series of what Mary Ann Doane (1987b) calls “paranoid women's films” in the 1940s. Dark, obscure, terrifying places within the gothic home space, for Doane, arise from the home's correlation with the female body – and the subsequent dread and “crisis of vision” in examining its orifices. *Mary Reilly* (1996), Stephen Frears' glacially slow version of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde also partakes in this visual style.

Rendered within the domestic English context made strange of the Yorkshire moors, these gothic spaces draw from a strong cinematic *noir* tradition which inspired Campion's New World gothic. Further, Anna Paquin as a young Jane and Charlotte Gainsborough's severe hairstyles and bonnets are strikingly reminiscent of *The Piano*'s costumery and casting, and also of the severe costuming of Matty Crompton in *Angels and Insects*. To restrict my reading of *Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre* to the question of colonialism and opacity, the classic "madwoman in the attic" figure of Bertha,³⁹ Rochester's wife, is in fact a creole woman from the West Indies whom Rochester has married for her fortune. The source of the mysterious noises, a constant pyromaniac threat to Rochester and the house, the secret behind the door has been read by feminist critics variously as female madness and sexuality – and also as the subaltern, ethnically "other" woman who threatens the *status quo* of nineteenth-century morality.

Jean Rhys wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966 as a colonial prequel to *Jane Eyre*. Like *The Piano* and *Angels and Insects*, Rhys's texts (and, more problematically, its adaptation) comments retrospectively upon an iconic feminist female-authored nineteenth-century novel. Herself a daughter of the Caribbean, Rhys sought through *Wide Sargasso Sea* to make peace with Brontë's feminist rendering of a colonial structure of attitude and reference. Rhys's novella sets out to write in the life of Bertha Mason, a white Jamaican Creole, before her arrival in England. Bertha, born Antoinette, as "a white Creole child growing up at the time of emancipation in Jamaica, is caught between the English imperialist and the black native." (Spivak 1995, 250) After her mother goes mad, Antoinette, an heiress to a plantation and a considerable fortune, is courted by Rochester, the younger son of Thornfield Hall. Retold from Antoinette's perspective, Rochester appears as an opportunistic racist patriarchal male of his time who appropriates not only Antoinette's fortune, but her name.

³⁹ "Bertha" has been read as a quintessential figure of nineteenth century female hysterical and madness. (See Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) a seminal investigation of nineteenth-century female writers, named partly in honour of Jane Eyre's "Bertha.").

John Duigan's adaptation of Rhys's novella plays more like orientalist soft-core porn than a rejoinder to Brontë.⁴⁰ Although Antoinette's voiceover begins the film, her perspective is overwhelmed by Rochester. The lush jungle here provides a quintessentially "exotic" jungle backdrop to Antoinette and Rochester's obsessive sexual relationship. This "natural" staging, the creepers, the half-closed doors, the lurking "natives," are somewhat reminiscent of the gothic bush landscape of *The Piano*. Without dwelling overlong on *Wide Sargasso Sea*, I would simply note the amazing resilience of certain colonial tropes in evidence in contemporary film: the sensuality and passions evoked by heat and tropical jungles.

To return to the issue of visibility and audibility of "natives," *Wide Sargasso Sea*, by its initial setting in prerevolutionary Jamaica, must deal with racial and colonial conflict. The film's opening scenes, seen through the eyes of the child Antoinette, show a terrifying spectacle where her home is burnt by renegade slaves. As a shadow image of Antoinette's later fate as Bertha where she burns with Thornfield, this sequence helps bookend the film's interest in madness and destiny. As a sequence of movement-image, the burning of the plantation house and the threatening field workers, visually distances the French owners from the Jamaicans. At the same time, Antoinette as a Creole, becomes the exotic, sensual "other" with whom Rochester becomes obsessed.

With the different shades of blackness and whiteness come different qualities of agency and audibility within the film. While Antoinette narrates the opening sequences of her childhood, where her Creole family still has the power, Rochester's voice takes over after their marriage. Finally, forcefully taken from her homeland, Antoinette symbolically loses her voice, language, and identity as Rochester renames her "Bertha." But to backtrack a moment, I return to the ambivalent figures of the Jamaican servants, who remain with Antoinette throughout her fortunes

⁴⁰ Spivak's (1985) dense reading of the interrelated texts suggests key imperial tropes at work within nineteenth-century women's fiction. In my own project, examining the spatial qualities of the adaptations, the careful dialogue created by Rhys with *Jane Eyre*, this fascinating intertextual dialogue is lost as both films edit out major aspects of the story; for instance, Jane's journey to India was completely axed from Zeffirelli's film, as well as most other adaptations.

in Jamaica. For instance, Christophine, Antoinette's black nurse cuts an important figure in both novella and film, yet Spivak notes the limits to her inclusion in the narrative:

She cannot be contained by a novel which rewrites a canonical English text within the European novelistic tradition in the interest of the white Creole rather than the native. No perspective *critical* of imperialism can turn the Other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been the absolutely Other into a domesticated Other that consolidates the imperialist self. (Spivak, 253)

This statement perhaps best describes *The Piano's* attempt to render a European novelistic tradition sympathetic to the native Other. But these characters, "domesticated Others" placed somehow into a story which is not their own, a language and cultural tradition whose terms they can only mimic (either as clowns, idiot savants, or social critics), are eventually "driven out of the story"; they can only be tangential to a narrative which was never about them. And finally, like the servants and working people who fill out the frame of the Austen adaptations, these characters may watch, may occasionally intervene (such as when Baines's "Maori woman" Hira stops Baines from shaking Flora when she arrives with Ada's finger), but they cannot *speak* the language of the narrative. In the novel, access to language connotes full subjectivity (the speaking subject) and narrative presence.

In *The Piano*, the question of speech becomes deliberately tricky. Ada chooses *not* to speak, presumably because no one would listen to her anyway. But Ada's mode of expression, what she must lose to recover her voice in the end, is the piano. This bulky, impractical instrument of Ada's sacred inner self becomes her voice. No one else can play it: neither the illiterate Baines, nor Ada's husband Stewart who attacks the piano with an axe in frustration – certainly not the Maori who must lift the blasted thing through the jungle, and who run their fingers curiously over the keys. It is telling that the film's title, symbolic object fits so incongruously in the jungle. Both the key to its mistress's inner soul, and what Dyson calls a symbol of bourgeois culture, it must be jettisoned in this new world. But this whole process of lost and found and cherished objects, of silence and speech, sensuality and expression, revolves around the figure

of Ada and her quest for subjectivity. And this broader quest is what connects Ada to the other heroines and other films of the cycle.

Evoking such tensions between different trajectories, voices, subjects, Spivak (1985) writes of the “tangential narratives” of imperialism which overlap with the project of nineteenth-century feminist individualism – the quest for privacy, interiority, subjecthood and romance embodied in the novels of the time. Spivak goes on to suggest that the emergent feminist criticism of the 1980s “reproduces the axioms of imperialism” through the admiration of literature of the feminist subject” (243) in authors such as the Brontë sisters and Jane Austen. In the case of Jane Eyre, this tangential narrative involves the story of missionary St. John Rivers (largely absent in the film), whose story “escapes the closed circle of the *narrative* conclusion” of the novel. These threads, which both enable the narrative movement, and pull outside of the confines of narrative, from the *hors-champ*, forming a discursive regularity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European literature. In a sense, Campion chooses to tug on one of these tangents, to “foreground the background” of New Zealand's white settler history in *The Piano* with her play of gesture and mimicry. Going one step further, this is Dyson's critical project in reading *The Piano* as a “white settlement narrative.” Finally, this is what post-colonial theorists like Spivak and Saïd undertake in relation to the cultural texts of imperialism.

Most often applied retrospectively to nineteenth-century texts, we see here how these preoccupations apply powerfully and perceptively to the spatial blockings of power in the contemporary audio-visual adaptations of these literary texts. Methodologically, this process involves seizing on a detail, the maid in the corner of the frame, a minor character (as in Spivak's reading of *Christophine*, Antoinette's black nurse). In audio-visual terms, my project in this chapter has been to foreground the background of the costume drama. Servants and working people form a more or less visible and audible landscape for the narrativised desires and machinations of the bourgeois protagonists of the English costume drama.

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This last section reiterates the intimate links between the perception-image (milieu) figured through landscape in long shot, voice, and narrative which have been raised implicitly in the rich textual investigations of this chapter. From the country walk which began this chapter somewhere in Austen's pleasant southern English countryside, I have traced the the question of gender, class and colonial mobility through a series of gothic texts situated both within the English domestic context and abroad in the *hors-champ* of the colonies. Whereas the field of perception-image insists on reading "around" narrative, Spivak's work brings us back to this question. In the next chapter, I will draw from these discussions of the nineteenth century's restless wanderings in my full reading of narrative movement in *Orlando* – a text which toys with such easy trajectories, putting the imagined feminist journey into question. In due course, following the recursive structure of this dissertation, Orlando's narrative journey will revisit certain other issues raised in this chapter, notably the question of colonialism in the costume drama, and the question of allegory raised in a preliminary way in the reading of scale and significance in *Angels and Insects*. Chapter Four also takes up a reading of issues of colonialism in *Daughters of the Dust*, a film which both critiques the imperial tropes of costume drama, and refashions it, drawing from a sophisticated heritage of African American cultural traditions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Gender, Narrative, Movement: Of Action-Image and Flights of Fancy

Orlando: You see – I am about to lose everything –

Shelmerdine: – then you can come with me.

Orlando: Where are you going?

Shelmerdine: Back to America – when the wind changes to the south-west.

Orlando: America? I've been abroad – but East –

Shelmerdine: Then you know as well as I how good it is to travel. Like a free spirit – unfettered by position or possession.

Orlando: Unfettered? Are you an...adventurer...by profession?

Shelmerdine: My profession, if you can call it that, is the pursuit of liberty.

...

Orlando: I suppose your journeys to be hazardous at times?

You have fought in battles, like a man?

Shelmerdine: I have fought.

Orlando: Blood?

Shelmerdine: If necessary, yes. Freedom must be *taken*. Freedom must be *won*.

Orlando: If I were a man...

Shelmerdine: You?

Orlando: I might choose *not* to risk my life for an uncertain cause. I might think that freedom won by death was not worth having. In fact –

Shelmerdine: (*Shrugging*) – you might choose not to be a *real* man at all... say if I was a woman.

Orlando: You?

Shelmerdine: I might choose not to sacrifice my life caring for my children, nor my children's children. Nor to drown anonymously in the milk of female kindness. But instead – say – to go abroad. Would I then be – (*Orlando and Shelmerdine look at each other, and both smile in recognition.*)

Orlando: – a real woman?

In this exchange from *Orlando*, Shelmerdine and Orlando find themselves somewhere in Jane Austen's England in 1800, just eleven years after the French Revolution, on the cusp of a new century which they encounter in a bold (and noisy) steam locomotive. Framed on horseback, about to set sail for America, Shelmerdine (Potter casts him as an American)¹ embodies the nineteenth-century energy, adventurousness of the ascendant middle class discussed in the previous chapter. For Potter, Shelmerdine's very slightly absurd, self-important dynamism contrasts wryly with the cloying constraints of bourgeois femininity which Orlando has just

¹ In her notes on the film, Potter attests to the importance of incorporating an American sensibility into the film, particularly as she takes Orlando's metahistorical trajectory into the twentieth century. Shelmerdine embodies the specifically American revolutionary spirit related to the national project of Manifest Destiny. (See Potter 1992, xii.)

narrowly escaped. Shelmerdine's historically precise momentum (the colonial and propertied expansive exuberance of the middle class coupled with the specifically American qualities of revolutionary spirit) offers an intriguing point of departure for a consideration of the various imagined historical journeys scripted across the texts of my corpus. In this fragment of dialogue, Potter takes a self-conscious step back from Shelmerdine's celebration of travel and adventure, wryly noting the class and imperial entitlement and mobility implied in the dream of "unfettered" exploration. However tentative and self-conscious, though, Orlando's ambitious journey through four hundred years and several continents resonates with a utopian feminist desire for collective and individual movement, change, becoming. Rooted in a modernist social movement, *Orlando* as a feminist text cannot remain entirely unsympathetic to Shelmerdine's revolutionary dynamism. As a self-conscious distillation of the generic temporal "stillness" of costume drama and what I call the "attenuated dynamism" of Orlando's meta-historical journey, *Orlando* proves a fascinating case study for this middle chapter on narrative movement.

This pithy exchange between Orlando and Shelmerdine playfully reintroduces the problem of gendered movement. The two speakers comment upon the shortcomings of prescribed gender roles – roles inscribed, as I have suggested throughout this dissertation, by gendered cultural horizons of movement, dynamism, agency. Whereas in the previous chapter I concentrated gendered, class, and colonial codes of space and movement in relation to landscape (perception-image or long-shot), here I wish to foreground the question of corporeality and character movement – figure, character, destination. Figures traversing social and geographical space, the narrative trajectory introduces essential vectors of desire, temporality, destination into Chapter Two's general discussion of mobility. Organised around the realm of the medium shot, Deleuze's "action-image" ("the force or act"), this analysis is formulated around the scale of the human figure. Following debates within film theory introduced in the Introduction and Chapter One, the action-image suggests the problematic of narrative movement – but also the more liminal concerns of costume, gesture, choreography, corporeality, and journey.

As the major analytic framework for understanding movement and desire in cultural texts, narrative constitutes a central preoccupation in this dissertation. Essentially, narrative offers a means to organise and make sense of the human lifeworld through the symbolic ordering of time and space. Inflected through the socio-historical codes of genre, as suggested in the previous two chapters, these orderings of space, time, and movement are always fraught with embedded relations of power. Within film theory, Heath's essay "Narrative Space" (discussed at length in Chapter One) suggests that the historical harnessing of cinematic technologies into the prescribed teleological movement of narrative has created an ideological apparatus par excellence which "sutures" the subject into pre-scripted stories. Thus, cinematic "space" has been dominated, in a sense "colonised," by the capitalist, patriarchal, and ideological routings of desire (for instance, the inexorable desiring movement within Austen toward heterosexual marriage and the accumulation of property). Within feminist film theory, from Haskell to Mulvey to de Lauretis, prescriptive narrative trajectories (for instance, the "containment" of the disruptive female figure in the narrative closure of marriage or death) are seen to circumscribe women's psychic and social desires.

In Deleuzian terms, narrative routes the diverse potentialities, the "lines of flight," or polymorphously perverse desires of social subjects along prescribed tedious trails, toward predestined outcomes. Further, though, Deleuze's three types of action-image insist that there is not only one type of movement. Even within the frame of the action-image, while narrative may form one aspect of cinematic movement, we must seek to trace "lines of flight" which exceed or subvert the oedipalising work of narrative. This qualification has been essential to feminist filmmaking and theory, which has consistently engaged in formal strategies to usurp or "read against the grain" of narrative closure. Within this tradition, *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust* engage directly with (and seek to subvert) inherited aesthetic forms including narrative. For this reason, these two films form the centerpiece of this chapter's discussion of narrative and other aspects of action-image. Finally, following the textured audio-visual details of these idiosyncratic texts, I trace out other aspects of movement at the scale of the human figure foregrounded in this

film (costume, gesture, choreographed movement) which work in relation to narrative, but which also have their own autonomy.

The formal density and intelligence of Potter's *Orlando* merits a full treatment in this chapter, the single most complete analysis of one text in this dissertation. While the other chapters seek patterns and exceptions *across* the corpus through particular movement-images, the problem of narrative movement requires a synthetic account of an entire text – Orlando's allegorical feminist journey from beginning to end. As an explicit, self-conscious retort to the realist and romantic traditions embodied in the Austen cycle and the gothic texts (described in some detail in Chapters One and Two), *Orlando* forms a fascinating case study. In a sense, the exception illuminates the generic rule, and my close reading of the film illuminates interesting spatio-temporal aspects of costume drama reiterated across the cycle (specific qualities of tempo and detail). Finally, both *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust* share an "allegorical" narrative motor distinct from the more common "realist" or interior narrative movement focused on the individual person. I conclude the chapter with a return to the problem of inside and outside, charting these two types of narrative space in evidence across the cycle.

Gender, Narrative, Movement: Approaching *Orlando* ²

In her essay "Desire in Narrative," de Lauretis (1984) identifies an overarching structural narrative economy of gendered stasis and movement. This formula scripts the male subject as dynamic hero who strides through narrative time and space; in contrast, the female character typically represents stasis, home and hearth. As mentioned in Chapter One, the female character represents social and narrative constraint – a threshold or destination for the male protagonist's inner and outer journeys of self-realisation and social transformation, respectively. Doane (1987a) extends such a gendered economy to spatio-temporal patterns of genre. She suggests that more dynamic narratives and open landscapes signifying freedom of movement and possibility correspond to male address, while cluttered interiors and narrative constraint correspond to

² An earlier version of this analysis of *Orlando* appeared in *Screen* (Pidduck 1997).

female address. The notion of female narrative constraint is manifested textually and historically in gendered codes of corporeal and geographical mobility – a skewed actual and imagined access to social space and agency.

Doane cites the Western as the “masculine” genre par excellence, while the costume drama, with its precise attention to costume and set design, and a meandering, detail-rich, languorous quality of event may be seen according to this schema as a quintessentially “female” genre. Observing the costume drama’s obsession with the alternately luscious and claustrophobic subtleties of decorum and visual style, it could be argued that this genre intimately explores a particular historical quality of white, bourgeois, social constraint – an experience rendered explicitly around gender relations and femininity. However, Sally Potter’s *Orlando* (1992), does not fit neatly as a “typical” costume drama. Perhaps the general descriptive terms of movement and constraint are qualified, fleshed out, problematized when applied to a particular text. What has come to fascinate me in this film is the attenuated dynamism traced out by a protagonist who changes, at least on the surface, from male to female. Even as s/he undertakes an audacious journey through 400 years of English bourgeois and imperial history, Orlando proves for the most part a rather inept protagonist.

The slowness and uncertainty of Orlando’s progress coincides with what I believe to be an explicit play (in both Virginia Woolf’s source novel and Potter’s film adaptation) with gendered conventions of narrative movement. According to de Lauretis, part of the project of feminist film criticism and filmmaking has been the production of new forms of discourse, new forms of narrative which can “construct the terms of reference of another measure of desire.” Potter’s *Orlando*, like her earlier projects *Thriller* (1979) and *The Gold Diggers* (1984), playfully takes up this challenge. The following detailed account of the film’s precise and in some ways idiosyncratic treatment of gendered space, time, and movement raises interesting questions about these emergent feminist desires. Further, as an exception can illuminate the rule, this filmmaker’s deliberate tinkering with narrative patterns and film form generally, as well as the particular

conventions of costume drama, foregrounds generic and cultural norms of gendered movement and constraint.

In this section, I will elucidate several different qualities of gendered movement in *Orlando*. Through the term of “movement” I address, variably, the spatio-temporal issues of costume, décor and narrative tempo, the psychological dimension of character development, as well as narrative and imaginative historical and geographical voyages. Working from literary accounts of the pull of narrative through time and space, I first develop a detailed description of these layers of movement and stillness. Then, using Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of chronotope as a bridge, I work outward from textual issues of narrative movement toward a “preferred” audience for this text: a dispersed feminist audience. Drawing from the notion of the journey as a structuring logic of narrative, I would even go so far to say that *Orlando* develops a utopian feminist voyage of “becoming” which can delicately “move,” inspire, or amuse this audience. In a sense, Potter updates and screens Woolf’s iconic feminist text through Tilda Swinton’s feminist heroine who strides, at times with difficulty, through four centuries of English bourgeois and colonial history. In the process the dry theoretical problem of gendered narrative movement becomes an explicitly collective project of social critique – and above all, the exploration of a feminist utopian journey.

However, to extend the theoretical questions raised by de Lauretis and Doane, I follow *Orlando*’s awkward bumbling through historical social and aesthetic vignettes into the imaginative imperialist encounter with the Khan of Khiva. In the final section of the essay, then, I look at *Orlando*’s sojourn into colonial space as an instance which calls into question the binary logic of a gendered narrative/social allocation of movement and constraint. In the process, I begin to explore the implications of a seemingly self-evident feminist aspiration for access to the (white masculine) dream of unhindered mobility.

Narrative and Chronotope in *Orlando*

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were,

thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (Bakhtin 84)

In the following analysis of *Orlando*, I return to Bakhtin's chronotope as a productive spatio-temporal approach to narrative as movement. However, whereas in Chapter Two I focused on the more incidental *spatial* elements of the chronotope (the provincial town, the salon), here I wish to borrow from its core tenet – the articulation of time and space into different narrative forms, into the desiring movement of narrative. For instance, Bakhtin describes a classical Greek form, the “adventure novel of everyday life” which evokes the inner machinations of plot-time/space in *Orlando*. This form twins a biographical narrative of human identity, crisis and metamorphosis with an adventure structure chronicling a protagonist's “actual course of travel” or journey. For Bakhtin, this chronotope combines the epic adventure time of the Greek romance with the everyday time of human biography: “The factor of the journey itself, the *itinerary*, is an actual one: it imparts to the temporal sequence of the novel a real and essential organizing center. In such novels, finally, biography is the crucial organizing principle for time.” (104)

The adventure time (space) through which the literary and cinematic protagonist Orlando gambols wide-eyed follows a highly selective and ironic journey through 400 years of English aristocratic gender and social relations. Further, the subtitle of Woolf's novel, “a biography,” hints that Orlando was written as a *roman clef* shadowing the life of Woolf's friend and lover Vita Sackville-West.³ To further complicate this biographical frame Woolf's (and Potter's) Orlando may be read as a stand-in for, or a witness to, the historical experience of bourgeois English women. As I will suggest below, the film's “narrative movement,” Orlando's journey, cannot be separated from an allegorical English feminist trajectory which transports the modern (feminine) viewer at once into the past seeking the roots of the present, and toward the future.

Following the framework of the adventure novel of everyday life, Potter's adaptation of Woolf combines the characteristic narrative structure of segmentation and passage. Intertitled

³ See Sandra M. Gilbert, “Introduction,” in Virginia Woolf, Orlando: A Biography (1993, xi-xl).

signposts mark off a sequence of seven semi-autonomous episodes: “1600 DEATH,” “1610 LOVE,” “1650 POETRY,” “1700 POLITICS,” “1750 SOCIETY,” “1800 SEX,” and “BIRTH” (not dated, presumably Potter’s present-day).⁴ Bold white capitals on a black screen, these intertitles effectively frame, foreground, and methodically *interrupt* the film’s narrative flow. The two elements (dates and events) within the titles signal the doubled spatial-temporal articulation of the adventure novel of everyday life. Crass episodal tags from death to (re)birth frame formative moments in Orlando’s life according to traditional biographical developmental stages. Orlando’s “biographical” journey involves his/her passage through the clearly delineated historical episodes referenced by the dates.⁵ The protagonist, then, literally “moves” through clearly differentiated tableaux, from the dotage of Elizabeth I (1600) to an ambassadorial appointment in the Orient (1700) and into the late twentieth century, ending in the present-day of the filmmaker. Orlando’s passage through these stylized historical chronotopes links the film’s narrative movement with an allegorical “history” of British (bourgeois, white) womanhood.

I shall call these segments “tableaux” or, even better, “movements.” As in the composition of musical texts, each movement carries its own colourations and mood. These movements offer a clue to the bare bones of *Orlando’s* narrative structure. Each episode encapsulates a particular æsthetic/historical space-time, presenting a stylistically and narratively semi-autonomous segment. Visually, the tableaux are set apart by a distinct array of period costumes and décor which playfully evoke and exaggerate the “feel” of an era. Working with a particular room in the Great House, the Duchess’s drawing room, or the stylized exteriors of the ice court, fragments of space metonymically reproduce a certain æsthetic/historical moment. In keeping with a theme of property-holding, Orlando’s travels continually return to the family seat, the Great House itself. While the bold black and white flagstones of the Great Hall, the manor’s

⁴ At the end of her novel, Woolf brings the text into her “present” in recording the exact time of its completion: “And the twelfth stroke of midnight sounded; the twelfth stroke of midnight, Thursday, the eleventh of October, Nineteen hundred and Twenty Eight.” (1993, 228).

⁵ By evoking the intertitles of silent film, these frames draw attention to *Orlando’s* construction as narrative, and as a cinematic text. A technique of Brechtian distanciation, these intertitles effect both the novel’s inexplicable lapses of time, and feed the film’s self-conscious preoccupation with cultural production, typical of Potter’s avant-garde filmmaking roots.

exterior architecture, and the great oak tree in the field which bookends the film (“enduring old England”) remain constant, particular rooms are redecorated (like Orlando/ Tilda Swinton’s changing garb) to signal temporal transitions.

These historical moments are not produced, though, through the conventions of realism (even as applied within more traditional costume drama), but rather through the metonymic excess of elaborate set design and splendid overblown costumery. The staged fantastical setting of each movement calls attention to the film’s irreality. For example, the encounter with the Muscovites transpires not within a castle, but in the magical space of the ice court; Orlando’s ambassadorial mission to Central Asia occurs within a grove of pillars, or out in the windblown desert. The excess of the costumes and ridiculousness of the infinite ritual and pomp offer a kind of ongoing visual satire of the historical conventions of bourgeois English manners, gender comportment, and, less rigorously, empire. For example, consider the British ambassadorial contingent in Khiva at the onset of the battle, who parade around in their enormous hats with obscene plumage, skinny stockinged legs and coyly, hugely, buckled shoes. The pompousness of these wigs and costumes and the self-important mannerisms which accompany them offer a running visual commentary on the project of empire. The impracticality of the clothes, attitudes, and disingenuous policies brought along in the huge spatial movement of colonialism highlight the polite ridiculousness (if not the tragedy) of the colonial venture.

In parallel (and perhaps more eloquently), the sheer crippling unmanageability of Orlando’s bourgeois female attire speaks volumes to the “structure of feeling” of upper class British womanhood – the limits on physical and social mobility. The newly-corsetted Orlando in her voluminous stiff white gown minces with difficulty around the dust-draped furniture in what had been her own parlour; the whiteness and volume of her skirt liken her to the abandoned furniture which has been draped awaiting the return of the lord of the manor. Similarly, in the “Society” parlour scene, Orlando is immobilized like one elaborate, frosted blue cake on a love seat. Complete with an unlikely sculpted headdress, in her voluminous blue dress she becomes a porcelain figurine, hampered equally by costume and convention from moving or responding to

the routine snubs by the male “wits.” The awkwardness of these overblown costumes is reinforced through a consistent use of perfectly orchestrated balanced compositions and long still shots that create a luscious stage on which to watch the actors go through their painstakingly choreographed, if meaningless paces.

Costume and Constraint

Orlando's abrupt and ambivalent début as a member of the “fairer sex” in the “SOCIETY 1750” movement (of the white and blue dresses) corresponds loosely with the early modern period, the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in England. Clothing historians have linked this time (and more particularly the early nineteenth century) with a gender and class-based shift in garb. Women's attire in the emergent middle class, notes Renée Baert (1994), became increasingly elaborate: “The conspicuous display of finery by women of the rising bourgeois class served as an advertisement of their husband's (or father's) prosperity, the unwieldiness of the increasingly pumped up and elaborate clothing itself a sign of the freedom of women of this leisure class from the physical requirements even of household labour.” (1994, 355) A sign of “freedom” from domestic labour, this elaborate immobility of clothes created a prison of uselessness, turning their wearers into little more than ornamental objects. Within Potter's retrospective feminist critique, this point comes through the overblown extravagance of the white and blue gowns.

Meanwhile, men of the upper and middle classes of this period gradually abandoned their earlier dandy phase (gloriously puffy Elizabethan collars; the POETRY movement's voluminous lace shirt with its huge bow at the collar; the satin male fripperies still in evidence in the SOCIETY movement), their clothes becoming increasingly more sober, purposeful, to correspond to the emergent masculine “virtues of industry, self-control, and renunciation.” (Baert, 355) With his dark, comfortable trousers and waistcoat, his high riding boots, Orlando's lover Shelmerdine perhaps most energetically embodies the masculine spirit of the nineteenth century: An American, he speaks headily of Revolution, of adventure and voyages across the ocean. As Shelmerdine

and Orlando gallop wildly across the countryside, they encounter a train, a material symbol of the Industrial Revolution. Yet, Potter cannot resist toppling the dashing Shelmerdine off his horse as he rescues Orlando.

