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# **Jane Austen Film Adaptations, Fan Fiction, and Contemporary Anglo-American Culture**

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in English and Textual Studies with Honors

May 2008

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## **Jane Austen Film Adaptations, Fan Fiction, and Contemporary Anglo-American Culture Abstract**

The rise of “Austenmania” in the form of films and heritage tours has been well marked in the past twenty years. Films based on Austen texts have attained a mass market popularity and tours based on Austen texts (and even Austen film adaptations) have likewise become popular within the heterosexual, romance-consuming female demographic. With the advent of the heritage film, Austen’s original texts became prime fodder for the heritage industry and the conservative depiction of Britain’s past Margaret Thatcher’s administration wished to portray. It is no mistake, in short, that “Austenmania” in effect began in the 1980s. The contemporary Anglo-American cultural markers of the heritage industry and feminism have influenced the development, success, and consumption of products like Austen film adaptations and have also influenced the production and consumption of Austen fan fiction. In this thesis I sought to prove that the heritage industry’s conservative agenda has a similarly conservative influence on Austen fan fiction. This conservative influence undermines or complicates the feminism some literary critics claim appears in fan fictions like Alexandra Potter’s Me and Mr. Darcy and Pamela Aidan’s Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy.

In order to prove this thesis, I relied mainly on traditional research into the arguments of prominent literary critics of the heritage industry, film and feminism. I also performed independent research into Austen fan fictions through close readings and comparisons with other fan fictions not mentioned in this thesis. The evidence of an unfeminist message in Potter and Aidan’s fan fiction lies in their creation of irrational heroines, overly saccharine romances, and confusion in the characterization of Darcy as a “New Man.” While various feminist literary critics (according to their own, often widely different definitions of feminism) claim that each of these elements signals the feminism of Austen and/or of Austen film adaptations, I question such claims in light of the evidence of Austen fan fiction. Furthermore, while critics like Janice Radway or Henry Jenkins claim romances and fan fictions, respectively, are feminist, I argue that Austen fan fictions lack some of the characteristics that these critics cite as crucial to the feminism of these genres. In light of this evidence, I claim that Austen fan fiction should be considered unfeminist texts, and the influence of the heritage industry is in large part responsible for this conservative reading.

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## Jane Austen Film Adaptations, Fan Fiction, and Contemporary Anglo-American Culture

“‘I must say,’ said Natasha, with a knowing smile, ‘I always feel with the Classics people should be made to prove they’ve read the book before they’re allowed to watch the television version.’ ...

‘Though in many respects, of course,’ said Mark’s Natasha, suddenly earnest.... ‘the democratization of our culture is a *good thing*--’ ...

‘What I *resent*, though’ – Natasha was looking all sorts of twitchy and distorted as if she were in an Oxbridge debating society – ‘is this, this sort of, arrogant individualism which imagines each new generation can somehow create the world afresh.’

‘But that’s exactly what they *do*, do,’ said Mark Darcy gently.’”

This short excerpt from Bridget Jones’ Diary, one of many adaptations of Jane Austen’s novels, suggests that with each passing generation, “classics” have been changed and molded to fit the purposes of their producers. Nowhere could this be more evident than with the adaptations of Jane Austen’s novels in the past two decades. Austen’s novels have seen many reincarnations in various forms, from films and TV specials to mini-series and fan fiction. While some of these adaptations are more closely aligned with the novels than others, such as the reworkings of Emma in the 1996 Miramax production and in Amy Heckerling’s *Clueless*, each adaptation contains markers of contemporary Anglo and Anglo-American culture; in these adaptations we can see the influence of current cultural trends. Indeed, in some cases, the adaptations actually make those trends visible as such. The most well documented of these contemporary influences are the rise of the heritage industry, which has

become a driving force behind “Austenmania,” and the rise of feminism, which has informed film adaptations of Austen’s novels at least as much as it has shaped literary criticism of them. But these influences are not as straightforwardly evident as many critics have suggested. While many argue that Austen adaptations *do* contain elements promoting the heritage industry and *do* present a feminist vision, I argue that certain adaptations in themselves resist the cultural trends of the heritage industry and feminism. In other adaptations, the way in which it is *consumed* by the viewer/reader reveals a resistance to these influences. Aspects of particular Austen adaptations and the way Anglo-American culture has consumed them goes against the pro-heritage and pro-feminist tendencies many critics ascribe to Austen adaptations. The first portion of this thesis will be dedicated to explicating other critics’ ideas about the influence of the heritage industry and of feminism on Austen adaptations. The second portion of this thesis will deal with overlooked adaptations, specifically fan fiction. In many fan fictions, the influence of the heritage industry is readily seen, and this influence creates a resistance to the pro-feminist trends many critics attribute to Austen adaptations.

## **Chapter 1: The Heritage Industry and its Politics**

Among those specifically interested in the heritage industry, namely geographers, sociologists, and anthropologists, the heritage industry refers to all the historical sites, preservation trusts, and historical tourist practices that have sprung up in the past twenty years or so. The term “heritage industry” was first coined by Robert Hewison, a prominent English scholar who specializes in English culture in the age of mass media. The rise of the heritage industry began when films, tourist companies, and even national governments sought to evoke particular identities and emotions tied to specific places and eras. In a way, these efforts allowed the past to become a desired place to visit, to go back to the days of old in order to seek something lost in the modern world. David Lowenthal’s belief that the past is like “a foreign country” may have been the phrase to spark the field of the heritage industry (4). And if the past is such, then it can be visited, and therefore marketed, complete with tours and souvenirs (4). Lowenthal states that one major impetus for visiting heritage sites is a sense of nostalgia; the thought that the past was part of the “Good Old Days,” regardless of the reality (7). “No matter if those days were wretched” he claims, “life was lovely” back in the ‘Good Old Days’ (7). The workings of nostalgia have encouraged an influx of tourists bent on experiencing the heritage industry, people interested in living the lives of their cultural ancestors. As Lowenthal writes, “nostalgia has made [the past] ‘the foreign country with the healthiest tourist trade of all’” (5).

Thus, this sense of nostalgia has led to a commodification of history, i.e. the heritage industry.

The promotion of a sense of nostalgia has led to tourist attractions like London's "Time Machine" bus tours, in which sightseers are invited to "imagine doing the Charleston or buying a house for under £1,000 in Pinner" during the 1920's (Lowenthal 32). Moreover, promoting nostalgia is nothing new; it was evident in English literature at the turn of the century, exemplified in then Poet Laureate P.H. Ditchfield's exclamation "Let us live again in the past, and surround ourselves with the treasures of past ages" (Lowenthal 34). The urge to "look back" was also shown in the newest fashions in architecture; popularizing Mock-Tudor houses and the like (Lowenthal 9). This vague sense of appreciating the past in any form lends itself more specifically to the heritage industry in that nostalgia for the "Good Old Days" informs our perception of the present; "we conceive of things not only as seen but also as heard and read about before" (Lowenthal 40). The perception of the "Good Old Days" ties classic national literature into the national heritage industry because while the sense of nostalgia brings tourists to experience the past vicariously, the mental images produced by what they have "heard and read about before," can be based on works like Austen adaptations. Heritage films, which include most "straightforward" literary adaptations, provide a rich visual account of what England was like "back then," as will be explored in depth later in this thesis. Furthermore, the mental images of what England

was like “back then” help inform heritage tourists as to their contemporary surroundings, going so far as to implant a specific sense of national identity (Wyatt 319). In other words, the heritage industry is simply turning the past into a tangible, visitable place in the present, and marketing that place to tourists, appealing to their sense of nostalgia and their desire to attach meaning to the present by understanding and vicariously re-living the past.

The rise of the British heritage industry in the 1980s and 1990s was also inexorably intertwined with the politics of the time. For the Thatcher administration, the heritage industry was seen as a valuable, and popular, form through which to promote a conservative political message (Crang 112). “The promotion and manipulation of the past was argued to provide a compensatory nostalgia for a time when Britain was ‘Great’” literary critics Mike Crang claims, and the use of mediums like film and television became the main vehicle for Thatcherites to promote a conservative view of “traditional England” (112). This was done through the “cult of the country house,” where the country manor was used as “a favored symbol...to stand for a stable, hierarchically ordered society that symbolized the ‘English character’” (Crang 113). The country house was almost always surrounded by the low-lying, picturesque scenery of Southern England, which, according to Crang, “support[ed] an essentialized English identity through a static, enclosed sense of the past” (113). This “static, enclosed sense of the past” fit well with Thatcher’s

conservative political message; England should be brought back to the “Good Old Days,” of the Regency country house and surrounding country-side. In fact, the Regency period was seen as a “key historical moment” – a “Golden Era” in British history – and was therefore given especial treatment and consideration in the heritage industry and in period piece films, also called heritage films or costume dramas, produced in the 80s and 90s (Sales 189).

There were other motives for and methods to the Thatcher administration’s use of the heritage industry. One was to provide “a nostalgic and escapist flight from the present,” perceived to be in a state of national distress and economic decline at the time (Hewison 23). Not only was the heritage film to provide an escape for its viewers, the Thatcher administration believed heritage films would provide a new venue through which England could “manage conflict between old and new, tradition and modernity” (Higson 51). The Thatcher administration sought to rectify the national distress and economic decline of the time by “yok[ing] the modernizing and transformative impulse of enterprise to the concern with tradition and continuity that we call heritage,” thereby addressing both the old and new that was pressuring English national identity in the 1980s (Higson 51). In order to attain this goal of tying the modern to the traditional, the Thatcher administration encouraged the heritage industry to grow in any shape or form; the National Heritage Acts of 1980 and 1983, the formation of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and the

overseeing body named English Heritage all helped England boost its heritage industry, as evidenced by the doubling of listed heritage sites during Thatcher's years in office (Higson 52). With the rise of these heritage-based organizations, the number of heritage films also increased.

The most visually stimulating propaganda for this older Britain was the film industry, which at the time that the Thatcher government began pumping money into heritage trusts was just beginning to produce period pieces that highlighted the older country these trusts were intended to preserve, a country filled with picturesque landscapes and country houses (Dole 58). According to Andrew Higson, heritage films became "conservative films for middle-class audiences because they functioned to maintain the values and interests of the most privileged social strata," which, to a large extent, was Thatcher's constituency (46).

The influence of the national trusts and the politics that gave rise to them were not the only causes of the development of the heritage industry. Coupled with the sense of nostalgia, already present in many tourists according to Lowenthal, and heightened by the picturesque views lovingly shot in many period pieces, film was also a driving force behind the rise of the heritage industry (Higson 5). Along with the political message and promotion attached to such films, they became ambassadors of "Englishness" around the world, and films with "authorship," here in terms of literary source material, were given extra weight as having "authority" about how the past was, and therefore should be, represented

(Higson 5). Whatever the political message, movie-goers, who were arguably attracted to period pieces from the start due to their sense of nostalgia for the past in general, could now foster their desire to experience the past for themselves through the blossoming heritage film industry. Thus, the relationship between heritage films and the heritage industry is somewhat complicated; each gave rise to and bolstered the other, while at the same time being the source of one another.

However, Thatcher's conservative view of the heritage industry would ultimately not be the only message portrayed through the heritage industry and its classic literature-based filmic source material. After the Thatcher administration, Tony Blair to some extent muted the cultural emphasis on national heritage by promoting a more progressive, egalitarian vision of Britain that he called "Cool Britannia" (Brown 31). "Cool Britannia" reinforced a view of an egalitarian England built by middle-class, creative entrepreneurialism (Monk 161). Like Thatcher, Blair founded various organizations aimed at promoting his vision of England, and like Thatcher, Blair also focused on film. He introduced organizations like Channel 4 on the BBC, which was dedicated to airing programs that depicted "Englishness," and which also branched out to Channel 4 Films, whose goals were very similar (Miller 40). Blair also promoted the creation of the lottery system, which awarded funding to true "English productions" in the hopes that his vision of a hip, young, modern

“Cool Britannia” would become evident both at home and abroad, dispelling the notion that England was “a dated concept” (Hewison 24). Blair’s vision appears in films like *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *The Full Monty*, which seek to create a young, modern view of “Englishness” by focusing on working class, contemporary English culture instead of the “Golden Era” of past English society.

The heritage industry, however, remained strong throughout Blair’s administration, and heritage films remained popular. While on the surface not much had changed for heritage films, the interpretation of such films *had* changed. Under Thatcher, heritage films were hailed as a vision of Regency stability through the country house, whereas during Blair’s years in office similar films were sought to offer a more critical, progressive stance on the past. At the time Patricia Rozema’s 1999 rendition of *Mansfield Park* was produced, for example, many critics, both film and literary, began to analyze heritage films for more progressive themes, like feminism and gender roles, and Rozema’s film seems conscious of this audience (Whiltshire 136). Not only were heritage films being viewed differently under Blair, the heritage industry itself also began being viewed differently. It increased its visibility by creating specific “countries,” complete with tours, guidebooks, and abundant press attention, usually in accordance with the release of a heritage film or literary adaptation. These “countries” included “Shakespeare country,” “Bronte country,” and “Austen country,” along with various websites

dedicated to specific tours (see <http://www.ehotango.co.uk/janeausten.htm> for one example). The foreign press in recent years has dedicated precious page space to heritage industry tours; Toronto's *The Globe and Mail*, for instance, ran an article dedicated to evaluating Jane Austen heritage tours, complete with a "Where to Stay" and "What to do" guide (9/11/05). Thus, from Thatcher to Blair, the heritage industry continued to grow despite the political messages attached to it.

And the rise of the heritage industry has by no means ended in present times. From its inception it has relied on sources like films, particularly literary adaptations, to fuel its audience's sense of nostalgia and desire to experience the past. With each new period piece that does well in the box office, such as the recent Working Title film *Pride and Prejudice*, starring Kiera Knightley, the heritage industry responds, often with specific tours and websites inviting tourists to "experience film locations" and "sleep where the stars slept" (<http://www.visitprideandprejudice.com/>). On many of these websites, the locations are not dedicated to places that inspired Austen's writing, but the locations which appeared in the film or TV mini-series, ushering in a new wave of heritage tourism dedicated to evaluating what such tourists have "heard and seen before" (Crang, 116). Thus, while literary authorship lends authoritative weight to the film adaptations and the heritage industry related to it, it is apparently not necessary in order to promote a popular tour or tourist destination. Many heritage tourists visit movie locations

without having read the novels that inspired them, and therefore the heritage industry is a marker not of the literature that may have helped produce the industry, but rather of the phenomenon of commodifying the past and marketing it to those with a sense of nostalgia, often bolstered by increasingly popular heritage films.

With respect to Jane Austen specifically, the adaptations of her novels have been used for many disparate purposes. During the Thatcher administration, Austen adaptations were valued for their conservative view of Regency England; they had the period setting, the picturesque views of English countryside couldn't be better, and the conservative nature of the plot and characters bolstered Thatcher's view of a conservative England (Crang 114). However, Austen adaptations were also produced throughout the Blair administration, and began to be interpreted through more progressive, politically liberal lenses, like feminism. The heritage industry has targeted Austen fans particularly because of the popularity of recent adaptations, especially the BBC/A&E mini-series *Pride and Prejudice* and the aforementioned 2005 Working Title production of the same name. In such a way, Austen fans are feeding the flames of the heritage industry: not only are period piece fans adding to the popularity of the heritage industry, but also the film industry itself is targeting the Austen fan demographic.