Clumsy and ineffectual in this ironic retrospective feminist reading, Shelmerdine embodies the dynamism and adventure of the nineteenth-century male figure through the cut of his clothes. Similarly, in *Angels and Insects* the practical, well-traveled William Adamson is clad always in a simple dark wool suit which facilitates his naturalist projects; women in this film, in contrast, are spectacularly and ridiculously decked out in gaudy, insect-like gowns which liken them to insects or birds trying to attract their mates.⁶ In the Austen cycle, the heroic figure of the man on horseback clad in serviceable dark traveling clothes recurs. Willoughby, Edward Ferrars, Mr. Darcy, Captain Wentworth and Colonel Brandon quite commonly overtake their love interests in their earthbound, more leisurely “walks” in the countryside, or as they travel by coach). Within these costume codes of gendered movement, Orlando gradually dons the more unisex garb of the liberated twentieth century woman in her trajectory toward independence. Evoked partly through a spectacular series of costume changes (rather than the psychological realist processes of character development), Orlando completes her narrative journey in the final BIRTH movement wearing practical brown trousers and a white shirt, her hair pulled back. Traveling clothes equip her to ride off into the future on a vintage motorcycle with her daughter in the sidecar. A voice-over notes with satisfaction that she is “no longer trapped by destiny.” (Nor, we are to presumably imply, is she now trapped by her outfits.)

Stella Bruzzi (1993) examines the rendering of clothes as part of a creative retrospective treatment of women’s history within feminist costume drama. She identifies two pervasive costuming strategies: the “liberal” and the “sexual.” Within the liberal approach, clothes “are merely signifiers to carry information about country, class and period” (234); without foregrounding the work of representation, this strategy explores what are seen as “universal

⁶ Borrowing from A.S. Byatt’s novella, the film has a field day with the comparison between “natural” gender codes of camouflage and seduction from the insect world, and the rather bizarre rituals of courtship within the Alabaster household.

female dilemmas.” Through an implicit juxtaposition with films like *My Brilliant Career*, Bruzzi argues, seeks to create “political and ideological affinity between the struggles of women in the present and figures from the past.” (233) This account, I believe, succinctly hits the nail on the head in describing the costuming within the Austen adaptations. By no means a “simple” or straightforward task, clothes here are the prop for the “real” psychological progression of narrative; the realist period aesthetic (costume, mise-en-scène, landscape) seeks to create an “actual” historical look.

In contrast, Bruzzi’s “sexual” approach to costume “offers a more elliptical way of examining the past – one based on complex, hard-to-define emotions and attractions rather than concrete events.” (235) Bruzzi (1993; 1995) insightfully explores the complex terrain of costume in *The Piano*, detailing how the film brilliantly explores the problem of female sensuality and desire through costume. With reference to other costume dramas such as *Daughters of the Dust* and *Orlando*, Bruzzi’s second category might be extended beyond complex treatments of (gendered) sexuality and sensuality. In fact, Bruzzi’s following description of how Ada and Flora’s clothes add to the awkwardness of the colonial venture speaks directly to my problematic of movement and constraint.

Women’s clothes are presented as constricting, ugly, absurd; the multiple skirts which trip Ada and Flora as they trudge through the mud, and which make it ludicrously difficult for Aunt Morag to relieve herself when “caught short” in the woods. Clothes seem liberating only when they come off, as when Flora dances and cartwheels across the beach in her petticoat. That is, until Ada starts to fall in love with Baines. (240)

As suggested by these examples, *The Piano*, *Orlando*, *Portrait of a Lady*, *Angels and Insects*, and *Daughters of the Dust* all deploy the possibilities of “costume” far beyond the expectations of the realist tradition; certainly in *Campion* and *Potter* we can read critical treatments of movement and constraint into the very deliberate costuming strategies. Costume, gesture, and choreographed movement imply other aspects of the action-image, the sphere of the medium shot, organised around the scale and domain of the body. As foregrounded visual details of movement and stillness, physical texture and social commentary, these elements form part of the

digressing temporality of the costume drama narrative; at the same time, they cannot be simply reduced to narrative function.

As suggested by this long digression within or from *Orlando's* narrative movement, the swirl and artifice of costume and make-believe constitute one of the core qualities of my corpus.⁷ I will return to the question of costume in greater detail with reference to the rest of the corpus later in this chapter. Meanwhile, I wish to turn back to the question of temporality in *Orlando*.

Genre, Tempo, and Temporality

Moving from this discussion of the screen spaces of segmentation, the implication of costume in gendered movement and constraint, I would like now to delve into the *temporal* problem of movement and passage. Roland Barthes' essay "The Structural Analysis of Narratives" (1977) offers precise terms to delineate the movement, interruption, ellipsis, and expansion of narrative. For Barthes, the "functional units" of narrative describe the actions and events which advance the plot-line. He divides these units into the primary "cardinal functions" and "catalysers." Cardinal functions correspond to the key plot points within narrative, while catalysers describe the secondary events which fill the space between the moments of risk or plot development. In Barthes' terms, "cardinal functions are the risky moments of a narrative. Between these points of alternative, these "dispatchers," the catalysers, lay out areas of safety, rests, luxuries." (95)

While this schema seems to lend itself most immediately to a conventional narrative such as the Bond detective novels analysed by Barthes,⁸ it applies also to a more leisurely, digressing

⁷ As Robyn Diner suggested to me, in the light of queer theory and culture and given the film's strongly "queer" sensibility, another reading of costume in *Orlando* would highlight what Judith Butler calls the "performative" quality of gender. In some ways, a Butleresque reading would better highlight the film's tremendous playfulness, its use of irony, than does the dialectic of movement and constraint. Talia Schaffer (1994) takes on this task, although interestingly enough, not in relation to the film, but rather with reference to the strange pseudo-autobiographical photographs published in the original edition.

⁸ Umberto Eco (1979) also uses Fleming's James Bond novels as the test case for his claims about the oppositional, Manichean (conflict-based) nature of narrative. While Eco's analysis proves much less applicable to a radically different genre like costume drama (and possibly also to the rich audio-visuality of non-literary texts), it is interesting to note the pre-eminence of the classic "masculine" genres as the prototype for narrative analysis.

structure such as that of *Orlando*. The cardinal functions, the critical episodes of risk, of ordeal, traversed by the protagonist correspond neatly to the intertitled episodes. The titles shorthand the significant action of each movement, from the death of Queen Elizabeth, to Orlando's love for Sasha. In a sense, very little "happens" in this film, as its events can be condensed into the string of intertitles. In costume drama, the cardinal functions appear secondary to the real "meat" of the story – the subtleties of gesture, a sidelong glance, the flick of a fan. As in costume drama generally, a great deal of the meaningfulness, *Orlando's* richness and texture, proceeds through a micro-economy of polite silences, gestures, and looks. Within this genre, these secondary actions do far more than "embellish" the narrative events. As Barthes so perceptively points out, these catalysers are intrinsic to the "economy of the message." The "dilatatory sign," this "apparently merely expletive notation always has a discursive function: it accelerates, delays, gives fresh impetus to the discourse, it summarizes, anticipates and sometimes even leads astray." (95)

The triumph of the dilatatory sign in *Orlando* indicates a key quality of the text's narrative movement, its tempo. Potter creates a languorous, digressing, and stately progression of perfectly choreographed tableaux: the splash of a red and gold tunic in a golden field as the long-legged Orlando sprawls under a tree; the winter funeral procession with Orlando in a sweeping black cloak, his father's dark casket behind him, against the hazy whites of a snowy day; Orlando, this time in a dark tunic and a billowing white blouse with absurdly laced cuffs and a huge bow under the chin perched on a ladder in the library reading a book. Here, the category of secondary plot points spills over into Barthes' second category of units, known as "indices." Indices relate to another descriptive level of narrative, related to character or setting. Cardinal functions form the narrative framework, which functions according to the logic of plot or story, while catalysers and indices serve as narrative *distortion* and *expansion*. The centrality afforded to details of costume, setting and atmosphere in *Orlando* as in other costume dramas helps to explain the pleasures of this slow-moving genre. A consistent use of long takes and meaningful stillnesses allow the leisure to enjoy the film's ample textures and colours, its precise dialogue. (In the Austen

adaptations, dialogue drives the narrative; all of the richness of mise-en-scène, careful period costume, the layering of audio-visual elements foregrounds the human voice.)

Orlando, on the other hand, shares some of *The Piano*'s distrust of words and speech, opting for other representational strategies. The film's ironic and unique "punch" emerges through its idiosyncratic combination of choreographed movement, gesture, costume described above (important elements in all costume drama), juxtaposed with spare, carefully-deployed dialogue, and finally, Orlando's addresses and looks to the camera. For instance, in the late twentieth century sequence when Orlando takes her manuscript to the publisher, he says to her,

This is really very good. Written from the heart. I think it will sell.
Provided you re-write a little. You know, develop the love interest and
give it a happy ending.
By the way, how long did this draft take you...?

In response, Orlando merely looks quizzically into the camera. The pith of the moment, the richness of its irony speaks eloquently through Orlando's mute look. Perhaps the most singular stylistic device in the film, these carefully orchestrated looks and addresses to the camera reach outside of the diegetic action to create a moment of complicity with the audience. In a sense, the absurd constraints on bourgeois femininity so precisely evoked in the film's visual language prompt a leap to a different level of discourse for commentary. Swinton's quick looks and witty rejoinders brilliantly rupture the potential claustrophobia and preciousness resulting from a deliberately slow pacing.

Barthes points out that cardinal functions correspond to "metonymic relata," while indices refer to "metaphoric relata; the former correspond to a functionality of doing, the latter to a functionality of being." (93) Clearly, this polarity of being and doing signals the question of gendering of narrative and genre. While detective, Western or action genres (traditionally coded as "masculine") privilege the metonymic plane of physical and spectacular *doing*, of action and decision, the more "feminine" melodrama or costume drama genres lean more heavily toward the metaphorical level of *being* – a micro-economy of gesture, and a rich audio-visual array of colour, harmony, pattern, texture, rhythm, melody. In "Entertainment and Utopia," Dyer (1992) calls these elements "non-representational signs" which may be treated as a mere function of narrative, but

which operate at a different level of “feeling” or “sensitivity,” from linear plot progression. And even though these non-representational signs may call attention to themselves within female-coded genres (Dyer focuses on the musical), they certainly form an integral part of the semiotic system of all genres.

Of course, as Dyer reminds us, generic conventions and the “structure of feeling” they evoke correspond to very real systems of marketing and social relations. As noted above, Doane points out that the gendering of genre articulates the former category of traditionally “male” genres precisely with the level of action, of *doing* – a linear and energetic narrative “drive” traversing topographies of open space, possibility, agency, movement. “Female” genres such as the melodrama, on the other hand, tend to function at a more subtle, immobile level, incorporating (for Doane) claustrophobic, cluttered internal spaces, and a corresponding stifling, hysterically immobilized temporality.

On one level, then, *Orlando's* chosen genre of the costume drama, with its attention to setting, costume, subtle conventions of look and gesture, draws heavily from such “female”-coded generic conventions – rather than the muscular striding of a protagonist through space and time, as suggested by the quintessential male genres. Such a tempo and chronotopic horizon forms a definitive part of the audio-visual economy, the gendered generic structure of feeling developed and bent by contemporary feminine and feminist costume drama’s multiple practitioners. Even so, the audacity of Orlando’s journey through 400 years of British history links the adventure to motion, transformation, change on the heroic scale of Gulliver’s Travels, or Around the World in Eighty Days. If this generic tension between the gendered economies of being and doing holds, how then can we describe the attenuated narrative movement of *Orlando*?

Orlando’s Journey: Passage and Metamorphosis?

To this point, I have described a plot structure which follows a dilatory, languorous pattern of sequential segments of (in)action. Each segment sketches out a perfectly orchestrated, self-contained little world of set, costume, and micro-narrative. These “movements” are strung

together by the physical presence, if not the forceful subjectivity, of Orlando in his/her passage *through*, destination unknown.

For Bakhtin, the "journey" provides a stock narrative code of the character's movement through time and space. The metaphor of narrative as journey is an old one; but more than a mere artistic trope, the journey has been described as the structuring code of narrative. De Lauretis follows from Greimas to suggest that "the semantic structure of all narrative is the movement of an actant-subject toward an actant-object." (112) She writes that the movement of narrative "seems to be that of a passage, a transformation predicated on the figure of a hero, a mythical subject." (113) Yet as she points out, this journey, the seeming substance of all manner of narrative from folkloric tales to Sophocles' (and Freud's) tale of *Œdipus*, does not spring spontaneously, ahistorically, and neutrally from Zeus' brow, but carries traces of the places and times through which it travels. In short, the narrative journey is historical, culturally-specific, and, perhaps most importantly, *gendered*. De Lauretis contends that "the work of narrative, then, is a mapping of differences, and specifically, first and foremost, of sexual difference into each text; and hence, by a sort of accumulation, into the universe of meaning, fiction, and history, represented by the literary-artistic tradition and all the texts of culture." (121)

For this author, such a binary coding of differences functions according to a gendered economy of stasis and movement. Here she borrows from structural linguist Jurij Lotman who describes two fundamental character types, "those who are mobile, who enjoy freedom with regard to plot-space, who can change their place in the structure of the artistic world and cross the frontier, the basic topological feature of this space, and those who are immobile, who represent, in fact, a function of this space." (118) For de Lauretis, this gendered division of narrative labours describes perhaps

the fundamental opposition between boundary and passage; and if passage may be in either direction, from inside to outside or vice versa, from life to death or vice versa, nonetheless all these terms are predicated on the *single* figure of the hero who crosses the boundary and penetrates the other space. In so doing the hero, the mythical subject, is constructed as human being and as male; he is creator of differences. Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she

(it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter.
(119)

“Immobile” (female) characters are seen to exist solely as functions of male becoming, providing landmarks and diversions in the all-important, hopelessly self-involved journey of Our Hero. Yet when we look at *Orlando*, the binary gendering of movement and agency within the narrative becomes problematic. Orlando becomes, almost in spite of him/her self *mobile*, as s/he moves through different historical circumstances. But his/hers is a fickle quality of agency, reliant on the whims of chance.

Happenstance and Arrested Development

The film’s narrative eschews the conventional psychological motor of character motivation, or a subtly orchestrated sequence of conflicts (dilemma, action, reaction); rather, Orlando’s story progresses according to what Bakhtin calls “the logic of chance”: “This logic is one of *random contingency*, which is to say, chance *simultaneity* [meetings] and *chance rupture* [nonmeetings], that is, a logic of random *disjunctions* in time as well.” (92) *Orlando*’s plot moves not through the psychological, progressive logic of character development, but rather, sails on the fickle winds of circumstance. Orlando’s acquisition of immortality, for example, springs from his chance meeting with Queen Elizabeth who, upon her deathbed, simply wills away the ruins of time. In the film’s second movement, Our Hero chances to meet Sasha, the daughter of the Muscovite ambassador amongst the pomp of the magical ice-court, and courts her only for the time granted by the insubstantial ice that the revelers skim over so beautifully. Waiting under the bridge for Sasha to steal away with him forever, Orlando is once again subject to chance as the rain breaks up the ice, allowing the Muscovite ship to set sail. Similarly, after Orlando’s encounter with Shelmerdine, her lover’s departure is signaled by a change in the wind.

Intriguingly, Orlando’s biographical journey does not entirely correspond to the “adventure novel of everyday life” where the hero must weather crisis and emerge transformed, a better (or worse) version of himself. Rather, Orlando proves a uniquely melancholic and lethargic hero who, within each plot movement and within the film as a whole, fails most of the trials of manliness (or

womanliness). In this way, the closure of conventional narrative convention is constantly denied: Orlando does not get his girl; he proves a self-indulgent and mediocre “dabbling” poet; faced with the enemies at the gate of Khiva, Orlando fails the test of manly valor and flees the site of battle; when she meets Shelmerdine, Orlando lets him go again and foregoes marriage (and the possibility of keeping her land); when she gives birth, she bears not a son, who would allow her to keep her beloved property, but a daughter.

This constant frustration within the micro-narrative of each movement forms a recursive structure which defies conventional narrative closure – both the classic heterosexual closure of marriage, or the capitalist drive toward regaining what was owned and lost, Orlando’s property. Orlando’s biographical journey transpires very slowly, as s/he lingers in lengthy melancholic adolescence for some 350 years before becoming a young woman. Digressing from the centrality of metamorphosis in Bakhtin’s biographical passage, the drama and significance of this transformation is played down.

According to Rachel Blau DuPlessis’ analysis of Woolf’s *Orlando*, “Orlando’s perpetual youth – at any rate, her astonishingly slow rate of growth – seems to challenge Freud’s idea of the progress of the psyche from bisexual dramas to heterosexual object choice.” (1985 64) In the novel, the affirmation of androgyny and homosexual desire undercuts the Freudian developmental model of female sexuality current in the 1920s. The newly-female Orlando finds in Shelmerdine a mate who is very womanly, played by a sensual and “féminine” Billy Zane resplendent in long flowing locks and sensuous lips. Through moments like this, and especially through Swinton’s self-conscious performance of Orlando’s man-becoming-woman, Potter’s film toys incessantly with the arbitrariness of gender.

The uncertain status of gender in *Orlando* reverberates in a hesitancy at the level of action. The film’s precise play of gendered and imperialist conventions through costume and the choreography of bumbling, hesitant, awkward movement, extends from individual “movements” to an overarching narrative strategy. As Orlando never entirely rids him or herself of gender ambiguity, s/he never achieves full status as a mobile adventurer. As a woman, she experiences

in one stroke the constraints levied against bourgeois females through law, apparel, and social codes of conduct. For example, in the "Society" movement, when ambassador Orlando awakes to find himself a her, she is unceremoniously bundled off home on the back of a camel, only to discover upon arrival that she must now marry or lose her property. As many gendered conventions of narrative closure (romance, heroism, property) fall by the wayside, the outcome becomes indeterminate. The hero as androgyne is no longer guaranteed to get his girl. Meanwhile, the girl might unexpectedly sprout a penis and set out on an adventure of her own.

Such a reading of gendered movement in *Orlando* must be informed by the understanding that Woolf and Potter are on some level explicitly out to usurp such conventions. Even as critics commonly identify *Orlando* as a "cross-dressing" film (in reference to concurrent British sensation *The Crying Game* (1993)), Potter explicitly underplays the significance of gender. Upon realising her change of sex, Orlando comments dryly to the camera, "Same person. No difference at all. Just a different sex." In this vein, Orlando moves through the film virtually unchanged. What transformation occurs does not change the "essence" of Orlando/ Tilda Swinton, but registers at the level of costume and hair style, or in the case of the sex change, is etched on the body surface. Potter's Orlando speaks overwhelmingly through Tilda Swinton's singular *female* performance.⁹ Woolf and Potter remind us that gender is superficial and matters not a whit; at the same time, however, the film's irony arises from its constant demonstration that gender gets made to matter very very much through absurd social convention. In this vein it is absolutely pivotal that Orlando is played by a woman, not a man. Orlando's enigmatic address to the camera must be absolutely female, and feminist.

Through her bravura performance and direct addresses, Orlando/Swinton periodically punctures the diegesis. In the process, she achieves a certain immunity to the perils of either position as s/he journeys more as witness than active participant. Through her looks and addresses to the camera, Swinton's Orlando usurps and comments upon the constraints of narrative and social codes. Much of the pleasure of *Orlando* for a feminist audience arises from

⁹ I would like to thank Richard Dyer for suggesting this point to me.

these juxtapositions of narrative situation and commentary, and from the simultaneous dramatization and unbinding of gendered constraints of bourgeois history. Bakhtin's study of historical literary forms of narrative time and space incorporates forms which pre-date the dominant psychological realism best exemplified in this corpus by the Austen adaptations. Woolf's incorporation of aspects of the journey, the adventure novel of everyday life (as well as, in fact, a whole series of other historical literary forms and references) places the novel, and the film in turn, outside of the more conventional realist framework. There is, in fact, an allegorical quality to the novel and the film which accounts in part for its distinctive uses of space and time. In the next section, I will return to Bakhtin's chronotope to link *Orlando's* textual world to the social space of the Western feminist "discursive community" which forms one important context where the film circulates.

Orlando's Utopian Feminist Journey

Tracing the transposition of Woolf's Orlando into another medium and another historical era, the chronotopic model insists on the specificity of each textual and social time-space, and on the dynamic relation between the living, breathing text and "the completely real-life time-space where the work resonates." (252) Bakhtin's dialogism sketches a porous membrane between text and specific historical social formations. *Orlando's* "look," then, provides a chronotopic doorway, if you like, between the textual chronotope (the intricacies of plot structure, character, and "narrative movement" through textual space-time as described in the first half of this essay) and the meaning-making process undertaken by situated historical subjects. Swinton's looks and addresses construct a bridge, a link of sensibility, offering a humorous phatic contact which continually invites the spectator back into *Orlando's* journey. This beckoning, the in-joke, speaks with a particular inflection through the codes of a particular feminist tradition. By evoking Woolf's iconic feminist text and authorial voice, *Orlando* speaks to and from the dispersed and varied contexts of (Western, English-speaking) feminism – the "discursive community" which interests me here as a designated rhetorical destination for Potter's feminist avant-garde work in particular.

Woolf and Potter respectively harness the collective, utopic, and transformative power of narrative movement, specifically the allegorical female biographical journey. Hardly disturbing the times through which she travels, Orlando bears witness to the absurdity of these quasi-historical tableaux, pausing periodically to “report back” to the 1990s audience. Swinton’s Orlando becomes a time-traveling feminist observer – and ultimately a protagonist journeying toward herself, toward artistic creation.

Throughout her adventures, the cinematic Orlando retains a certain blank quality, the hard smooth surface of impressionable youth, where her full subjectivity as protagonist should be recorded. Further, she remains to some audiences, Tilda (a British avant-garde performance and film persona) while her witty asides carry an implicit homage to Woolf. The address and the adventure straddle the “once upon a time” inflection of fabled mythical subject, and a more complex collective project of feminist movement, where Orlando offers a quizzical screen onto which the audience can project a utopic feminist fable of becoming. For Duplessis, Woolf’s

Orlando is at least a parodic biography, a female history of Britain, a feminist apologue—an insouciant break with conventional norms surrounding gender, sexual identity, and narrative. In this work, the Ages of England have become the Ages of Woman, scrutinized with two questions in mind: whether the protagonist can undertake work and whether she can enjoy love. Until the present, these satisfactions are divided, and love is separated from quest. (61)

Potter’s changes to key aspects of Woolf’s plot-line (especially resolutions) offer clues to the 1990s feminist exigencies which inform her adaptation. Woolf’s novel, a wish-fulfilling spoof biography of Vita Sackville-West, ends with green lights on all counts: In love, in the work of writing, and in the restoration of the lost property to its rightful owner. Transposed into the terms of contemporary feminism, Potter’s film also ends on a hopeful note, but dispenses with the romantic closure of married life with Shelmerdine, gives up the bourgeois privilege of property, and trades a daughter for the son. The symbolic achievement of artistic self-expression, the birthright of a new generation of daughters, becomes the key focus of resolution and utopic future vision. The film closes in the field under the oak tree where it began with the unbearded youth trying to write poetry. Only now, in the present, Orlando stares coolly into the camera in a final

lingering close-up, as her daughter plays with a camcorder (a none-too-subtle symbol of feminist self-representation). A cherubic Jimmy Somerville floats somewhere above. The field, the oak tree (solid, enduring old England), Somerville's otherworldly angel falsetto, bookend the film, enclosing it in the pleasing wrapper of "once upon a time" and "happily ever after."

To return to the earlier discussion of narrative movement, through the looks to the camera the audience shares the pithy pauses, the ridiculous uncertainties of Orlando's progress through the ages. After all of Orlando's masculine bumbling lassitude, it is only in the present day, as a woman in the late twentieth century, that she finds artistic (and presumably in the process, social) recognition. In keeping with the film's curious tempo of attenuated dynamism, *Orlando* ends in the same place it began. After all of her wardrobe changes Orlando remains essentially the same, only, as the final voice-over attests, "she is no longer trapped by destiny." Ultimately, Potter stakes the allegorical project of feminist becoming almost entirely on the feminist tradition of critical high art, a bourgeois tradition exemplified by Woolf and continued by Potter and Swinton. Orlando's "arrival" is a return to the English oak tree, an evocation of interconnected generations of feminist artistic creators. A field of their own?

Pause

Now, in this quest for the "movement" within *Orlando's* narrative structure, we hit a snag. What I have described so far indicates stasis, or at best, a pleasurable (spatial) lingering, or (temporal) digression at the film's formal core. Transposing Orlando's journey onto de Lauretis's gendered structure of narrative, I had hoped to arrive at a semblance of dynamism which seems necessary to a feminist journey of becoming. But if I were to report this dynamism, with Orlando/Swinton/Woolf/Potter voyaging purposefully through the centuries, setting things right, I would be manipulating the text to my own ends.

Rather, we find ourselves at a kind of rest station, stuck in what Margaret Morse (1990) describes as a "paradoxical feeling of stasis and motion." What I am constantly craving, what was so splendid and rare about, say, *Thelma and Louise* (1991), or even *The River Wild* (1994), was

the female embodiment-in-journey: The subversive act of what Kirsten Marthe Lenz (1993) calls “changing the script” – hijacking that muscular male drive, and somehow making it our own, a female journey of metamorphosis, and, ultimately, we hope, to arrive someplace *better*. Where we find ourselves miraculously “transformed” (Bakhtin’s term) into something less damaged, more dynamic. But this is not the flavour of pleasure offered by *Orlando*. Even with their utopic endings, Potter and Woolf present a more subtle project of critique – a kind of attenuated “doing” or extended, aesthetically vibrant “being.”

In the above detailed analysis of gendered movement, Orlando’s curious lassitude seems to spring from his/her indeterminate gender. But after all that, I’m left wondering about the completeness of this binary argument about gendered stasis and motion. Reconsidering the film, widening my perspective, I think I’ve missed something. As is so often the case, where de Lauretis’ argument illuminates some patterns in narrative, it obscures others. Part of the wonderful, satisfying, all-encompassing “tug” of narrative (even the digressing, attenuated movement of costume drama) is a tendency to foreground the protagonist’s journey (the most “legible” and forceful aspect of the action-image) – in this case, Orlando’s spectacular feminist allegorical journey of “becoming.” But to re-integrate some of the concerns of Chapter Three into this present analysis, I am reminded that “movement” in its many wonderful inflections is never “pure,” but always *relational*. While *Orlando* speaks so eloquently to a particular English bourgeois experience of gender, I have overlooked other dynamics of stasis and movement operative within the text. In fact, in one interview, in the midst of a detailed discussion of feminism, Potter states that colonialism constitutes the film’s subtext (see Florence (1993, 284)). But how does the profound historical and geographical movement of imperialism complicate the genesis and impetus of Orlando’s utopian feminist journey?

Empire and Feminist Movement

Not unlike Campion’s incorporation of the Maori in *The Piano*, colonialism as *Orlando*’s subtext implies a contemporary self-conscious engagement with what Saïd calls the “structure of

attitude and reference” of imperialism which strongly informs the spatial imaginary of the English novel. Not only concerned with works set explicitly in the colonies, Saïd describes the constitutive outside provided by empire even in “domestic” English novels. “As a reference, as a point of definition, as an easily assumed place of travel, wealth, and service, the empire functions for much of the European nineteenth century as a codified, if only marginal visible, presence in fiction.” (75) In this literature, young English men of the middle and upper classes are commonly sent off to sow their wild oats in the constantly available, lucrative and exotic playground of “the colonies.” (As discussed in Chapter Three, this theme recurs across the corpus, in Rochester’s Caribbean sojourn (*Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*); William Adamson’s scientific expedition to Brazil (*Angels and Insects*); and finally, in the Austen cycle, Captain Wentworth and Colonel Brandon’s manly and lucrative escapes from unfortunate affairs of the heart.) Along these lines, Woolf wryly describes Orlando’s voyage to Turkey to escape a persistent suitor: “He did what any other young man would have done in his place, and asked King Charles to send him as Ambassador Extraordinary to Constantinople.” (1993, 82) Orlando the novel adds a layer of satirical commentary to the trope of colonial adventure, an engagement taken up by Potter in the cinematic language of 1990s arthouse cinema.

The gentle irony of Orlando’s self-indulgent sojourn in Khiva (shot in Khiva, Uzbekistan) emerges perhaps most directly in the stock trope of the adventure novel, the “encounter” with the Other. In Potter’s *Orlando* the initial encounter with the Khan of Khiva cuts directly to the quick of the matter.