In the BBC/A&E's version, from the opening scene in which Bingley and Darcy are riding headlong across the countryside, the

landscapes used in the mini-series “convert the viewer/spectator into a consumer, both of pastoral English landscape and of what constitutes Englishness at a given time” (Ellington 91). Throughout the six hour mini-series, many of Elizabeth’s walks are included, enabling the production team several opportunities to film the picturesque landscapes of the locations used. In fact, Ellington has argued that landscape views have such an effect on the film that the English countryside should be considered a character in and of itself (93). The heritage industry sought to capitalize on the views already presented in the adaptation, which over twenty percent of the UK had seen, and had earned A&E’s highest rating ever when aired in the US (Thompson 14). Capitalizing on what is already presented to so many is seen in Higson’s statement that “the emphasis in heritage cinema on picturesque landscapes and fine old buildings, and the public interest thereby generated, dovetails neatly with the work of heritage bodies like the National Trust and English Heritage” (57). Another indication of the mini-series’s success as both entertainment and as an example of national heritage is the fact that the British Tourist Board gave the mini-series top honors for “outstanding contribution to tourism” (Sargeant 182). Several books and websites are also dedicated to the BBC/A&E’s version of *Pride and Prejudice*, including The World of Jane Austen, published at the height of “Austenmania” in the 1990s, and The Making of Pride and Prejudice, a 117-page book sold as part of the tenth anniversary edition of the mini-series, complete with a map of all

film locations. Thus, the heritage industry capitalized on the landscape views and “fine old buildings” already used in the heritage film industry.

With the newest edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, produced by Working Title Films and starring Kiera Knightley, similar strides were made to tie the film to the heritage industry. One of the websites listed first when “Pride and Prejudice” was searched on Google in September 2007 was “Visit Pride and Prejudice Country,” a site filled with images from the newest film (<http://www.visitprideandprejudice.com/>). The site includes a map similar to the one included in The Making of, complete with pictures and short descriptions of each location, the region where it can be found, and whether or not it is open to the public. Moreover, one of the most famous (or infamous, depending on interpretation) scenes of the film is when Elizabeth is out in Derbyshire with her Aunt Gardiner and climbing a rocky outcrop. While in the BBC/A&E version the scene is played much as it is in the novel, in the newest rendition it is much more dramatic: swelling music fills the background and the cinematography provides a wide, sweeping view of all Elizabeth can see from her vantage point. The image of Elizabeth on this outcrop has become one of the most popular images from the film, used on posters, advertisements, and their internet counterparts. Thus, much like the BBC/A&E’s version, Working Title’s production also provides the heritage industry, or at least that sector of the tourist industry focused on heritage tours, with a perfect source for new tours and sites which, due to the popularity of the film and mini-

series, will garner the attention of many heritage tourists. These tours and sites are promoted by private tour groups, like British Tours Ltd. or Echo Tango tours, which accompanies its itinerary with an imagery-filled article of one tourist's experience, and by local governments, like Hampshire's, which boasts "Austen Country" as one of its top attractions

([http://www.britishtours.com/360/jane\\_austen.html](http://www.britishtours.com/360/jane_austen.html),

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/austen>). Because many heritage films, and Austen adaptations in particular, use picturesque landscapes (many of which were described in Austen's original novels), the heritage industry has picked up on this popularity and turned it to its own advantage. Thus, not only did the politics surrounding the inception of the heritage industry promote films like Working Title's *Pride and Prejudice*, but the heritage industry itself saw them as a prime source for boosting its own enterprises.

However, as we shall see in the next chapter, these films were not produced only because the ruling administration needed something visual to reinforce its political convictions; the film industry itself was coming to see the heritage film as a valuable product on its own.

## **Chapter 2: The Film Industry and its Contribution to the Heritage**

### **Industry**

Although the heritage industry and its surrounding politics definitely affected the rise and popularity of many heritage films, the film industry itself was coming to realize that films like *Pride and Prejudice*, as well as other literary adaptations (*A Room With a View*), and period pieces (*Elizabeth*, *Shakespeare in Love*), could be valuable additions to the film industry. As stated in Chapter 1, the heritage industry picked up on the success of heritage films and used them to bolster their own purposes; however, the heritage industry also helped bolster the film industry's foray into the heritage film industry. After its initial take off, the heritage industry's willingness to provide tours, "film maps," and other amenities to those specifically seeking film locations increased the viability that other popular heritage films would do well in the future (Gibson 116). Similarly, after the success of the 'first' heritage film, *A Room With a View* (1986), the film industry began producing more of the same, capitalizing on this new market trend (Higson 13). "Such trends," Higson suggests, "emerge as producers attempt to repeat a success, or to exploit a current fashion...they can still be understood as playing off repetition (reworking a familiar model) against difference (but not too different, not too original)" (13). The similarities between heritage films were often due to financial, business decisions, rather than critical debate. "The success of one facilitates and to some extent determines the production and

marketing of subsequent films, and gradually a trend emerges” (Higson 14). Therefore, after the box office success of *A Room With a View*, producers set off to capitalize on the newly formed market of the heritage film.

The success of the heritage film has been due not only to producers trying to secure a repeat success, but also to the rise of the multiplex in both the UK and the US, where heritage films were originally marketed, although the trend has now spread across the globe (resulting in its own unique forms of Austen adaptations, such as Bollywood’s *Bride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*). The first multiplex to open in the UK did so in 1985, one year before the release of *A Room With a View* (Hanson 48). The rise of the multiplex produced a concurrent phenomenon; the “Big Five” production companies, being Rank Odeon, National Amusement/Showcase, UCI, Virgin, and Warner Village at the time, owned more than 80 percent of the screens in the UK by the mid-1990s (Hanson 50). And while there were more physical screens in the film industry, a smaller variety of films were being shown, especially since the advent of the multiplex spelled hard times for the small, independently owned, “art-house” theaters (Hanson 50). Currently, many American production companies have out-stripped British companies like Rank Odeon for control of multiplex screens, leading to an “Americanization” of the film industry, including the heritage films, which until the mid-90s were mainly “British” films, although many were

backed by American financial partnerships (Higson 6). This increased the pressure on the film industry to produce guaranteed hits; films that would be sure to do well, including the heritage film.

Heritage films were seen as “quality productions,” highlighting English culture and thereby becoming an English ambassador to those abroad (Higson 5). They were viewed as portraying the “Golden Eras” of the English past, including “key historical moments,” like the reign of Elizabeth I in *Elizabeth* or the Regency period in Austen adaptations (Sales 50). Heritage films were also viewed somewhat sentimentally as a “look back” at the past, thereby inspiring nostalgia for such a past, which in turn sparked interest in future heritage films in the audience enraptured by one (Higson 111). And while these films were originally shown in small, “art-house” theaters before the advent of the multiplex, with the rise of multiplexes major production companies took these “quality” British films and marketed them to wider audiences in the mid to late-90s.

So why did heritage films do so well in the box office smash world of the multiplex? In part, the success of heritage films depended on two factors; audience demographics and marketing schemes. Heritage films were successful because they hit a niche market that had not been addressed before the arrival of the multiplex. This is not to say that heritage films succeeded *because of* the multiplex, but only that they became more mainstream with the proliferation of them. These films, according to Higson, are part of the “new British art cinema, which

straddles the traditional art-house circuit and the mainstream commercial cinemas in Britain;" in other words, these films occupy the tenuous middle ground between the avant-garde films of the "art-house," and the commercialized "blockbusters" of mainstream multiplexes (5). These "quality English productions" were usually more slowly paced, cast orientated character studies than the "blockbusters" of the multiplex (Higson 37). Many were originally marketed as cross-over pieces, capable of being screened in both "art-house" cinemas and mainstream multiplexes at various points in the film's "life" -- the 1996 production of *Emma* being one example (Hanson 85). *Emma* began in a few "art-houses," gradually building its releases in proportion to its success. Many heritage films were marketed "in such a way that they might break out of the art-house into the multiplex, or at least achieve a wider release than the specialized film with specifically limited appeal" (Higson 93). The gradual release of films like *Emma* relied mainly on word-of-mouth; because budgets for many heritage films, both in production and advertising, were relatively small in comparison to multiplex blockbusters, many heritage film producers relied on their "quality" production, audience taste and good reviews to market the film for them (Higson 96). In this way, heritage films gained popularity through "long runs intended for select audiences," rather than the saturation approach used by many multiplex blockbusters (Edson 141). This middle ground attracted an audience demographic that was middle-class, slightly older than the 15-25 year old

target market, and one allied with the film culture which is tied to educational discourse, literary culture, “good taste” and Anglophiles both in the UK and abroad (Higson 5). Therefore, the heritage films targeted a demographic that was, like the films themselves, somewhere in that amorphous middle ground. With the heritage film, movie-goers were given a more diverse choice between the “art-house” and the multiplex (although heritage films were shown in both), and audience numbers swelled in proportion to the popularity of the heritage film (Hanson 87). Thus, the target demographic of the heritage film was different, and they thereby bypassed head on competition with both the “art-house” and the blockbusters, forming their own niche market to exploit. The distinct type of marketing scheme also encouraged heritage films to become increasingly popular, and interestingly enough, increasingly “high brow;” by the late 90s there were as many movie-goers “whose interests include literature or the arts in general” as those that comprised the targeted 15-25 year old demographic (Edson 140).

In financial terms, literary adaptations made into heritage films have been ‘on top of the heap’ so to speak, in the realm of heritage films, Austen adaptations included. In general, literary adaptations immediately have a sense of authenticity; the author of the original work was *there*, involved in the society and culture of the time being presented on film (Gibson 115). This authenticity then becomes a major selling point for many literary adaptations. More than other heritage films, these

adaptations offer a purportedly true picture of what life was like “back then.” This has led to a preoccupation with “getting it right;” every period detail had to be just so, although this preoccupation for correctness has declined in importance for some heritage film producers. However, the heritage films who disregard “getting it right” in effect show the pervasiveness of the trend elsewhere in the heritage industry. For example, Sophia Coppola’s *Marie Antoinette* is intentionally anachronistic in response to the need to “get it right.” Literary adaptations tend to “play on the familiarity and/or cultural prestige of a particular novel,” which couldn’t be more true of adaptations of Austen’s novels (Higson 20). *Pride and Prejudice* has been called “the greatest love story of all time” (Daily News and Analysis) as late as March 2007, and the novel itself is used throughout the US and UK as a choice example of the Regency period (Thompson 14). Literary adaptations also tend to focus on class and “British national identity,” and therefore the film industry looks to “good books” off of which to base their film adaptations (Sales 230). Lastly, the 1990s has seen a rise in the number of students interested in Media and Film Studies throughout the US and UK, increasing the film industry’s knowledge of canonical texts like Austen (Brown 30). In this way, heritage films look to canonical texts to validate their portrayal of a specific period in the past.

Austen adaptations in particular contribute to the characteristics of the heritage film industry discussed above. Not only are all of Austen’s six

major novels considered canonical texts, but they are set in Regency England, a “key historical moment” as we have seen, upon which both the film and heritage industries like to capitalize (Higson 26). Especially in the BBC/A&E mini-series *Pride and Prejudice*, along with Working Title’s 2005 rendition of the same name, the visual splendor of the English countryside, the Regency manor house, “Britishness,” and what the country was like at the time are all particularly on display. The numerous balls present in both adaptations is one example of displaying “Britishness;” here, proper Regency style, manners (or *improper* manners, in the case of Mr. Darcy), and a rosy picture of society during the Regency era are all on display. And because Austen writes of her own time period, such visual representations of what she writes seems to *prove* how the “Good Old Days” really were. These adaptations are regarded as such because they create a credible version of the past through authorial authenticity.

Furthermore, the most recent adaptations of Austen’s films have been produced and marketed in such a way that while Austen’s authorial authenticity is on display, it is not the *only* feature worth viewing. Working Title’s 2005 production of *Pride and Prejudice* was marketed to a much wider audience than many previous Austen adaptations; instead of starting in “art-houses,” this rendition was marketed to be a blockbuster from the start (P&P Production Notes). Saturation of multiplexes and TV and internet trailers made the 2005 film incredibly popular before it even

opened, and coupled with positive reviews ([http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/pride\\_and\\_prejudice/](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/pride_and_prejudice/)), it became critically acclaimed as well, garnering four Oscar nominations (Daily News and Analysis). The marketing scheme for this newest adaptation did not rely on Austen's authenticity to carry the movie, the promotional 'tag line' was "the classic tale of love and misunderstanding," basing its appeal on the universal themes of a love story rather than the newest adaptation of a well beloved author (P&P Production Notes). Thus, while many Austen adaptations are firmly part of the heritage film industry, the latest adaptation has sprung directly into the mainstream market of multiplex blockbusters.

The film industry itself created the heritage film in the hopes of attracting a new audience to the theaters by targeting the middle ground between the "art-house" film and the multiplex blockbuster. Many Austen adaptations fit the bill, and have been used to exemplify the different aspects of both the heritage industry and the film industry's change in the past twenty years. Each adaptation however, is also the site of intense debate centered on the intended reading of Austen's novels, and thus not necessarily reduced as easily to conservative politics or to savvy film industry and tourist board marketing as critics of the heritage industry and heritage film have argued. In the next chapter, I will explore this point by examining another, more potentially progressive, ideological influence on

Austen adaptations that many critics have detected – namely, the rise of feminist cultural criticism.

### **Chapter 3: Feminism in Austen and Austen Adaptations**

Because many heritage films rely on Austen's authority as a Regency author to lend credibility to a film adaptation, the fact that many recent adaptations have promoted a progressive feminist reading of an Austen text is worth investigating. Directors like Patricia Rozema cite Austen's inherent feminism as the base for their own progressive adaptations, and therefore it is important to investigate what evidence of feminist tendencies actually exist in Austen's novels and what feminist tendencies have been projected onto Austen's novels as a result of the heritage industry and the savvy marketing strategies of the films it produces. Some film adaptations pick up on what critics argue are feminist tendencies in Austen's novels, while others import aspects of the heritage industry which negate the feminist tendencies these critics argue for, and some pick up on aspects of Austen's novel which are *not* feminist based on the arguments of feminist critics. Intense arguments occur when discussing Austen's feminism; some critics claim Austen could not have been a feminist while others argue that she must have been. This chapter will begin with an examination of Austen's feminist tendencies as a

whole, and then focus on a more detailed look at the novels which have been made into feminist screen versions in the past twenty years, namely Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility, and Mansfield Park.

The most apparent form of feminism in Austen's work is her acceptance of Enlightenment ideals and her insistence that these ideals should apply to women as well as men. Throughout her works, Austen emphasizes the rational abilities of her heroines; her most beloved are sharp, witty, and acutely aware of the societal limitations and injustices around them. By centering her novels on the world of women, she is able to examine their moral and intellectual development closely, and feminist critics like Ann Mellor have emphasized this focus on women and their 'sphere' as a key aspect of Austen's feminism (Mellor 52). Austen endorses rationality in her heroines by creating a meritocracy in her novels through the use of the marriage plot. While the marriage plot may outwardly seem to be a conservative convention, literary critics like Laura White argue that it has served Austen well as a platform from which to promote a meritocracy based on moral decency, common sense, and an ability to read the world surrounding the heroine (White 75). This ability to read, according to literary critics like Gary Kelly, becomes one of the identifying characteristics of Austen's heroines; those who can properly read both texts and social situations are better qualified to negotiate between personal desire, social demands and limitations under the system of patriarchal dominance, giving her a more likely chance of "getting what

she wants” (Kelly 31). Those who do not read, on the other hand, are often ridiculed and satirized as members of the defunct patriarchal system (Kelly 31). This ability to read also denotes Austen’s endorsement of Enlightenment ideas as applied to women; the ability to read, decipher, and discriminate are important aspects of being a “rational creature,” which Austen touts as the most important aspect of a heroine in order to obtain her “reward,” her compensation for the moral and intellectual growth she has undergone over the course of the novel (White 81).

Feminist critic Devoney Looser argues that seeing women as “rational creatures” able to read and decipher the world around them makes Austen a feminist author, especially in contrast to the contemporary popularity of the Gothic novel, which created “heroines of feeling” rather than of rationality (Looser 119). In the Gothic novel, many heroines are caught up in their emotions rather than “reading” their surroundings, a habit which usually ends the heroine in disgrace or disaster. With the popularity of such emotional, as opposed to rational, heroines, and the rise of the “angel of the house” ideal and other social “reforms” of Austen’s era, the belief that women are equal in moral reasoning and capable of “reading” their world is comparatively progressive, and therefore feminist. In this way, critics like Anne Mellor suggest Austen would have been considered a feminist in her time, although not a radical feminist. She states:

“Jane Austen espoused a value system firmly grounded on a belief in women’s capacity for intellectual and moral growth, in the desirability of egalitarian marriages based on rational love and

mutual esteem... Her fiction... is that of a moderate feminist, solidly progressive in its measured examinations both of the failures of the patriarchy and the landed gentry and of the potential for moral and intellectual equality between the sexes.” (52)

The Enlightenment belief that humans, and therefore women, are “rational creatures” is one example of Austen’s feminist tendencies in her works.

Another of Austen’s feminist tendencies in the eyes of many critics is her fictions’ examination of the social injustices of patriarchy.

Throughout her work she suggests, in the words of Claudia Johnson, “that fathers, sons, and brothers themselves may be selfish, bullying and unscrupulous, and that the ‘bonds of domestic attachment’ are not always sweet” (Johnson 10). Many of her paternal figures are incompetent, and many biological mothers are in need of replacement due to their inept parenting, leading to a search for replacements in the form of sisters and close family friends (Hudson 63). Male models of power are often insipid and foolish, sexist, and ridiculous in the opinions they hold; their moralizing, stereotypical views and practices, along with their inability properly to manage their estates, earn them the ridicule and mockery of the author, the heroine, and the reader (Mellor 62). Within this society Austen highlights the limitations in social mobility, opportunities for independence, and the cut-throat marriage market that turns less moral women into, to use Audrey Bilger’s term, “tricksters,” competing for eligible men (Bilger 165). As Mellor puts it, Austen “wants us to see the myriad ways in which patriarchal power – especially the possession of

money – can corrupt both men and women” (Mellor 63). Austen also emphasizes the ill effects such patriarchs have on those around them. With the limited options available to women, they have little choice but to suffer the ill treatment or neglect they receive from the patriarchal system, upon which they depend for protection against the outside, amoral world (Bilger 138). Thus, while those few decently moral members of the landed gentry use their wealth and power benevolently, those who do not are harshly ridiculed by the author. This ridiculing of the patriarchal system marks Austen as a moderate feminist for her day according to these critics. Although she stops short of promoting an overhaul of the social order, she makes an effort to show its cracks and flaws in such a way as to highlight the detrimental effects that pride, negligence, or all-out selfishness can have on those who depend on the patriarch for protection and economic support.

The last and most well documented aspect critics cite of Austen’s feminism is her laughter – that is, her irony, and its subversive capabilities. In Austen’s era, laughter was seen as unfit in a “proper woman,” and therefore the novel genre gave women like Austen an unprecedented opportunity to write comedy with subversive undertones, to hide their anger or bitterness with the patriarchal system behind laughter and social conventions like the marriage plot (Bilger 25). Moreover, because most of Austen’s subversive laughter is subtle, she could rest assured, according to nineteenth-century essayist George Henry Lewes,

that her laughter was “harmless.” In one passage he exclaims “What incomparable noodles she exhibits for our astonishment and laughter! What silly, good-natured women!” (qtd. in Bilger 30). Austen’s playfully aggressive style is also exemplified in a letter she wrote to her publisher, expressing her frustration that Northanger Abbey had not been published after six years at the publishing house. She signed this letter “M.A.D.” thereby expressing both her frustration and hinting at what her publishers probably thought of her letter (Bilger 68).

This type of irony and incisive awareness of the social limitations put upon women is shown throughout Austen’s fiction, especially in her heroine’s opinions and actions. Austen also uses her irony to reveal the failings of the patriarchal system discussed above: she points out the more ridiculous and unjust aspects in order to laugh at them (Bilger 93). In this way, she creates parodies of the patriarchal standards against which her literature was judged. The inclusion of the marriage plot and the “happy ending” for her heroines seem to be the conventional fare, while according to critics like Bilger or Looser, a closer look reveals her subtle critique of patriarchy’s failings, especially towards women (Looser 75). In this manner, feminist critics claim Austen’s laughter and ridicule of the patriarchal system and its limitations on women make her a feminist for her day, and a moderate one for the present.

For literary critics like Mellor, Bilger, and White, Austen’s feminism, according to their own, sometime contradictory definitions of

feminism, resides in a few salient points of her writing. These feminist tendencies become apparent in her promotion of Enlightenment ideas, creating a meritocracy for her heroines, focusing on the “women’s sphere” and women’s issues, a critique of the patriarchal system, and her subversive, ironic laughter in which Austen invites the reader to see her point of view and share her critiques. In the minds of these critics, Austen promotes proto-feminist ideas which classify her as a moderate feminist for her day. These critics would argue that film adaptations of Austen’s work which show similar feminist trends should also be considered feminist adaptations. Although each film makes changes to Austen’s original story, highlighting specific aspects or situations while downplaying others, critics cite the focus on the “women’s sphere,” the critique of patriarchal norms, and the audience’s consumption of the films as evidence of feminism in Austen film adaptations.

Such is the case, for example, of the BBC/A&E’s 1995 mini-series *Pride and Prejudice*. The producer of the mini-series, Sue Birthwistle, claimed *Pride and Prejudice* to be “simply the sexiest book ever written” and determined the mini-series would reflect the sentiment (Hopkins 112). And according to literary critic Martine Voiret, the attempt to make a similarly “sexy” mini-series has led to privileging the romance-consuming, heterosexual female gaze by catering specifically to the female target demographic, which she sees as a homogeneous group. In this way, much of the mini-series is cast and shot in a way to attract a

female audience (Voiret 230). While in Austen's novel there are very few physical descriptions, in the mini-series everyone is very attractive, with the exceptions of Mary and a slightly less-pretty-than-Elizabeth Charlotte. The men in the mini-series are likewise "soft on the eyes," Colin Firth as Darcy was specifically chosen for his manly image (P&P Production Notes). Darcy is further displayed for a romance-consuming heterosexual female gaze in numerous added scenes, most notably those of him swimming in a pond, fencing, and writing his explanatory letter to Elizabeth. In the first, Darcy's jumping into a pond for a swim elicited "Darcy Parties" where women gathered to watch this scene repeatedly (Voiret 232). In the fencing scene, Darcy is shown not only to be an active, attractive male, but also a man violently struggling to put Elizabeth out of his mind, a facet of Darcy that never appears in the novel. Lastly, while writing the letter to Elizabeth, Darcy is, in the words of Lisa Hopkins, the very picture of "hot and bothered" (Hopkins 118). With his loose shirt and disheveled demeanor, this picture of Darcy is shamelessly catering to the romance-consuming female gaze (Voiret 232). According to Voiret, this change in dress symbolizes "a playful reversal of the modesty and prudishness" usually exemplified in 19<sup>th</sup> century plotlines (Voiret 232). The costuming, too, privileges the female gaze. The men are "suggestively dressed in the more flamboyant fashion of the times" including skin tight pantaloons and a coat made to "subtly follow the curves of the body and the bone structure" of the already "hunky" male

characters (Voiret 233). This eroticized costuming clearly states that in this production, the hero is there to be looked at. Thus, casting and costuming privileged the female gaze in this mini-series, and this catering to a target demographic, not to mention reversal of the tradition of putting women on screen primarily to be looked at, has come to be considered one of the mini-series' feminist bents.

Similarly, the camera angles and scenes throughout the mini-series reveal their female-orientated foundation. In the first half of the mini-series, Darcy is pictured only in profile or framed in a window. Only when discussing "accomplished females" does the viewer get their first peek at Darcy full in the face (Hopkins 113). According to Ellen Belton, keeping Darcy's face averted keeps the mystery of Darcy in a visual sense, and also hints at a feeling of entrapment, since windows are often the symbols of such sentiments: in Darcy's case he is trapped by his own arrogance (Belton 188). Moreover, throughout the mini-series there are a series of smoldering looks, side glances, and an emphasis on the eyes and their expressive qualities (Belton 190). Such glances chart the relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth; at the start Elizabeth and Darcy are never pictured in the same shot and they communicate solely through sidelong glances (Belton 190). As their relationship progresses, the type of eye movement and contact also changes, as exemplified in the exchange of glances over Georgiana's piano as Elizabeth rushes to cover her embarrassment and Darcy looks on with warm approval. Another aspect

of this emphasis on eye movement is the way in which the camera delineates the plotline. In this adaptation, Darcy is given much more room to “speak” (Hopkins 114). With the added scenes the viewer knows Darcy’s struggle and his inward emotions more fully than Elizabeth or the readers of the novel. Furthermore, Darcy, rather than Elizabeth, becomes the narrative focal point from the moment of his first proposal to Elizabeth; the viewer sees Darcy’s reaction to Elizabeth’s rejection before they see Elizabeth’s, and this focus continues for much of the second half of the mini-series (Hopkins 115). Thus, through casting, costuming, and camera angle choices, the romance-consuming, heterosexual female gaze is privileged in the mini-series.

Another aspect of the mini-series that could be argued to promote feminist tendencies is morphing Darcy into what has been termed a “New Man” by critics like Devoney Looser. In this sense, Darcy is given more room to express his emotions and display his emotional struggle before he finally capitulates to his love for Elizabeth. According to Looser, “the celluloid Austen heroes may in fact be the ones most obviously affected by the second wave of the women’s movement... Austen’s heroes have been translated onto the screen as caregivers, as well as rescuers of damsels in distress” (Looser 170). Thus, in the mini-series Darcy is shown to be more affective, more emotional, and more caring towards friends and dependents like Bingley and Georgiana. Furthermore, his emotional struggle becomes the focus of the second half of the mini-series, leaving

Darcy not only to be looked at by the female audience, but admired for his capability to possess both sets of characteristics that make him a female fantasy (Looser 171). As Voiret states, “the movie provides the viewer with the realization of a wish rarely granted in real life: the metamorphosis of a self-centered male into a loving, caring companion” (Voiret 239). However, Darcy still retains his manly outward appearance, thereby possessing both the “manly” characteristics and those of the “New Man.” Critics like Voiret argue that by creating Darcy anew as a “New Man,” he is better loved and accepted by a modern, feminist audience because he has become the embodiment of their fantasy (Voiret 240). Thus, with these changes, the BBC/A&E production of *Pride and Prejudice* reveals feminist tendencies aimed at “updating” Austen’s feminism for modern viewers.

Likewise, in Patricia Rozema’s 1999 film rendition of Mansfield Park, many feminist elements are taken up in order to modernize the novel for today’s audiences. One of the most striking changes is the character of Fanny. Called “insipid” even in Austen’s day, Rozema drastically changes the “model woman” to fit more modern, feminist sensibilities. In the film, Fanny is no longer the delicate, soft-spoken, modest woman she is in the novel; instead, scholar James Thompson claims Rozema has cast Fanny as an active, vibrant, cheeky composite of the Fanny of the novel, Elizabeth Bennet, and Austen herself (Thompson 26). Using Austen’s letters and journals, as well as the novel, Rozema casts a more modernly feminist

version of Fanny. She is now a writer with wit reminiscent of Elizabeth, and she addresses the camera directly with her most acerbic comments, giving her a definite air of the narrator herself (Fergus 78). Rozema's Fanny is also more sexualized, as is the entire film, than anything presented in Austen's novel. The scene of the ball at Mansfield Park is particularly blatant; here it is clearly seen that Fanny has discovered and is exalting in her newfound sexuality in her knowing glances and body language (Harris 62). Fanny's character makeover demonstrates the change in attitude towards women and an influence from the feminist movement; Rozema's Fanny reveals the "contemporary female desire that it is not the traditionally gentle and self-effacing woman who finds fulfilling love but the outspoken, self-assured woman" (Voiret 234). She is no longer the "guardian of morality" as she was portrayed in the novel; rather, she is the contemporary feminist version of the "model woman" (Voiret 235). By changing Fanny to accommodate contemporary feminist sentiments, Rozema has updated Austen's "model woman" to fit today's notion of what such a woman should be.

Another aspect of Rozema's film that has been characterized as more feminist and progressive is her focus on the slave trade and gender roles throughout the film. Although mentioned only momentarily in the novel, Rozema's heavy focus on the slave trade through image and sound help bolster her investigation of the gender roles in both novel and film. This motif of slavery pits the slaves against the women in a war of who is

treated worse; both women and slaves are caged by the patriarchal social system (Harris 59). This narrative thread encourages a parallel comparison of women and slaves, highlighting the limitations and “caged” aspect of female life in Austen’s era for the progressive Austen heroines, implying that women are little more than the slaves of Sir Thomas’s plantations (Harris 59). Thus, the trope of the slave trade reveals Rozema’s “updating” of Austen’s feminist notion of the injustice of the limitations placed on women by male authority.

The trope of slavery also highlights the injustice of the patriarchy system both at home and abroad; more than any other adaptation, Rozema’s *Mansfield Park* does not shy away from the disastrous effects to which negligent patriarchy can lead. Throughout the film, *Mansfield Park* is characterized as dark, gloomy, alienating; even the windows are begrimed and reveal only blurred and murky pictures of the world outside. Also, as Suzanne Pucci points out, the furniture within the manor house is sparse and oddly placed, adding to Fanny’s feelings of isolation (Pucci 151). The characters of the Bertram family are in no way sugar-coated in order to give the film that glowing quality other Austen adaptations have; in fact, the “grittiness” of *Mansfield Park* is enhanced in order to showcase visually the effects of Sir Thomas’s tainted patriarchy. Thus, by examining gender roles, Rozema, like Austen, focused on the deteriorating patriarchal system and exposed its failures, bringing a feminist light to this dark and “gritty” portrayal of Austen’s novel.

In the case of the 1995 film *Sense and Sensibility* specific aspects of the film belie feminist notions. The most prominent feminist tendency is the characterization of “gendered space,” to use Julianne Pidduck’s term (Pidduck 25). Throughout the film, the women are pictured as mainly stationary, forever in the cottage or in its close environs, looking out windows or framed by them; a visual representation of their limitations (Pidduck 26). Literary critic Penny Gay states that “gendered space” creates a sense of their entrapment, their confined “female spaces” are filled with simple amusements rather than “work” (with the exception of Elinor, who attempts to balance the family’s budget) (Gay 94). In this sense, the gendered “female space” creates “women at the windows” who “dramatize feminine constraint and longing” while grappling with the limitations of their “space” (Pidduck 29). Such grappling is exemplified by Elinor’s comment to Edward that women have no hope of earning their income, while he has opportunities other than marriage through which he can achieve economic stability, although Edward denies this claim, saying he too is waiting to become financially independent (Pidduck 30). The colors of their confined habitation also belie the limited options the Dashwoods have as poor women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the tones are dull and lackluster, giving a sense that not only are they trapped within their “gendered space,” but that this space is itself dreary and with few modes of escape (Pidduck 29). Thus, *Sense and Sensibility* creates a visual

representation of women's social limitations under the patriarchal system, criticizing it for putting the Dashwoods into a "gendered space."