Khan: Why are you here?

Orlando: I am here as a representative of His Majesty’s government –

Khan: Yes. It has been said to me that the English make a habit of collecting...countries.

This scene, as well as the following one where the Khan exchanges toasts with Orlando under the blistering sun offer brilliant send-ups of the ceremonious imperial encounter. Surely the casting of Québécois actor Lothaire Bluteau as “Khan” of a generic Orientalist kingdom can be no coincidence. Potter slyly brings the breadth and arbitrariness of British imperialism into relief here, as one colonial subject is made, tongue in cheek, to stand in for another.

Visually, these encounters are composed of perfectly symmetrical balanced shots which play up the formality of imperial exchange against the exaggerated quality of the costumes, and the explicit irony of the dialogue. The Khan, for example, is resplendent in a blue "Arab" outfit, flanked by his twin turbaned lieutenants with columns aligned perfectly behind. This shot corresponds to an even more ornate Orlando with his enormous (hot) white flowing wig, backed up by his effeminate soldiers. The absolute theatricality of these matched shots, the stasis of both camera (long still shots) and actors (posed "tableaux" sequences like this one, as well as a constant formal choreographing of purposefully pointless marching) concisely satirizes the imperial encounter with similar strategies as Potter employs elsewhere to address gender. Yet there is an uncomfortable edge to this ironic take on colonialism.

In fact, I would suggest that part of the narrative uncertainty of *Orlando* (particularly in the "Politics" movement) springs not only from indeterminate gender, but also from a certain "stuckness" which extends beyond feminism into bourgeois imperialist history proper: How now are Westerners to critically represent the project of empire? What exactly are/were Orlando (and through him our collective historical imaginations) *doing* in Khiva? According to Woolf, "We can only testify that Orlando was kept busy, what with his wax and seals, his various coloured ribbons which had to be diversely attached, his engrossing of titles and making of flourishes round capital letters, till luncheon came – a splendid meal of perhaps thirty courses." (85) In film language, Potter also focuses on empty ceremonious detail and luxury. She visualises the lassitude and general uselessness of what Woolf calls Orlando's "career" in the constant parading of the Ambassador and his henchmen through the dusty streets of the walled city. Then, after a time in his new post, Ambassador Orlando is pictured posed in rapturous meditation beside a "Turkish" bath wrapped in a middle eastern shift, his hair up in a towel. Apparently our Orlando has "gone native." In his polite, well-meaning way, Orlando fulfills all the clichés of Westerners who "discover" themselves in the Orient.

In imperialist literature, the encounter often facilitates some deeper knowledge of self. The Other, like the female term in de Lauretis' equation, marks a threshold for the protagonist's

passage. Even as we find Orlando in Khiva ultimately, narcissistically alone (suggesting that a rendez-vous with self seems the logical fruition of the colonial encounter) such a critique can only be about Englishness. (The delightful scene with the Muscovites offers another superb vignette on English attitudes to “foreigners.”) As in E.M. Forster’s soul-searching tales of colonial relations, the passage into another world ultimately only brings Orlando back to her “true” (female) self. Yet, the shadowy, rather flat surface of this colonizing self rather wanly reflects the vanity and self-indulgence of this idea.¹⁰

Personal and political crisis strikes for Orlando only when the Khan’s enemies are at the city gates, and the English guests are called upon to prove their mettle. Significantly, the incomprehensible battle raging between heathen forces offers the backdrop and the catalyst to Orlando’s gender transformation. At this key juncture in the film, the site of narrative critique shifts politely from the awkwardness of the colonial encounter back to issues of gender, and Orlando is abruptly transported back to “Society.” Crisis of empire becomes crisis in masculinity, a timely disengagement from distasteful matters of statesmanship and empire. Woolf’s point, of course, is that British women have historically been excluded from “the public life of Orlando’s country.” In Potter’s contemporary adaptation, the contested quality of imperial space presents a limit, a vanishing point for a critical feminist costume drama. Perhaps feminist costume drama can most powerfully and precisely address a particular white, bourgeois experience of English femininity. Could it be that the polite, understated mannered form of this genre, conceived in European bourgeois social experience does not translate well to address the savagery of bloody colonial conflict? Or, for that matter, into the messy, impoverished, seemingly inarticulate and certainly inelegant life-worlds of working class people in the “home” country?

¹⁰ Brenda Longfellow’s caution about the disavowed orientalism of the postmodern pastiche of “Mongolia” in Ulrike Ottinger’s *Johanna d’Arc of Mongolia* strikes a chord for Potter’s film: “The caricatured nature of the orientalist signifier in Ottinger’s work functions to deny any ontological status of the referent, this reflexivity does not entirely liberate the gesture from the orientalist scenario.” (1993, 130)

Coda: A Return to the Problem of Colonialism

Such a polite disengagement from the complex and fraught issue of empire corresponds to a dominant tenet within Western feminism whose memory and imagination are rooted in the iconic chronotopes evoked in this corpus. Many authors have identified a certain Western feminist disingenuousness in naming the historical feminine and feminist complicity with discourses of imperialism. For instance, Vron Ware points out that “feminist ideology and practice were shaped by the social, economic and political forces of imperialism to a far greater extent than has been acknowledged... The Empire provided both a physical and an ideological space in which the different meanings of femininity could be explored or contested.” (1992, 119-120) A considerable recent body of feminist literary scholarship has examined feminist discourses of imperial mobility in the last century. Amongst these feminist texts of imperial travel, Grewal highlights a certain ambivalent “mastery” of looking or of mobility, “and while imperial mastery is present in the narrative, there is also a denial of domination and a parody of power.” (24) On this theme, the ironic undertones of Orlando’s colonial expedition recall Mary Louise Pratt’s reading of Mary Kingsley’s late nineteenth-century African travelogues. Pratt (1992) notes how Kingsley’s peculiar rhetorical strategy navigates this difficult gendered position of exploration and mastery.

In her rhetoric she seeks to separate mastery from domination, knowledge from control. “Not knowing” for her does not mean “needing to know”: “not seeing” does not mean “needing to see”; “not arriving” does not mean “needing to arrive.” The bumbling, comic innocence of everyone in her writings, including herself, proposes a particular way of being a European in Africa. Utopian in its own right, her proposal seems expressly designed to respond to the agonies of the European who has landed in the swamp after falling from his promontory. (215)

Such scholarship on the gendered discourses of imperialism sketches in an historical context for Potter’s retrospective ambivalent audio-visual “take” on Orlando’s sojourn in Khiva. Of course, it is essential to understand Potter’s work as a self-conscious adaptation of Woolf’s own tongue-in-cheek early twentieth-century novella. As I have demonstrated, Potter seeks to “stretch” aspects of Woolf’s text into a contemporary cinematic critique of these very colonial discourses which Woolf playfully evokes. Rather than chastise Potter for venturing into the fraught chronotopic space of the encounter, my goal here is to assess how socio-cultural codes of

movement and constraint persist in (even?) the most wise and self-conscious contemporary feminist texts. In this way, this rather technical reading of narrative movement in *Orlando* works over some of the same terrain originally mapped in Chapter Three. The recursive topographical and troubling questions of the social relations of mobility and constraint emerge in slightly different form in this chapter through the particular *temporal* problem of narrative movement. From the raw energy of movement and expansion raised in Chapter Three in relation to shifting nineteenth-century gender, class, and imperial formations, my analysis of *Orlando* describes the specific routings of a narrative journey (in this peculiar case, a meta-historical feminist journey of becoming) through these social spaces.

Preceding discussions of class and imperialist formations, dynamism, and movement in the Austen cycle overlaps productively with the current discussion of gendered colonial digression in *Orlando*. Potter's film, though, merits a separate discussion, as it mobilises unique audio-visual strategies of historical critique including maverick avant-garde costumery, mise-en-scène, and choreography. (Campion's rich use of gesture and mise-en-scène, highlighted in Chapter Three, are equally distinctive; I will return to this film's treatment of costume below.) My thorough elaboration of *Orlando's* exceptional qualities illuminates many spatio-temporal regularities of costume drama – its precise qualities of tempo, costume, narrative structure, and mise-en-scène which Potter evokes and (sometimes) subverts.

Yet in paying homage to the singularity of *Orlando* within this corpus, I wish to avoid the type of avant-garde dismissal of the more "mainstream" films in the corpus made by Andrew Higson, and by Potter herself. In fact, the problem of framing a critical feminist historical vision which does not merely reinvent the individualist narrative model of movement recurs across the range of fantastical feminist visions across the corpus. At the cusp of another century, we witness an ongoing uncritical adherence amongst Western feminists to nineteenth-century paradigms of individual bourgeois space and liberation. Questions of overlapping and sometimes contradictory trajectories of liberation, the question of differences *among* women and the interrelation of oppressions, *must* present stumbling blocks within feminist cultural texts, even as they present a

“limit” to Western feminism itself. The complex interrogation of “movement” undertaken in this dissertation brings me back to Einstein’s insistence that there is no absolute motion of bodies through space: Movement, displacement, must always be seen *in relation to* other bodies and contexts. How we measure and understand movement depends on the place we observe from – and on the simultaneous overlapping trajectories of space and movement that co-exist in the frame of reference, and just outside it.

Through the preceding analysis of *Orlando* and the discussion of *The Piano* in Chapter Three, we seem to arrive at a political and aesthetic limit to the critical possibilities of a critical costume drama, particularly (though not exclusively) in relation to colonialism and class. While *Orlando* springs from and continually returns to the preoccupations of English history and landscape, in the “LOVE” and “POLITICS” movements, Potter digresses into the “foreign” landscapes of St. Petersburg and Uzbekistan, respectively. As in period drama generally, whether realist or avant-garde, *Orlando* relies for its appeal on an absolutely lush quality of set and costume – and on the spectacle of historically or culturally “othered” landscapes, costumes, peoples, and customs. Potter draws from this contemporary cultural repertoire of international image-space, even as she inserts moments of incisive self-critiques of English xenophobia. For both novel and film, the conceptual sweep of a bumbling feminist journey through vast tracts of space and time provides part of the delight, the élan, the sense of movement and possibility of the project. These exotic backdrops may provide one element of de Lauretis’ “plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter” to mark the passage of the feminist adventurer. This choreography of character movement across designated exotic picturesque landscapes and peoples (be they rendered in realist or in avant-garde codes of costume, mise-en-scène and composition) corresponds to the Austen cycle’s relegation of nineteenth-century English working people as backdrop to the restless perambulations of the middle class.

Placed alongside the broader cultural plundering of “common” British and neo-colonial spaces, the voyages taken by feminist costume drama in search of self and narrative agency may be considered in a new light. Clearly, the question of colonial movement, as well as other key

issues around race and class mobility and constraint examined in Chapter Three must inform a feminist reading of these issues. To this point, this chapter has opened up an intuitive link between narrative and imaginative movement, and the socio-historical feminist desires for agency and transformation (specifically the utopian drive of feminist journeying as expressed in cultural texts) through a close reading of Sally Potter's film, *Orlando*. By juxtaposing a consideration of how imperialism facilitates and undercuts these feminist aspirations to geographical and imaginative mobility, I come to reconsider the implications of a certain quality of desired "feminist movement."

* * *

In the next section, I will consider Julie Dash's distinctive African American feminist text, *Daughters of the Dust*. Speaking predominantly from outside the main chronotopic references of the rest of my corpus, and in the process transforming them, *Daughters of the Dust* explicitly borrows and reinvents the complex audio-visual textures of costume drama from a distinct cultural and aesthetic context. I wish to introduce this text in some detail at this point as to build from the above discussion of narrative movement and the action-image in the *Orlando* analysis.

Daughters of the Dust: An African American Feminist Allegory

In *Daughters of the Dust*, Dash creates an exquisite, lingering, collective portrait of an island family/ community of African Americans in 1902 on the brink of departing their home, one of the sea islands off the coast of the Carolinas and Georgia. Dash's chosen setting, these islands were "the main drop-off point for Africans brought to North America as slaves in the days of the transatlantic slave trade... It became the region with the strongest retention of African culture." (Dash 1992, 6) Set on the cusp of the twentieth century, *Daughters of the Dust* chronicles the Peasant family's last day on their island as they ponder the futures awaiting them upon their passage over to the mainland and up North toward the offerings of modern progress and civilization. Headed by great-grandmother Nana, the Peasant clan encompasses a range of personalities, ages, and religious convictions (Christian, Moslem, and African spirituality).

Through the lens of contemporary African American cultural debates, Dash interweaves these different voices and a range of audio-visual iconographies to create a complex, self-reflexive African American feminist chronicle. A unique cultural intervention,¹¹ *Daughters of the Dust* intervenes in several overlapping “discursive communities including African American cultural venues as part of the Black Cinema Movement;¹² more “mainstream” commercial arthouse venues; and contemporary feminist arthouse cinema culture. In parallel with the dispersed (predominantly white, middle-class) Western feminist “discursive community” which I read as a “preferred audience” for *Orlando*, African American women, and the related critical and cultural context, might be read as an important rhetorical destination for Dash’s film.¹³

Toni Cade Bambara suggests that from the film’s opening shots Dash undertakes the gargantuan task of usurping the inculcated aesthetic traditions of racism and colonialism from an African American feminist perspective.

Following the credits, a boat glides down a thick, green river. Standing near the front of the boat is a woman in a long white dress and a large veiled hat. The image is familiar from dominant cinema’s colonialism-as-entertainment genre. But we notice that this woman stands hipshot, chin cocked, one arm akimbo. These ebonics signify that filmmaker Dash has appropriated the image from reactionary cinema for an emancipatory purpose. She intends to heal our imperialized eyes. (1992, xii)

Dash evokes and usurps established codes of landscape [perception-image] and costume/corporeality [action-image] in order to represent the denigrated figure of the Black woman in history. In this sequence, for instance, Yellow Mary returns with her friend Trula to her home island resplendent in the trappings of bourgeois European and American civilisation – long, flowing white gowns and huge white hats with veiling.¹⁴ Opposite Mary and Trula in the barge sit Viola, a zealous Christian clad in sombre “missionary” clothes and Mr. Snead the photographer, a

¹¹ For an analysis of the unique commercial success of this film see Bobo (1995, 167-173). Based on this case, as well as historical evidence of the reception of independent films in African American communities, Bobo argues that audiences have had some power in creating a cultural and commercial context of reception even for marginalised, independent cultural texts.

¹² For an analysis of the links between Dash and this tradition, see Bambara (1993).

¹³ On this intuition, Bobo undertook an ethnographic study of African American women’s responses to the films. See Bobo (167-196)

¹⁴ This formal, lacey white gown and incongruous huge white hat on the barge floating through an “exotic” setting are reminiscent of Katherine Hepburn in *The African Queen* (1951).

“Philadelphia-looking negro” wearing a straw hat and suit as if dressed up for the races or a strawberry social. Standing out from the plain white shifts of the women islanders and the homespun clothing of their male counterparts, this elaborate clothing jars with the mystical island surroundings and, as Bambara notes, the Black bodies wearing them. Evocative of impressionist European painting traditions, the film’s exquisite, posed *mise-en-scène* comprised of picnics, expansive beaches, and sunny glades continues this political and aesthetic challenge to Western landscape representations. This aesthetic strategy also challenges the implicit codes of ethnic and racial framing and inclusion – which (white) bodies “belong” in such pastoral, leisured compositions; of course, these are the very compositions which comprise the picnics and landscapes of the Austen cycle and many other texts of the corpus.

In sharp contrast to the short list of stereotypical “types” within the historical representation of African Americans, and African American women in particular, Dash works with these distinctive bodies, gestures, codes *against* inherited representational codes in order to image different imagined historical spaces and modes of inhabiting them. In the process, the filmmaker pays very conscious tributes to the works of Harlem photographer James Van derZee, the religious folk dramas of early black filmmaker Spencer Williams, and black director filmmaker Bill Gunn.¹⁵ The disjunction between hegemonic nineteenth-century iconographies of costume and landscape with the Gulf Island settings and the African American characters descended from slaves, transforms costume drama’s inherited forms. Situated in a forgotten corner of the slave trade, replete with the material and spiritual residue of African diasporic culture and memories, *Daughters of the Dust* adds different inflections and challenges to the meditations on imagined historical stasis and movement which run through this dissertation. If *Orlando* takes a feminist jaunt through British imperial history, its allegorical motor of narrative movement begins from a contested place (bourgeois femininity) at the window seat of empire. Situated on a tiny island, the dominant English, white, bourgeois impulse running through my corpus from *Persuasion* to *Moll Flanders* to *Orlando* looks outward at the world as its oyster – a problematic oyster for the female

¹⁵ For the African American cultural referents of this film, see Bobo’s textual reading (133-165).

subject perhaps, but an oyster nonetheless. Starting from the fraught spatiality of the African diaspora, *Daughters of the Dust* begins from another place, at the nexus of several violent and ambivalent journeys.¹⁶

The tale of the Ibo which is retold at several points throughout the film illustrates the fragility, danger, and violence of historical movements – and the importance not only of remembering them, but of keeping them alive and implicated in the life of the present. Eula first tells the story of the Ibo in its idealised form, where, upon arriving at the sea islands, the Ibo on the slave ship took a good look around them, seeing at once the past, present, and future, and turned, as a group, chains and all, and walked back out to sea. As Eula tells it, the water held them, and they walked all the way back home to Africa. Toward the end of the film, old Bilal the Moslem who claims to have been present at the incident, re-tells the “true” story, insisting that of course no one can walk on water, and that the Ibo drowned together rather than submit to slavery. The story of the Ibo frames the sea islands with a mystical sense of the omnipresence of the past of slavery, resistance, and liberation – and the future of the African American people. The island’s utopic landscapes reclaimed from Western aesthetic traditions are full of reminders: The carved wooden Ibo statue floating at Ibo landing; the simple but well-tended gravestones in the forest; the bottle tree as a “reminder of who’s come and gone”; the old charms and sacred objects hanging in the trees. The forceful transportation of the slaves from Africa necessarily frames the Peasant family’s planned departure from the island.

Through the powerful figure of Nana, the Peasant clan grandmother, Dash’s film pleads for a remembrance of the past in the rush toward the future in the new century. Insofar as *Daughters of the Dust* weaves a narrative, this desiring-movement is preoccupied with discourses of progress, of migration, of memory and hope for the future. Lingering like the other texts of the corpus on the magic significance of detail, resplendent mise-en-scène, costume and gesture, this text evokes an attenuated, thoughtful temporality which hovers somewhere between absolute,

¹⁶ For a meditation on the diasporic “nomadic” space-time of Black independent cinema, see Teshome H. Gabriel, “Thoughts on Nomadic Aesthetics and the Black Independent Cinema: Traces of a Journey” (1992).

contemplative stillness, and the subtle rustle of movement-image. But the “content” of these textured action-images is always dense with the urgency of remembering (in effect, of imaging) a forgotten past in service of the future. In this sense, *Daughters of the Dust* shares some ground with *Orlando*'s explicitly feminist historical journeying, and in a looser sense, with all the texts of the corpus which seek to insert a lost or forgotten “feminine” past into the masculine tracts of history. Further, some of the formal and political tensions between the safety and comfort of home and stasis and the promise of movement and futurity are very concretely articulated, albeit quite differently, within Dash's film. But the narration, the mode of telling in Dash's film diverges from the spatiality of interiority and individualism which drives the realist texts – and even *Orlando*'s idiosyncratic allegorical narrative structure once again organised around the single figure of the hero/ine striding through time and space.

Bambara notes that the multiplicity of narration and point of view marks Dash's film from the start as “oppositional cinema” within the Black Cinema Movement.

The use of dual narration and multiple point-of-view camerawork, rather than a hero-dominated perspective, is our second clue that *Daughters* was conceived outside of Hollywood protocol. Dash's eschewing of a master narrative in favor of a nonlinear, multilayered unfolding – one more in keeping with the storytelling traditions that inform African cinema – is further evidence of *Daughters*' Africentric grounding. Dash's demystified and democratic treatment of space positions *Daughters* in progressive world film culture movements that bolster socially responsible cinema... (xiii)

Multiple Voices and Collective Imaging: Homeplace, Departures, and Futurity

Tracing the events of this most momentous day, the Peasant clan's last on the island before departing for the mainland, this film raises different perspectives on past and future, stasis and motion, through the interweaving of many distinct voices. In this collective filmmaking strategy, the single voyaging protagonist is eclipsed in the multiple, loudly-argued visions and trajectories of different characters. For instance, Viola, the forward-looking Christian woman, states her feelings about the Peasant's upcoming migration to Mr. Snead (the photographer from the mainland who has come to document this momentous event) at the outset of the film: “What's

past is prologue... I see this day as their first steps towards progress, an engraved invitation, you might say, to the culture, education and wealth of the mainland." Viola's perspective, echoed in the ebullient Haagar's proclamations, pushes toward the imagined offerings of progress, wealth, civilisation embodied in the Northern American industrial heartland. (This dream of progress is encapsulated in a brief black and white early film image of a bustling, prosperous Northern American city of this period which is cut in as one of the children looks at photographic images of the North.) Staunch Christians who are suspicious and hostile to what they see as Nana's "backward" African traditions, Viola and Haagar retrospectively express early twentieth century Negro Reformer views of the NAACP.

Another voice calling out for movement, a restless adventurous spirit of rebellion and individualism appears in Yellow Mary, the truant Peasant who has left the island for the city and returned (she arrives on the boat which is to take the Peasants away, only, herself, to remain behind with Nana). Decked out in "fancy" city clothes and doubly marked as "yellow" (half-breed), whore, and possibly a lesbian (her relationship with Trula is ambiguous in the film), Yellow Mary plays the part of the renegade, the sheep who has left the family fold. Initially contemptuous of this "back-water" island, Yellow Mary reflects sarcastically on the "tourist" charms of Ibo Landing: "Here it is folks! Ibo Landing, reflecting the muddy waters of history... Me, myself, personally... I don't look for my reflection in no muddy water, you know. The only way for things to happen or for people to change is to keep moving. People sitting still, men sitting still, don't get it with me, y'know." (Dash, 120-121) Part of a complex thread within the film pleading for tolerance of difference, of different sexualities and life-choices, Yellow Mary also marks the peril of the adventurous traveling spirit of the age, especially for a Black woman. Mary recounts the story of how, when her child was still-born, she went to work as a wet-nurse for a white family; taken along as a servant to Cuba, she was not permitted to leave, until she "fixed" her breasts so that she could no longer nurse. Yellow Mary's story, one of a departure and a return, scripts a very different, ambivalent micro-narrative of escape, danger, and ambivalent return to her community, family, people.

Gradually, as Yellow Mary tells her story, she comes to appreciate the third main point of view in the story which is embodied in the double narration of Nana Peazant and the Unborn Child. The film is bookended by these two voices, the matriarch Nana embodying the memory of slavery and the “old souls” who have come before – and the Unborn child, the promise of the future sent by the ancestors to heal the rifts in the Peazant family. As spokesperson of the past in this age of progress, Nana begs her grandson Eli to remember: “Eli... Eli! There's a thought... a recollection... something somebody remembers. We carry these memories inside of us... Eli,...I'm trying to teach you how to touch your own spirit. I'm fighting for my life, Eli, and I'm fighting for yours. Look in my face! I'm trying to give you something to take North with you, along with all your great big dreams.” (Dash 96) As the great tornado blows the winds of change across the island, Nana chooses to remain with the dust of those who came before her. She sorrowfully watches her family leave for the bustle and dangers of the twentieth century and modernity, but they depart with a caution to remember their roots, their history.

Nana as the original mother of the clan worries about the safety of her children as they leave the safety of the island home which has kept them in some ways apart from historical change on the mainland. The association of Nana with roots, home, safety, evokes bell hooks' insistence on the vital importance of home as a safe space created by women within African American traditions.

Historically, African-American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack), had a radical political dimension. Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist. Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation, where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world. (1990, 42)

hooks' image of homeplace as safety within the American context challenges the particular class-based historical and geographical experience of public and private which has been generalised by much Western feminism as *the* feminine experience. Evoked neither as confinement nor as the stylised interiors of opulence which recur in much costume drama, the shanty interiors of

Daughters of the Dust are fragile, porous, makeshift, and all-the-more precious for these qualities. In fact, besides Eula's early confinement in her shack as she is subjected to Eli's rage and the censure of the community, most of the film transpires out-of-doors. The notion of "homeplace" here is more general, the communal, porous, shared space of the island, with Nana at the emotional and spiritual centre.

If these different viewpoints and voices frame the film's digressing narrative movement, the dilemma over departure, the link between past and present, *Daughters of the Dust*, like *Orlando*, works on many layers of action-image. In some ways reminiscent of Campion's abilities to sculpt the image, Dash works within a temporal economy of stillness and considered, choreographed movement. And while these statements, these fragments of dialogue, convey aspects of the forces at work in the text, they are carefully layered with other subtle, non-verbal elements. For example, intercut with Nana and Eli's exchange cited above ("We carry these memories inside of us") is the remarkable sequence where Myown, Iona, and several other girls dance on the beach. Beginning as a simple ring-and-line game, as the dialogue continues, the girls are, according to the script, "taken into spiritual possession." Clad in simple white shifts, their braids flying around their faces, they dance with abandon on the sand, framed in medium shot against the wide-open horizon; like all the spiritual or supernatural moments in the film (particularly the ghostly moments where the unborn child runs through the forest or along the beach) this sequence is shot in slow motion. While Nana and Eli discuss the omnipresence of the past, this past emerges, bodily, through the liminal motions of the girls on the beach. These inherited, learned, ongoing corporeal traces of the past are recapitulated also in the men's gestures and games: An old game with a wooden board with carved hollows and stones; Eli's remarkable choreographed movements on the beach, and the shadow-fighting with his cousin. (For further comments on the significance of gesture in *Daughters*, see the discussion of "hands" in Chapter Five.)

A striking transformation of the movement-image which extends and accentuates the beauty of pure motion apart from the coordinates of narrative, Dash's use of slow motion often

corresponds with spiritual moments within the film. Based on African cultural and filmmaking traditions (with echoes in other cultural and cinematic traditions such as South American “magic realism”) such moments insist on the omnipresence of history, of ancestors – and in this case, of the future. The girls’ simple game on the beach which is gradually transposed into spiritual possession marks the presence of the “old souls” in the repetition of almost ritualistic gestures and movements. Thus, while Nana and Eli “discuss” the stakes of past and future, the ongoing presence of the Ibo and the old souls in the everyday actions of the Peazants is manifested corporeally in these unconscious action-images. Perhaps the most striking and sustained incorporation of slow motion in *Daughters* involves the ghostly passages of the Unborn Child as, clad in a white shift, she runs headlong through the frame. A flurry of pure movement, a blur of light representing the future, she provides one of the voices of narration, but also (meta)physically flits through the everyday lives of her family members.

Significantly, the film closes on a long shot of the beach, where Nana, Yellow Mary and Eula stroll along the beach against the glittering horizon. As their figures “dissolve” into dust, the Unborn Child enters the frame, once again running headlong across the frame. At this moment, in her closing voice-over the child states, “We remained behind, growing older, wiser, stronger.” The Unborn Child’s headlong run is destined not toward the conventional linear “future” of the twentieth-century, but rather rests suspended somewhere between a reckoning with the past, an acknowledgement of the importance of staying, of “homeplace” – and the collective possibility of a common future for African American people. By choosing a girl child as her prophet, Dash gestures toward a utopian future led by African American women.

“Flights of Fancy”: The Dance and Liminal Movement

This closing moment of *Daughters* strikingly evokes the “flight” of several children across the corpus. Most dramatically, it brings to mind the sequence with Ada, Flora, and Baines on the beach in *The Piano*. Discussed in detail in Chapter Three, through the flowing piano score and the bright, wide-open horizons of the beach, this scene provides a tremendous sense of

respiration in the film's generally cloying, dark, claustrophobic mise-en-scène. Part of the wonderful élan, the release or escape of the sequence unfolds through Flora's carefree barefoot dance on the beach. Reminiscent of both the Unborn Child and the girls dancing on the beach in *Daughters of the Dust*, the child is finally unburdened of her ridiculous clothing and cavorts happily on the beach clad only in her white petticoats, trailing seaweed in each hand, she twirls and dances. Intimately connected through dress and gesture to her mother, Flora, like the Unborn Child, embodies a kinetic, hopeful female future.