In contrast, the men, who are mainly characterized as "New Men" in accordance with the previous discussion, are pictured mainly outdoors, actively coming and going in the women's lives, and are also meant to be looked at, as in *Pride and Prejudice*. The first outdoor appearance is Willoughby, coming to the rescue of Marianne after her fall; in this instance, Willoughby's inspection of Marianne's ankle is highly charged with sexual tension, as is their sopping wet costuming (Gay 96). Like Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, Willoughby and others are attired in apparel designed to attract the romance-consuming, heterosexual female gaze and to communicate the character's inner nature; Willoughby is therefore dashingy attired, Edward is straight laced and buttoned up, and Colonel Brandon is somberly dressed, until his great agitation at Marianne's sickness prompts him to loosen his cravat and cut a more contemporarily attractive picture of 19<sup>th</sup> century male fashion (Gay 97). All the men in this film are continually seen riding, rescuing, planning, and generally being more active and busy than the women, conforming to Pidduck's notion of "gendered space" as a visual representation of the social norms and limitations of Austen's day.

One exception to this "gendered space" is Margaret Dashwood, who, although a very minor character in the novel, takes on a much greater role in the film. Here she has been changed into a modern tomboy,

complete with sword fighting lessons from Edward, a tree house, and a keen interest in atlases and travel (Pidduck 32). Pictured as continually running and playing outdoors, Margaret “introduces female physical movement to the restrained spatio-temporal economy” of the film’s “gendered space” (Pidduck 32). Margaret’s revamped tomboy attitude reveals contemporary feminist feeling; in light of the entrapped elder women, audiences wish to see the past, including gender roles, in a light that anticipates the future, and this includes offering an alternative to the tightly encapsulated elder women. As Amanda Collins argues, in Margaret, viewers are presented with a thoroughly progressive female character, one that gives hope for future generations of progressively feminist women (Collins 85). Thus, she is a prime example of how characters are changed to suit the contemporary cultural and in this case feminist, climate.

The changes made to recent film adaptations discussed here reveal the fact that in some cases there is a feminist bent to Austen film adaptations. However, both in the novels and in the films, a closer inspection exposes a complication of these feminist tendencies. The examples given of Austen’s feminism in both novel and film could just as easily be used to show her promotion of the conservative, patriarchal order of her day, and more to the point here, it is this conservative message that, I would argue, has likewise been picked up in recent film adaptations.

Ann Mellor's claim that Austen promotes Enlightenment ideals of women as "rational" and equal to men is taken up by recent film adaptations; however, the films tend to inadvertently promote an unfeminist reading of Austen's Enlightenment ideals due to a change in genre. Although her most beloved heroines are indeed witty, insightful, and recognize their social limitations, they do nothing to promote an alternate order or indeed, anything to stop the traditional trajectory which proclaims that marriage is the only means of escape and security. All of Austen's heroines end in "happy endings," complete with advantageous marriages and a secure future. The "happy ending" through marriage may secure financial well-being, but capitulating to the prevailing social order which views women as inferior and irrational largely negates the belief that women are equal to men. Even Elizabeth Bennet, Austen's most audaciously critical heroine, eventually surrenders to the patriarchal hegemony she once critiqued. Although Elizabeth is a "rational creature," her willingness to conform to a hegemonic order which systematically denies women's rationality silences her critiques; in the end, Elizabeth becomes another "angel of the house." Because all her heroines in the end conform to the prevailing social hierarchy, and thereby reduce themselves to an inferior, subservient position, the argument for Austen as a feminist author is undermined.

The film renditions of Pride and Prejudice seemingly embrace this failing of "rational creatures" in order to promote a more romantic,

idealized “chick flick.” In the 1995 BBC/A&E mini-series, the double wedding (of both Elizabeth and Jane) promotes an overly romantic view of both women’s relationships. The heavenly light used during the ceremony, along with the beatific camera angles which focus primarily on Elizabeth and Jane’s smiling faces, form a picture-perfect “happy ending” that encourages a romantic plotline and mutes the perception of the union between two morally and rationally equal couples. The romantic picture is only heightened by the ending freeze frame showing Elizabeth positively gleeful in her wedding carriage with Darcy. In this way, the rationality of the heroines is overshadowed by the romance genre, the fact that Elizabeth and Jane are getting married seems to be the end goal in the mini-series, rather than that they have found compatible mates. The tendency to promote the romance plot over that of rational characterization reproduces itself in Working Title’s 2005 *Pride and Prejudice*, in which an entire new scene (not included in the novel) is added at the end. In this scene, Darcy and Elizabeth are enjoying their new-found wedded bliss and discuss how Darcy may only call Elizabeth “Mrs. Darcy” when he is “completely, and perfectly, and incandescently happy,” to which he replies by repeatedly calling her “Mrs. Darcy.” In this case, the romance plot has completely overtaken any other theme in the novel or in the film. By emphasizing the romantic plot and bypassing the struggle to find a morally and intellectually equal partner, these film adaptations mute Austen’s promotion of women as equally rational to men.

Also, the meritocracy that critics like Johnson cite as a feminist tendency in Austen's work fails with some of her heroines and the film adaptations seem to embrace this failing. Marianne in Sense and Sensibility, for example, does not know how to "read" the world around her, and her forced education does not merit "reward" as argued previously. The 1995 film *Sense and Sensibility* visually portrays Marianne's failing to "read" her world, and ends in a near-deathly illness as a result of her inability to "read" Willoughby's intentions. Even Elizabeth Bennet fails to "read" the truth in Darcy, only to change her mind when she sees that she "could have been mistress" of Pemberley (P&P 135). A similar change in mind occurs in both film adaptations of the novel, highlighting Elizabeth's inaccuracy in her "reading" of Darcy. These failings undermine Austen's support of a meritocracy.

Moreover, these film adaptations fetishize displays of wealth; the viewer does not particularly like Darcy until Pemberley's gorgeous grounds and magnificent architecture (and the impressive marble collection in the Working Title adaptation), are put on display. The *display* of Darcy's wealth is what the reader sees as changing Elizabeth's mind; the visual confirmation of Darcy's wealth is highlighted as the driving force behind Elizabeth's re-reading of Darcy, rather than the change in Darcy's attitude while at Pemberley. In this way, the films capitalize on this fetishism of wealth and in turn change Elizabeth into a less feminist character by Enlightenment standards. Because she (and the viewer) are

distracted by the wealth of Pemberley, the rational re-evaluation of Darcy based on his actions is lessened in proportion to the good opinion lent to him by his estate. The film's promotion of the romance plot and displays of wealth downplay the rationality of its heroine, and in this way they show themselves to be less feminist than critics have suggested.

Similarly, the contention that Austen critiques the patriarchal order and therefore is a feminist, along with the idea that her laughter is what delineates this feminist tendency, does not necessarily hold up in the face of inspectional elements of the novels. As stated above, all of Austen's heroines capitulate to the patriarchal model as the "happy ending" they have been looking for, and thereby promote the prevailing social order. Nowhere could this be more evident than in the character of Emma. According to critic William Galperin, Emma hides behind the patriarchal order because of the security it gives her; instead of pitying those in difficult situations, like Miss Bates, Jane Fairfax, and even Mrs. Elton, she "retreats into class-based discrimination that has been cleansed of any connection" to the "sad stories" she wishes to ignore (Galperin 200). This retreat into the patriarchal system which denies women many opportunities shows that not all of Austen's heroines are the feminist prototypes that critics like Mellor or Bilger would have them be.

Austen's laughter also fails in the face of the patriarchal system. On the whole, very few of her heroines laugh about the marriage plot that will be the means of securing their happiness and comfort; instead, this

marriage plot is seen as the “happy ending” every heroine is looking for. Moreover, those who *do* represent alternatives to the patriarchal order, notably Lydia Bennet, Marianne Dashwood and her romantic sentiments, and Miss Bates in Emma, are all ridiculed and criticized for their departure from the “norm.” In each case, the heroine of the story (Elizabeth, Elinor, and Emma respectively) join in on this critique, thereby confusing Austen’s feminist message. The critique of women like Lydia Bennet and her revolt against the dominant social patterns performs a regulatory function. As Galperin argues, these deviants highlight the “normal” relationships of Elizabeth and Darcy (Galperin 132). That is, they show “what’s at stake” should the dominant social order fail -- namely, the spinsterhood of women like Emma or Jane Bennet, and the disastrous choices of less moral women like Lydia Bennet and Marianne Dashwood (Galperin 133). On the other hand, the heroines who follow the hegemonic social order are “rewarded” with secure marriages, even if these marriages contain women like Elizabeth Bennet in structured, controlling, and limited positions (Galperin 128). No matter if these marriages constrain their lives, their “reward” outweighs the alternatives, and each of Austen’s heroines, and especially Elizabeth Bennet, consider the evaluation of worth by their future husbands to be their “crowning achievement;” being found worthy of a man is the high point of their lives (Galperin 136). Therefore, while there is convincing evidence of Austen’s feminist

tendencies, these tendencies break down into mere suggestions upon closer inspection.

The feminist tendencies that critics have argued to be evident in Austen's work have been picked up in the numerous film adaptations of them produced in the past twenty years; however, these feminist tendencies, like so many other aspects of her novels, have been changed and "updated" to fit the contemporary social climate, and these changes have affected Austen's feminist message and have, on the whole, upheld even fewer feminist tendencies than her novels. While in many adaptations the heroines themselves are updated in order to coincide with a modern viewer's perception of the ideal woman, other aspects, specifically plot and genre, align more closely with the "chick flick," romance-novel films which do little to promote Austen's feminism. By adopting the "chick flick" genre, the following adaptations in effect mute whatever feminist updating has occurred to the heroine; her modern feminism is drowned by the overwhelming tropes of the "chick flick." The focus on fantasy (male or female), the romantic plotline, the fetishizing of visuals, and the emphasis on the "happy ending" demote the feminist changes in these adaptations, making them less feminist than critics would have them be. For the purposes of this thesis, I will take feminism to mean something like the promotion of female intellectual and moral equality without attempting to masculinize femininity or fetishize masculinity. In other words, feminism means women's equality can be promoted without

demoting men to objects to be looked at and fetishized (much like women have been objects of consumption by heterosexual men, as mentioned previously), and women do not have to act like men in order to be perceived as their equals.

Through changes made to genre, the 1995 BBC/A&E mini-series *Pride and Prejudice* reveals itself to be less feminist than critics like Voiret and Hopkins have argued. The promotion of the romantic relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy over Elizabeth's moral and intellectual development, as well as over her relationship with other women (including her sister Jane), changes the genre of Austen's novel from one focused on a dynamic character's growth to a Hollywood style "chick flick." The promotion of the romance story and promoting Pride and Prejudice as the "sexiest story ever told" diminishes Austen's argument for women as "rational creatures" (both on screen and in the audience), and does nothing to promote women as the moral and intellectual equals to men. The romantic focus likewise stresses the *physical* aspect of Elizabeth's and Darcy's relationship; much of their dialogue is overlaid by those smoldering glances and mysterious half glances of the first half, giving Darcy the air of mystery that Hollywood believes is so sexy to women audiences. The costuming also heightens the physical over the mental; no longer does the audience really care what the characters are saying, as long as the sexy Darcy and the wonder-bra-ed Elizabeth get together in the end. This focus on the romantic and the

physical also diminishes the reality of this Austen adaptation. By becoming more of a “chick flick,” *Pride and Prejudice* forgoes the verisimilitude Austen was known for in her day. Therefore, by “privileging the female gaze,” this mini-series in effect dismantles any feminist tendency in the novel – or, at the very least, anachronizes it -- by promoting the physical, romantic aspect of the storyline over the moral, intellectual thread that was Austen’s focus in the novel.

A similar muting of feminist tropes is also evident in the 1999 film adaptation of Mansfield Park. While Rozema’s *Mansfield Park* is definitely the most modernly feminist film adaptation, the most prominent point in which *Mansfield Park* is unfeminist is in the change to Fanny herself. As she becomes more attractive, physically active, and witty in the film, she becomes more like the modern man’s “fantasy.” Proclaimed as “insipid” in her own day, Fanny Price *needed* to be changed in order for *Mansfield Park* to become a success, but in changing the main character Rozema not only attempted to produce a modern version of a “female fantasy,” but also succeeded in creating a Fanny modern *men* could appreciate as well. By creating a Fanny that captures the “male fantasy” in her physical attractiveness and lively manner, Rozema’s version of Mansfield Park could also be considered an unfeminist adaptation. The film even introduces homoerotic scenes between Fanny and Mary that are arguably targeted more for a heterosexual male gaze and for a homosexual female gaze.

Some similar themes run through the 1995 film production *Sense and Sensibility*. Like the previous films discussed, various elements have been highlighted while others have been demoted in order to update Austen's world to align more closely with our own. The most pronounced update is the change in the sororal dynamic between Elinor and Marianne. Emma Thompson, the writer of the screenplay, wished to keep the focus on the sororal bond, claiming she did not want it to "seem like a movie about a couple of women waiting around for men" (Gay 92). While this focus is kept in the film, Rebecca Dickson argues that Elinor's temperance and restraint appear more akin to repression and it is Marianne's passion which attracts the viewer's approval (Dickson 50). Elinor is no longer the "whole" woman Austen designed her to be; instead, it is Elinor who must "come to terms" with her emotions, and Marianne, in this respect, becomes her instructor (Dickson 51). The change in the sororal dynamic is shown by the acceptance Marianne receives, from characters within the film and from the audience. Colonel Brandon claims he likes Marianne's "unspoilt" nature, and throughout the film Marianne is badgering Elinor to express her feelings, something the audience wishes for as well (Dickson 52). In contrast to the novel, Elinor appears to be the one in need of education, changing Austen's message that temperance and common sense are needed in greater proportion to sensibility in order to survive successfully in the world of patriarchy and achieve a "happy ending." In the film adaptation, the audience agrees with Colonel Brandon when he

praises Marianne's "unspoilt nature," and views the elder, comparatively somber Elinor as the one that needs change in order to obtain her "reward." The promotion of the romantic over the rational undermines Austen's meritocracy; rather than siding with the "whole" woman who already deserves to be "rewarded," the audience sides with the highly romantic Marianne in the hopes of a highly unrealistic "chick flick happy ending."

In order to focus on the romantic relationships, *Sense and Sensibility* removes many of the social and gender critiques that feminist critics like Johnson argue is a dominant facet of Austen's feminism. Like *Pride and Prejudice*, the romantic aspects of the novel are highlighted in order to create the "female fantasy" necessary for the film to succeed and this "female fantasy" is *not* a modernly feminist one. In fact, the "female fantasy" creates a sense of nostalgia for the Regency era, playing into the hands of the heritage industry. Consequently, unfeminist elements like the creation of the "female fantasy" of the Regency era are in reality imports from the heritage industry, rather than a contradiction of the feminism found in Austen's novels. Despite the fact that *Sense and Sensibility* to some extent updates Austen's feminism through the characterization of her heroines, it adapts the plot to the "chick flick" genre. The "chick flick" and romance genre tend to be, on the whole, not very feminist, i.e. they do little to promote women's equality to men and therefore mute the feminist potential of heroines like Elinor. They do, however, promote a certain

nostalgia for the past, creating a desire to become a “heritage tourist” and relive the Regency era. *Sense and Sensibility*’s change of the sororal dynamic in an attempt to promote the more emotive, affective, and passionate “fantasy” desired by contemporary female audiences makes it a less feminist adaptation than critics and Emma Thompson alike have argued.

Some of these unfeminist tendencies are not, however, present in Austen’s novels. Instead, they have been imported into the film adaptations from the heritage industry, including a sense of nostalgia and the fetishism of fashion and interior design. While the films attempt to subvert these unfeminist trends by updating central heroines to become more modernly feminist, the sense of nostalgia and fetishism of each film ultimately undercut this effort.

The sense of nostalgia that has been discussed as a major influence of the heritage industry, and one of the main advertising schemes it uses to encourage “heritage tourists,” is also present in the film adaptations previously analyzed. In all three of these films, a sense of nostalgia is promoted regardless of the reality of the Regency era. No matter that in this “key historical moment” women had very few rights or opportunities for social mobility, this was the “Good Old Days.” In each of the films, the heroine overcomes her societal obstacles and achieves her “reward.” Nowhere is the alternative (spinsterhood, unhappy marriages, etc.) hinted at as a realistic option for these heroines. While minor characters are

described as living in spinsterhood or as part of an unhappy marriage, for each of the heroines this is never really a choice, and the audience knows that each heroine will end happily married. For example, Elizabeth jokes about becoming a spinster and about her parent's unhappy marriage in the 1995 mini-series, but neither she nor the audience truly believes she will end in either situation. Moreover, Elizabeth's ideal marriage to Darcy is a contrast to the reality of the times, in which many women *did* end as spinsters or in unhappy marriages. Darcy's grudging good manners, the picturesque beauty of regional balls, as shown in *Sense and Sensibility* when Marianne and Willoughby meet after his long absence, the witticisms of the heroines like Elizabeth and Fanny, and the "happy endings" of every heroine are also prime examples of the nostalgia for the "Good Old Days" the heritage industry seeks to promote through its tours, brochures, and advertisements. The viewers of Austen film adaptations forget the social and cultural reality of the Regency era, particularly for women, and are instead whisked away by the rosy picture these adaptations present. The viewer is never confronted with the reality of the lower classes of Regency society, the social "norms" of the era, while laughed at, never propose a significant deterrent or threat to the heroine, and the "happy ending" of each promotes an unrealistic picture of the Regency era when marriage was as much an economic contract as a social one. Because both the novels and the film adaptations of them largely ignore wider social issues and instead promote "happy endings," they

create a sense of nostalgia that back then everything was genteel and picturesque and worked out well in the end. In these film adaptations, it truly is the “Good Old Days” for all involved.

Similarly, the film adaptations discussed previously showcase various aspects of the Regency era in a fetishized way. The use of fashion, interior spaces, and even the landscapes filmed in each of these adaptations not only adds to the nostalgic effect, but also endorses a desire to travel back to the “Good Old Days.” This desire to live in the past is another emotion the heritage industry seeks to promote to increase its revenue. By fetishizing the fashion of the Regency era, these films engender the desire to live vicariously in the past in their audiences. Who wouldn’t want to live in the Regency era if everyone looked like Colin Firth or Kiera Knightley? The use of suggestive costuming and good looking actors erroneously promotes the idea that in the Regency era, not only did everything work out well in the end, but everything and everyone was gorgeous as well. As Voiret has stated, the choice of costuming was modeled on the more flamboyant, suggestive clothing of the time, allowing the films to become “sexier” than the social strictures of the Regency era would usually allow. Because the film adaptations seek to create a sexier version of the Regency era, they in effect fetishize such visuals; the audience believes this type of costuming to be authentic for the era, and therefore it heightens the desire to travel back to the Regency era.

Furthermore, the fetishizing of interior spaces in these adaptations promotes the heritage industry's insistence on the desirability of revisiting and living vicariously through the past. With picturesque views of Pemberley in both film versions of *Pride and Prejudice*, along with gorgeous shots of its interior, these shots are meant to capture the viewers' imaginations and endorse a view of the Regency era's opulence and wealth as an object to be desired and consumed; every viewer (Elizabeth included) of Pemberley knew Elizabeth had lost something significant by rejecting Darcy. The interior shots of Pemberley in both film renditions only emphasize such a fetish; Pemberley inside and out has become the model "manor house," the veritable poster-child for Regency wealth and class, which modern viewers long for as a bygone "Golden" era. The audiences of these films wanted to be at Pemberley, and wished to inhabit the actual place that engendered such a fetishism of a location, even though the shots of the interior and exterior of Pemberley were combined from two different country estates. The desire to visit actual places, largely created by picturesque views like the ones used in Austen adaptations, has led to the creation of heritage tours visiting movie locations rather than the ones Austen may have actually visited. As a result, the use of picturesque views of interior spaces has become a fetish among Austen adaptation viewers, creating a desire to visit the "real places" the heritage industry insists is achievable for "heritage tourists."

The views of the surrounding English countryside only heighten this fetishism of the picturesque as something desirable and as the epitome of English class. In *Pride and Prejudice* (both the mini-series and the 2005 feature film) and in *Sense and Sensibility* the picturesque countryside is an element of desire; it's where many romantic scenes occur, like Marianne's rescue by Willoughby and Elizabeth's willful freedom when on tour with her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner, as well as capturing a sense of the peaceful tranquility and inherent beauty of the "Good Old Days." These picturesque views of landscape, like those of interior spaces, have been commodified by the film and the heritage industry; both capitalize on the beauty of its interior and exterior shots and the fetishism it creates in order to become more financially successful. In this way, the fetishism created by casting, costuming, interior and exterior spaces plays directly into the hands of the heritage industry, better promotional material cannot be found. Because these elements of the films are imports from the heritage industry, they do nothing to promote Austen's feminist message. However, because they form a major part of each adaptation (between the attention given by the audience to casting, costuming and the overwhelming beauty of the sets and scenery, there is little attention left to give to the actual *plot*), the nostalgia and fetishism created by these heritage industry imports mutes the feminist tendencies critics have argued appear in Austen film adaptations.

As the recent film adaptations show, many aspects of Austen's feminism have been taken up and updated to fit more contemporary ideals. However, some changes embraced by these films changes or mutes Austen's feminist message, making the recent adaptations, on the whole, less feminist than they have been argued to be by critics, producers and directors alike. Furthermore, some unfeminist tendencies are, in fact, heritage industry imports, which do more to promote a sense of nostalgia and fetishism of the past than to promote any feminist message. The changes made to each of the film renditions discussed above mute the feminist tendencies of Austen's novels in order to promote a Hollywood ideal, replete with sexualized characters and a complete dominance of the marriage/romantic plotline. In fact, the heritage industry's insistence on the romance of the Regency era as shown through films is partly responsible for upping the ante on the romance plots in Austen novels themselves. The social and gender critique argued to be one of Austen's most salient feminist tendencies is pushed to the side in these film renditions in favor of romance and nostalgia, although there are some, notably Rozema's *Mansfield Park*, that do more justice to modern feminist ideas than others. In the next section I will explore if the trends of the heritage industry's insistence on nostalgic "real places" and of feminism's insistence on the equality of women reproduce themselves in genres other than film – namely, in fan fiction.

## Chapter 4: Fan Fiction and the Heritage Industry

According to Henry Jenkins, fan fiction, in its purest sense, is writing which takes up portions of an original text that the writer feels have been “misused” in one way or another (a poorly adapted film version and sequels/prequels are popular incentives) (Fans, Bloggers and Gamers 41). Many fan fiction productions come in the form of zines, online sites and blogs like LiveJournal and others (Fans, Bloggers and Gamers 39). In recent years the fan fiction industry has become semi-institutionalized, with fan fiction authors sometimes publishing their work through well-known publishing houses like Ballantine Books, HarperCollins, and Penguin. These fan fictions that have been taken up, published and advertised by legitimate publishing houses (as opposed to the kinds of underground, not-for-profit ventures seen, for example, in many *Star Trek* fan fictions) will be the focus of this chapter. Though published as commercial products and even advertised as mainstream novels, these texts nevertheless follow many conventions of less institutionalized fan fiction. Like most fan fiction, the novels studied in this chapter – Alexandra Potter’s Me and Mr. Darcy, and Pamela Aidan’s Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy – are written by women, are largely romances, focus mainly on character and character relationships, and seek to rectify, modernize or clarify some aspect of the original text. Drawing upon last chapter’s discussion of how critics interpret the gender politics of Austen’s novels, I will argue that the conservatism of the heritage industry

underwrites Austen fan fiction's unfeminist tendencies or, at the very least, compromises its potential feminism. Because critics like Voiret, Mellor, and Looser differ in their definitions of feminism, it is similarly difficult to 'pin down' fan fictions like Me and Mr. Darcy or the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy as feminist or unfeminist. Each of these critics would argue that Austen fan fiction should be considered feminist for widely divergent reasons. I, on the other hand, argue that Austen fan fiction should *not* be considered feminist because it often lacks major tenets of what Voiret, Mellor, and Looser would argue to be feminist tendencies while also incorporating heritage industry influences *not* included in these critics' definitions of feminism. Here, I take feminism to mean the equality of women to men in intellectual capacity, logical reasoning and judgment without abnegating their stance as 'women' (in other words, women don't have to act like men in order to be viewed as equal to them). For the purposes of this thesis I will focus on the argued feminist tendencies of creating rational heroines and "catering to the female gaze," as Martine Voiret puts it, which usually re-creates Mr. Darcy as a female fantasy and/or "New Man."

Austen fan fictions promote the romantic plotline of her novels over everything else, just as Austen film adaptations do. Here, I take 'romance' to mean a storyline which focuses primarily on the emotional relationship that develops between two (or more, in the case of love triangles) characters. Romance conventions, like a happy ending and

obstacles like unrequited love or social barriers, and romance rhetoric, which standardizes these conventions into stereotypical tropes of a romance film or novel through advertising (for example, promoting Pride and Prejudice as “simply the sexiest story ever told”), inform the plot structure of Me and Mr. Darcy (Sue Birthwistle, qtd. in Hopkins 112). In this fan fiction, a twenty-nine year old woman, Emily Albright, spontaneously attends a heritage tour of “Austen country” in order to escape her hectic New York City life and disastrous love life, and in the process she finds her own Mr. Darcy. Other basic romance conventions appear in the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy, which retells the story of Pride and Prejudice from Darcy’s perspective. These fan fiction novels indulge the desires created by the heritage industry’s own use of romance conventions, including its emphasis on picturesque settings and landscapes, on generating nostalgia and/or fetishism for the material culture of the past, and on delivering a sense of escape from the modern world.

Me and Mr. Darcy makes numerous references to picturesque views throughout the novel. From the outset, Emily characterizes Britain as a romantic, “magical” place because of its idyllic countryside (197). She exclaims with glee that in Britain, “everything is in miniature, with skinny winding roads, blind corners...the patchwork of the fields, and church spires. It’s all so pretty” and “there’s not a Hummer or a McDonald’s, or even a Starbucks in sight” (138, 46). Her depiction of the

English countryside is almost identical to the language used in many heritage tour brochures. Take, for example, Hidden Britain Tour's description of "Austen country":

"Step out of the busy world for a time, and discover some of the secrets of the north Hampshire landscape. Explore with friends, family, or colleagues England's special countryside. Experience the colours and landscape at all times of the year, visit special places seldom seen, travel the roads less traveled and take a guided tour away from the pace of business life. The Hidden Hampshire Country Tour will take you on a journey that will leave you with fond memories and a greater understanding of this beautiful part of England." (<http://www.hiddenbritaintours.co.uk/hampsTour.html>).

In a sense, the heritage tourist industry should look no further than Emily Albright for their next promotional salesperson. Emily's depictions of England reflect and bolster the same sentiments the heritage industry seeks to promote in its visitors. Emily's enrapture with picturesque views where "everything reeks of history" engender a romantic sentiment in Emily that permeates the novel (47). To Emily, *everything* is beautiful and romantic specifically because it is picturesque, part of the "Good Old Days," and because she is given the opportunity to live in the past. Once the premise of a "magical" English countryside has been set up with her picturesque descriptions, the subsequent interactions in which she dates Mr. Darcy, complete with moonlit horseback rides and intimate picnics, take neither the characters nor the reader by surprise. In this way, the picturesque landscapes Emily describes as "magical" set the stage for the saccharinely romantic, fantastic plot that follows.

Me and Mr. Darcy also creates a sense of nostalgia and a fetishism for the past by highlighting the romantic storyline. The picturesque views already described go a long way to stimulate Emily's already potent nostalgia for a "peaceful, contemplative world of writing letters with feather quills.... and playing the harpsichord after dinner," forgetting the "noise, bustle, and frantic pace of modern-day life" (66). But nostalgia is not the only force at work here. Emily's desire to inhabit the places Jane Austen lived -- to live through history vicariously by physically being "where history happened" -- is periodically on display in the novel (93). Most notably, while in Chawton manor, she exclaims "Gosh, it's so amazing to think that Jane Austen once walked around this house, and on these very floorboards. She probably stood on this very spot" (67). Not only is this encounter with Jane Austen's material possessions an acting out of Emily's nostalgia for the "Good Old Days," it is also evidence that she fetishizes the past and Jane Austen herself. Emily is using specific material objects, like Jane Austen's writing desk or her home, as metonymic representations of Jane Austen herself: she even revels in "feeling a bond with the author" (70). By being close to physical objects associated with Austen, Emily feels she is in authentic communication with her.

The heritage industry seeks to tap into just such a desire. Not only does the industry look to capitalize on people's longing to live in the "Good Old Days" as described in Chapters 1 and 2, it also seeks to profit

from Emily's wish to be in authentic communication with an admired figure through a connection to physical objects associated with that person. Thus, brochures like HiddenBritain, which invite tourists to "Follow in her footsteps, And walk where she has walked, Stand where she must have stood... Touch what she must have touched," confirm that the desire to connect to someone in the past through metonymy is as outright as nostalgia for many heritage tourists (<http://www.hiddenbritaintours.co.uk/brochures/janeausten.pdf>). The fetishizing of the past, as seen in Me and Mr. Darcy, promotes the romantic storyline in that it, like the picturesque views, gives an overriding sentimental feeling to the novel. It comes as no surprise, then, that as Emily is sitting at Jane Austen's writing desk she has her first encounter with the *real* Mr. Darcy. Moreover, her future encounters with Mr. Darcy only occur at "important Jane Austen sites" (93). Because Emily's character as a 'hopeless romantic' is compounded by her relish in picturesque views *and* her desire to connect with a distant past and person, the romantic plotline of the rest of the novel comes as a matter of course. The unrealistic nature of dating the *real* Mr. Darcy is somehow plausible to Emily in the "magical" world of "Austen country," where it's possible to feel as though "the twenty-first century seems to have slipped away" (67). In addition, there is never a full explanation of her encounters with Mr. Darcy. At the end of the novel Emily claims: "Part of me actually wants to believe it's true... I really did get to date Mr. Darcy" (341). Both

Emily and the reader are supposed to take it at face value that, in “Austen country,” dating the *real* Mr. Darcy is somehow possible. Emily’s romantic nature, as shown through her relish in picturesque views and her nostalgic and fetishistic desires, gives the plotline of Me and Mr. Darcy a decidedly romantic emphasis.