The image of the girl-child as symbol of the future recurs across the cycle in Moll Flanders' daughter, in Emma Thompson's creation of Margaret Dashwood as tomboy (described in Chapter Three) – and finally, Orlando's child, rewritten by Potter as a girl, in the utopian finale of *Orlando*. The girl child as physical embodiment of a hoped-for future forms a link throughout the cycle to an imagined future of female becoming which may be evoked in dialogue (in Nana's and Eula's speeches, for instance) – but which are perhaps most powerfully conveyed through pure, fleeting joy of the action-image. After these many pages of hemming and hawing, of deliberation over the possibilities and baggages of desired feminist movements, it is perhaps in such simple "lines of flight" that I can recover some of the intuitive power and delight in movement which inspired this dissertation.

To conclude my meditations on the narrative dimensions of the action-image begun with *Orlando*, and woven through *Daughters of the Dust*, it is important to note the connection between action-image as potentiality, and narrative movement. For instance, the sequence which I highlighted in Chapter Three in *Persuasion* where the young boy runs across the boardwalk during the sea walk, marking off a remarkable kinetic audio-visual digression from the inexorable plodding progress of Austen's narrative. Discussing this moment, I noted how, in keeping with the requirements of "narrative space," this liminal moment was summarily folded back into the romantic plot. In contrast with this moment, the ritualistic and carefree moments of children (and adults) in Dash's film are carefully considered, documented, lingered upon. In this digression from the requirements of narrative, there is a specific cultural creation of a different type of action-

image which strays from the requirements of narrative. Foregrounded in avant-garde cinemas, including some of *Orlando's* more breathtaking moments, I would argue that it is possible to extract such wonderful moments of pure movement from different texts of the corpus. In this light, I will briefly consider the recurring chronotope or movement-image of the dance, introduced through the above beach scenes.

Part of the chronotopic economy of costume drama mentioned in Chapter Two, "dance" may be found across the corpus. From the seemingly spontaneous (yet carefully choreographed) dance of Myown and Iona or Flora, we find much more formal orchestrations in the other more "interior" texts. For instance, *Angels and Insects* opens on a spectacular "ball" sequence where the women are decked out like so many fabulous insects in bright colours and fantastical voluminous forms in order to attract their mates. Each of the Austen adaptations includes one (if not several) "ball" sequences, perhaps the most extensive and playful one occurring in *Pride and Prejudice* where Elizabeth and Jane first formally encounter Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley. In *Orlando*, the skating waltz situates the ritualistic courting of Orlando and Sasha outside on the insubstantial ice, projecting this fragile (and doomed) romance into a spectacular wintry setting.

And, like the readings of the woman at the window, each of these episodes or movement-images might be read almost as a sensual hologram or condensed version of the entire text. William is first helplessly smitten by Eugenia at the ball, as the wry hormonal magic of colour and shapes has its desired effect; the spectacle of female costumes and the confusion of the male drone are both powerfully evoked in this scene. In *Pride and Prejudice* (and in the playful dance sequences in *Emma*), Austen's delight in the playful switching of partners, the confusion of attractions and rejections, the dulling sense of propriety and obligation (Elizabeth must dance with Mr. Collins) are all skillfully choreographed into the ballroom sequence. The form of the dance, as well, the careful, measured steps, the subtle contraction and expansion of the space between bodies, the modulation of tempo and intensity, the electric touch of a hand (either longed for or despised), the forbidden over-closeness of bodies – all these play with each text's (and the genre's) audio-visual patternings of desire, pleasure, attenuated movement.

Finally, in *Orlando*, the ice palace sequence of the LOVE movement recursively scripts Orlando's slight ridiculousness, his impropriety, and, his inability to close the narrative successfully, as Sasha slips away from him. As the ice palace sequence demonstrates, romance, desire, and the machinations of narrative flow through the tremendous energy of these action-images. Yet there is something residual, something in the colours, the textures, the flurry of movement and stillness which evokes the pure pleasures of costume drama – “flights of fancy” which are deployed into different trajectories across the different texts of the corpus.

Allegory and Symbol: Interiority and Exteriority of Costume and the Body

From my extensive reading of *Orlando* and the linked analysis of *Daughters of the Dust*, in this chapter I have explored the singular qualities of two remarkable auteurist texts. Along with Campion's work (especially *The Piano*, discussed at length in Chapter Three), these two works present innovative and dense case studies of different qualities of space and movement at work in costume drama. This chapter diverges from the others in the sense that, rather than beginning from “discursive” and affective chronotopic or movement-image regularities (the woman at the window; the country walk), I have worked through one in some ways idiosyncratic text in great detail (and through another one in less detail) with reference to the interrelated preoccupations of narrative movement and action-image. By no means entirely separate from the rest of the corpus, resulting observations on Potter's and Dash's distinctive treatments of temporality, movement and stillness, and costuming both borrow from, and comment upon, inherited conventions within costume drama. In this final section, I wish to very briefly relate these observations to the rest of the corpus. I will do this through a discussion of allegory and symbol as a return to the spatial metaphor of interior and exterior space introduced in Chapter Two; this time, however, I will extend the division of inside/outside to consider the action-image modalities of narrative space, character, and costume.

Orlando and *Daughters of the Dust* may be differentiated from the rest of the corpus through the formal division between allegory and symbol – between an exterior social space and

collective motor of narrative becoming, and the more common interior, “private” treatments of space exemplified in the Austen cycle (described at length in Chapter Two’s chronotopic analysis). Allegory constitutes one specific narrative form which, as suggested in the above treatments of *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust*, harnesses distinctive motors of desire, movement, becoming which may be distinguished from the hegemonic realist text, be it novel or audio-visual text. A pre-modern narrative form which predates the individualist, “private” framing of the realist novel (and the derivative audio-visual tradition of “classic narrative cinema”), allegorical narrative structures involve distinctive articulations of space and time.

Walter Benjamin’s work on the *Trauerspiel* includes long meditations on allegory as a foil to German Romanticism;¹⁷ for his part, Fredric Jameson (1992) argues that allegory has experienced a comeback within the contemporary cultural formation of late capitalism. These authors are central to a series of ongoing important debates around aesthetics, culture, and modernism. Rather than engage with these dense debates about modern and postmodern aesthetics, however, I wish here to make some preliminary observations about audio-visual narrative space through the concept of allegory as laid out by Susan Stewart in On Longing. Stewart’s ideas prove more flexible to the subtleties of the films in question, and provide a suggestive framework for highlighting different qualities of space and movement. Premodern, postmodern, or, I would argue, palimpsest texts saturated with different aesthetic forms, *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust* (and, to some degree, *Angels and Insects*) might be linked through their “allegorical” characteristics of narrative space, characterisation, and costuming.

The contrast between allegory and symbol suggests a way of thinking about narrative space across the corpus as a whole. Roughly speaking, we could describe the transition from pre-modern allegorical forms to the realist novel as a shift from narratives of exteriority to those of interiority. Such a juxtaposition implies a tension both between the “public” and “private” realms, and between different models of the subject, fictive character, or person. For Stewart, allegory progresses according to a social, almost didactic imperative.

¹⁷ For a discussion of Benjamin’s work on allegory, see McCole (1993)

In allegory the vision of the reader is larger than the vision of the text; the reader dreams to an excess, to an overabundance. To read an allegorical narration is to see beyond the relations of narration, character, desire. To read allegory is to live in the future, the anticipation of closure beyond the closure of narrative. (3)

The repetition of the stock narrative, the fable, the homily, serves a particular communicative purpose: "Repetition proclaims the cyclical and identical patterns of history. Each turn through the text will result in the same reading. The locus of action is not in the text but in the transformation of the reader." (3) The idea of repetition evokes older narrative forms such as the fable, the folk tale, the legend, and oral traditions of storytelling, many of which are used by Dash in *Daughters*.

Further, allegory operates within the common realm of the moral, the social, whereas the realist text navigates "actual" milieux through the eyes and desires of an individual. "The allegorical figure who moves in a binary fashion within a world by means of correct and incorrect actions is replaced by a subject looking for signs... And what is described in the realistic novel is "personal space," the space of property, and the social relations that take place within that space." (5) Here we can begin to see a fault line between *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust* and the other texts of the corpus which are configured around the desires of individual heroines: Jane Eyre, Ada McGrath, Isabel Archer, Moll Flanders. In quite different ways, Dash's orchestra of protagonists and the slyly chameleon Orlando function as "types" more than individuals, and their journeys speak to, stand in for, collective projects of remembering and becoming. The film presents vague, stylised treatment of place and a looser temporal scope which extends beyond the life-world of an individual protagonist. Like *Daughters*, *Orlando's* pull is simultaneously toward the past and the future. These allegorical narrative spaces imply a different desiring-machine, a different motor of becoming than the drive (implicit within the realist novel and cinematic traditions) toward heterosexual closure and the acquisition of property.

Allegory implies a "flatter," exterior treatment of characters as social types rather than discrete individuals. Seeded with dense, self-conscious, and layered references to African cinematic and cultural forms, and through the inherited narratives of oral histories and storytelling, *Daughters* could be described as "allegorical." As mentioned above, rather than focus on a single

individual and his (or her) desiring-movement, Dash layers different “voices” which weave together as a squabbling, diverse, yet strangely complete functioning community. These characters are individuated by voice and opinion, but also linked through their simple, common clothing (the women’s plain, white shifts, and the men’s homespun clothes); the narrative drive, if it could be described as such, articulates a common process of becoming, a link between the past and the future. Bambara differentiates Dash’s “social,” shared narrative space from the idealized or delineated space of realism.

In *Daughters*, the focus is on shared space (wide-angled and deep-focus shots in which no one becomes backdrop to anyone else’s drama) rather than dominated space (foregrounded hero in sharp focus, others Othered in background blur); on social space rather than idealized space (as in Westerns); on delineated space that encourages a contiguous-reality reading rather than on masked space in which, through close-ups and framing, the spectator is encouraged to believe that conflicts are solely psychological not, say systemic, hence, can be resolved by a shrink, a lawyer, or a gun, but not say, through societal transformation. (xiii)

As Bambara’s account suggests, within Dash’s vision, which I have described here as provisionally “allegorical,” space and time unfold differently. *Orlando* also includes a distinctive spatio-temporal economy, described at length above. Unlike the mystical quality of *Daughters of the Dust*, Potter works within a British avant-garde art tradition, within a distinctive cultural tradition of social critique rendered, through Woolf, for the purposes of a critical feminist costume drama. Potter’s self-conscious artifice of set and costume emphasizes a refusal of realist period film’s claim to represent a historically or “authentic” narrative space. On this subject, Potter remarks, “I always said to the design teams: this is not a costume drama, this is not a historical film, it’s a film about now that happens to move through these periods. Research and find out all the things we can and then throw them away. We’re going to stylize, we’re going to leave out, exclude certain colours or textures or shapes. The usual approach to costume drama is in the genre of realism... But the premise of *Orlando* is that all history is imagined history and leaves out all the most important bits anyway.” (Florence 1993, 276-277)¹⁸

¹⁸ Such an approach relates to current British avant-garde cinema’s ironic reworking of the genre such as *The Draughtsman’s Contract* (1982) or *The Madness of King George* (1994). Further, British queer rewritings of history and costume drama (Derek Jarman’s *Caravaggio* (1986) and *Edward II* (1991) or Isaac Julien’s *Looking for Langston* (1989)) offer an aesthetic and political context for *Orlando*. Potter’s casting of

This critical queer or feminist European avant-garde aesthetics involves a kind of postmodern pastiche, a disregard for the proprieties of realist time and place which structures much of the selection, blocking, and organisation of detail in the other films of the corpus. Following this tradition, Potter's use of exterior space and posed tableaux, rather than the more usual three-dimensional dramatic space of realism diverges sharply from the carefully differentiated interiors and exteriors of classic period drama. Within a different context, Dash (and to some degree Campion) composes her tableaux almost exclusively outside, in the open, airy, magical "common" spaces of the sea islands. In the concluding section of this chapter, I will work through this interior/exterior distinction in relation to the question of characterisation, costume, and interiority.

Interiority, Costume, and the Person

As mentioned in Chapter Two, this qualitative distinction in narrative space which I have been describing has been documented within literary history around the emergence of the novel. For instance, for Ian Watt, the first realist novels (exemplified by Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding) rejected stock the plots and characters of earlier mythological traditions, striving instead toward realistic particularity of characterisation and milieu. In terms of character, this shift coincided with an eighteenth century philosophical interest in defining the individual person; the realist psychological novel, then, emerges in concert with the social production of individual, interior subjectivity. With their precise, ongoing interior monologues and well-crafted, intelligent, emerging personalities, Austen's heroines epitomise the distinctive individual characterisation so prized within the realist tradition.

The question of interior subjectivity, the "exactness" of characterisation might be read in the adaptations through a certain realist precision not only in period mise-en-scène, but in

gay icons Jimmy Somerville, Quentin Crisp, and Tilda Swinton firmly anchor the film within a queer avant-garde movement within British culture of the 1980s and 1990s.

costuming. Anne Hollander (1993) asserts that the function of clothing within the Western tradition “is to contribute to the making of a self-conscious individual image, an image linked to all other imaginative and idealized visualizations of the human body.” (xiv) Jane Gaines asserts that the realist tradition in cinematic (and presumably, theatrical) costuming, follows the nineteenth-century notion of personhood which “assumes a continuity between inner and outer rather than two discrepant parts. But the other related assumption...is that dress is a key to the personality of the wearer.” (1990, 184) Thus, within the dominant realist cinematic tradition, clothing generally is treated, like other non-verbal signifying elements, to be merely “supports” for the psychological drive of narrative. In this sense, there is a “correct” costume for each story.

In this light, in her discussion of costume in film, Hollander follows this assumption in her analysis of costume in different historical Austen adaptations: “Austen’s characters are very precisely indicated, even if the clothes are not; precisely conceived as to their general look as part of the quality of their personal selves.” In the companion volume to *Jane Austen’s Emma*, an entire chapter is devoted to costume and make-up. Costume designer Jenny Beavan shares her process with the reader, detailing the costuming of Kate Beckinsale’s Emma (with two colour photos alongside).

Kate is tall and I knew that we were going to have to make virtually everything for her but I had already been tracking down authentic costumes from the period to use as the starting point. I had been looking for stylish clothes with clean lines, not heavily laced – unfussy things, but which showed she had money. She would have had a style which she knew suited her... I imagined Emma going to Ford’s shop in Highbury and the fabrics there that would have attracted her. Her colours became green-blues to grey-blues and the whites, of course, which were so popular at that time. (Birtwistle and Conklin, 48)

This precise match between actress’s (fictional) personality and historical period (Beavan distinguishes between the 1800 fashions of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, set closer to 1815) epitomises the realist novel’s attention to particulars translated into the period drama conventions. The cults of personality and historical detail take no prisoners. Hollander critiques the 1940 screen version of *Pride and Prejudice* which dressed up the story “well over a generation past its time and into the period of Romantic exaggeration in clothing.” (427) We might consider the rather

gaudy American production of *Emma* (1996) in this light, where Hollywood starlet Gwynneth Paltrow changes her ostentatious outfits every ten minutes or so. In the process, and partly through a fanciful and at times almost surreal mise-en-scène, this other, maverick *Emma* breaks the implicit realist rule that costume does not draw attention to itself.

This “realist” or “authentic” treatment of costume contrasts significantly with Potter’s and Campion’s more avant-garde treatments of costume. Unlike the modernist obsession with a “fit” between internal and external accounts of the person (personality=“self”), Potter’s allegorical strategy designates symbolic function or identity of character through costume. Orlando’s curious blank quality as a character, a kind of wry clothes horse, implies a different articulation of interiority and exteriority. In fact, I would argue that Woolf questions the very category of the interior self; Orlando’s body is inscribed with signs of the places and times s/he moves through, but the “essence” of the person remains elusive, quizzical. A particular postmodern rearticulation of the mythical role of character in allegory, Orlando is a stand-in for a particular contemporary feminist sensibility. *Orlando’s* costumes might be productively compared with those of *Angels and Insects*.

The analogy of scale discussed in Chapter Three between the “natural” rain forest and insect world and the Alabaster estate is also effected through brilliant costuming strategies. From the first introduction of the Alabaster women at the ball which introduces the film’s core action, the filmmaker bridges the “primitive” costuming and rituals of the indigenous people of the Amazon basin with the bizarre courting rituals of the English aristocracy. Patsy Kensit’s Eugenia is resplendent in the brilliant, metallic turquoises, blues, and yellows of the insect world. Colours, spectacular bold patterns, and extravagant lines designed to attract the (male) eye, to cement the rituals of courtship, marriage, procreation, lines of inheritance. (Eugenia’s excessive fertility, her perfumed over-attractiveness emerges brilliantly in the sequence in the observatory where William, believing that he is orchestrating a romantic moment, releases the butterflies, where all the male insects are drawn to her like moths to a flame.) The increasingly ominous insect-like quality of the clothes, and the Alabaster women’s endless breeding and eating, remind us how in

the insect world brilliant colours connote poison – butterflies advertise their inedible bodies, their unattainability, through brilliant colours and patterns.

Except for protagonists William and Matty, *Angels and Insects*' characters are designated through costume. Drably dressed male figures (“drones”) contrast with the brilliant female costumes. The indistinguishable series of Alabaster younger daughters are all marked through identical striped uniforms. Similarly, female servants scurry along in identical dark, dowdy dresses and insect-like hair. Thus, what in Austen is a “distinctive” attention to period dress, hairstyle, becomes in *Angels and Insects* a parody of the Gothic – an absurd extension of the murky anxieties which fuel this type of narrative. Among this array of bodies “typed” by dress, William and Matty emerge as the only three-dimensional characters. Through these two characters, the love story, the nineteenth-century drive toward exploration, adventure, science and knowledge, emerge. As suggested in Chapter Three, the pointed target of this satire is class relations. And, given the choice between the brilliant, absurd costumes of the aristocracy and William’s and Matty’s drab but more serviceable clothes, it is the latter which house the will-to-understand, to leave, and ultimately, to overcome and transform this older, rotten society. William’s and Eugenia’s thwarted romance is finally resolved in William’s final ability to see Matty *as a person* outside of her dowdy designated governess dress. Significantly, this change in their relationship occurs in the “privacy” of Matty’s room, the tiny space allocated to her for “herself.” A re-ventilation of how we see people “through clothes,” this scene also brings *Angels and Insects* back into a more familiar romantic narrative form of character interiority and heterosexual closure.

* * *

From the narrative analysis of *Orlando* to the question of allegory and exterior and interior unfoldings of narrative space, to the realm of costume, dance, movement, and the body, this chapter has assembled a dizzying array of meditations organised around the frame of the action-image. At the end of these dense chapters of textual analysis, it becomes fiercely difficult to sum up the implications of a series of exploratory observations. Whereas the question of movement and constraint in narrative proves a very productive and rich point of departure in examining

Orlando, I also observe certain limits to this problematic. Whether a fluid, open oppositional structure or not, I have encountered in this chapter some of the limits of such a binary, even “heterosexual” framework of gendered space and movement.

Such a problematic seems to preclude a more subtle and comprehensive reading of many elements of movement associated with the body. Whereas in my analysis I evoke certain gestures, moments, and “lines of flight” through description, in conceiving of movement as related to constraint, I still find the project to some degree mired in teleological presuppositions about movement. Many of the performative, gestured, or spontaneous (dance-like) movements which I sought to capture raise a whole series of other corporeal dimensions – tempo, weight, density, even the on-screen proximity of other bodies – which fall outside of the problematic as it has been posed. Current theories of performance, dance, and choreography offer insights into theorising corporeal expression and motility, but the difficulty lies in elaborating the specificity of audio-visual texts – and in theorising how these texts interact with the sensible world of the body.

From these treatments of narrative movement, “lines of flight,” and the spatial field of the body-in movement, in the next chapter I turn to a different, intensive, and unusual question of “affectivity.” From this chapter’s concluding thoughts on interiority and exteriority, different modalities of characterisation and screen space, I will next examine a range of different registers of affectivity, the movement of emotion, read through the visual rendering of faces and hands (the privileged shots of the close-up or affection-image according to Deleuze’s schema) and the aural layerings of voice and music. A third layer of reading, this final section of intensive textual analysis shifts from the spatial and kinetic qualities of costume to a more subtle and whimsical engagement with my corpus of contemporary costume drama.

CHAPTER FIVE

Affectivity and Expression: Faces, Hands, and Voices

Affect and Proximity in Feminist Film Theory

One of the key generic dynamic qualities in costume drama involves the culturally-coded realms of sentiment and deep feeling. Whereas in Chapters Three and Four I examined the social blocking of interior and exterior space (landscape, costume, *mise-en-scène*), in this concluding chapter I wish to focus on the “closest” and most intangible movement-image, the affection-image which hovers at the core of the costume drama’s “structure of feeling.” Delving into the muddy waters of gendered sentiment in relation to this contemporary “woman’s genre,” I return to some of the key questions raised by contemporary feminist film theory – questions of desire, criticality, and gendered generic address. In the process, I seek to open up conventional understandings of desire, extending the limited psychoanalytic visual field of desire to explore other dimensions of affective engagement with cultural texts. Moving beyond the controlling gaze and its elusive object of desire, I evoke other sensual dimensions of audio-visual texts: tactility, sound (music and voice), and the ephemeral address of the close-up through hands and faces.

The close-up, with its affective qualities and proximities to the object, suggests a privileged and problematic feminine complicity or “closeness” to the image. Sentimental films, romance, “the weepies,” have long been denigrated for the direct expressive effects which they invoke in their audiences – audiences seen to be predominantly women. This is part of the legacy of an affective reading which foregrounds the emotional dimension of films. Within feminist film theory, from Mulvey’s influential indictment of visual pleasure, to de Lauretis’s caution that traditional narrative forms “seduce women into femininity,” there has been a healthy distrust of the complicity invited by popular cultural forms. If Baudry and Heath evoke the *ideological* qualities of a structured gap between viewer and screen in narrative cinema, critical traditions of the 1970s, including feminism, have sought to dialectically and rationally rupture the thrall of suture. In a sense, all of these related critical approaches have undertaken to *increase* the gap between

immobile spectator and the mobile chimera of flickering images. In the process, they wish to introduce a critical awareness of the cinematic apparatus's overdetermined psychical and ideological investment in narrative cinema. Mary Ann Doane most directly addresses this question of critical distance in relation to the female spectator.

In "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator," Doane cites the "over-presence of the image" for the female spectator. For this theorist, the sadistic cinematic relations of voyeurism can only function for the *male* spectator, who is positioned and centered by the cinema, and in his extra-cinematic life, as "bearer of the gaze." In addition to Mulvey's gendered economy of active/passive gaze and narrative, then, Doane asserts a second binary at work within the classic Hollywood textual system – "an opposition between proximity and distance in relation to the image." (1982, 77) Associated with the image, with the "flattened" iconic system of representation rather than the viewing subject, the female spectator constantly risks becoming the spectacle/image. Lacking the necessary voyeuristic gap, what Burch calls the "perfect distance from the screen," the female spectator risks collapsing into the image, experiencing a certain "over-presence of the body": "The body, so close, so excessive, prevents the woman from assuming a place similar to the man's in relation to signifying systems." (79)

For the female spectator...to possess the image through the gaze is to become it. The gap which strictly separates identification and desire for the male spectator (whose possession of the cinematic woman is at least partially dependent upon an identification with the male protagonist) is abolished in the case of the woman. Binding identification to desire (the basic strategy of narcissism), the teleological aim of the female look demands a becoming and hence, a dispossession. She must give up the image in order to become it – the image is *too* present for her. (1988, 199)

Working from Freud's lecture on Femininity, Doane links the woman-as-enigma to the hieroglyphic, the iconic¹ system of representation: "The iconic system of representation is inherently deficient – it cannot disengage itself from the "real," from the concrete; it lacks the gap necessary for generalisability... The woman, too, is defined by such an insufficiency." (76) Doane

¹ Doane uses the term of iconicity as a flat, two-dimensional image. Her usage differs significantly from de Lauretis's and Deleuze's productive engagements with Peirce's sign category. See the discussion of "imaging" in Chapter One for de Lauretis's semiotic use of the ubiquitous icon.

goes on to suggest that the female spectator can only partake in cinematic pleasure by “masquerading” or reading as a *male spectator*. If the woman finds herself literally “too close” to the image, for Doane her only hope of seeing clearly (rationally?) is to read as a man. In this case, the task for the feminist critic would be to disengage herself yet one step further from this problematic business of identification and fetishism, to reassert a critical distance.² For her part, Mulvey concluded her feminist film manifesto with a plea for an avant-garde cinema which would free “the look of the audience into dialectics, passionate detachment.” (68) To this end, psychoanalysis was taken up by an influential generation of feminist film theorists as a means to reveal the inner workings of patriarchal subjectivity, to cut into the seductive thrall of visual pleasure.

Given Doane’s association of the feminine with (claustrophobic) proximity to the image, and a more general twentieth century Western cultural denigration of feminine emotionalism, this issue becomes particularly thorny in the case of a feminist analysis. Yet feminist theorists have too long denied the sensual, passionate, intensive affectivities; psychoanalytic configurations of desire, identification, and fetishism have proved immensely productive, but they have by no means exhausted the many dimensions of audio-visual sensuality at play. I would suggest that these affectivities form a vital part of the ongoing power and fascination of the movement-image. Further, questions of texture, sound, tactility, rhythm, movement, and stillness, form an integral part of the audio-visual economy of my corpus. Through my intensive readings of movement-images throughout the thesis, I have implicitly highlighted the sensual, subtle, detailed elements which may escape other types of reading; these observations have been interwoven with a range of other “critical” tools for the analysis of space and movement (notably Bakhtin’s chronotope). In this chapter, I wish to throw caution to the wind and see what happens if I delve right into the heart of this matter, seizing explicitly on the intimate, affective aspects of the movement-image.

² As many theorists have pointed out (see Modleski (1990); and Stacey (1994), there are many problems with Doane’s scenario. See also D. N. Rodowick’s critique discussed in Chapter One, the inescapable heterosexual binaries: the active/passive gaze transposed into a distance/proximity binary.

In order to do this, I incorporate different vocabularies addressing affectivity, expression, and sensibility: Thomas Elsaesser's and Peter Brooks' scholarship on melodrama; Richard Dyer's work on the musical, utopia, and Englishness; Deleuze's scholarship on the affection-image; and Luce Irigaray's scholarship on tactility. To briefly introduce Irigaray here, this theorist insists on the general dominance of the visual sense in Western metaphysics. Irigaray concurs with the feminist psychoanalytic film studies tradition in her insistence that the phallic economy of the controlling gaze tends to figure the feminine as lack. But rather than continue to beat her head against this wall, Irigaray turns to different material/ corporeal/ sensual experiences such as sound and touch which imply different economies of power and experience. From this starting point, the assorted foci of analysis in this chapter might be grouped under a general loose category of "non-visual" senses at work in the cinema – by no means exhaustive, but rather, exploratory, the "affective" reading of contemporary costume drama undertaken in this chapter will trace a series of threads including voice to music (sound), hands (tactility), and faces (Deleuze's affection-image or close-up). In the process, I wish to pinpoint some of the affective qualities which move the films, and "move" the audiences. Implicit within this exploration is the understanding that sentiment, feeling, emotion, affectivity, are central to *all* genres, although their shapes and patterns vary. In this chapter, I hope to chart some of the subtle affective vicissitudes of costume drama, and in the process point to some ways in which film studies scholarship can be extended to address these enigmatic, and essential, qualities.

Deleuze and the Affection-Image: Close-Up, Hands and Faces

This affective reading of this corpus proceeds through the guiding lens of the close-up, Deleuze's affection-image. Complementary to yet distinct from perception-image (long-shot/ landscape or milieu), or the action-image (medium shot/ narrative), the affection-image implies a complex, emotionally-charged proximity to the image. While psychoanalytic film theory often translates this affective proximity into the repetitive and drearily predictable psychic processes of identification, disavowal, fetishism, voyeurism, Deleuze's theory reads affect as potentiality, and

possibility. Indebted to Peirce's semiotics, the affection-image is akin to "firstness": "Firstness is difficult to define, because it is felt rather than conceived: it concerns what is new in experience, what is fresh, fleeting and nevertheless eternal... Firstness is thus the category of the possible." (98) For our purposes here, the quality of affect, of firstness, can be read most concisely through the cinematic properties of the close-up.³ Close-up, for Deleuze, encapsulates what Brooks and Elsaesser might call the "expressive" dimension of cinema⁴ – most often localised into hands and faces, privileged sites of human expression.