Complicating this reading is the fact that Me and Mr. Darcy develops a parallel plotline to Pride and Prejudice in the characters of Emily Albright and Spike, a surly journalist along on the heritage tour interviewing its various members. Their relationship blatantly parallels Elizabeth and Darcy’s in Pride and Prejudice and includes all the major highlights of that story, from their negative first impressions of one another, in which Emily characterizes Spike as “an asshole” (44), to the dance in which Emily attempts to discover the true character of Spike and ends in argument (209), to the eventual happy ending in which Emily realizes Spike is her “modern day Mr. Darcy” (336). The ending is complete with a last minute appearance at Spike’s office where Emily realizes her faults, Spike saccharinely forgives her, and they live happily ever after. The happy ending on display here is just what the ‘hopeless romantic’ Emily (and, presumably, the reader who has made it this far) is looking for. It also follows the sentimental feel of the novel; from beginning to end, romance is highlighted, whether it be in the fantasy (or quasi-reality) of dating Mr. Darcy, or the ‘true life’ parallel of her relationship to Spike, or the dramatic happy ending. The promotion of the

romantic aspects of novels like Me and Mr. Darcy springs from similar conventions in the heritage industry, which have sought to “modernize” historical eras by increasing a film’s sex appeal through costuming and casting and engendering strong nostalgic desires for bygone eras in its audience. The romance rhetoric of the heritage industry frames the plot trajectory of this fan fiction by advertising the picturesque and in the characterization of Emily Albright as a ‘hopeless romantic’ in need of a vacation from the present.

While the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy is quite different in terms of plot from Me and Mr. Darcy, it likewise picks up certain romance conventions and employs them throughout the three novels. Most blatant is the revamping of Darcy into a “New Man.” Because the trilogy is told from Darcy’s perspective, the reader sees much more of his inner struggles and his lengthy path towards Elizabeth. For example, Darcy’s vicious remarks about Wickham are taken up by Aidan in more depth than in Austen’s original. He claims: “the truth was that [his] hot resentment of the man had been re-animated because Wickham seemed to be intimately involved in Elizabeth Bennet’s poor opinion of him” (Duty and Desire 15). Similar explanations of Darcy’s actions and inner turmoil highlight his newly given sensitive nature; “something inside him clenched, and a sudden remembrance of lavender and sun-kissed curls sent shards of longing to pierce and shred what was left of his equanimity” when his younger sister Georgiana asks about his time in Hertfordshire (Duty and

Desire 32). When pushed further, Darcy drifts into a reverie about Elizabeth's "beautiful eyes" looking at him "in the way he's imagined" as he touches her bookmark of embroidery threads, which he keeps as a talisman for the majority of the trilogy (Duty and Desire 69). This talisman serves as a touchstone of "goodness and good sense" when Darcy needs it most; notably, when he is implicated in a disastrous "house party" of old friends, Darcy hangs on to these threads as a moral compass to guide him (Duty and Desire 266). By giving Darcy room to speak, Aidan in effect re-imagines Darcy as a more sensitive, romantic character. Like Emily Albright in Me and Mr. Darcy, the characterization of Darcy in this trilogy emphasizes the romantic thread of Austen's original novel with the increased focus on his 'softer side.'

A Gothic sequence that appears in the latter half of Duty and Desire further utilizes romance conventions similar to that which revamps Darcy as a "New Man." Aidan uses the Gothic sequence to draw attention to the romantic plotline of her trilogy and give Darcy further room to speak away from Hertfordshire and Elizabeth. While doing little to propel the original plotline of Pride and Prejudice, the sequence allows Darcy to explore his feelings for Elizabeth by comparing her to others in his social circle. One example which showcases the Gothic elements employed in this section and the emphasis placed on Darcy's "New Man" qualities is the "house party's" excursion to a mysterious, Stonehenge like structure called "the whispering Knights." On their way there, a good natured horse

race between the men gets out of hand, endangering one of the women, a chilling story of pagan rituals involving “the whispering Knights” is related, and when the party arrives a bloody bundle, at first thought to be a child (it turns out to be a small animal), is discovered at the base of the stones (Duty and Desire 148-165). Throughout this Gothic “house party,” the romantic is on display through Darcy’s conflicted state. He does not know who would make a better wife: Elizabeth or the hosts’ half sister, Lady Sylvania. At first, Darcy qualifies Lady Sylvania as a “fairy princess... one of that more traditional, fearful caste whom men do well to treat with caution” (Duty and Desire 132). He is impressed with her ready wit in mixed company, her passionate rendition of an Irish ballad, and her exotic beauty (Duty and Desire 132). After much comparison, Darcy comes to the conclusion that “Elizabeth had eclipsed the Brilliants that Society had offered him” (Duty and Desire 216). In this way, the Gothic sequence further stresses Darcy’s inner struggle towards Elizabeth by solidifying his love for her through the shortcomings of another. Even as he is drawn into a disastrous plot, Darcy is continually thinking about Elizabeth, showcasing his romantic, sensitive nature. Thus, the sequence promotes the romantic over everything else, giving Darcy qualities of a “New Man” similar to those given the Darcy actors in many film adaptations.

Romance conventions and romance rhetoric are not the only influences to be seen in Austen fan fiction; feminist tendencies, like those

discussed in both her novels and some film adaptations of them, are also apparent. To varying degrees, the different feminist tendencies which critics like Martine Voiret, Ann Mellor and Devoney Looser have argued appear in Austen's texts and inform film adaptations of her works could be argued to appear in Austen fan fiction as well. According to Voiret, catering to a romance-consuming, heterosexual female audience by indulging in their desires would make Austen fan fictions feminist, whereas Mellor would argue the creation of rational heroines would be the main feminist tendency to appear in Austen fan fiction.

And Looser would cite the tendency to re-create Darcy as a "New Man" as feminist in Austen fan fiction. Upon closer inspection of these fan fictions, however, the argued feminist tropes are undermined or complicated by the heritage industry's conservative influence.

In the case of Me and Mr. Darcy, the clearest example of what literary critics like Voiret have cited as feminism appears in the characterization of Darcy as the ideal man. When asked to describe Darcy, members of the heritage tour exclaim he is "Sex on a stick!" and Emily claims he is the perfect man: "devastatingly handsome, mysterious, smoldering, and a total romantic" (34, 4). She goes so far as to say Darcy was her "first love" and had "set the bar for all [her] future boyfriends" (4). Her devotion to the ideal of Darcy is based on his opposition to "modern men:" "the men in books," she says, were "chivalrous, devoted, and honorable. And strode across fields in breeches and white shirts

clinging to their chests” (11). By showcasing Darcy as the “perfect man,” critics like Voiret would argue that Me and Mr. Darcy caters specifically to a romance-consuming, heterosexual female audience, and in doing so are performing a feminist function.

The fantasy of dating the *real* Mr. Darcy is likewise pure female fantasy. Emily’s relationship with Mr. Darcy is the fruition of many fantasies described by other members of the tour; she lives the fantasy many only dream of. In the end, however, Emily relinquishes this fantasy and opts for the “modern day Mr. Darcy” in Spike. It is only through these fantastic encounters, however, that Emily realizes the benefits of dating a “modern day Mr. Darcy” like Spike. Without falling *out* of love with the nostalgic ideal of Mr. Darcy, Emily would never have relinquished her hold on the fantasy of Mr. Darcy and be able to fall *in* love with Spike. Thus, by exploring and analyzing a female fantasy and paralleling it to a ‘real life’ romance involving a “modern man,” Me and Mr. Darcy caters to the romance-consuming, heterosexual female audience by presenting the audience with a beloved female fantasy and its contemporary counterpart.

Having Emily opt for a modern version of Mr. Darcy emphasizes a modernization of Austen’s original text: the parallel between Elizabeth Bennet and Emily comes full circle in that both find their *contemporary* “perfect man.” In this way, Me and Mr. Darcy updates the female fantasy of Mr. Darcy by giving its audience a modern parallel, in effect telling its audience that there are *modern* versions of Mr. Darcy out there for the

taking if the romance-consuming, heterosexual female is willing to search for him. By offering up Spike as a “modern day Mr. Darcy,” Potter offers a modern conceptualization of Mr. Darcy that would be (theoretically) within the readers’ grasps, making Spike a similarly attractive, yet attainable, female fantasy. Thus, Me and Mr. Darcy could be considered feminist by Voiret’s standards because it caters to the romance-consuming, heterosexual female’s desires.

Emily Albright’s characterization could also be considered feminist by critics like Mellor; but on closer inspection this reading is complicated by her ‘hopeless romantic’ status. Emily embodies many elements of Elizabeth Bennet; for instance, she is quick to form judgments based on first impressions, labeling Spike as “an asshole” in the beginning chapters and by characterizing Rose Bierman as “intimidating,” “flamboyant,” and “still very much acting” (although she is retired from stage performing) (57-58) and by describing Maeve as being “scared of her own voice” (59). Also, like Elizabeth, Emily’s first impressions turn out to be dead wrong. Spike turns out to be her “modern day Mr. Darcy,” Rose is less confident than she presents herself, and Maeve has an inner strength unknown to others. Emily learns on her tour, much as Elizabeth does in the course of Pride and Prejudice, that first impressions are often misleading. In this way, Potter seeks to create a parallel between Elizabeth Bennet and Emily Albright through their similar thought patterns. However, whereas Elizabeth’s rationality, according to critics like Mellor,

makes her a feminist character, Emily does not embody the same feminism, if indeed she is feminist at all. Emily's erroneous characterizations are more aligned with the 'hopeless romantic' tendency to jump to conclusions based on immediate feelings than with Elizabeth Bennet's capacity to reform previous judgments based on further information, the positive capacity that critics like Mellor take to be central to the original novel's feminism. Thus, Me and Mr. Darcy does not live up to Mellor's (nor my) interpretation of feminism as an emphasis on female intellectual equality, and instead aligns more closely with Voiret's definition of feminism by catering to a specific audience's desires.

The feminist tendencies of the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy show up mainly in Darcy's re-creation as a "New Man." Darcy's tendencies to show his sensitive, romantic side characterize him not only as a "New Man," but also as a female fantasy for modern readers. The feminist tendencies in this trilogy rely not on Darcy's sex appeal – that is, not on the texts' appeals directly to the sexual desires of its female readers – so much as on giving Darcy room to speak. The trilogy exaggerates his 'softer side' and romantic nature in comparison to Austen's original text, making Darcy a "New Man." In this case, Darcy becomes what modern, heterosexual women (presumably) want in their own lives; a combination of the "Sex on a stick!" Darcy of Me and Mr. Darcy with a 'softer side' devoted to finding his soul-mate. In this trilogy Darcy contains elements of the 'hopeless romantic' himself, further endorsing the female fantasy.

When discussing his prospects of marriage with his younger sister, Darcy claims “I have seen [love] in its most sublime form in our parents” and insinuates that nothing less will do for himself (Duty and Desire 68). Giving him room to speak and display his struggles is, according to literary critics like Devoney Looser, evidence of feminist tendencies in that the “New Man” is the modern woman’s ideal, and by morphing a much beloved character into a modern female fantasy, the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy is, like Me and Mr. Darcy, catering to a specifically romance-consuming, heterosexual female gaze. Thus, according to critics like Voiret and Looser, re-imagining Darcy as a “New Man” makes the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy feminist in that it focuses on modern women’s desires. Critics like Mellor, on the other hand, would disagree, claiming that by highlighting Darcy’s ‘softer side,’ the trilogy in effect undermines the feminist tendency to value and be attracted to a man whose good judgment trumps affective impulses. Because Darcy capitulates to his ‘hopeless romantic’ side, the reader is attracted to his emotive responses rather than his ability to make logical decisions based on facts.

Unlike the characterization of Darcy as a “New Man,” the characterization of the two major female characters, Elizabeth Bennet and Lady Sylvania, would be considered feminist by critics like Mellor. Both characters are portrayed as having superior qualities which are not only appealing to Darcy, through whose lens the reader sees both women, but

also appealing to the modern reader. Elizabeth is characterized as full of “goodness and good sense,” and as “belong[ing] within any group of women in [Darcy’s] acquaintance,” as well as being “strong-minded” hinting at her incisive wit (Duty and Desire 52-53). Darcy gives Elizabeth precisely the characteristics of the Elizabeth of Pride and Prejudice that many modern women would still take to be appealing and feminist. Her characterization as a “woman of ‘uncommon good sense, all wrapped up in as neat a little package as could be desired’” contains the rationality and wit many critics like Mellor suggest is evidence of feminism in Austen’s original work (Duty and Desire 52). In this trilogy, the same tendencies are attributed to Elizabeth in such a way that many modern readers would see her as a modern model of the ‘ideal woman.’

Lady Sylvanie, on the other hand, represents elements of feminism more closely aligned with a modern conception of feminism. Whereas Elizabeth’s feminism relies on her “goodness and good sense,” Lady Sylvanie’s relies on her independent spirit and desire to achieve her own goals regardless of social norms. Her provocative language marks her as more progressive than any other woman of the “house party” Darcy attends (Duty and Desire 175). When discussing the societal norms, she accepts Darcy’s advice to “always move to [her] advantage” as completely logical (Duty and Desire 184). Moreover, she actively pursues Darcy as a prospective husband; she places herself near Darcy so as to be the natural choice as a dinner companion (176), flirts with him when discussing music

and societal norms (184), and goes so far as to attempt to seduce him with a “love potion” (209). Lady Sylvania is comfortable portraying herself as equal to men in comportment and speech, and she is quite confident in her abilities to get what she desires. With this in mind, Lady Sylvania becomes an example of a progressive, modern feminism shown in many Austen film adaptations; like the confident Fanny Price of *Mansfield Park* (1999) or the precocious Margaret Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), Lady Sylvania represents a more modern notion of feminism where women view themselves as absolute equals to men.

With these two opposed visions of feminism, Darcy’s decision to marry Elizabeth stresses his view of ‘proper feminism.’ Darcy’s choice of Elizabeth highlights his view that a feminism based on “goodness and good sense” is more attractive than that which seeks to “move to [its] advantage.” Lady Sylvania’s brand of feminism may in fact be interpreted as unfeminist in that her insistence on social promotion through the marriage market contrasts with Fanny Price or Margaret Dashwood’s wish for equality beyond or in spite of the marriage market. In reality, Lady Sylvania is a ‘social climber,’ looking for the best way to promote her own designs regardless of her compatibility with her (prospective) husband. Elizabeth, on the other hand, maintains all the feminist qualities of the Elizabeth of Pride and Prejudice without needing to consciously “move to [her] advantage.” When Darcy rejects Lady Sylvania, and by extension her brand of feminism, he emphasizes the benefits of Elizabeth’s feminism,

which, in comparison to Lady Sylvania's (arguably) more modern feminist sensibilities, seems anachronistic. By choosing this anachronistic brand of feminism, Darcy creates a sense of nostalgia by emphasizing the attractiveness of "goodness and good sense" over confidence and "moving to [one's] advantage" as part of the "Good Old Days." Thus, Darcy's choice of Elizabeth over Lady Sylvania promotes a sense of nostalgia for an earlier brand of feminism that is no longer feminist.

Although critics like Mellor, Voiret and Looser might all argue that Austen fan fictions like Me and Mr. Darcy and the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy contain different feminist tendencies, and should therefore be considered feminist for similarly differing reasons, on the whole they should be considered unfeminist texts. While each of these critics would claim that their own definition of feminism can be seen in Austen fan fiction, upon closer inspection, each of the tropes they cite as feminist become complicated and even negated. The unfeminist message which is ultimately delivered by Austen fan fictions like Me and Mr. Darcy and the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy can in large part be attributed to the conservative influence of the heritage industry.