In methodological and philosophical terms, Deleuze insists that the affection-image exists in complex relation to the fabric of the text as a whole (narrative/action and milieu). "The affect is independent of all determinate space-time; but it is none the less created in a history which produces it as the expressed and the expression of a space or time, of an epoch or a milieu." (1991, 99) Not merely a function of what Heath would call "narrative space"; the close-up is not a partial object, and does not function metonymically:

The close-up does *not* tear away its object from a set of which it would form part, of which it would be a part, but on the contrary, *it abstracts it from all spatio-temporal coordinates*, that is to say it raises it to the state of Entity. The close-up is not an enlargement and, if it implies a change of dimension, this is an absolute change: a mutation of movement which ceases to be translation in order to become expression. (95-96)

Thus, Deleuze suggests that the close-up involves a qualitative leap, a change in dimension to the realm of potentiality, singularity, "what is felt rather than conceived." This is a difficult but essential point, as it reiterates the powers of certain cinematic moments to interrupt narrative flow, to "move" us somehow – a difficult and absolutely focal aspect of audio-visual texts.

³ In fact, Deleuze reads the affection-image both through the close-up (especially in Dreyer and Eisenstein), and also through the montage and mise-en-scène construction of what he calls "any-space-whatevers." Thus, affect functions both in the realm of the close-up (face and hands), and in the creation of lyrical or affective environments.

⁴ Deleuze would not use the term "expression" as it refers to the psychoanalytic topography of interiority. I note this tension here, which runs through this thesis, between a notion of subjectivity versed on interiority and expression (the very "hydraulics" of narrative and expression which inform my chronotopic analysis)– and Deleuze's insistence on absolute exteriority. In Chapter Four, I discussed the different spatial/narrative, and subjective aspects of interiority and exteriority at work in the corpus. Without resolving this tension, Deleuze's movement-image and his attendant interest in affectivity permits a different engagement with these complex issues of emotional/subjective investment and engagement with cultural texts.

Taking two recurring types of close-up which are central to the costume drama, in the first half of the chapter I will explore the evocative affective qualities of faces and hands. Within the history of the melodrama, Griffiths developed the quintessential “saturated” close-up, where the emotional import of the drama was registered, spectacularly, on these cutaway shots. In Hollywood cinema generally, and in the tradition of melodrama and drama, the face recurs as a privileged register of emotion. In the following section, I will undertake a dialogic reading of the face in *Orlando*. Another concept derived from Bakhtin, I use the “dialogic” here to sketch in a “preferred” audience for the contemporary costume drama – what Hutcheon calls a “discursive community.” In the following dialogic reading of the close-up in *Orlando*, and to some degree in the other “affective” readings undertaken in this chapter, I highlight the importance of rhetorical direction and specificity in the textual readings. A variation on scholarship on “women’s genres,” the notion of dialogism seeks to understand the links (in this case, the very specific problem of affective links) between text and world.

Bakhtin insists on the rhetorical quality of cultural texts which create meaning in relation to specific socio-historical contexts. Meaning, for Bakhtin, does not exist in a vacuum, but is produced dialogically, with a “directionality toward an object”: “All rhetorical forms, monologic in their compositional structure, are oriented toward the listener and his answer.” (280) For Bakhtin, cultural expression must be by definition dialogic, fundamentally *communicative*, rhetorical, intended: “Every literary work *faces outward away from itself*, toward the listener-reader, and to a certain extent thus anticipates possible reactions to itself.” (257) Under the rubric of the dialogic, I assert the necessity of developing new types of textual criticism which situate work as socially-grounded, rhetorical, directional, and in dialogue with the complexities of particular discursive communities and the social worlds they inhabit. In this light, I have read the texts of the corpus throughout the thesis as “living utterances” which are directed with intent and passion, toward a particular audience.

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of utterance; it cannot

fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all, the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it—it does not approach the object from the sidelines. (Bakhtin 276-277)

This insistence on precise, rhetorical forms of address manifests itself as particularly important when undertaking a series of affective readings. As I seek in the following analysis of face, hands, voice, and tactility, to trace the fine threads which link the work and the world, I read outward, then, toward a geographically-dispersed “discursive community” of international Western feminist subjects.

Reading the Close-up in *Orlando*: Faces and the Dialogic

In his seminal essay “Entertainment and Utopia,” Richard Dyer offers one of the few discussions of cinema in relation to feeling and sensibility. For Dyer, one of the key functions of entertainment within capitalist society is that of escape or “wish-fulfillment” – a tendency which he links with utopianism, with the wish for a better world. Dyer suggests that in cultural texts, utopia is not offered up as a blueprint for society, but “rather the utopianism is contained in the feelings it embodies...It thus works at the level of sensibility, by which I mean an affective code that is characteristic of, and largely specific to, a given mode of cultural production.” (18) For Dyer, these affective codes work both through representational signs (stars, narrative situations) and through non-representational signs such as colour, texture, movement, rhythm, melody, camerawork. Following Peirce, Dyer types these as iconic signs working through “resemblance at the level of basic structuration” much as music embodies feeling. These are some of the qualities which I described in Chapter Four in my close “tactile” reading of *Orlando*. The sensation of attenuated movement and stillness “moves” the film and links it to a very *social* notion of a feminist journey. In this more specifically “affective” return to *Orlando*, I will develop an account of this dialogic point of contact which is condensed and accented through Orlando’s looks and addresses to the camera.

To read *Orlando*’s dialogic address toward a specific “discursive community” through narrative movement (as I did in Chapter Four) implies an invitation to engage with the text-as-

trajectory, to be “caught up” in the progress of narrative; in isolating the affective beckoning of the close-up from the march of story, I suggest another more ephemeral layer of dialogism. More commonly read in film theory as identification (or even desire for the lovely Tilda), in puncturing the diegesis Potter not only gestures toward Brechtian aesthetics, but also makes an explicit, self-conscious address toward the audience. Breaking beyond the unconscious, hermetic processes read by psychoanalysis, I read this trope not as gaze, but as a rhetorical gesture directed *outward* toward the audience. In fact, Potter expressly developed this “look” as a bridge between Woolf’s story of the time-traveling Orlando, and a contemporary audience. On this subject, Potter writes:

But one question remained for many of [the investors] – why was *Orlando* relevant to today? How would a modern audience connect with the story? I searched for a form that would mirror my own convictions that the issues in the films were entirely pertinent, and that the *tone* of the book might itself provide a clue. For whilst it is a work that is melancholy at its heart, it is light and witty in its delivery.

And finally, with Tilda Swinton’s help, I settled on Orlando’s looks and addresses to the camera. I wanted to convert Virginia Woolf’s literary wit into a cinematic humour at which people could laugh out loud. I hoped that this direct address would create a golden thread that would connect the audience, through the lens, with Orlando. (xiii)

This “golden thread,” I would suggest, works strongly through the matrix of cultural sensibility and feeling. Orlando’s “looks” out to the audience provide a phatic contact which continually links his/her narrative passage with a broader (Western) feminist journey. The utopian quality of this feminist yearning (a very specific case of Dyer’s utopia as a “wish for a better world”) draws both from the semi-dynamic and critical qualities of Orlando’s historical passage, and from a rich intertextual layering of feminist iconic figures, faces, and lives, from Woolf to Potter to Swinton. Before continuing with a more detailed discussion of how this link functions, though, I will now briefly extend my earlier discussion of the affection-image.

Deleuze’s affection-image offers an interesting vocabulary to address certain questions of feeling, sensation, sensibility commonly excluded by psychoanalytic film theory. In the gap between perception (the long shot as both the precondition for viewing, and also contemplation) and action (the dynamic, energetically transformative qualities of movement framed in medium shot), for Deleuze “there is an in-between.”

Affection is what occupies the interval, what occupies it without filling it in or filling it up. It surges in the centre of determination, that is to say in the subject, between a perception which is troubling in certain respects and a hesitant action. It is a coincidence of subject and object, or the way in which the subject perceives itself, or rather experiences itself or feels itself "from the inside" (third material aspect of subjectivity). It relates movement to a "quality" as lived state (adjective). Indeed, it is not sufficient to think that perception – thanks to distance – retains or reflects what interests us by letting pass what is indifferent to us. There is inevitably a part of external movements that we "absorb," that we refract, and which does not transform itself into either objects of perception or acts of the subject; rather they mark the coincidence of the subject and the object in a pure quality. (65)

While feeling, affectivity, sensation, intensity always exists within and in relation to perception and action, these qualities are afforded an important singularity, force, and intensity in and of themselves. As mentioned in the Introduction, affection-image corresponds to Peirce's *firstness* – which, for Deleuze, is "difficult to describe, because it is felt rather than conceived: it concerns what is new in experience, what is fresh, fleeting, and nevertheless eternal." (98) Deleuze further subdivides the affection-image, the category of potentiality, into three categories of Peircian signs, the *Icon* ("the affect as expressed by a face, or facial equivalent"); the *Qualisign* ("the affect as expressed (or exposed) in an *any-space-whatever*"); and the *Dividual* (qualitative change in collective/individual expression, as in Eisenstein's strategies of montage). These three categories correspond to the affective dimensions of close-up, mise-en-scène, and montage, respectively. In the case of *Orlando*, the iconic category of faces offers an intriguing angle on Orlando's recurring returned look.

***Orlando* and the Close-Up: Tilda Swinton and the Affection-Image**

While compiling my research file on *Orlando*, I was struck by the extraordinary extent of still image reproduction and circulation through different contexts.⁵ On an informal polling, *Orlando* figures as one of the most-photographed films of 1992 and 1993 in anglo-american cinephile and feminine/ feminist cultural circles alike. Luscious full colour and black-and-white film

⁵ Talia Schaffer (1994) proposes an intriguing Butleresque reading of the original "autobiographical" images in the original edition of Woolf's *Orlando*. This reading coincides interestingly with this reading of the circulation of the film's still images.

stills of the stunning sets and Tilda Swinton in her extraordinary array of costumes were widely reproduced in film journals like Cineaste and Sight and Sound to more popular forums like Vanity Fair.⁶ Later into the 1990s, following the slower turnaround time of academic publishing, film stills from *Orlando* were selected for the cover images of Patricia Mellencamp's A Fine Romance...Five Ages of Film Feminism (1995a), the new edition of Annette Kuhn's seminal Women's Pictures (1994), Women and Film: A Sight and Sound Reader (1993), and Maggie Humm's Feminism and Film (1997).

Read through the circulation of its images, *Orlando* (and to some degree, *The Piano* and *Daughters of the Dust* whose respective painterly still images share a ubiquitous status in these circles) marks a watershed in feminist arthouse production, achieving critical cinematic acclaim, and crossover success within dispersed Western feminist discursive communities. In fact, the painterly, detailed, aestheticised qualities of these feminist costume dramas as well as the Austen adaptations have reproduced well in cinema journals, and in the broader feminist communities through posters, screenplays, coffee-table books, and so on. *Orlando* stands out as one case of this "iconic" status of contemporary costume drama, a film which, while not hugely commercially successful, has garnered a significant following amongst feminist audiences and scholars alike. In effect, to read the affective address of the close-up in *Orlando* is to try to isolate which qualities have "spoken" so powerfully to these discursive communities. Part of this appeal, I argue, might be linked to a generational historical relay of feminist cultural production, sensibility, and autobiography – the intermingling of the faces and voices of Virginia Woolf, Sally Potter, and Tilda Swinton.

Two things are remarkable about the promotional imagery generated by *Orlando*: First, its ubiquity, and second, the arresting quality of Swinton's face,⁷ photographed as it most often is

⁶ In addition to extensive review coverage, *Orlando* stills appeared on the covers and inside Cineaste and Visions cinema journals; Sight and Sound also featured a number of pieces including several "on site" articles. In addition, the popular women's magazine Vanity Fair featured an illustrated interview with Sally Potter, and a series of four full-page colour images of Tilda Swinton in full costume.

⁷ Swinton's face in extreme closeup appears on the cover of Potter's script published by Faber & Faber in 1994; Swinton appears, again, as mentioned above, on the cover of the Sight and Sound Women and Film reader.

with her enigmatic direct gaze at the spectator. Indeed, the absolute precision of these images, the splendour of costumes and décor amplified in the Douglas Brothers' photographs make for an extraordinarily appealing series of images. A strong drawing card for the film is Virginia Woolf's iconic status in feminist circles, and particularly of Orlando, perhaps her most carefree and amusing novel. In fact, *Orlando* was often referred to in the press as Potter's "long-awaited adaptation." A labour of love spread over eight years, *Orlando* generally did not disappoint with its precise adaptation of literary wit into cinematic language. Woolf's voice and presence (corresponding to a particular "sensibility" which I will return to) are translated and condensed into Swinton's "look." As mentioned in Chapter Four, this compelling use of Tilda Swinton's looks and direct addresses to the audience evokes an ironic, "knowing" feminist sensibility, and comprises a core aspect of the film's rhetorical address and promotional machinery.

Leafing through these images, again and again I am drawn to Swinton's gaze which is directed to meet mine. In the most commonly reproduced publicity stills, Orlando looks directly at the camera: The film's poster features Swinton in a dashing black high-necked doublet and hose on a splendid black and white checkered floor, hand on hip, as she looks solemnly into the camera with a hint of a smile; on the cover of Cineaste, Orlando and Shelmerdine (Billy Zane) in bed, shot from above as Swinton looks directly into the camera while Shelmerdine sleeps; a series of full-colour publicity shots reproduced in Vanity Fair with full-length shots of Swinton in a series of stunning and absurd costumes who in most shots gazes coyly at the camera (notably the expansive blue dress from the SOCIETY movement). Black and white stills include Orlando's father's funeral march, a hazy procession of black robes against white snow with Orlando's face an indistinct halo looking out at us, framed against black robes and casket; and a two-shot in which Sasha (Charlotte Valandrey) looks at the melancholic Orlando, whose gaze is directed off-screen. (This latter image is the only commonly-quoted still where Orlando/Swinton does not meet the gaze of the spectator).

This enigmatic, amused gaze in the still images reproduces the device of the look/ direct address which punctuates the film. Significantly, this face, this gaze (framed perfectly, precisely

against superlatively rich costume and careful mise-en-scène) was selected by the filmmakers and promotion machinery to sell the film, to amplify an “essence” of what *Orlando* could offer. Strange, as I peruse these stills, often medium shots (posed, not active), I still retain the impression of close-up, affection-image as somehow offering up the emotional whole of *Orlando* – or more precisely, its “playful sensibility.” *Orlando* is not an “emotional” film in the usual sense, I realise upon reflection. Its wry aloofness does not fit easily into the emotional groove scripted by given genres; certainly the affective intensities of *Orlando* should be differentiated from Austen’s ironic treatment of social compression which lingers on the edge of melodrama, or the more fully romantic gothic texts like *The Piano*. The film offers a lightness, a humourous quality which I seek to capture here under the rubric of “playful sensibility.”

For Deleuze, “the affection-image is the close-up, and the close-up is the face.” (87) Potter’s use of Swinton’s face and her direct address presents a singular instance of Deleuze’s affection-image:⁸ The reflecting face which expresses pure quality (wonder, contemplation...), a kind of immobile unity. While these lingering moments of the returned gaze and direct address are framed at times in close-up (notably the lingering closing image held on Orlando’s face), at times in a medium shot, I find Deleuze’s comments on the affection-image as close-up helpful in pinpointing address here. In theorizing the relationship between the “close-up” of Swinton’s face as a punctuating image within the film or publicity still and the film as a functioning whole, the relation between affection-image and text is neither metonymic nor that of a partial object. Affect may be addressed apart from the narrative, “moving” fabric of the film, but also emerges within a particular socio-historical “milieu.”

The close-up does *not* tear away its object from a set of which it would form a part...but on the contrary, *it abstracts it from all spatio-temporal coordinates*, that is to say it raises it to the state of Entity...The close-up is not an enlargement and, if it implies a change of dimension, this is an absolute change: a mutation of movement that ceases to be translation in order to become expression. (96)

⁸ In his philosophy generally, and in the *Cinema* project in particular, Deleuze insists on the importance of singularities, a particular kind of empiricism. His work on the affection-image proceeds along these lines as he examines the very distinct operations of close-up in Eisenstein, von Sternberg, Griffith, and most evocatively for this analysis, Dreyer’s *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (87-108).

Affection image becomes expression or “pure quality,” a leap in dimension from narrative preoccupations of time and space, to a semi-autonomous expression. This “mutation of movement” well describes, I think, the pausing phatic contact offered by the look within the film text – and more obliquely, the iconic status of the film’s promotional stills, which circulate semi-independently through social and media circles (in books, posters, magazines, video jackets, etc.)

But what “quality” does this close-up express? We might productively reflect, for example, on *Orlando*’s implicit historical linkages with other iconic female faces in the cinema. For certainly Potter is interested in pushing the possibilities of a particular (flawless) female face on the screen. To take up a classic example of “Garbo’s Face,” Swinton conveys a powdered, smooth, immobile mask-like quality which is in some ways comparable. For Roland Barthes, Garbo expressed

an archetype of the human face. Garbo offered to one’s gaze a sort of Platonic Idea of the human creature, which explains why her face is almost sexually undefined, without however leaving one in doubt... Garbo does not perform [her cross-dressing role in *Queen Christina*] in any feat of transvestism; she is always herself, and carries without pretence, under her crown or her wide-brimmed hats, the same snowy solitary face. (1993, 56)

Barthes’ splendid tribute to Garbo comes very close to describing Swinton’s bravura performance as Orlando. But where Garbo in *Queen Christina* retains a coldly stern, unreachable expression (“the Divine”), Swinton is more boyish, coy, knowing – her skin bathed in golden light. Also, there is something very slightly absurd about Orlando, or more precisely about the predicaments s/he finds her/himself in. That pale, flawless, naked face, strangely exposed, almost severe – hair swept back or piled ridiculously high on top, but nested on an exuberance, an obscenity of pleats and collars and lace, colour and texture. Barthes bids us look at the eyes: In Garbo, “not in the least expressive, two faintly tremulous wounds.” Heavy-lidded eyes, knowing eyes that shield their deepest thoughts, eyes that look away – mysterious, unattainable Woman. But Orlando Looks Back. A singularly amused returned gaze. Her eyes light, small, almond-shaped, and wide open, wondering, watching, surprised. Swinton projects a quick intelligence and a complicity with the audience. There is a knowingness here, a shared joke. We find ourselves laughing not *at* Orlando, but *with* him/her. And the ridiculousness of it all springs from a some

shared context: Woolf's novel, a satirical take on the Great History of England, a delight in gender performance, the trials and tribulations of feminist cultural production.

This juxtaposition with Barthes' tribute to Garbo situates Orlando/Swinton within the social and economic tradition of "star" production. As Dyer points out, the framing and key-lighting of such close-ups may be read at the nexus of industrial and social codes of production. Swinton's face in these film stills mobilises not only a unique and refreshing feminist rejoinder to such images, but also builds upon historical codes of feminine desirability, notably "whiteness." To read this image in its full complexity, it must also be read in relation to these codes – codes which it both replicates and comments upon: Swinton's wry humour and boyishness, the specifically "feminist" address of the film critiques the voluptuous stars which came before, from Jean Harlow to Marilyn Monroe.⁹

Winking Look as a Link: Swinton, Potter, Woolf

Swinton's look links the film text and the promotional machinery of *Orlando* – and in the process, gains a momentum and an affective force of its own. However, this "pure affect" is "none the less created in a history which produces it as the expressed and the expression of a space or a time, of an epoch or a milieu." For, as I attempt to evoke a particular quality which moves through *Orlando*, it would be absurd and problematic to elevate this quality to the status of Eternal Art. In the following section, I would like to link the idea of the affection-image/ Swinton's look back into the discussion of context and chronotope.

If we look at Potter's *Orlando* as an adaptation of Woolf's novel, we can approach the close-up as an affective link between the chronotope of the text, and that of the contexts through which it circulates. The looks and addresses to the camera suggest a complicity between Orlando and a particular type of audience – loosely defined, this audience might share a familiarity and

⁹ The particular photographic key-lighting strategies applied to *Orlando's* face here hints at how this image takes its place within the iconographic imaging of stars, including Garbo, Monroe, and so on. Interesting as a "feminist" rendering of the "star" project, Swinton in *Orlando* (and as a recurring figure in Derek Jarman's work) functions as a star speaking to queer, avant-garde, and feminist constituencies. For key critical literatures on the phenomenon of stardom, see Dyer (1986a; 1986b) and Stacey (1994).

affection for Virginia Woolf and her work Orlando; and/or a sympathy for both feminist social critique; and/ or a particular recent tradition in British avant-garde cinema; and/or a feel for a whole tradition of British satire as social critique (or more precisely, a sensibility which can be shorthanded as “Bloomsbury”). This is not to say that the film exceeds the grasp of those not possessing all such cultural capital. In fact, *Orlando* carries enough of an explicit narrative to be intelligible to a broad audience (this is clear from the film’s considerable international success), but it speaks most pointedly to a circumscribed group.¹⁰ For example, Potter’s casting of gay icons Quentin Crisp as a highly dignified Queen Elizabeth (“Eliza is the Fairest Queen” indeed!), and Jimmy Sommerville as a singing angel, signal a particular in-joke which will especially delight queer-informed audience members.¹¹ Part of the pleasure of this particular text is being included within the circle of those ‘in the know’ – and conversely, a displeasure arises, presumably, from a sense of exclusion or not knowing the codes.

In addition, the well-known auto/biographical subtext of Woolf’s Orlando draws us into a layering of feminist historical reference and narrative, a particular kind of affective reading which is suggested by the iconic nature of the personages involved. As I was thinking about the peculiar role of the close-up in the film, I began thinking about the circulation of certain iconic portraits/ faces through feminist cultural space, and the imaginative pull of these people’s lives. Alongside the reading of *Orlando* as attenuated feminist narrative movement presented in Chapter Four, I would put forth a second intertextual affective reading of the film as mobilizing a series of three iconic feminist faces and lives: Virginia Woolf, Sally Potter, Tilda Swinton. Woolf’s face circulates through feminist cultural circles (posters, book covers, postcards) as a gifted writer whose incisive wit and feminist social critique were tragically eclipsed in madness and suicide. Potter, a feminist filmmaker whose earlier “difficult” avant-garde films *Thriller* and *The Goldiggers* are known to a

¹⁰ I thank Kim Sawchuk for suggesting this to point to me.

¹¹ Quentin Crisp’s cameo in the film, alongside Jimmy Sommerville offers a multi-generational acknowledgment of the queer sensibility which informs this film (particularly costuming and set design) and in different ways, Woolf’s work. The most striking foregrounded use of music in *Orlando* involve the opening and closing numbers which feature Sommerville’s distinct falsetto. These numbers (corresponding to the stately arrival of Queen Elizabeth), and the floating angel, bookend the soundtrack and the film itself, in a contemporary queer sensibility.)

small circle, has moved into an international arthouse spotlight with this lush production.¹² Third, Swinton's face is known to British avant-garde art fans through her work with Derek Jarman; finally, this role has made her "the face of Orlando" in international arthouse and feminist circles.

An affective reading of *Orlando* would conjure a layering of iconic portraits and accompanying lives and works. Swinton, the youngest, the "front woman" here offers up a bravado, an intelligence which most visibly speaks to the spectator. Slightly indistinct, we can find Potter behind the camera, orchestrating, blocking, facilitating, conceiving the links between Woolf's text, the world of finance and film production, and the shape of the cinematic project. And finally, hovering in the background, the much-analysed, but still haunting spectre of Virginia Woolf, an echo of an effervescent, satirical wit. (Perhaps we like to imagine her seated at a writing desk, penning *A Room of One's Own*, or *Three Guineas*? Or perhaps we merely have kept an old postcard or poster of her face pinned on the wall?) A brilliant compellingly illustrated and documented (in letters and diaries) narrative with a tragic ending.

Finally, let us consider the voices that accompany these etched white British faces: Articulate, modulated, well-spoken, precise. Carrying intonations of particular national and class experience. These faces, these voices, produce an affect which is rich and perfect in its precision – an incisive feminist critique of a particular experience of gender, of class, of imperialism. In some ways a marginal experience, one constantly in quest of "a room of one's own," the well-traveled dominance of this experience internationally (or amongst English-speaking feminists in particular) may be measured in the recognition that Orlando's look evokes in spatially-dispersed audiences.

In addressing the specificity of these faces, these narratives, this sensibility, I seek to anchor it socially and historically. For part of the pleasure (or conceivably, displeasure) which *Orlando* evokes arises from its grounding in an idiosyncratic class, racial, and imperial history.

¹² Significantly, the print coverage of the film commonly pictures Potter as the "eye behind the camera"; also, a BBC television documentary described the making of *Orlando*. Extensive interviews in the popular press, as well as in *Sight and Sound* carefully documented the painstaking and financially precarious production history of the film.

Like the Austen adaptations, when *Orlando* travels, she does so on a British passport. And the affective charge, a certain familiarity of attitude and reference, is inseparable from the inculcated class dynamics and colonial history of Englishness and English culture. Even as Orlando's satirical journey into Empire overlays this imaginative feminist journey with the nineteenth-century imperial travelogue, the iconic status of Woolf's and Swinton's flawless white faces point out the social and historical patternings of affectivity. Approaching this film from a Canadian feminist perspective, I am fascinated in part by the affective charge it carries for me: Why *this* journey? Why *this* face?

To broaden out from this reading, the recurring affection-image of Orlando's face is not unlike the reading of the woman at the window developed in Chapter Two. These images share a quality of potentiality, a gazing into the future: Might not Emma Thompson at the window offer another affective out-take which partakes in this intensive quality, be it longing, nostalgia, the quest for land, motion, empire, "a room of one's own"? Later in this chapter I will develop a reading of the Austen cycle more generally as mobilising an ironic sensibility of "Englishness" which is related to, yet distinct from the avant-garde sensibility of *Orlando*. But what are the implications of these faces (recognisable, feminist "knowing" faces in close-up) as a stand-in for contemporary costume drama as a whole? From the specificity of *Orlando* to the current more widespread popularity of feminist costume drama for an "upscale" female audience and feminist film critics alike, what are the implications of Tilda Swinton, Emma Thompson, Kate Winslet, even Holly Hunter, as the contemporary "faces of feminism"? White, middle-class (you can read class through the texture of the skin, the evenness of the teeth), young, attractive, heterosexual – do they engage primarily in a dialogue with other, like, faces and subjectivities?

The notable exception to costume drama's potential for colonial or class critique, *Daughters of the Dust*, might be seen to prove the rule. Set against the hegemonic costume drama tradition, Dash's protagonists stand out dramatically as the "wrong" bodies, clothed in the nineteenth-century garb; the history of the Ibo, of the descendants of the slaves, are not the "content" of costume drama narratives – the backdrop perhaps, the landscape, but never the

heart of the narrative.¹³ Embodied in Tilda Swinton's or Emma Thompson's faces and their star personae are the white, middle-class, and Western "limits" of costume drama's dialogic reach – the location and affective qualities of these faces both explain how brilliantly they "reach" certain constituencies, and the limits of these constituencies.

* * *

This reading of the iconic faces of *Orlando*, the Austen heroines, and the other leading ladies of contemporary costume drama identifies the cycle's "preferred" voice and quality of expression. From this visual reading of affectivity in close-up, I will now turn to another important realm of affectivity, the aural dynamics of sound, music, voice, which, as I have indicated throughout the thesis, form an essential component of the audio-visual system of costume drama. In the following section, I wish to leave aside for the time-being an explicitly Deleuzian framework (Deleuze, like many film theorists, tends to privilege the visual) to return to the insights of scholarship on melodrama. Moving from the exterior, postmodern spaces of *Orlando* with its winking looks which reach outside the text, I wish to return here to the romantic aspects of the corpus which work within a hydraulic spatial economy – a spatial economy which is also an affective economy. And the affective dimensions of the Austen adaptations and the gothic texts function, as in any genre, through the orchestration of voice, music, and sound.

Melodramatic Cultural Antecedents

Melodrama is one important scholarly field which helps provide a vocabulary to broach difficult affectivity in the cinema. For instance, Elsaesser describes melodrama in plastic audio-visual terms, evoking what I have called a "hydraulic economy" of emotional repression and release which I have employed in Chapter Two in relation to the expressive dynamics of interior

¹³ As Brenda Longfellow points out, some of the debate arising with the release of *Daughters of the Dust* revolved around the aesthetic, ephemeral, utopian quality of the film. Seen as a form of social history, many of the film's critics saw it as an inappropriately lush portrayal of black history. Such debates, which also arose around Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* raise an important debate around realism and historical representation.

and exterior space in the Austen cycle. I wish to return to this suggestive metaphor here to take up the implicit questions of gendered emotional constraint and expression.¹⁴

Melodrama constitutes a long-standing historical literary and theatrical cultural form (see Brooks 1976; Gledhill 1987; Bratton, Cook, and Gledhill 1994) with its etymological roots as, literally, "drama + *melos* (music)." (Nowell-Smith 1987, 70) Featuring dramatic narratives inflected with a significant musical component, melodrama speaks (sings, hums, orchestrates) the language of sentiment. Elsaesser traces the melodrama back to French traditions of costume drama and historical novel, German "high" drama and more popular ballad form, and Italian opera. (44) In England, this form emerged through the melodramatic novel popularised by Dickens and the literary gothic tradition (including, for our purposes here, the work of the Brontë sisters). Commenting on the European historical cultural resonance of melodrama, Elsaesser writes: "There is little doubt that the whole conception of life in nineteenth-century Europe and England, and especially the spiritual problems of the age, were often viewed in categories we would today call melodramatic." (49-50)

Associated with the realm of feeling, melodrama has been treated by cultural critics alternately as the highest form of human expression, or denigrated as a feminised form of "low" culture. From Molière's aristocratic comedies of manners, to the more humble music hall traditions, melodrama has played to distinct European class and gendered taste formations since the eighteenth century. In the present century dominated by an aesthetics of realism, the genre translates into "feminine" forms of mass culture such as soap opera, the romance novel, or the "woman's film." In consequence, cultural critics have associated sentimentality with the lowest cultural common denominator through association with feminine and working class "poor taste."

¹⁴ Of course, in importing this influential scholarship the question arises: Does contemporary costume drama qualify as melodramatic? I have asked myself this question again and again as I work through different texts from the corpus. Certainly, the cycle's trajectory involves a contemporary feminine and feminist return to romance. Of the entire corpus, the Austen adaptations remain most faithful to a "realist narrative cinema" model which has been juxtaposed dialectically with the emotional "excess" of melodrama. Yet, much of the affective and desiring motor which drives these texts involves a diffuse, attenuated, yet nonetheless absolutely central, emotionalism, sentimentality. Potter's, Campion's, and Dash's more "critical" feminist texts work in relation to and against the romantic sensibility, dredging up more difficult, less familiar emotional patterns.

Clearly, this class-bound classification of sentimental forms continues to inflect cultural and generic trends. With its middlebrow claims to “classic” literary roots or avant-garde cinematic form, contemporary costume drama eschews the “crass” emotionalism of, for instance soap opera. Sentiment plays an important role within the corpus, but it is expressed in curiously attenuated, compressed forms.

Christine Gledhill (1987) notes how the melodramatic sensibility works across theatre, literature, and painting through the mode of visual narrativisation. Translated into the 20th century cinema (and ultimately, televisual) context, cultural historian Nicholas Vardac notes how melodrama informed the very roots of Hollywood film form.¹⁵ According to Gledhill, Vardac

charts the development of techniques bent on the narrativisation of action through “telling” gestures, incidents or situations and an episodic, pictorial mode of narration which dispensed with dialogue and conventional “dramatic” construction... Such techniques dispensed with the expression of character through dialogue, relying on “effective situations and telling *mise-en-scène*, “action-tableaux” and episodic narration to externalise the inner states of characters. (22-23)¹⁶

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Elsaesser notes how *mise-en-scène*, music, and dialogue are “orchestrated” to create the classic affective melodramatic “compression.” I have read this profound sense of compression or constraint throughout this thesis in relation to gendered movement, and clearly one key dimension of such a hydraulic economy involves the repression of emotion – the inability to “express” one’s true feelings. Much of the subtext of social critique within Austen or the Brontës (and many of their current feminist incarnations) revolves around *what cannot be said*. Within the formal and social limits of politesse and attenuated gesture, what cannot be expressed in words is often displaced into *mise-en-scène* and a dramatic use of music

¹⁵ D.W. Griffiths’ foundational oeuvre deserves special mention in this regard. For a fascinating account of the plastic significance of Griffiths’ work, see Sergei Eisenstein’s essay on “Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today” in his *Film Form* (1949).

¹⁶ Hollywood cinema’s debt to melodramatic literary, theatrical and painting forms brings us back to Baudry’s and Heath’s comments on film’s borrowing of perspectival systems in painting which reconstruct a “centered” subject. Interestingly, though, much of the neo-Marxist critique of the ideology of cinematic forms and conventions is threaded through a critique of the “classic realist text.” Even as cultural historians note the melodramatic qualities of silent cinema, melodrama itself has, in the latter part of the 20th century, served as an aesthetic foil to “realism” within Marxist cultural theory. Critical film theorists of the 1960s and 1970s championed melodramatic “excess” generally, and Douglas Sirk’s Hollywood oeuvre in particular as an antidote to the ideological qualities of realism. Sirk was retrospectively seen to exhibit tendencies toward Brechtian distanciation and stylistic excess, which presented a visual, emotional challenge to the film’s surface narrative preoccupations with the constricting social norms of the 1950s.

(and occasionally dance numbers) in the soundtrack. In films like *The Piano* and *Sense and Sensibility*, both diegetic (piano) and extra-diegetic romantic music facilitate moments of expressive release from the convoluted and oppressive constraints of bourgeois propriety.

Dyer's work on dance in the musical and Elsaesser's comments on melodrama effectively combine a *spatial* or topographical sense of constraint (*mise-en-scène* and character movement) with a subjective/psychological state of compression and release. Dyer's and Elsaesser's attention to music (a generally under-developed aspect of cinema scholarship) points to the importance of sound in creating affective environments with precise emotional inflections. In his discussion of utopianism, Dyer stresses the subtle significance of what he calls "non-representational signs" in the cinema. Undertheorised within film studies, elements such as colour, texture, movement, rhythm, melody, camerawork do not signify symbolically, but rather "through resemblance at the level of basic structuration." Music, for instance, "moves" us in a way which is much more visceral than symbolic. In this vein, Dyer cites Susanne K. Langer on music:

The tonal structures we call "music" bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling—forms of growth and of attenuation, excitement and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm or subtle activation or dreamy lapses—not joy and sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of both—the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt. Such is the pattern, or logical form, of sentience; and the pattern of music is that same form worked out in pure measures, sound and silence. Music is a tonal analogue of emotive life. (cited in Dyer 1992, 19)

Dyer is careful to note that the correlation between human feeling and musical form is not natural, but has to be *learned*. Indeed, these correlations are culturally encoded through representational systems such as genre. My own approach to textual analysis as developed within this thesis also strongly emphasizes these "non-representational" elements – notably movement, stillness, texture, and colour. These elements tend to be excluded from psychoanalytic film studies, or are addressed as mere functions of "narrative space." In the next section on voice, I wish to examine particular articulations of music as part of the broader soundscape of these films (voice, diegetic and extra-diegetic music, ambient sound) as one important aspect of their affective address.

Voice: Aural Codings of Authority

In Chapter Three, I asserted that period adaptation employs a rich array of classical music to texture its romantic landscapes and delicate period interiors. Elsaesser describes this layering of image and sound as “orchestration”; this layering of diegetic and extra-diegetic sound and music helps create an immediacy and depth for the image. Within the costume drama, musical interludes provide refuges, moments of passage, or expressive outlets from a barrage of socially-monitored, precise speech. Included in this orchestration, Elsaesser stresses the “expressive use of diction and the plasticity of the human voice” as a crucial cinematic element.¹⁷ In fact, most of the texts of the corpus are anchored in talk. The link between the iconic novel and the adaptation lies largely in dialogue which forms the core of Austen’s narrative. “The grain of the voice” deployed to speak Emma Woodhouse, Elinor Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, Anne Elliot, and other much-loved heroines, is the well-spoken, modulated tones of educated, middle-class middle England. For the ears of a British audience, this voice is embodied in the Cambridge-educated Emma Thompson, but emerges from the historically hegemonic English theatre tradition producing the *dramatis personae* which people the British heritage cinema generally.¹⁸

Reaching outside the complex and fraught British context of accent, region, and class, these modulated tones carry a related cultural resonance for a global audience. Writing of the “anglophilia” which has gripped (North) American viewers of Merchant-Ivory, Hipsky notes the general appeal of British heritage films as “affordable luxuries,” as commodities offered to the upwardly mobile *élite*. While Hipsky focuses on the films’ tremendous “circumambience” (the excessive, sensual period settings and costumes), I would suggest that a significant aspect of these film and television serials’ “cultural capital” also involves the appeal of exquisite dialogue and “quality” European acting (sanctioned by academy awards). The precise, modulated tones of

¹⁷ By extension, though, we can think of human voice, speech patterns, regional accents and inflections, as an essential aspect of audio-visual textures, from John Wayne’s straight-shooting one-liners, to Woody Allen’s inner city New York patter.

¹⁸ As I mentioned in Chapter Two, the appeal of classical British theatrical training and voice has been gradually transformed into a significant global star commodity. Sir Anthony Hopkins, Emma Thompson and Kristen Scott-Thomas present the most striking and popular examples.

these actors and actresses speaking Shakespeare, Austen, or Brontë texts correspond both aurally and culturally to the romantic, modulated scores which round out the period drama soundscape – and which, incidentally, are marketed separately as film scores.

Amidst this precise layering of voice, this exquisite diction which dominates the soundscape of Austen adaptations, it is interesting to note the aural encoding of authority. As noted in Chapter Three, the English novel tradition as translated into cinematic and televisual texts, lives and breathes a particular class-bound and imperial access to language. But it is possible to break this reading down further. Thinking about how the “grain of the voice” carries authority within the audio-visual economy of the Austen adaptations, let us consider the range of stock voices which recur across the cycle, using *Pride and Prejudice* as a point of departure. Kaja Silverman identifies the gendered aural regimes of authority within classic cinema.

The male subject...is allowed to occupy the position of the speaking subject – in fiction, and even to some degree in fact. Within dominant narrative cinema the male subject enjoys not only specular but linguistic authority. The female subject, on the contrary, is associated with unreliable, thwarted, or acquiescent speech. She talks a great deal; it would be a mistake to characterize her as silent, since it is in large part through her prattle, her bitchiness, her sweet murmurings, her maternal admonitions, and her verbal cunning that we know her. (1990, 309-310)

Within Austen, as Raymond Williams points out, the archetype of the honourable country gentleman always emerges as the privileged voice of rightful authority (and the “correct” love object). Within the Bennet family at the heart of this novel, Mr. Bennet’s incisive wit cuts through the constant hysterical prattle of his ridiculous wife, and his three younger daughters, “three of the silliest girls in England.” Certainly, Mr. Bennet has mastered the sober, insightful, and yet self-aware expression, “the voice of reason” which must always prevail in Austen.

Besides Mr. Bennet, Mr. Darcy emerges as *Pride and Prejudice*’s other “voice of reason.” His case illustrates another aspect of voice at work across the Austen cycle. Whereas lyrical and precise expression are highly valued, indeed absolutely pivotal, to the pleasures of the genre, there is a mistrust of too-easy, flowery language. Where the highest achievement is “true” and “honourable” discourse, in Austen, people are often not as they initially appear. Particularly amongst the male characters, the male dandies and flatterers (Willoughby, Frank Churchill, Mr.

Elliot, Mr. Wickham) often conceal shady and dishonourable motives with syrupy phrases and poetry. In a sense, the essential task of Austen's genteel husband-seeking heroines is to differentiate amongst their suitors to find the "true" voices of passion and class responsibility. For instance, Darcy, who initially seems over-proud, gloomy and inarticulate, finally proves to be the "true" gentleman, for, as his sister Georgiana asserts, "he always tells the truth." Similarly, the true country gentleman who provides an authoritative moral centre recurs in the didactic figure of *Emma's* John Knightley (who constantly corrects Emma on her "inappropriate" behaviour), in *Sense and Sensibility's* Colonel Brandon, and in *Persuasion's* Captain Wentworth.

The virtue of an economy of expression, a modesty and honesty tempered by discretion, also figures amongst Austen's female characters. True to Silverman's observations, comic, "silly" women recur, from the Musgrove sisters of *Persuasion*, to Mrs. Jenkins and her daughter Charlotte Palmer of *Sense and Sensibility*, to, most spectacularly, the giggling duo of Kitty and Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice*. In certain scenes, these characters provide an ongoing background noise of bubbling, giggling chatter, a breathlessness of language and flurry of movement which sets a comic counterpoint to the sober, contained, and precise comportment and language of the protagonists. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Lydia's loud indiscretions provide a continual interruption to parlour conversations – and a means of bridging the transition from one small group to another. Running through the parlour or the ball, laughing too loudly, Lydia's voice serves as a constant aural reminder of the perils of unchecked female behaviour, even when her cheerful, dumpy, silly body is not on-screen. She cuts a comic figure, and favourably sets off Lizzie and Jane's discrete and subtle natures expressed through their measured, careful, eloquent tones. In these contrasting voices we have a key to the moral economy at the heart of Austen. The adaptations put forward both a distrust of the haughty, self-important, commanding language of the aristocracy (Lady Catherine de Bourgh) – and an instruction for class upward mobility through self-improvement and proper comportment.

A class-bound struggle for voice occurs expressly in *Pride and Prejudice* in Lady Catherine's monopoly of conversation at Rosings Park. For instance, consider this passage:

"When the ladies returned to the drawing room, there was little to be done but to hear Lady Catherine talk, which she did without intermission till coffee came in, delivering her opinion on every subject in so decisive a manner as proved that she was not used to have her judgement controverted." (198) Of course, part of Eliza Bennet's charm as the heroine of this text lies in her tactful yet fearless ripostes to Lady Catherine – her refusal to be silenced.¹⁹ Elizabeth's triumph here is not only to be silent, but to out-manoeuvre the old battle-axe through her wordsmithery. But her ultimate triumph moves beyond discourse, where, during the concluding double marriage ceremony, Lady de Bourgh and her daughter (as well as the hateful Caroline Bingley) are pictured outside of their hoped-for accession for Pemberley. The true prize here is Jane and Elizabeth's accession into propertied families – facilitated through their womanly virtues and correct speech and comportment.

Realist costume dramas like the Austen cycle generally proceed through the layering of dialogue and pregnant silences, an interweaving of voices and significances. Yet we can pull this soundscape apart, much as I did with landscape in Chapter Three, to think about the privileging, the foregrounding of certain voices over others. If working people lack a voice in this particular dialogue, there is another class battle at work between, once again, the indulgent and lazy aristocracy, and the middle class coming into its preferred voice. This emergent voice has modulated tones, a certain reasonableness and articulateness, and strives, in Austen, toward certain codes of honour and correctness. At the same time, these voices are gendered. Through diction, discretion, and economy of utterance, Austen's heroines emerge as the fit partners of the country gentlemen, distinguished from their "silly" female relations and friends, even as their mates stand apart from false flattery and insincerity. In this way, we can see how language, the

¹⁹ This challenge of the "country cousin" comes to a head when Lady de Bourgh visits Longbourne to dissuade Elizabeth from marrying Darcy. When Elizabeth does not comply with her orders, she exclaims, archly: "Miss Bennet, do you know who I am? I have not been accustomed to such language as this. I am almost the nearest relation he has in the world, and am entitled to know all his dearest concerns." Elizabeth replies: "But you are not entitled to know *mine*; nor will such behaviour as this, ever induce me to be explicit." (364)

“plasticity of the human voice,” the foregrounding of particular voices and the ridicule toward or erasure of others functions through genre.²⁰

Expression and Silences: The “Text of Muteness”

To situate the sonorous “orchestration” of period adaptation in a different light, in The Melodramatic Imagination, Peter Brooks characterises melodrama in terms of a desire for expression. “The desire to express all seems fundamental to the melodramatic mode... Life tends, in this fiction, toward ever more concentrated and totally expressive gestures and statements.” (4) On first consideration, it would seem that the restrained Austen adaptations and many other films of the cycle are not spectacularly “melodramatic” – they seem to be about what, for various reasons, *cannot be expressed*. In Austen, the constraints of manners and propriety continually prohibit “free” expression. But, rather than rendering these films cold and inexpressive, this emotional compression generates a distinctive poignancy. At once so dense with talk, with exquisite turns of phrase, the expressive plane of these films gets pushed into silences, into diegetic and extra-diegetic music (which I will return to), and finally, into inarticulate glances and gesture.

Brooks describes “the text of muteness” where nonverbal expression rather than words, carries the drama’s emotional charge.

Melodrama appears as a medium in which repression has been pierced to allow thorough articulation, to make available the expression of pure moral and psychological integers. Yet here we encounter the apparent paradox that melodrama so often, particularly in climactic moments and in extreme situations, has recourse to non-verbal means of expressing its meanings. Words, however unrepressed and pure, however transparent as vehicles for the expression of basic relations and verities, appear to be not wholly adequate to the representation of meanings, and the melodramatic message must be formulated through other registers of the sign. (56)

This equation, the “puncturing” of repression (in Austen, the broaching of propriety, reserve, politeness) is especially interesting in period drama dominated by the virtuoso, restrained play of

²⁰ Perhaps each genre has its own “preferred” mode of expression. To extend: “expression” taken in its broader connotations. The Western favours a laconic, smouldering stranger. A man of action, his words are few, carefully chosen, fired off like crack shots: “Make my day!”

language. Words fail the heroes and heroines in matters of the heart. Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, Elinor Dashwood and Edward Ferrars, Emma Woodhouse and John Knightley: These four leading couples resemble each other at the level of an incredible inarticulateness at the level of desire, in contrast with their incredible articulateness on all other matters. Within the “text of muteness,” Brooks writes of the “inarticulate cry or gesture” as outside of ordinary discourse, “an attempt to recover on the stage something like the mythical primal language, a language of presence, purity, immediacy.” (66) This affective immediacy registers at the end of *Sense and Sensibility* when, upon discovering that Edward is not indeed married, Elinor bursts into tears. All of the ironclad composure and rational discourse which she has exhibited to this point explodes in this moment of joy and relief.

In response to the inadequacy of the precise and careful language of Austen’s characters for expressing matters of the heart, desire and longing are deployed to different planes, notably through mute looks (cornered, perhaps by Colin Firth’s Mr. Darcy and his beseeching “come hither” looks), through those moments of gazing out the window, and through musical expression. Brooks notes the paradox that in melodrama, “the total expressivity assigned to gesture is related to the ineffability of what is being expressed. Gesture is read as containing such meanings because it is postulated as the metaphorical approach to what cannot be said.” (11) My preceding readings of gesture and costume in *Orlando*, *Daughters of the Dust* and *The Piano* suggest an “inarticulate” yet incredibly evocative feminist approach to what “cannot be said” within the nineteenth-century context. Or, perhaps, moving beyond the tyranny of language, costume drama’s virtuoso range of expression through gesture, movement, stillness, mise-en-scène, and costume creates an exciting range of expression which requires different critical tools to read. Dyer categorises these elements as iconic or “non-representational signs”; more precisely, they do not signify within a literal, language-based mode, but rather at the level of affectivity and feeling.

I now turn in greater depth to the non-verbal aural dimensions of music in the corpus, beginning from the Austen adaptations, and moving toward *The Piano* – perhaps the penultimate feminist “text of muteness.”

Music, Interiority, Affectivity

In audio-visual texts, music expresses an important realm of emotion. In Chapter Three, I examined the audio-visual blocking of class and gender relations in *Sense and Sensibility* with reference to Elinor and Edward’s “walk in the country,” foregrounding the layering of dialogue, character movement, and landscape. Marianne’s piano playing provided a diegetic link in this scene with the events of the house, and a romantic accompaniment to Elinor and Edward’s exchange. In passages between scenes and locations, musical numbers coupled with the expanse of landscape conventionally provide “breaks” from the density of dialogue and narrative. This observation retains a rather functional treatment of music in films as ushering along the narrative; offering moments of pause and reflection; or as a mere expression or support of character feeling. To extend this analysis into a more whimsical, affective dimension, I wish now to look more closely at the use of diegetic music in the Austen adaptations. Specifically, I wish to treat the pianoforte concert as a recurring movement-image both among the Austen adaptations and across the cycle more generally. These sequences evoke the expressive capacity of music as a privileged link to the inner affective lives of the characters. The movement-image of “the woman at the piano” suggests another affective micro-chronotope which compares with the woman at the window or the walk in the country.

The piano recital takes a privileged place within the topography of the Austen cycle. Culled from the repertoire of bourgeois leisured life of the nineteenth century, the pianoforte was a preferred instrument of musical instruction for accomplished young ladies of the period. The recital presents an engaging cinematic moment, a kind of musical “number” not unlike dance-hall

performances or other types of “spectacle” in classic Hollywood musicals and variety.²¹ As mentioned in Chapter Two, the music recital is a particular instance of the salon’s or parlour’s social gathering, the explicitly expressive quality of the music prompting a tension between formal codes of comportment and the characters’ deepest passions. For instance, the emotional “excess” of the love aria in *Persuasion* prompts a break in both Anne and Frederick’s composure; still, constrained by propriety, they cannot express their true feelings until a chance encounter in the town square. This exquisite piece of music returns at the film’s uncharacteristically romantic close, as the married pair sail off into the sunset. In an earlier sequence, Anne Elliot is asked to play the pianoforte at a gathering at Uppercross; perceived to be an old maid who doesn’t dance, she is also the most musical of the party, in this case, the designated secret “romantic.” Anne Elliott’s reticent association with music, and by extension, with deep feeling, indicates the Austen cycle’s complex (often ironic) correlation between musical expression and interiority.

In *Jane Austen’s Emma*, the recital at Hartfield Hall provides a competitive moment between Emma and Jane Fairfax. First Emma performs a simple folk song, and Frank Churchill flirtatiously joins in. Next, while Jane performs a moody and passionate German song, Emma and Frank engage in a light banter, often with the “Irish” (and less-well-off) Jane as the butt of their jokes. Jane’s “Irishness,” the focus on her dark, enigmatic beauty, designates her as the passionate, deep-feeling character. In the script, this moment is described as follows: “Jane plays and sings an Italian song. Much more demanding technically, but also something that enables her to express deep emotion – perhaps this is the way this secretive reserved girl finds an outlet for her feelings.” (114) Both novel and adaptation apply an ironic but insistent framing of Jane as “other,” as somehow closer to her emotions through her Irishness, which is expressed in her music. As in *The Piano’s* ambivalent fetishised treatment of the instrument which I return to

²¹ The idea of the “number,” the narrative pause offered by spectacle recurs across all types of film and might be related to Bakhtin’s notion of narrative as segmentation and passage, movement and pauses. As I’ve suggested here, the period film mobilises a particularly luscious treatment of landscape and historical settings as an intrinsic part of the audio-visual economy which both interrupts narrative, and locates it within an exotic and plentiful past. This mode of thought might be extended across genres: For instance, in pornography, the “cum” shot offers a kind of recurrent “number” (Williams 1989); alternately, the action cinema or the Western certainly turn on an energetic series of spectacular moments: car chases, hand-to-hand combat, shootouts.

below, in Austen the pianoforte serves as a privileged token of emotional transaction. Marianne Dashwood and Jane, not well-off, receive pianofortes as gifts from their respective love-interests, Colonel Brandon and Frank Churchill; Mr. Darcy bestows a pianoforte on his beloved younger sister, Georgiana. Music, the pianoforte, operates within the realm of privileged interiority and emotional expression.

In *Sense and Sensibility*, we can trace how Emma Thompson plays “sense” to Kate Winslet’s “sensibility” through the sisters’ varying relationships to music. Elinor runs the household and maintains a no-nonsense, iron-clad control over her burgeoning feelings for Edward, all in the name of propriety. Marianne, on the other hand, embodies unbridled emotion, passion, recklessness. Between them the sisters achieve a balance of commonsense and passion, but Austen’s preferred narrators (Anne Elliot, Emma Woodhouse, Elinor Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet) generally err on the side of “sense.” Often, another character gets designated as the reservoir of romantic expression – both foolhardy (Marianne pays a high price for her headlong pursuit of Willoughby) and yet somehow admirable. In the novel after Willoughby’s inexplicable departure, Marianne’s “sensibility” emerges as follows:

The evening passed off in the equal indulgence of feeling. She played over every favourite song that she had been used to play to Willoughby, every air in which their voices had been oftenest joined, and sat at the instrument gazing on every line of music that he had written out for her, till her heart was so heavy that no further sadness could be gained; whole hours at the pianoforte alternately singing and crying, her voice often totally suspended by tears. (69)

Marianne emotes at and through the pianoforte. She is first introduced playing a mournful number after her father’s death, and continues to mark her own and the film’s changing moods through a series of numbers. Pictured serene, like a Boucher painting in the exquisitely blue room, Marianne pours out her family’s inarticulate grief at the loss of a husband and son. In one exquisite moment, Edward happens upon Elinor standing unobtrusively in the doorway of this room weeping as Marianne plays.

Jane Fairfax and especially Marianne Dashwood exemplify a tragic, brooding, enigmatic romanticism which is both valued and lightly mocked in Austen. Tony Tanner situates Austen on

the early cusp of Romanticism, still ingrained in Enlightenment and rationalism. "Jane Austen was writing at a time when a major shift of sensibility was taking place, as indeed major social changes were taking place or were imminent, and to some extent she was aware of this. She had depicted at least one incipient Romantic in the figure of Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, and her treatment is a rather ambiguous mixture of sympathy and satire." (1972, 45) Thompson's recurringly ironic script plays up this gently mocking treatment of everything, and especially Marianne. For instance, as she plays one melancholy tune after another, Elinor says: "Marianne, could you play something else? Mama has been weeping since breakfast."

In his analysis of *Brief Encounter*, Richard Dyer notes how the film evokes a very specific middle-class English "structure of feeling" which strongly evokes the emotional topography of Austen – an understated, slightly ironic realism which has developed within the West End theatre tradition and extended itself into film and television production. He reports a preoccupation with niceness and emotional restraint, but insists that "such restraint is not the absence of feeling. Indeed, there can be no concept of restraint without an acknowledgement of feeling – restraint must keep something emotional in check." (1993, 66) *Brief Encounter's* melodramatic qualities manifest themselves through surging romantic music, and certain qualities of mise-en-scène. Yet the film's realist organisation

contains the melodrama, keeps it at bay with irony and well-mannered distance, but only in part. It also, in the very act of distancing, invokes the power of what has to be kept at bay, the scale of the emotions in play. At the same time, the politeness (of the characters and the style), the irony, the "being realistic," always keep regret, ruefulness and melancholy to the fore. This seems to me a particular way of handling emotion characteristic of a particular, once, perhaps still, hegemonic, definition of Englishness. (67)

This passage brilliantly evokes what I believe to be the affective motor of the Austen adaptations. The tension between a depth of feeling and longing, and a light irony which peppers these texts precisely captures part of their iconic appeal as "English" objects. That concluding moment of *Sense and Sensibility*, for instance, leaps out powerfully, as Elinor Dashwood's "sensible," routinely ironic voice cracks. Framed so evocatively (and silently) by the window, her longing explodes out – the drama and poignancy of this moment arising from her tremendous composure

and restraint performed through the entirety of the film to that moment. In *Sense and Sensibility*, as in *Pride and Prejudice*, the excruciating restraint, the misunderstandings and unstated longings of two and six hours, respectively, finally make way for brief, sweet moments of emotional release and mutual recognition for the romantic pairs.

In light of rather one-dimensional feminist arguments about desire, it is interesting and important to broach an affective quality of reading. I have detailed the precise temperament of the passions and intensities at work, the emotional fabrics, both of “face” in *Orlando* and of voice and music in the Austen cycle, in order to draw out different affective qualities of address. For, as Dyer points out, far from a “natural” expression of feeling, to read the emotional dimensions of cultural texts involves learned codes. From a British perspective, the emotional textures of the Austen adaptations evoke one familiar, hegemonic quality of middle-class Englishness associated with cultural institutions like the BBC and London’s West End theatre. I would argue that to understand the international appeal of the contemporary costume drama, we must look in part at their emotional address which is embedded in the audio-visual patterns described here: Not only visual dimensions of sensual, lush historical landscapes and costume, but also the treatment of voice and music.