I want to suggest that it is the conservative influence of the heritage industry that interferes with the potential feminism of Me and Mr. Darcy, ultimately undermining it almost entirely. To see this requires reexamining the characterization of Emily herself. Although literary critics like Voiret might argue that Emily, because she embodies the

heterosexual, romance-consuming female gaze should be considered feminist, upon closer inspection her characterization promotes an unfeminist agenda. Emily is characterized as a ‘hopeless romantic,’ carried away by her desire to live in the past and date the *real* Mr. Darcy. She idolizes Darcy as the epitome of a chivalrous era long gone by (4). As the novel progresses and Emily begins to date *real* Mr. Darcy, the ability for the reader to relate to Emily is lost. Although Emily does live out the female fantasy of many women (and, assumedly, the readers of this fan fiction), the fact that Emily is taken in by her own fantasy to the point of hallucinating (the only logical explanation for her encounters) creates an *irrational* character. Because she is willing to give in to the “magic” of Hampshire and “actually wants to believe it’s true... [she] really did get to date Mr. Darcy,” Emily is not only a ‘hopeless romantic’ but one hopeless to such an extent that she becomes irrational and illogical. She makes little effort to explain her encounters with the *real* Mr. Darcy; instead she takes her meetings with Darcy as part of her escape from her hectic modern life. And because she *wants* to live in her moments with Mr. Darcy, she acts irrationally and illogically; she believes she can escape forever into the past where men were “chivalrous, devoted, and honorable.” She goes so far as to claim that her tour guide, Miss Una J. Steane, who seems “really familiar” upon their first meeting, is a reincarnation of Jane Austen herself (36).

Such irrational actions, seemingly due to the presence of the “magic” of “Austen country,” ultimately dismantle any feminist tendencies Emily as a character could have embodied. Instead, the reader comes away with the textual counterpart to a “chick flick;” instead of being a rational character who benefits from a meritocracy, Emily benefits from a purely romantic parallel to Pride and Prejudice. Instead of working to read the world around her, Emily floats on the tide of her hallucinations, hoping they will become real. Even when she does snap back to reality as the heritage tour ends, she is still the ‘hopeless romantic,’ hoping things will work out in her favor. As she enters Spike’s workplace, she does not know what his reaction will be, and only the conventions of the romance plot determine that Spike will complete the female fantasy and forgive her and they will live happily ever after. Furthermore, Potter’s characterization of Emily as an irrational, ‘hopeless romantic’ in effect creates an unfeminist character and, by extension, an unfeminist novel. Potter offers up Emily as the model of a ‘modern woman,’ a heroine readers are intended to identify with. Since the reader is intended to identify and sympathize with the unfeminist character of Emily the entire novel, by extension, becomes unfeminist as well.

This characterization of Emily stems, one can argue, from the way that the novel’s romance conventions are filtered through the heritage industry’s appropriation of those conventions. As I said before, Emily, in addition to being the heroine of a romance novel, is also presented as an

ideal consumer for the heritage tourist industry. As with many film adaptations, Me and Mr. Darcy seeks to capitalize on the tropes that have become popular in heritage films. Because the heritage industry sought to re-create the success of the first heritage films, the major themes of films and fan fictions have come to promote a conservative, unfeminist message. In order to engender a sense of nostalgia and a desire to live vicariously through the past, the heritage industry plays up the romantic aspects of its adaptations, hoping to cash in on the “sexy” storylines of Austen novels (Hopkins 112). The heritage industry is not interested in reproducing the *reality* of past historical eras, but rather a fantasized version of that past that people will want to watch, visit, and live in. A similar tendency appears in this fan fiction because it too seeks to capitalize on the popular trends of romance conventions and catering to a female fantasy that made previous film adaptations successful. Because Potter tries to cater to a romance-consuming, heterosexual female gaze by allowing Emily to live out her fantasy and date the *real* Mr. Darcy, she in effect creates an irrational, ‘hopeless romantic’ character instead of a strong moral character based on “goodness and good sense.” Her attempt to cater to such a demographic is similar to the efforts of Austen adaptations like the BBC/A&E mini-series *Pride and Prejudice* or the 2005 Working Title film of the same name, which foregrounded romance in its advertising, claiming it was the “sexiest story ever told,” hoping to encourage a wider audience (and bigger profits) (Sue Birthwistle, qtd. in

Hopkins 112). Potter is trying to do something similar with her characterization of Emily as a ‘hopeless romantic.’ In effect, the conservatism of the heritage industry’s insistence on the romance inherent in the “Good Old Days” is captured in Potter’s characterization of Emily as a ‘hopeless romantic.’

The same is true for the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy. Its feminist tendencies in the end are not enough to secure an overall feminist message, and it is the conservative presence of the heritage industry that underwrites much of what I take to be the novel’s unfeminism. The most prominent source of this conservative message is the fact that the trilogy is told from Darcy’s perspective. In doing so, Aidan actually generates sympathy for a conservative, patriarchal reading of the Regency era. Much like the film adaptations, the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy does little to critique the patriarchal system, and instead endorses its positive features. For example, Darcy’s largesse to his cousin Richard is couched in patriarchal terms when he claims:

“[He] knew his cousin to be generous to a fault with the men...under his command, particularly those who were younger sons, as he was...Therefore, [he] unfailingly made his box available to his cousin for interests they shared...and for those they did not, the occasion wager... provided what was lacking” (13). And when he interviews his sister’s governess he displays his patriarchy as he badgers her, stating “You have succeeded where [I] had failed, and I would know how!...I am indebted to you, certainly, but I am not accustomed to obtuseness from my employees” (Duty and Desire 43-45).

His interview with Georgiana's governess is patriarchal for two reasons: first, Darcy does not attribute his sister's "wonderful change" to her own capabilities but rather to the influence of the governess, implying that Georgiana is incapable of improvement without guidance: and, second, by the fact that Darcy is skeptical of her success where he had failed, implying that a mere governess is less capable than he, a member of the landed gentry and a father-figure to Georgiana (Duty and Desire 43). Furthermore, Darcy's adherence to patriarchal norms is on display when he discusses the prospect of marrying Elizabeth, claiming "the lady and her family are so decidedly beneath our own that an alliance would be unthinkable. It would be an abasement of the Darcy name, whose honor I am forsworn to uphold in all respects" (Duty and Desire 67). He upholds this honor in the face of "predacious lad[ies]" who, in the end, are always found "less than worthy in the structure of her mind, the stricture of her conduct, or his sounding of her depths in the unpredictable sea of female charity" (Duty and Desire 125). These are but a few examples in which Darcy proclaims his adherence to patriarchal norms. Nowhere in the trilogy does Darcy relinquish his patriarchal customs, instead he reinterprets his *pride* in order to win Elizabeth, not the principles which produced that pride.

On the other hand, Darcy is also given some characteristics of a "New Man" in this trilogy which, although at times highlight his 'softer side,' also confuse and complicate Darcy as a female fantasy. The reader

sees his ill-will towards the marriage market and towards women generally without analyzing what systems could have produced such women. Instead of critiquing the patriarchal system as the catalyst for the marriage market, Darcy claims these women are the way they are because they are “less than worthy in the structure of [their] mind[s]” (Duty and Desire 125). He claims many “toasts of the season” are women who “required more admiration than one man could be expected to bestow” and are involved in flirtations which “provide a safe harbor from the marriage mart or relief from the tedious results for those who had succumbed to it” (Duty and Desire 125). Furthermore, when entering the drawing room during the “house party,” Darcy remarks “It was a pleasing sight...Veteran as he was of many a drawing room campaign, he was not inured to beauty and grace; and the females present possessed those qualities in full measure” (Duty and Desire 130). Such meditations are not the (argued) typical thoughts of “New Men” and instead highlight Darcy’s allegiance to the patriarchal system. Such thoughts reveal that Darcy’s room to speak, and the sympathy it generates for his thoughts in general, is often used towards unfeminist ends.

Moreover, the portions in which Darcy *does* reveal his ‘softer side’ usually only appear in conjunction with another character; and these revelations come across as disjointed and anachronistic. As Aidan seeks to give Darcy elements of a “New Man,” she creates a confused picture of Darcy where, on the one hand, he adheres to the patriarchal system which

demands good judgment to prevail over emotions, yet, on the other hand, he holds tender feelings for a woman he believes will never love him. Giving him such a 'hopeless romantic,' "New Man" strain along with his allegiance to patriarchal society is confusing. Furthermore, because his 'softer side' is only revealed in conjunction with another character's prodding, Darcy on his own would not reveal much of his inner struggle to the reader. Only when he tries to express his emotions aloud, as when he attempts to describe Elizabeth to Georgiana and trips over himself, does the reader get a sense of his inner turmoil (Duty and Desire 51-53). Moreover, his "New Man" tendency to dwell on the romantic aspects of Elizabeth, keeping her bookmark as a talisman and continually day-dreaming about her, creates an anachronistic confusion of the nineteenth century landed gentleman who ascribes to patriarchal norms and the twentieth century "New Man" seeking his soul-mate.

As with Me and Mr. Darcy, the heritage industry can be held partially responsible for the unfeminist encoding of the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy. In this case, as Aidan attempts to portray Darcy as a landed Regency gentleman, she ends up stressing his unfeminist tendencies while also trying to capture her largely female audience by giving him qualities of a modern "New Man." In doing so, she confuses the character of Darcy and, in the end, the reader is unsure whether to take Darcy as a "New Man" or as a member of the patriarchal landed gentry. This confusion eliminates any feminism Darcy could have embodied as a

“New Man” and instead emphasizes the unfeminist tendencies inherent in the patriarchal system. And like Emily Albright in Me and Mr. Darcy, Darcy is the main focus of intended reader sympathy, making the overall novel similarly confused and ultimately unfeminist because the reader is unable to identify Darcy clearly as either a “New Man” or a member of the patriarchal landed gentry. This is in contrast to what the heritage industry attempts to do with its various heritage products; in heritage films, tours, brochures and advertisements, the heritage industry continually plays up the romance and beauty of the “Good Old Days,” ignoring the reality. Aidan’s attempt to do what the heritage industry *claims* to do (provide an accurate portrayal of past historical moments), complicates her main character and dismantles any feminist message he could have promoted.

The evidence given above shows that overall, Austen fan fictions should be considered unfeminist texts because they, and the conservative influence of the heritage industry, eliminate, undermine or confuse the various feminist tendencies critics like Voiret, Looser or Mellor would claim appear in them. However, other critics would claim Austen fan fiction is feminist for other reasons. Henry Jenkins, an authority on fan fictions, claims that fan fictions are feminist because they focus on issues that surround contemporary women’s lives, including the desire to escape their daily lives and/or the isolation they feel as members of a patriarchal society (Textual Poachers 81). He claims that fan fictions, and the consumption of them, feminize source material by analyzing and

extrapolating on the interpersonal relationships of the characters (Textual Poachers 80). The analysis of interpersonal relationships is the basis of many fan fictions; as seen in the case of the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy, interpersonal relationships can be explored through a change in perspective, although many fan fiction prequels and sequels also explore similar subjects.

Jenkins also claims that “men and women have been socialized to read for different purposes and in different ways,” and fan fiction is consistent with a *woman’s* socialization within the patriarchal system because it focuses on female issues (Fans, Bloggers and Gamers 43). According to Jenkins, women seek to escape their patriarchal isolation through an “active participation in a ‘community’ receptive to their cultural productions, a ‘community’ within which they may feel a sense of ‘belonging’” (Fans, Bloggers and Gamers 41). Women are also more willing to “enter the world of the novel” and present the story as “an atmosphere or an experience” according David Bleich, which Jenkins cites in his analysis of fan fiction (qtd. in Fans, Bloggers and Gamers 43). In this way, fan fiction is feminist because the methods used in creating it reveal a woman’s interpretation of the world and what women believe is important to a storyline, thereby performing a feminist function by highlighting a woman’s perspective.

Lastly, Jenkins argues that fan fictions are feminist productions because they produce meaning through an “affective semiotics,” in which

their readers' emotions and feelings become the foundation for the fictions' meanings (50). He states that fan fiction is written largely in "a language saturated with emotion which tries to evoke the fans' quality of feeling through description and prose style" (Fans, Bloggers and Gamers 25-26). Because women are usually the authors of fan fiction and their fan fiction usually emphasizes issues present in a contemporary woman's life, the attempt to evoke a strong emotional response is likewise a feminist effort in that it further emphasizes a woman's perspective of the world and evokes a sympathetic response in the reader. To sum up, Jenkins claims that fan fictions are inherently feminist for their focus on contemporary women's issues, and their meaning production through an "affective semiotics."

In the case of Austen fan fiction, however, Jenkins' argument does not apply in all respects. Although most Austen fan fiction is written by women and focuses on interpersonal relationships, there are other aspects which debunk Jenkins' argument. For one, many Austen fan fictions do not present the problems of contemporary women, or at least not in contemporary contexts. Take, for example, the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy; because the trilogy is told from Darcy's perspective, there is little room for women to appear in the trilogy, let alone present their issues with (or within) patriarchal society in a way with which contemporary women would sympathize. Since the reader sees the Regency era through Darcy's eyes, contemporary women's issues are

likewise seen through his lens, making it more difficult for the reader to sympathize with a woman's trials (whether in the Regency era or in the present) because the primary focus is on Darcy and *his* trials. The only contemporary women's issue that could be argued to appear in this trilogy is the re-creation of Darcy as the modern woman's ideal "New Man." Most contemporary women's issues are not seen as such because the major focus of Austen fan fiction is the romantic development between Elizabeth and Darcy, rather than gender politics or women's issues. In the case of the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy, the focus is on Darcy, not on women and their issues, and in Me and Mr. Darcy, the focus is on the developing romance between Emily and Mr. Darcy and later, Emily and Spike. Neither of these fan fictions takes the time to present the reader with an analysis of contemporary women's issues; instead, they focus on the developing romance between their main characters.

Moreover, those Austen fan fictions which *do* present contemporary women, like Me and Mr. Darcy, largely set aside these women's professional problems in exchange for a focus on romance or for a female fantasy. In Me and Mr. Darcy Emily abandons her job as a bookstore manager to escape into the British countryside and find her "modern day Mr. Darcy." Her professional life is only seen at the very opening and close of the novel, and it is never the focus even of these scenes. The bookstore in which she works is either simply a setting through which to establish Emily's status as a 'hopeless romantic,' lost in

the world of books like Pride and Prejudice, or the site of her happy ending where, after she buys the bookstore, she invites Spike to visit (346). Her purchase of the bookstore is the only part of the novel which focuses on Emily's professional life. But this problem is quickly resolved by members of the heritage tour who agree to help her buy the bookstore for herself. In this way, Emily's problems as a contemporary, professional woman are put on the back burner as she flees to England. And while some literary critics may argue that this escapism is a reflection of the lack of fulfillment in many contemporary women's lives, the primary focus of the novel is on the developing romance(s) of Emily while in England, and not her attempt to escape an unfulfilled life. Emily's need to escape is merely a plot device to get her into the "magical" world of Austen country so she can begin her romance(s). Since Emily's contemporary issues barely break the surface of the novel, Jenkins' argument that feminist fan fictions focus on contemporary women's issues does not apply to Austen fan fiction, as it lacks the major tenets Jenkins claims make a fan fiction feminist.

Similarly, Austen fan fictions like Me and Mr. Darcy can only be characterized as "syrupy" or "sweet," two words Jenkins uses to describe exactly what fan fiction consumers are *not* looking for in their female-centered fan fictions (Fans, Bloggers and Gamers 50). As discussed previously, Me and Mr. Darcy is almost completely a romance story highlighting only the most romantic, "sweet" aspects of Austen's original

plot. Furthermore, Emily's encounters with the *real* Mr. Darcy are in no way "believable," a word Jenkins attaches to 'good' fan fiction (Fans, Bloggers and Gamers 50). Emily's characterization as a 'hopeless romantic,' the preponderance of descriptions of picturesque views, and the blatant parallel between Pride and Prejudice and Emily and Spike's courtship narrative give Me and Mr. Darcy a decidedly "sweet," "syrupy" feel. Because they are mainly "sweet" and focus primarily on the romantic developments between characters, Austen fan fictions should be considered more in line with what Jenkins terms "Lt. Mary Sue" stories, stories that "take the form of romantic fantasies about the [novel's] characters" (Fans, Bloggers and Gamers 51). These types of stories are also termed "groupie fantasies" because of their "self-indulgence, their often hackneyed writing styles, [and] their formulaic plots" (Fans, Bloggers and Gamers 51). Any and all of these terms could be applied to Austen fan fictions like Me and Mr. Darcy that depend on a romance-consuming, heterosexual female fantasy of dating the *real* Mr. Darcy for their premise. Therefore, Jenkins' argument that fan fictions are feminist does not apply in all respects to Austen fan fiction.