* * *

From the affective qualities of sound and music, I wish now to turn to a quality of sensory perception even more undertheorised in film studies – the question of tactility, texture, touch. Returning to Deleuze’s affection-image, in addition to the face, the hand figures importantly in close-up as the condensed expression of emotion. From the movement-image of the woman at the piano evoked above, to other “feminine” domestic activities, hands figure importantly in the corpus in gestures of tenderness, expression, tactility. In the next section, I will read the different treatments of hands across the cycle. As Irigaray argues, the tactile sensuality of the hand (as opposed to what has been characterised by feminist film theory as the “controlling male gaze”) implies the realm of expression; this tactile expression speaks in this cycle through the domestic arts of needlework, drawing, and especially music. The affective sphere of the hand, then, might

be linked metonymically with the interior “feminine” subjective and spatial realms at the chronotopic heart of my corpus.

Irigaray: Alternate Economies of Sensuality: Tactility and the Hand

In her essay on Merleau-Ponty, Irigaray critiques vision as the dominant sense in this theorist’s work and in Western metaphysics generally. Summarised by Elizabeth Grosz, Irigaray asserts that “the privileged, indeed dominant, position of vision in his writings, in overpowering and acting as a model for all other perceptual relations, submits them to a phallic economy in which the feminine figures as a lack or a blind spot.” (Grosz 1994, 104) Within a phenomenological framework, then, as well as a psychoanalytic one, Irigaray critiques what she sees as the phallic, controlling visual sense. To this point, Irigaray reasserts the problem of the controlling (male) gaze identified by Laura Mulvey and subsequent psychoanalytic film theorists. But rather than accept the terms of female lack which she associates with vision, Irigaray takes this discussion elsewhere. She evokes “darkness and the invisibility of maternal sojourn” as a precondition for the light of vision, exploring the tactile sense as “received, perceived prior to the dichotomies of active and passive.”

As a rejoinder to Merleau-Ponty’s formulation of the visual and the tangible as two complete and interdependent “maps,” Irigaray insists on the prior and distinct senses of tactility and of sound²² which follow different logics and rhythms from vision. Indeed, for this theorist, there is a specific knowledge in the touch which is often overlooked in our vision-centric culture.

And is it still possible that my look—the most developed of all the senses?—disturbs the intelligence of my hand, of my touching. That it makes a screen which freezes the tactile nuptials, paralysing the flow, turning it to ice, precipitating it, undoing its rhythm. The visible and the tactile do not obey the same laws or rhythms of the flesh. (1993, 162)

Although not a specifically “feminine” sense, Irigaray associates the tactile with the repressed knowledge of the maternal, prior to sight, to language, to the symbolic order. Seeking to imagine

²² Grosz notes the place of sound in Irigaray’s account as follows: “Chronologically between the touch and seeing, hearing, while relying on tactility, cannot hide its earliest feminine/maternal origins: the music of the womb, the precondition of both sound and meaning.” (107)

a different order of things, an “ethic of sexual difference” from the phenomenological site of the female body, Irigaray turns away from vision. Of particular interest to this discussion of hands and the close-up, is Irigaray’s rejoinder to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenon of “the double sensation, the case of one hand feeling another which is itself feeling an object.” (Grosz 105) Rejecting the hierarchical relation implicit in this image (the active and passive hand), Irigaray invents another figure.

The hands joined, palms together, fingers outstretched, constitute a very particular touching. A gesture often reserved for women (at least in the West) and which evokes, doubles, the *touching of the lips* silently applied upon one another. A touching more intimate than that of one hand taking hold of the other. A phenomenology of the passage between interior and exterior. A phenomenon that remains in the interior, does not appear in the light of day, speaks of itself only in gestures, remains always on the edge of speech, gathering the edges without sealing them. (161)

This wonderful passage poetically synthesizes many of *The Piano*’s unusual qualities – the gendered tension between speech and gesture, the oblique, mysterious passages between interior and exterior. Irigaray’s image of the hands implies a non-psychoanalytic affective reading for this film. Champion’s film almost begs (and then dismisses, laughing hysterically), a Freudian reading: What could be more classic than the “castrating” gesture of chopping off Ada’s finger? Or, Stewart’s guilty peeping through the keyhole suggests a classic “primal scene” – or is it merely garden variety voyeurism?²³ Sue Gillett applies the “sexual exchange” aspect of Irigaray’s work to Champion’s film.²⁴ In conclusion, she writes an oblique critique of the limited capacity not only of the single problematic of rape, but also of psychoanalysis to read this film: “This is more than a two-tiered layering of conscious and unconscious realms within the subject. The ocean and Ada’s music provide different, rhythmical analogies for this relationship. Whilst it visits

²³ Champion inserts a particularly wicked inflection to this scene as she has Baines’s dog licking Stewart’s hand as he watches through the crack in the wall. This sarcastic touch makes it difficult to seriously suggest a straight Freudian reading of this film: The text is too “knowing,” the voyeurism made manifest as that filthy secret we (women) already knew: “You dirty dog!”

²⁴ Interestingly enough, although her article is entitled “Lips and fingers,” Gillett does not draw directly from this part of Irigaray. In terms of inclusions and exclusions, and the interpretative capacities of different theories, Gillett’s prologue and cryptic ending work on a different, elliptical, poetic and personal level. Standing apart from the more linear, rigorous analysis at the core of the piece, Gillett’s intensive, personal, response to the film gets pushed to the margins as prologue and epilogue, “beyond” the analytic scope of the rest of her piece.

psychoanalytic regions, *The Piano* moves beyond the familiar Oedipal terrain, immersing us both visually and aurally in a watery, muddy, semiotic imagery of maternal, nostalgic longing.”

In the following affective reading of *The Piano* through the lens of the close-up, I work with the dense textures of this evocative text, lingering on the rich layers of voice, music, and hands which speak to the concerns of this chapter. As part of the affective reading, the writing here moves into another voice, becoming more experimental, poetic, free-flowing, in an attempt to work with the affective qualities of the text.

The Piano, Reprise: Music, Interiority, and the “Text of Muteness”

Shifting from the carefully restrained, perfectly choreographed and carefully demarcated emotional topography of Austen, the gothic tradition mobilises a much wilder, more passionate, romantic sensibility – the shadowy, turbulent emotional world of the Brontës, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Piano* (and in a more wry, self-conscious manner, of *Angels and Insects*). These gothic texts explore distinctive and turbulent inner worlds corresponding to the “sublime” and terrifying, dark and clammy landscapes described in Chapter Three. While I could explore this emotional terrain through a number of different devices (narrative, mise-en-scène, character development), I wish to extend my analysis of the movement-image of the woman at the piano in *The Piano*. A contemporary feminist return to Brooks’ melodramatic “text of muteness,” this film explores Ada’s inner world in a complex and troubling manner. In the context of my discussion of hands, it is striking how Campion pays close attention to the tactile realms of hands and fingers in close-up; a stone-faced protagonist who eschews speech, Ada’s hands forge an expressive link to the world around her through the projected voice and body of her piano.

In Campion’s considered modern-day feminist response to the nineteenth-century literary cult of female hysteria and silence,²⁵ Ada McGrath makes a willful choice as a child. Opting for silence in a world where her voice will not be heard, Ada makes a strangely unappealing, grim

²⁵ For the seminal feminist work on these aspects of the “nineteenth-century literary imagination,” see Gilbert and Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979).

heroine. Her small, spare body, her eerily white face framed with its severe hair and dark bonnet house a tremendous force of desire. Strange, still, brooding eyes, she only becomes “herself” in the intensive, introspective piano interludes. As in Austen, the piano provides moments of reverie, the possibility of expression, a narrative and emotional focal point. *The Piano* opens on an out-of-focus full-frame shadowy close-up of cylindrical shapes which turn out to be Ada’s fingers. With a cut to Ada’s dark eyes peering out through her clasped fingers, we hear a voice-over:

The voice you hear is not my speaking voice, but my mind’s voice.

I have not spoken since I was six years old. No one knows why, not even me. My father says it is a dark talent and the day I take it into my head to stop breathing will be my last.

Today he married me to a man I’ve not met yet. Soon my daughter and I shall join him in his own country. My husband said my muteness does not bother him. He writes and hark this: God loves dumb creatures, so why not he!

Were good he had God’s patience for silence affects everyone in the end. The strange thing is I don’t think myself silent, that is, because of my piano. I shall miss it on the journey.

In this seemingly straightforward opening statement, Ada distances herself from tragic silenced nineteenth-century heroines. Like Rhys’s Antoinette, Campion retrospectively restores Ada’s voice, her own story. Muteness for Ada, is a calculated choice, and in no way abdicates her agency in the world. She fights every step of the way. And while in crass terms the film moves, carefully, ambivalently, but moves nonetheless, from silence to voice, this process is neither easy, painless, nor direct. Like Orlando, Ada makes a journey. And although she crosses an ocean, her trajectory is inwardly directed – not a physical displacement, but the movement of spirit, of desire. Unlike the almost cornball jubilation at the end of *Orlando* (the camcorder, Jimmy Sommerville’s cresting falsetto), *The Piano* ends on a note of caution, barely choosing life, the first faltering steps toward a new voice.

Voice, silence, and expression register here in strange, tortured, romantic, and displaced patterns. Ada’s voice, her desires, her inner self, project themselves onto the piano. Her tiny, spare, rigid body (with its high, childlike voice) jars with, and speaks *through* the piano’s huge, eroticised, generous curved body and full voice. At once a tremendous affective focus and an

unwieldy burden (the piano almost capsizes the boat, twice), Ada chooses to jettison this massive metaphor in the end, opting instead for domestic life and the halting traces of her own voice. In the intimate sphere of the close-up which privileges faces and hands, Ada's small, sculpted, sometimes half-gloved hands, connect the woman's body with her voice. If Ada's silence raises the primordial problem of communication – between men and women, Europeans and Maori – her small hands offer a key to decipher these complex interactions. Or, put another way to read this film again, through the close-up, we trace these multiple intensities: The wish to be heard and to be left alone; a tremendous, stubborn force of will; the passionate, turbulent discovery of sensuality and sexuality for nineteenth- and twentieth-century women.

Beginning with a bizarre, out-of-focus shot of Ada's hands, over a swelling score in a minor key, as in her other works, *Campion* eschews the comfortable objective distance of the traditional establishing shot. Here we begin in close, much closer than Baudry's "perfect" distance of the voyeur from the screen, in closer proximity than even a close-up. Out of focus, from Ada's point of view, through her fingers, this shot might be seen to instantiate what Doane calls the "over-presence of the image" for women. From the very first, *Campion* plays with composition, scale, and proximity of the shot. She explores the intimate sphere of mother and daughter framed in the two-shot: Hands and faces, the fluttering of fingers between them, the mirroring of facial expression and gesture. Such intimate two-shots are intercut with strange compositions, jarring aerial shots which pin the human body to the ground like a dead insect against the mysterious grandness of the New Zealand landscape (for example, the aerial shot as Ada walks away from the piano on the beach). *Campion's* restless camera shifts constantly from the scale of the gigantic to the miniature. As Stewart suggests, in matters of spatial orientation and scale, the touchstone remains the scale of the body. In *The Piano*, the corporeal realm of hands offer one affective, communicating, tactile point of reference. The camera returns constantly to Ada's hands, as they are constantly drawn to touch the piano; or, as she signs to Flora, their small white, fluttering hands are the only element of movement in a dark, still, posed shot.

From the opening voice-over and the hand close-up, the camera follows Ada through her packed belongings, as she makes her way to the piano. Even on the brink of departure for an unknown life half-way around the world, she is curiously anchored to the piano. Beginning to play the film's theme music, Ada's stiff composure relaxes as she bends into the piano, swaying a little with the music. Then, the maid comes hesitantly to the door to interrupt: Time to leave. Ada glares resentfully at her. Cut to the underwater shot of the boat, then, a remarkable shot of the sailors' hands against the sky, reaching up for Ada. Helping hands for a woman who resents the journey, scorns their help. And finally, on the beach, after their departure, a moment of reverie: Flora asleep on Ada's lap; the mother gently caresses her daughter's white sleeping face with a half-gloved hand. Then she reaches distractedly to pull part of the casing off the piano to doodle a few notes. And again, she is interrupted, loudly, suddenly, as the tide crashes over them. Cut back abruptly to a long shot of the diminutive piano on the beach as the wave hits.

Through oblique camera angles, the awkwardness of the characters, *Campion* does not let us rest, relax into a familiar audio-visual or narrative rhythm; we cannot identify fully with this difficult heroine who does not speak. There are constant interruptions. We crave the pause, the musical synthesis offered by a swelling score, the closure of a "whole" musical number. The film refuses to break into such a lyrical mode where Ada can relax and, like Marianne, pour out her soul through the music. A familiar, romantic movement-image of reverie, this "expression" of the woman at the piano is deferred until Baines takes Ada and Flora back to the beach. The film language opens up with this expedition, from the jungle chiaroscuro gothic lighting, the cramped, cluttered bush, to a broad beach, natural light. For the first time, Ada smiles as she launches without hesitation into a flowing, beautiful number. Closing her eyes, her tense, flexed body posture relaxes and she sways with the music. Like Colonel Brandon in *Sense and Sensibility* or Frank Churchill in *Emma*, this is where Baines falls in love with Ada, as her romantic inner soul flows forth in a torrent of notes. Ada's acting voice and younger incarnation, Flora is clad only in her white underclothes, freed from her restricting outer clothes, dances in the sand, turning graceful cartwheels. (I described this lovely moment as a pure "line of flight" in Chapter Four.)

In this sombre, muddy film, this sequence stands out for its simple joy in music, movement. No words are spoken, and the film's theme finally gets played out in its entirety. Image and musical score fade in comfortably, from Ada's solo to a duet, when the transitional orchestral music fades in. At this moment, there is a wonderful shot of the piano keyboard, still partly obscured by its packing crate, with Ada's and Flora's four hands lined up, playing a duet. Unlike the earlier surreptitious solo numbers (always ungraciously interrupted) this sequence is enveloped in the reassuring wholeness of a complete number. Ada continues to play as the light fades, and Flora and Baines companionably collect the pieces of the crate to protect the piano before their departure. Unlike the uncomfortable close-ups, or the oblique, high angle shots which *Campion* routinely uses to catapult the audience to some bizarre vantage-point, this sequence concludes with a beautiful aerial shot of the seahorse sculpture on the beach.

No longer cooped up and furtive, this opportunity for full expression situates Ada for the first time *in relation* to other people. Not just Flora, her small feisty shadow. But as Ada opens herself outward through the music, she has Baines as witness. It is at this point that the piano becomes not merely a refuge for Ada's inner self but also a projection outward. The piano becomes her voice, but also an erotic extension of her body. In these twinned expressive and erotic capacities, the piano now becomes the token of exchange, part of the complex sexual currency between Ada, Stewart, and Baines. Of course, the correlation between the female form and the pleasing curves of musical instruments, their soothing voices is so familiar idea as verging on the cliché. *The Piano* poetically and provocatively pushes this idea. Within the period's repressive Victorian sexual economy, Ada's tightly coiled hair, her stiff and all-encompassing layers of clothes, all forbid access to her body. In the gradual negotiation between Baines and Ada to unclothe her, the piano stands between them as a privileged fetish object.

One scene pictures the piano in Baines's cabin, bathed in sunlight which streams in through the window. Baines, fully naked, stands before the instrument, contemplating its beauty. Carefully, lovingly, he cleans it with his shirt: more of a caress than a polish. With the light, this sequence constitutes an almost religious moment against the dark, cluttered texture of the film.

Baines here emerges as something between a fetishist and the perfect lover, with a respect and loving care for the body of the piano, of the woman. The camera's careful attention to the longing brush of Ada's fingers against the keys suggests a heightened tactility and sensuality strictly forbidden within the awkward, fumbling sexual economies of the day. The piano provides some access to Ada's inner self, as she opens herself through the act of playing, the camera uncannily brings us *inside* the full, gracious body of the instrument. As Ada disparagingly demonstrates a simple major scale. Uncannily, we are suddenly drawn right into the body of the piano, in an extraordinary close-up of the hammers as they strike the strings.

Campion pushes the analogy between the woman and her piano, body and voice, into a wild gothic ambivalence. In the foreboding shot mentioned in Chapter Three, when the piano is lowered in the foreground of the shot onto the beach, it looms in the frame's upper half, pressing down on Ada's diminutive figure. Living vicariously through the piano, the instrument works doubly as an expressive lifeline and the ultimate albatross which almost drags Ada to her death in the deep green sea. Given the instrument's strong connection with Ada's body, Stewart's violence feels particularly wrenching as he attacks the instrument. He hacks at the piano with an axe, and the sounds of this attack are as horrible as if a living being were receiving the blows. Still, the piano is not Ada, and Stewart is not satisfied until he hunts her down. His attempt at rape thwarted by her cumbersome clothes, he attacks her hands – her link with the piano as expression. Not strictly graphic, this act figures among one of the more shocking moments of violence on celluloid because of its horribly intimate nature: In attacking her hands, Stewart attacks not only Ada's body, but her deeper self.

* * *

This textured reading of the affectivity in *The Piano* through hands, voice, music, expression has synthesized the varied threads which weave through this chapter with reference to Campion's singular, virtuoso layering of movement, image, stillness, sound, and silence. In the next section, I wish to shift from this film's unique retrospective feminist romanticism – an unsettling, ambivalent, turbulent expression of Ada McGrath's inner spirit – toward a more general

survey of the treatment of interior spaces, hands, and tactility across the corpus.²⁶ In keeping with this project's commitment to singular readings of particular texts, this chapter's divergent approaches to sound, touch, close-up are grouped commonly around the intimate, proximate sphere of reading derived creatively from Deleuze's affection-image. Somewhat experimental in form, these divergent readings share an interest in creating new vocabularies and frames of reference for describing, cataloguing, pinpointing the subtle registers of affectivity which are so fundamental to the very *social* pleasures of audio-visual texts.

Intimate Places and Private Expression: The Letter, the Brush of the Hand

Throughout this thesis, I have deployed a series of linked spatial references to "interiority": From the "feminine" sanctuary of the home into an associated notion of individual bounded subjectivity, interiority. These intermingled notions of "interiority" (Chapter Two's chronotopic separation of interior and exterior settings; Chapter Four's interest in symbolic and allegorical narrative spaces; and the above analysis of the "expressive" qualities of the woman at the piano) may be historicised and clarified with reference to the nineteenth-century novel. For Watt, the novel's exploration of the private sphere of life, the emotional inner life of the subject, corresponded to the eighteenth century's demographic shifts toward urbanisation and industrialisation, "a combination of physical proximity and vast social distance." (179) These shifts in the literary sphere corresponded in complex ways to the gendering of the reading public, where the increasingly leisured middle- and upper-class women comprised a significant component of novel readership (and authorship). This production of interiority, the exploration of interior space (destined for a new, "private" cultural consumption practice of reading) makes up part of the gendered spatial legacy of the modernist novel. Not merely the interior spaces of salons, drawing rooms, dressing rooms, but also the (class-based and gendered) realms of inner feelings, desires, romance. Historical costume dramas are fascinated with these intensities of feeling as

²⁶ One of the few references to the pleasures of tactility in feminist film theory can be found in Jackie Stacey's *Star Gazing* where she discusses the "sensuous, physical pleasures" of cinema-going for British wartime women spectators. (1994, 94-97)

encountered in exotic, beautiful, and ordered historical settings. Part of the work of the contemporary adaptation, then, is to project these interior monologues and intricate accounts of feelings from an age of (perceived) restraint and emotional reserve into the audio-visual medium of cinema and television.

This early modern epochal transition within the literary realm corresponds with broader philosophical and social changes in English life, part of a more general privatisation of common spaces (including, as mentioned in Chapter Three, the imposition of Enclosure on the historical Commons in the countryside). Watt notes attendant shifts in the architecture of the period in the Georgian house, the almost exclusive setting for Austen's novels and adaptations. With its construction of individual bedrooms off a long corridor, the Georgian house offered increased privacy. In addition, these personalised spaces included a "closet or small private apartment usually adjoining the bedroom." Used for books, a writing desk or a standish, Watt notes that such nooks corresponded to Virginia Woolf's "room of one's own" – a feminine private space for personal reflection and writing. Watt notes the social significance of this writing desk for the increasingly leisured middle and upper classes. The associated practice of letter-writing facilitated a "new pattern of personal relationships made possible by familiar letter-writing, a pattern which, of course, involves a private and personal relationship rather than a social one, and which could be carried out without leaving the safety of the home." (188)

For the novelist Richardson, Watt notes how the cult of letter-writing facilitated both "withdrawal from society, and emotional release." Similarly, Lovelace writes in *Clarissa*, that "familiar letter-writing...was writing from the heart...as the very word "*Cor-respondence*" implied... Not the heart only; the *soul* was in it." (cited in Watt, 191) Returning to the expressive field of audio-visual texts, the letter surfaces commonly as a convenient narrative trope, a bit like the telephone in contemporary drama (Jane Eyre discovers by letter that she has received a windfall inheritance); the letter also provides a narrative structure, a story-telling voice, most spectacularly in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, *The Letter*, and in our cycle, *Moll Flanders*. Finally, and most

important to my analysis here, the letter acts as the carrier of true sentiments, emerging as an emotionally-charged communication, a hand-written declaration of a character's true feelings.

In the fourth episode of the *Pride and Prejudice* mini-series, for example, the silent Mr. Darcy finally pours out his soul to Elizabeth in a letter. Darcy makes an interesting case, as usually the practice of unburdening the soul rests with women in Austen. This episode begins with a lengthy sequence which records, through the physical torment of writing, crumpling up scraps of paper, the mysterious Darcy's suffering. Intercut with illustrative flashbacks, this sequence of letter-writing finally offers up Darcy's "inner self" – his childhood, his family affiliations, the difficult business with the duplicitous Mr. Wickham. Seated, like Marianne Dashwood or Captain Wentworth at the writing desk, the actual process of writing, the emotional outpouring rendered in exquisite penmanship, forms part of the audio-visual translation of the affective significance of the letter. Not only as expressive process, but as cherished object, the letter carries a sensuality as a token passed from one hand to another. In contemporary adaptation, it is not only the words, but the writing itself, the "authenticity" of paper and penmanship (the writer must pause to dip the pen in ink, and to seal the letter in wax) which encloses the letter in a sentimental aura; in this age of the copy, the simulacrum, and electronic communication, the letter's "aura" carries an added affective charge. (In *Moll Flanders*, Moll narrates her story to her child through the battered, traveled diary which has borne witness to the difficult events described in it.) Finally, the contents of the letter are read aloud, often in the voice of the writer, with a fade into the voice of the reader (for instance in the letter from Darcy to Elizabeth); this aural fade signals the completed circuit of communication.

Returning to the Deleuzian notion of the close-up, the affective significance of the letter might be read through its actual and virtual framing of the hand in close-up. Through the ages of print and into the information age, the sentimental act of proclaiming one's love through the written word appears quaint, and loaded with an inherited romance, not unlike Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax's duet at the piano. Through the hand, this is a gesture, a point of contact between the character's "deepest inner self," and the viewer. Not merely identification, this

contact, in close-up, seeks to brush up against its viewers – the intimacy of the gesture, the beauty of the hand which reaches out. Within the omnipresent slight ironic overlay of Austen, coupled perhaps with the sophisticated, postmodern moment where these texts are (re)produced, might we not also detect a whiff of the cliché here in the tortured Darcy, in Marianne’s brooding, melancholic piano numbers? In the tension between the heartfelt expressivity of the gothic texts (*The Piano*, *Jane Eyre*) and Austen’s more rational, wry sensibility, we trace, once again, a subtle shift in sensibility which links up with the contemporary British social satire of *Orlando* and *Angels and Insects*.

To read the affective tactility of the hand in close-up is to diverge once again from what Irigaray identifies as the pre-eminence of the visual in Western metaphysics, to begin to find works for other sensual, affective, “desiring” qualities at work in audio-visual texts. Tracing the significance of the hand across the cycle, from the musician to the letter, we find a range of trivial “feminine” activities, in themselves of no “narrative” significance, which occupy the protagonists’ hands. Part of the order of the genre’s glorious detailed “filler,” Austen’s heroines’ hands are constantly occupied with needlepoint, mending. As an extension of the tremendous importance of costume in these films explored in Chapter Four, these tasks of the leisured class foreground the feminine domestic arts of textures, fabrics.²⁷ For instance, the title sequence of *Pride and Prejudice*’s six episodes is couched in the luscious folds of a rippling, soft peach-coloured satin fabric, which a hand patiently embroiders. Panning over this textile field, to a melodic, “classical” score, the scripted titles roll. Beginning within the affective (and supremely tactile) realm of the hand, these titles signify the sentimental, domestic sphere.

Drawing, a realm of accomplishment and expression similar to the function of music in Austen, also figures. Her artistic abilities as average as her piano-playing, Emma Woodhouse draws an average portrait of Harriet Smith. *Jane Eyre* catches Rochester’s eye as a promising artist; one of the few ways that the impoverished orphan finds to express herself through her

²⁷ For an account of the historical gendering and politics of embroidery and handwork, see Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch* (1984). Also, in *Old Mistresses*, Parker and Pollock (1981) offer an historical account of the “trivialisation” and “feminisation” of the domestic arts in Western Europe.

difficult life, Jane's artistry singles her out as a worthy "sensitive," deep-feeling romantic heroine. In *Moll Flanders*, after much abuse at the hands of both men and women, the feminist heroine finds her only true love in the gentle hands of an artist. In a gendered reversal of the classically consumptive and vulnerable lover, we are drawn early on toward the artist's sensitive hands (in close-up) as he paints. After a brutal beating, he gently cares for Moll's poor battered body. Like Baines's gentle caress of the piano and Ada's body, the artist is imbued with an idealised, non-phallic sensuality through his gentle hands. This level of care, the touch of healing, connotes a gentle, loving relationship – an idealised, tactile (not scopophilic), form of idealised masculinity.

If hands can connote a sensitive potential for human interaction, Campion also uses them in *Portrait of a Lady* to connote the perverse, duplicitous dimensions of human interaction. Barbara Hershey figures as the woman at the piano in this film; yet the expressive depth of feeling implied by her playing which so affects Isabel on their first meeting belies a desperate and cruel duplicity, as this character offers Isabel up to Osmond as a trophy. The ambivalence of Hershey's role may be found in her characteristic warm greeting of Pansy, who we only find out in the end is her own daughter. In her first encounter with Pansy, Hershey takes Pansy's young soft hands in her own black-gloved ones. This shot conveys a foreboding spider-like quality to the character. This ambivalent contact of hands in close-up recurs when Isabel first meets Osmond; taking the teen-aged Pansy on his lap, he strokes her hands in a creepy, disturbing manner that only John Malkovitch would imagine. In an earlier imagined seduction sequence, Isabel imagines herself stroked by several different possible lovers at once; like much of the film, this slow-motion daydream sequence implies both Isabel's smoky desire, and a tremendous sense of enclosure – her immanent imprisonment by her own desire, and by the male hands grasping at her body.

The affective dimension of hands, then, varies according to the precise emotional terrain of the text: With Stewart's violence or Osmond's predatory, acquisitive hands, Campion's more sombre texts take the affective charge of the close-up into more disturbing zones. If this attention to the hand brings us into the zone of the erotic, of expression, of tactility, the multiplicity of possible inflections of these points of contact vary according to generic, auteurist, narrative, and

cultural inflections. Finally, to conclude this chapter, I will now turn to *Daughters of the Dust*, a text which also lingers significantly on the intimate sphere of the hand within a very different set of aesthetic and historical conditions.

Another Quality of Hands: *Daughters of the Dust*

To move away from what could become a universalizing notion of the significance of hands as an ahistorical, privileged site of “feminine” expressiveness (perhaps implicit in Irigaray) or a privileged link to some disembodied (implicitly white, middle-class European) “inner self,” let us consider the very different treatment of hands in *Daughters of the Dust*. The film opens on a striking close-up of Nana Peazant's hands. This shot is described in the script as follows:

CLOSE ON

The rough, INDIGO, BLUE-STAINED hands of an African American woman, YOUNG NANA PEAZANT. She is wearing an indigo-colored dress and holding Sea Island soil within her hands. There is a great WIND blowing. The soil, like dust, blows from her hands and through her fingers. (Dash 1992, 75)

Nana is the matriarch of the Peazant clan, her body a tangible link with her people's slave past, and with their almost-forgotten African forebears. *Daughters of the Dust*, as noted in Chapter Four, mounts a passionate feminist plea for an African American collective memory, for cultural continuity. The winds blowing in this opening shot represent the winds of change at the turn of this present century, along with the eternal cycle of birth and death, slavery, and the ongoing migrations of the African diaspora. A film figured significantly around “feminine” relationships and activities, as in the other texts of the corpus, hands figure centrally in *Daughters of the Dust*. However, the activities of the hands are different. The hands of the Sea Island women are constantly busy with the work of sustaining community, food preparation, weaving baskets, braiding hair, caring for children. The film builds slowly toward a huge collective picnic on the beach which Nana has called before the clan's departure. Like in the feasts of the Austen adaptations (a different cultural tradition in some ways paralleling the Western European cultural traditions of Dionysus), this sharing of food, the sense of the bounty of the land evokes

community, oneness with the earth, a link with past and future. In Austen the flurry of servants' activities (never really detailed – we do not dwell on the servants' hands, their faces, their tasks) foreshadow and build toward the final, choreographed event (the wedding feast at the end of *Emma*); in contrast, there is a continuity in *Daughters of the Dust*, an integration between the loving preparation of food and its consumption. The film features the careful preparation of a staple dish, gumbo. Intercut with a close-up of the chopping of the okra, Viola teaches the children old remembered African words for the elements. In this way, food, the communal process of food preparation and eating together, create a tangible thread with the past.²⁸

Nana embodies the source, the living memory of African spirituality and oral traditions. Dash constantly returns to Nana's strong, long-fingered hands, with their particular gestures (the gestures and body languages in themselves a corporeal link with her African ancestors). Only in flashback, late in the film, do we learn the source of the blue stain on Nana's hands (marked throughout the script, as in the above quote, in bold capitals: "BLUE-STAINED HANDS"). Born on an indigo plantation during the days of slavery, Nana, like all the other slaves, had her hands stained by the poisonous indigo dye. In voice-over, she states: "Our hands, scarred blue with the poisonous indigo dye that built up all those plantations from swampland." (Dash 105) Nana's rough, work-stained hands bear the marks of years of labour – both labours imposed and labours of love. While the hands in the romantic and gothic adaptations create an affective link with an imagined literary and leisured history, the hands in Dash's film connect in a material way with a corporeal history of struggle and suffering.²⁹ In her notes on the making of the film, Dash remarks on these threads of continuity embodied in gesture.

Many of the images seen in *Daughters of the Dust* parallel the action and behaviour of African Americans today. For instance, the hand signals given by two of the men in *Daughters* is a reference to the nonverbal

²⁸ This tremendous focus on food and community is echoed in a series of disparate, sensual films from very different contexts: the *Like Water for Chocolate* (1993), *Babette's Feast* (1987), *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (1990), and *Big Night* (1996). Cooking show meets the exotic?

²⁹ Within the context of African American art production, I am reminded here of Jacob Lawrence's work, particularly his painting of Harriet Tubman, with her strong, capable hands foregrounded holding a pestle. Within broader contexts of political art, Käthe Kollwitz's etchings and drawings of working class German women in the early part of this century, with their sensitive, substantial, and tired hands (and faces) foregrounded connects a feminist sensibility with the important European artistic tradition of socialist realism.

styles of communication of ancient African secret societies which have been passed down across thousands of years and through hundreds of generations. Today these forms are expressed in the secrets of fraternities and in the hand signals of youth gangs. (6)

Such a juxtaposition between *Daughters* and the other European texts of the corpus might be seen as comparing apples and a very singular, unique blood orange: Dash's film must be treated as at once absolutely unique and, as in my reading in Chapter Four, fundamentally connected with African American filmmaking and cultural traditions. Yet, the aesthetic and painterly framing of the shots, the fascination with gendered history and costume, a partially shared "discursive community" of reception implicitly set Dash's film in dialogue with the other texts of the corpus in a productive way. If we are looking at hands, we must also look at what they touch³⁰ – the stories these hands have to tell, their material histories, their activities, projects. Dash's unique appropriation of costume drama iconography and attendant affective attention to feminine spheres, tactility, and activity through hands extends this discussion of the "affective" dimensions of the close-up. Whereas the Western European melodramatic and novel traditions express a privileged "individual" interior realm – an historically specific "leisured" expression of self through hands – *Daughters of the Dust* evokes very different links. Related to a more collective narrative and historical sense described in Chapter Four is a different set of affective references, which address different audiences through different cultural and affective codes.

* * *

As I seek to articulate the possibilities of an affective approach to film criticism evoked in Deleuze's three types of movement-image, certain feminist theories, and a considerable body of feminine cultural production, I move into uncharted territories. Moving closer to the text, into its intimate places, the seductive qualities of texture, colour, movement and stillness, how can I read both with and against the grain of the text? By reading the recurrence of faces, hands, music, and voice across the corpus, I have forged distinctive insights into the dialogic qualities of certain texts, and the tactile, detail-rich genre of costume drama itself. To return to the problem of the

³⁰ I thank Kim Sawchuk for suggesting this to me.

affection-image, though, I return to Deleuze's ambiguous statement that "the affect is independent of all determinate space-time; but it is none the less created in a history which produces it as the expressed and the expression of a space or time, of an epoch or a milieu." A category of potentiality, what Dyer calls "the utopian," the affection-image begs to be pulled out of the narrative texture in order to be appreciated in its own intensity and force, a kind of dialogic phatic bridge with certain "tactile" qualities of gendered representation which have been woefully undertheorised in feminist film theory.

However, as suggested in the opening remarks of this chapter, part of the great difficulty of reading "with the text," of approaching these rich feminist works in complicity, in proximity, in close-up, lies in lapsing merely into "film appreciation." Throughout the formally separate layers of topographical analysis, I have maintained the tension between a close reading of audio-visual complexities, and a political insistence on the "spatial blockings of power" implicit in these formal chartings of space and movement. The question of "limits" of address resurfaces with a vengeance in this final affective chapter on the costume drama. My "facial" reading of the iconic feminist text *Orlando* inevitably confronts the "preferred" status of contemporary costume drama within particular (powerful) feminist circle – and within feminist film theory itself. As the chapter unfolds, in evoking the different affective dialogic links between text and their preferred discursive communities of reception, I have become increasingly aware of a certain "closed" quality of my reading.

In reading the certain intimate spaces of interiority which have been culturally coded within the Western European modern period as "feminine" and tracing certain affective regularities through them, I risk once again universalising this feminist experience. In ending on this reading of *Daughters of the Dust*, I have sought to open up this question of affectivity beyond the closed, intimate (and rich) interiors which populate most costume drama, feminist or not. For, as implied in the precise charting of different kinds of historical "English" sensibilities, affective intensities do not emerge out of a vacuum, nor indeed out of the unique genius of the (feminist) auteur filmmaker or artist. In reading the affective dimension of hands, I suggested that their

“potentialities” of hands in close-up are all bound up with the colour of their skin, their age, wear and tear of work, their scars and the things they touch, the things they do, link them materially with their social context. Extrapolating from the splendid complicity between Tilda Swinton's Orlando and a certain preferred audience, I have been troubled how certain very specific qualities of address, of voice, certain iconic white, middle-class, anglo-american faces may yet again become the ambassadors of feminism in the delightful, popular, and proliferating world of costume drama as a preferred feminist mode of cultural expression.

This chapter has undertaken a series of distinct, experimental readings of different qualities of affectivity at work in the costume drama. Conceptualised around the sphere of the affection-image or close-up, I advanced a unique reading of the rhetorical and affective qualities of the face in *Orlando*, and a broader reading of the diverse treatments of hands across the corpus. Although the affection-image has proved a productive and rich point of departure for reading questions of affectivity, I have chosen here, as an extension of a fascination with the role of music and voice which runs through the thesis, to address these aural qualities in this chapter in relation to questions of sentiment and expression in the different chronotopic moments of the corpus. These investigations have, in conclusion, proved fruitful and exciting as challenges both to the dominant rationalist forms of thought afoot in film studies and in social theory more broadly – and as an attempt to engage with non-visual audio-visual intensities through different avenues than the psychoanalytic problem of the subject and oedipal desire.

Three main difficulties arise out of this work. The first concerns the necessity of specificity of address (dialogism) and also of cultural referents, when reading “sensibility” or affectivity. Through the readings of “Englishness” and of hands in *Daughters of the Dust*, I sought to pinpoint the very specific strands of affectivity at work in these texts and movement-images: What context(s) do they refer to or borrow from? And who do they speak to? Within the context of contemporary global audio-visual culture, such questions become very complex. (In this chapter I evoke Bakhtin's dialogism, not as a means of asserting a single “discursive community” of address, but as a means of reading rhetorically outward toward one specific “discursive

community.”) The second, more philosophical issue arising from this work on affectivity raises the question, similar to my question at the end of Chapter Four, of lexicon. Where are we to find the words and the concepts to evoke the myriad affective intensities, at work in audio-visual texts – qualities at once so central to the power of these cultural creations, and so slippery to describe and conceptualise?

The third issue concerns the question of critical distance, the proximity of the reading with which I began the chapter. Throughout these textual moments I have sought to apply an immanent, almost complicitous scalpel to these texts in order to work with them and draw out their affective qualities. At the same time, as my analysis of the close-up in *Orlando* demonstrates, it is difficult to know when to cut into the affective flow of the text to invoke critical insights – such as the spectacularly obvious “whiteness” of Orlando’s face, and the limits of such faces as the cultural ambassadors of the feminist imaginary.

In the Conclusion that follows, I will return to some of these points, and integrate them with a series of final meditations on the findings of this dissertation.

CONCLUSION

The moment has arrived to take stock of the many layers of thought woven together in this dissertation. To return to the primary goals of the project, I set out with a twinned problematic encompassing both epistemology and method. Through the most pertinent and fascinating (if somewhat idiosyncratic) case study of contemporary costume drama, I have undertaken the theoretical challenge of reading this corpus of audio-visual texts through the prism of space and movement. In the process, I have forged an innovative methodological programme of "topographical criticism" which applies my epistemological interest in multiple spatio-temporal qualities of movement through detailed textual analysis. Implicit within this doubled problematic was a question: What is productive, pertinent, powerful about such an approach? What can this topographical project offer to the study of audio-visual texts which is different, innovative? And, finally (and at this point this becomes the most intriguing issue) what are the limits of this undertaking? What does it leave out?

Synthesis: Risks, Digressions, Movements

To walk the reader back through the different steps of the thesis, I will begin by narrating the key moments of risk, a few of the digressions, the triumphs, the surprises. As demanded by dissertation form, Chapter One embarks on weighty theoretical matters with a retrospective reading of the "spatial imaginary of film theory." Weaving together a series of fascinating insights around gendered space and movement culled from psychoanalytic film theory and "images of women" scholarship, I identify an insistent ideological hypothesis about the power of moving images to hold the spectator in thrall, and to "suture" (him) into textual movement and the progression of narrative. Feminist film theorists subsequently identified how these processes are saturated with the structuring binary of sexual difference through the "controlling male gaze" and the status of women-as-image. From this hegemonic problem of the gaze, I begin to open up these insights about gender, space, and movement through Mulvey's and Doane's assertions

about the gendering of narrative movement and generic space. It is at this point where I make the crucial epistemological leap from the (“interior”) problem of the subject to the (“exterior”), “topographical” or social reading of space and movement in audio-visual texts.

An important and difficult moment of transition, the balance of the dissertation rests on this shift from the psychoanalytic problem of the subject, the gaze, oedipalised desire – to my topographical project which charts social space and movement in audio-visual texts. Chapter Two takes up the challenge of topographical reading through a preliminary chronotopic framing of the Austen cycle. The goal of this analysis is twofold: First, I introduce the corpus through a critical lens of space and time; simultaneously, however, I flex my methodological muscles, testing out the possibilities of the chronotope in relation to these “classic realist texts.” Where the epistemological turn in Chapter One noted above lays the theoretical groundwork for my project, this initial textual foray establishes a working base from which to develop the more pointed projects of textual analysis undertaken in the final three chapters. Hardly an easy exercise, this section was invigorating to write, as the fluid yet critical possibilities of Bakhtin’s chronotope speak so eloquently to the revisited nineteenth-century topographical imaginary of the Austen adaptations. Through this analysis, I was able to simultaneously mobilise a subtle and innovative methodology – and to engage critically and creatively with the textual complexities of the Austen cycle.

Chapter Two, in sum, establishes a spatio-temporal approach to my corpus through a suggestive preliminary spatial reading of Austen. As the ambassadors of the dreaded “classic realist text” so despised in critical film studies circles, I use this cycle throughout the dissertation as a centerpiece, a touchstone of dominant narrative cinema against which to read the other texts (especially the self-consciously avant-garde projects of Campion, Dash, and Potter). At the same time, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Persuasion*, and *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Emma* furnished crucial insights – notably how gender, class and colonial relations are mobilised from landscape painting traditions and literature into the audio-visual textures of chronotope and voice. Chapter Two concludes with a preliminary synthesis of the corpus through the recurring costume-drama

moment of the woman at the window. Working with the suggestive frameworks of interior and exterior space, I contemplate this movement-image at the threshold between the “feminine” sphere of the home, and the “masculine” gardens and countryside beyond. Gazing out the window, this woman seeks not only the arrival of her beau, but also the mobility implied by the expanse of green outside. The woman at the window is one of a series of salient movement-images which condense certain spatio-temporal and affective regularities in the corpus. I find this reading of core movement-images to be an innovative and productive strategy for textual readings.

From the different interlocking spaces of chronotope to charting distinctive trajectories of mobility, Chapter Three works from the Deleuzian category of “perception-image” or long-shot. Mapping the social milieu, this chapter comprises the first of three dense projects of textual analysis which addresses the problem of landscape. Beginning from *Sense and Sensibility*'s walk in the country, I investigate different gendered and class-based notions of mobility and voice. Setting into audio-visual language the conventions of landscape painting, this country walk traces a pleasing, iconic “neo-pastoral” landscape which is virtually emptied of working people. Through an encounter with a shepherd, I raise the question of class relations and the costume drama’s rendering of historical landscape. From this treatment of landscape, I reach out of the frame toward the *hors-champ* – the structure of attitude and reference of imperialism which presents a broader spatial referent in the corpus's revisited spatial imaginary. Shifting from the pastoral space of Austen into the dark, Gothic, and sometimes colonial spaces of *Angels and Insects* and finally *The Piano*, I investigate the vicissitudes of colonial landscapes.

In turn, Chapter Three charts out a series of regularities of gendered, class, and colonial space and movement across the corpus. These regularities prompt a critique of the desire for feminine mobility which began this dissertation and which runs through many texts of the corpus. Through these readings of Austen and the gothic texts, I identify how a certain individualist feminist desire for movement is complicit with a nineteenth-century middle-class “consolidation of authority” within the English countryside – and a simultaneous greedy, exploratory movement out

into the colonies. To read contemporary costume drama critically through the problematic of space and movement is to discover a hesitant feminine and feminist complicity with these historical geographical events.

If Chapter Three charts discursive regularities, contemporary costume drama's predominant complicity with dominant historical power relations, Chapter Four's detailed reading of narrative movement in *Orlando* traces the singularity of Potter's remarkable film. This chapter is grouped around the medium-shot framing of the action-image – the sphere of the body which I read through narrative, gesture, and costume. These themes are explored primarily with reference to *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust* – two avant-garde films that take it as their business to subvert narrative norms. If the exception can illuminate the rule, from the spectacular attenuated movements of these films I stretch the action-image beyond the conventional problematic of narrative into more experimental readings of costume, dance, corporeality. This stretch allows for some of the dissertation's sweeter moments as I am able, at last, to identify some "lines of flight" through the images of the girl child's headlong flight into the feminist future. It is at this point that the corpus begins to open, like an orange, to my increasingly subtle and precise tools of textual analysis. In retrospect, this dexterity and playfulness becomes possible in the transition from the preoccupation with regularities and realist texts, toward Potter's and Dash's avant-garde and virtuoso works. These more supple readings facilitated by avant-garde cinema tend to draw me increasingly toward these exceptional texts which, following a Deleuzian sensibility, are more likely to offer up moments of potentiality. I take this under consideration and move on.

This methodological playfulness and experimentation with movement-image finds its stride in Chapter Five, an experimental, whimsical, and exciting moment in the dissertation. It is here, working with Deleuze's affection-image, the close-up on faces and hands, where I can engage in new exciting ways with audio-visual capacities generally left to the margins of conventional film theory. The ever-fascinating image of the face in close-up inspires a close reading of Orlando's winking look as an affective rhetorical strategy in Potter's film. Sound, read

through voice and music, forms a subtext throughout the thesis, but I read these concerns together at this point through the notion of “expression.” The third recurring movement-image linking the disparate texts of the corpus, the woman at the piano offers the anchor for this speculative reading. Hands figure centrally in this movement-image and in the corpus generally as a hint of the importance of tactility, touch, texture, within the “feminine” sphere of costumes and luscious interiors – but also as an important element in all genres and audio-visual texts. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a comparative reading of hands in *Daughters of the Dust*, a text which forms a consistent counterpoint to the rest of the corpus through its distinctive geographical and cultural location.

Limits and Extensions of the Project

This initial synthesis lays out the major accomplishments of this venture, a few of its engaging surprises, and the (considerable) theoretical and methodological risks. At this point, would like to reflect on some of the fascinating substantive limits which I have encountered in the project – both the conceptual limits to the research, and points of interest which prompt further investigation. Undertaking such a singularly dense reading strategy, I was gratified by the capacity of this topographical criticism to read backgrounded qualities of space and movement back into the frame. One major achievement of this dissertation has been to present a layered reading of gendered, class, and colonial spaces and movements of texts which, on first glance, seem to exclude registers of difference other than gender. In reading class relations and colonialism back into the frame through questions of voice, mobility, and chronotope, I was able to complicate a commonsense liberal feminist reading of the corpus. This strategy has allowed me to deepen and broaden both my philosophical meditations on movement and space – and to evoke unique and interesting qualities of contemporary costume drama.

However, as indicated at different points throughout the dissertation, the corpus itself poses certain limits to these types of layered, generative readings. For instance, in reading questions of colonialism through the *hors-champ*, I was able to pinpoint certain generic audio-

visual regularities and limits to the participation of non-Western subjects in the milieu. An interesting exercise to a degree, in order to re-orient the project more centrally around colonialism, I would need to address a different body of cultural texts. Having stated this limit, I do believe that many of the epistemological issues around space and movement as applied to colonialism could provide most interesting points of departure in reading broader fields of audio-visual projects. A cautionary note is in order here, however, as the cultural codes of individualist mobility and space which I have worked with and against throughout this project are, by definition, based in a Western philosophical, political, and cultural context. To extend a spatio-temporal orientation into different cultural contexts, into “the contact zone” would necessitate a series of very careful deliberations about the cultural specificity of “social space” and time.

A related theme arising from this project involves the “imaging” of race and ethnicity. In my readings of *Daughters of the Dust*, *The Piano*, and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the fraught contexts of diaspora, slavery, enforced migration, and racism were evoked. Yet space constraints (as well as the orientation of my corpus toward white, Western narratives and protagonists) prevent a more thorough investigation of how issues of race and ethnicity inflect audio-visual codes of space and movement. Once again, such readings need to be qualified with a substantial dose of historical context (for instance, the representation of the Maori in New Zealand evokes a set of specific historical and cultural references raised by Lynda Dyson).

A third point of exclusion which came to my attention in Chapter Four involves the interesting question of “queer space.” I find it intriguing how my problematic of movement and constraint is unable to raise the spectre of lesbianism, even in the fleeting moments when it arose in *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust*. Victorian context aside, given the important status of these texts within feminist circles, it is striking how lesbian desire is notably absent or absented from most of the corpus. Given my dexterity for reading subtle power relations of class and colonialism back into the frame, I was disturbed and amazed how the spectre of queerness somehow slipped through my fingers. The ghostly chimera of lesbianism or “queer space” belongs in such a project

– even it need be read as another quality of *hors-champ*, a structuring absence in these texts so centrally concerned with heterosexual romance.

On a related theme, in the analysis of *Orlando's* poetics of digression, I was struck by the limits of my chosen frame of analysis. Structured as it is around the heterosexual binary of gendered movement and constraint, this conceptual framework was incapable of evoking the playfulness and performativity of the text. Here, in thinking about Judith Butler's work which has been so important to queer theory, I was drawn toward another inflection of cultural space, "queer space" perhaps – a performative ethos of movement which stresses play rather than destination. Evoked in the descriptive passages of textual analysis, particularly in reference to *Orlando* and *Daughters of the Dust*, these spheres of costume, of masquerade, and also of sexuality beckon as a fascinating limit to the question of movement, stillness and constraint as I have posed it. Even as I sought to continually open up the question of movement throughout the dissertation, once begun, my analysis has been persistently drawn toward a Marxist critique of class and colonial mobility. And while I have used Deleuze to open up other dimensions to the problem (for instance, the question of affectivity), often these more liminal qualities of movement eluded me.

On this theme, my final substantive observations, fittingly, revolve around this intricate, subtle, and elusive question of movement. Of all the issues raised in this dissertation, "movement" remains for me the most precious, and the most slippery. The further one digresses from the familiar ground of physical displacement (journeys, travel, migration or immigration), the more difficult the project becomes. Chapter Five's exploration of the "movement" of emotion, for instance, struggled to find precise, grounded terms to describe the subtleties of affect, sentiment, sensibility. Shifting to another dimension, in Chapter Four I touch briefly on a more "pure" quality of physical movement encapsulated so beautifully in the play of the young girls on the beach in *The Piano* and *Daughters of the Dust*. Such qualities of corporeal movement are fiercely difficult to capture (odd choice of word!) in print, let alone to analyse, to categorise. What are the lexicons of different types of corporeal movement – not only dance, but also the habits of work, how the aging body shifts its walk? (Some of these points of specific, embodied forms of corporeal

experience, of scars and the physical markings of the body's memory are explored in Chapter Five's reading of hands in *Daughters of the Dust*.)

These complex questions of corporeal movement inevitably invokes phenomenological dimensions of the spectator's life world, their corporeal experience, a physicality of practice, of motion, gesture, interaction which is surely part of the magic of audio-visual texts. Such fascinating issues prompt me to consider a future line of inquiry which extends from de Lauretis's work on imaging and mapping, perhaps drawing from Peirce and from phenomenology, de Certeau, and Lefebvre on "lived space." Such an inquiry draws me away from the pure sphere of film studies, whose purely textual frame which has proved so productive for this project.

Notes on Topographical Methods

Given the centrality of questions methodological to this inquiry, a few ruminations on the topic are in order to conclude the dissertation. In the Introduction and again in the Methodological Programme section, I noted the exploratory nature of my topographical analysis. Frankly, this was an experiment, and happily I can now conclude that my fledgling methodological tools accomplished and even exceeded the bounds of the task I set out for them. And now, rounding out the above discussion of the limits of the analysis, I would have to note that the topographical questions raised in the dissertation have in many ways overtaken the textual and political limits of the corpus. I noted in the introduction the white, Western, bourgeois, individualist core of the feminist vision mobilised, for the most part, in contemporary costume drama. And while certain dimensions raised above (the liminal movement of gesture and dance, and also the tactile dimensions of costume and décor) still pique my interest, to some degree my preliminary intuitions about the political limits of these works have been prescient.

Where I had hoped to emerge (as do many Cultural Studies theorists) with a claim about the revolutionary, transgressive, or even unique, qualities of the texts at hand, my conclusions must remain, like so many aspects of this project, attenuated. Certain movement-images, certain texts (particularly *The Piano*, *Orlando*, and *Daughters of the Dust*) instantiated Deleuzian

“potentiality” or “lines of flight” through virtuoso audio-visual moments. But these moments fly in the face of a more general reterritorialization of contemporary costume drama with the aesthetic codes of class, colonial, and also heterosexual organisations of social space. Perhaps this is unsurprising and inevitable as we examine the broader cultural field where “lines of flight” gain their preciousness through endangered species status. However, I am still disturbed by how these projects with their cherished place in dispersed international feminist “discursive communities,” fall back upon such conservative mappings of shared historical space as a backdrop to retrospective feminine or even feminist aspirations to social mobility.

Setting out in quest of potentialities, of Deleuzian “lines of flight,” I did not always find them where I thought I might. In the bundle of notes for future projects which I retain after finishing the dissertation, the most intriguing bits involve an extension of the dissertation’s epistemological and methodological questions about space and movement. Geographical readings of landscape, social space, and mobility in Chapter Three suggest a host of other applications, genres, qualities of landscape and trajectories of movement. (The genre which has sometimes been explored through its spectacular use of space and movement, the Western, comes to mind immediately. Further, the urban spaces of contemporary action film lend themselves to such treatments as the force, dynamism, restless kinetic trajectories of bodies and vehicles supersede narrative.) Finally, my forays into the undertheorised qualities of affectivity, sound, and touch struck me as theoretically and methodologically rich. Evocative aspects of audio-visual texts implying a link with the sensible world beyond the dominant visual paradigm, these senses, while perhaps difficult to theorise, raise interesting points of contact between subjects and audio-visual texts which, once again, exceed the lens of psychoanalysis.

To conclude, I will make several observations about the major debates raised in this dissertation which speak to the field of feminist film and television studies. The spectre of Deleuze looms over this project. Deleuze’s pertinence for feminist critical projects remains a sore point in feminist theory. After an intense engagement with Cinema 1 and other works for several years, I would conclude that Deleuze has a great deal to offer to feminist film studies and film studies

generally, notably around the spatio-temporal questions of movement-image and affectivity – the exploration of non-rational (if not, we hope, irrational) forms of thought and cultural readings. This said, I would caution against the emergent camp which would posit Deleuze as an anathema to the “psychoanalytic problem” of feminist film theory. Since his work claims to begin beyond critical questions of difference, the coercive historical relations of power, Deleuze needs to be used with caution. An epistemological leavener, perhaps. But a leavener is no good without the other bread ingredients!

The final Big Question I will raise involves the status of psychoanalysis in feminist film theory. I believe that the move undertaken in Chapter One away from the subject toward social space is timely and apt. At the same time, however, in the process of analysing these texts, at certain points psychoanalysis would have provided an intriguing counterpoint or a complementary insight to my topographical readings of landscape and movement. Begun in the spirit of dialogue, I believe that these different approaches have a great deal to say to one another. For instance, to move beyond another binary, some very interesting current work seeks to combine the insights of psychoanalysis around desire, subjectivity, and the gaze with concerns which have largely remained “external” – questions of race and colonialism. The usefulness of psychoanalysis, and of the “topographical” problematic raised here depend very much on the context and spirit of their implementation. In this dissertation, I have developed the conceptual tools of space and movement as rich and evocative frames for understanding the pleasures and the politics of audio-visual texts. These tools are offered in the spirit of dialogue and creative thought.

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APPENDIX

Filmography

The Austen Cycle

Persuasion, Roger Michell, 1995
with: Amanda Root, Ciaran Hinds

Pride and Prejudice, Simon Langton, 1995
with: Jennifer Ehle, Colin Firth, David Bamber, Crispin Bonham Carter, Susannah Harker

Sense and Sensibility, Ang Lee, 1995
with: Emma Thompson, Alan Rickman, Kate Winslet, Hugh Grant

Emma, 1996, Douglas McGrath, 1996
with: Gwynneth Paltrow, Ewan MacGregor

Jane Austen's Emma, Diarmuid Davies, 1997
with: Kate Beckinsale, Mark Strong, Samantha Morton, Raymond Coulthard, Bernard Hepton

Gothic Texts

The Piano, Jane Campion, 1993
with: Holly Hunter, Harvey Keitel, Sam Neill, Anna Paquin

Angels and Insects, Philip Haas, 1996
with: Mark Rylance, Patsy Kensit, Kristin Scott Thomas

Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, Franco Zeffirelli, 1996
with: Charlotte Gainsbourg, William Hurt, Joan Plowright, Anna Paquin

Wide Sargasso Sea, John Duigan, 1993
with: Karina Lombard, Nathaniel Parker, Claudia Robinson, Michael York, Rachel Ward

Feminist Costume Dramas

Orlando, Sally Potter, 1993
with: Tilda Swinton, Billy Zane, Lothaire Bluteau, John Wood, Charlotte Valandrey, Heathcote Williams, Quentin Crisp

Portrait of a Lady, Jane Campion, 1997
with: Nicole Kidman, John Malkovich, Barbara Hershey

Daughters of the Dust, Julie Dash, 1991
with: Cora Lee Day, Avia Rogers, Barbara-O

Moll Flanders, Pen Densham, 1996
with: Robin Wright, Morgan Freeman, Stockard Channing, John Lynch