Janice Radway, a prominent literary critic who has written extensively on romance novels, likely would also disagree with my argument that Austen fan fictions, which are largely romances, should be considered unfeminist. Radway defines a romance as a story with the following elements: a historical setting, some sexually explicit encounters

(although she is quick to point out that too many sexually explicit encounters detract from the popularity of a romance and even offend some devoted romance fans), some elements of violence, usually towards the heroine (however, like sexually explicit material, only in moderation and under specific circumstances), and a developmental relationship between the hero and heroine (53). Romances also contain a happy ending, a prolonged development of the hero-heroine relationship, and at least one episode or scene depicting the hero and heroine after they have “gotten together” romantically (66). Romances structured in this way, according to Radway, are feminist because they are “chronicles of female triumph” (54). She states that romances “focus on an intelligent and able heroine who finds a man who recognizes her special qualities and is capable of loving and caring for her as she wants to be loved” (54). She also claims romances are feminist because “their stories are experienced [by readers] as a reversal of the oppression and emotional abandonment suffered by women in real life” (55). Because most of the romance readers on which Radway based her study were middle aged, married women, Radway claims that romances act as an escape from their “real lives” which focus on caring for and nurturing others, into a world that depicts a realm in which the heroine (and the reader) can experience a caring and nurturing love for themselves.

However, like Jenkins’ argument, Radway’s also does not apply in many respects to Austen fan fiction. In Austen fan fiction, the

identification with the heroine that Radway cites as main tenet of feminist romances is often not apparent because the plotline focuses on an irrational (hallucinating) heroine, as is the case in Me and Mr. Darcy, or the entire fan fiction is from Darcy's perspective, as in the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy. With the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy, because the perspective has been shifted away from women altogether, the standards of patriarchy prevail without much "female triumph." Indeed, without Elizabeth Bennet's point of view, there is little room for females at all in Aidan's trilogy. The feminism of the romance novel's emphasis on "female triumph" is largely absent in Austen fan fiction simply because its structure is dissimilar to that which Radway elicits as crucial for feminism to appear. Without an element of "female triumph," Austen fan fiction cannot be classified as a romance in Radway's terms and therefore her argument for romances as feminist texts is inapplicable to Austen fan fiction.

Another way in which Radway's argument does not apply to Austen fan fiction is that in Austen fan fiction there is a large emphasis on "far away places and times" (67). This emphasis contrasts Radway's characterization of a romance, which, according to her study, does not view an emphasis on "far away places and times" as a necessary, or even desired, aspect of romance novels (67-69). As seen in the discussion of Me and Mr. Darcy, the picturesque views of the English countryside are a major force in creating a sense of nostalgia for the past in the novel. Since

the heritage industry has also influenced the production of Austen fan fiction, tendencies like promoting a sense of nostalgia through picturesque views is to be expected, whereas in Radway's study a similar focus is unnecessary to be considered a romance (67). Furthermore, Austen fan fiction does not include two elements included in Radway's definition of a romance: there is no sexually explicit material in the Austen fan fictions analyzed in this thesis, nor is there any evidence of violence towards the heroine or any other main character.

Lastly, the origins that produce Austen fan fiction are different from those which produce the romances Radway studies in Reading the Romance. For fan fictions generally, fans produce their work in response to an injustice committed by some other party (a poor film adaptation, for example), or to extrapolate on a previous storyline (in prequels or sequels), and are usually small-scale, not-for-profit productions, although those studied in this thesis have been picked up by major publishing houses (Fans, Bloggers and Gamers 41). Romances, meanwhile, are created as mass market productions or, in the cases in which romances are written by fans of the genre, to engender an emotional response in the reader similar to that of the author. According to Radway, romances "vicariously fulfill [women's] needs for nurturance by identifying with a heroine whose principle accomplishment...is her success at drawing a hero's attention to herself," whereas the function of Austen fan fiction is to either rectify an injustice or to extrapolate on some aspect of Austen's

original texts (84). The purpose of fan fiction is, then, different from that of a romance; while a romance seeks to satiate a woman's need to feel loved on her own terms, at least according to Radway, fan fictions' purpose is to further explore or correct aspects of a world already known to the reader. This difference in purpose and origin makes Radway's argument unsuitable as a method of analyzing Austen fan fiction.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this thesis the rise of the heritage industry, its effect on the film industry, and the rise and effect of feminism on Austen's work and adaptations of her works have been explored. These factors were then taken to the more contemporary field of fan fiction, here defined as a novel (or novels) written by Austen fans which take up specific aspects "misused" by other parties and published by legitimate publishing houses. In this thesis I have argued that while critics like Johnson, Mellor and White argue that Austen was a feminist (for different reasons), upon closer examination, her novels do not hold up to all the feminist tendencies ascribed to her. A similar argument has been made for the film renditions of Austen works; critics like Voiret, Looser and Belton would argue that different feminist tendencies appear in modern film adaptations, but the trends they cite and the way in which the films were consumed emphasize their lack of feminism. Furthermore, fan fiction productions like

Alexandra Potter's Me and Mr. Darcy and Pamela Aidan's Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy take up similar feminist concerns but in the end should be considered unfeminist texts. With irrational heroines, saccharinely romantic plotlines, and a confusion of Mr. Darcy as both a "New Man" and an adherent to the patriarchal order, the Austen fan fictions studied in this thesis do not promote a feminist message. The heritage industry is in large part responsible for the unfeminist messages these fan fictions produce. Because many heritage films were successful by foregrounding romance conventions, depicting 'hopelessly romantic' heroines, and giving Darcy qualities of the "New Man," Austen fan fictions sought to do something similar. Moreover, the arguments of critics like Jenkins and Radway, who claim that fan fictions and romances, respectively, are inherently feminist, do not apply to Austen fan fiction. Austen fan fiction lacks some of the major tenets these two critics cite as necessary for a fan fiction or a romance to be considered feminist: they also incorporate heritage industry influences which accentuate their unfeminist message. Overall, Austen fan fictions like Me and Mr. Darcy and the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy promote unfeminist messages, and the heritage industry is in part responsible for this encoding.

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## **Jane Austen Film Adaptations, Fan Fiction and Contemporary Anglo-American Culture Summary**

In the past twenty years or so, the popularity of costume dramas and heritage films, films which represent past historical eras or figures, have promoted adaptations of many Jane Austen texts. All six of her major novels have been made into feature length film adaptations, and many have also been made into TV mini-series and made for TV movies. The rise of “Austenmania,” the immense popularity of Jane Austen and her works that has been gaining ground among a widening audience in the past twenty years, in conjunction with the release of her original novels as accessible film adaptations, has bred a series of spin off literary works known as fan fictions. In this thesis I explore how the contemporary Anglo-American cultural markers of the heritage industry and the advent of feminism have influenced the film and fan fiction adaptations of Jane Austen’s novels, especially Pride and Prejudice. This thesis first explores the relevance of critical scholarship on the heritage industry and on feminism for thinking about “Austenmania,” and then applies these findings to the newer genre of Austen fan fiction.

To those who study the British heritage industry specifically, the term “heritage industry” refers to all the historical sites, preservation trusts, and historical tourist practices that have sprung up in roughly the past twenty years. The rise of the heritage industry was mainly due to the

cooperation, whether inadvertent or concerted, of the film industry, tourist companies, and the Thatcher administration to promote a specific version or versions of Britain's past. To accomplish this, the heritage industry created a desire in its consumers to visit the past through a sense of nostalgia, a feeling that in the past life was somehow better. By promoting past historical moments as part of the "Good Old Days," when life was idyllic, simple, and genteel, the heritage industry was able to create a strong desire in its audience to want to live vicariously through the past and satiate their sense of nostalgia for a lifestyle long gone by (Lowenthal 7). The Thatcher administration in particular actively promoted this sense of nostalgia for the "Good Old Days" by founding and funding numerous preservation trusts and film companies dedicated to producing heritage films. These films created a visitable past through the use of picturesque landscapes and the country manor house, and both quickly became symbols of the "Good Old Days," invoking what Britain was like in its "Golden Era."

Many literary adaptations were picked up at this time to give the modern audience an avenue of escape from the modern world. To this end, Austen's novels became prime fodder for the heritage industry and its predominantly conservative agenda. Because her novels were written during the Regency era, a period the heritage industry and the Thatcher administration earmarked as a "key historical moment," her novels lent authorial credibility to any film adaptation made of them (Sales 189).

Austen film adaptations immediately had a sense of truth, of verisimilitude to the past simply because Austen wrote and published in that historical moment. Moreover, the plot of many Austen novels dovetailed nicely with the conservative aims of the Thatcher administration's use of the heritage industry; her novels focus on a few families of the landed gentry in the genteel, 'proper' English country, and their tribulations always end in a happily married couple (or two). The way in which Austen adaptations were filmed also supported the heritage industry's creation of a desire to visit the past. In the vast majority of Austen adaptations: the BBC/A&E's 1995 TV mini-series *Pride and Prejudice*, the 2005 Working Title blockbuster of the same name, Douglas McGrath's *Emma*, and even in Patricia Rozema's "gritty" *Mansfield Park*, there are picturesque views of the British landscape and an emphasis on the happy ending of each novel, creating a sense that the Regency period *was* a "Golden Era" of British history.

The political administration was not the only force driving the rise of the heritage film; the film industry itself was simultaneously realizing that heritage films like *Emma* and Emma Thompson's *Sense and Sensibility* would do well at the box-office. In the late 1980s and 1990s multiplexes were taking over small, independently owned theaters, decreasing the variety of movies shown in exchange for playing blockbusters on multiple screens. The rise of the multiplex pushed the film industry to produce either truly independent, "art house" films or

enormous blockbusters with little variety in-between. The heritage film fit nicely into the middle ground between the two, filling a niche market left vacant by blockbusters and multiplexes. Heritage films were seen as “quality productions,” giving the more educated, older crowd a film targeted towards them other than the blockbusters usually aimed at 15-24 year olds (Higson 5). In this way, relatively low budget heritage films did well with the advent of the multiplex because they filled the tenuous middle ground between “art house” independent films and major blockbusters.

As the heritage film began to rise in popularity, Tony Blair’s administration sought to change the conservative message of the heritage industry to align with his political vision. Blair wanted to promote a modern, progressive interpretation of the heritage industry, and so endorsed a different reading of Austen film adaptations. During his administration, films like *Mansfield Park* (1999) were read by audiences and critics more progressively, emphasizing the more controversial aspects of Austen’s works, like the evidence of the slave trade in *Mansfield Park* or the destruction caused by a defunct patriarchy. Feminist readings of Austen’s novels and films also gained ground, giving rise to other film adaptations that literary critics like Martine Voiret would argue include feminist tendencies, like Emma Thompson’s *Sense and Sensibility*.

The various motivations for promoting heritage films, along with their appeal to an overlooked theater demographic and their ability to be

read conservatively or progressively, made heritage films popular. Their popularity encouraged tourist companies to focus on “heritage tours,” visiting “Austen country” (located in the county of Hampshire in England), and sight-seeing “important locations” where Austen had lived or visited (<http://www.hiddenbritaintours.co.uk/hampsTour.html>). The popularity of the films themselves created their own “heritage tours” where visitors could “sleep where the stars slept” and visit movie filming locations (<http://www.visitprideandprejudice.com/>). In this way, the *consumption* of heritage films led to a desire to visit the past, even if the past was only a movie set. As Austen adaptations became popular in the theater, many literary critics picked up on perceived feminist tendencies, both in her original novels and in the film adaptations.

Prominent feminist literary critics like Ann Mellor, Audrey Bilger, and Laura White claim that Austen’s original texts contain various feminist tendencies (according to their own, sometimes contradictory definitions of feminism), and many Austen film adaptations follow similar feminist trends. I, however, argue that in some cases, the brand of feminism promoted by recent Austen adaptations and the way these adaptations are *consumed* goes against the feminist tendencies argued to be found in the films or in Austen’s original novels. In effect, film adaptations like the BBC/A&E’s *Pride and Prejudice* or the 2005 Working Title *Pride and Prejudice* endorse an unfeminist message through the changes that they make to Austen’s original works. For

example, the genre of many Austen film adaptations has been changed in order to align with the modern sensibility of the “chick flick.” In order to align with this genre, parts of Austen’s original novels have been altered to highlight the romantic storyline, undermining the feminism critics like Mellor argue appear in her original texts. Another trope which has been emphasized in Austen film adaptations is the “happy ending.” Instead of the “happy ending” of the novel where two equal minds are united, many adaptations become simply a search for a girl’s sexy dream guy. Many modern film adaptations stress the romantic aspects of Austen’s novels over everything else; no longer are these films congruent with Austen’s (arguably feminist) notion of rational heroines learning to navigate their world; instead the films endorse the physical, romantic plotline. As long as the characters are beautiful and there is a “happy ending,” the audience seems satisfied. Austen’s feminist tendencies to critique the patriarchal system (as Claudia Johnson argues), and her creation of ironic, satirical laughter (as Audrey Bilger argues) are likewise absent from modern film adaptations in exchange for archetypes that will do well in the box office.

Literary critics like Voiret and Mellor would argue that various feminist tendencies also appear in Austen fan fiction, although they would disagree on what makes Austen fan fiction specifically feminist. Fan fiction has been defined by Henry Jenkins as any writing which takes up portions of an original text that the writer feels have been misused (a poorly adapted film version and sequels/prequels are popular incentives).

In many Austen fan fictions the tendency to change aspects of Austen's novels to modernize her texts and promote the romance plot is quite apparent. Moreover, the heritage industry has influenced fan fiction productions like Alexandra Potter's Me and Mr. Darcy and Pamela Aidan's Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy by underwriting their unfeminist tendencies or compromising its potential feminism. These fan fictions are unfeminist on the whole because as they seek to capitalize on genres and tropes which made many heritage films successful, like emphasizing the romance storyline, indulging in female fantasies, and giving Darcy characteristics of a "New Man." Austen fan fictions also promote the heritage industry's conservative message through these genres and tropes. In this way, the feminism that main characters like Emily Albright in Me and Mr. Darcy or Darcy in the Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman trilogy could have embodied is compromised by the author's efforts to reproduce the economic success of similar heritage films.

In order to fully investigate the topics covered in this thesis, I relied on a variety of methods to collect and analyze my research. For the portions concerning the rise of the heritage industry, the film industry, and the rise of feminism, I relied mainly on traditional, text-based research and consultation with my thesis advisor. I compiled the text-based research from numerous sources and bolstered it with my own investigation of the films and novels discussed in these early chapters. My own investigation focused on re-reading Austen's original texts, viewing (and re-viewing)

many film and TV adaptations, and doing further research into the opposing arguments regarding the potential feminism of Austen's novels and their film adaptations. I also researched the heritage tourist industry online, reading various brochures and itineraries of "Austen country" tours. Finally, I performed a close reading of numerous fan fiction texts (of which only a few are discussed in this thesis) to form the basis of my final chapter focusing on the influences of the heritage industry and feminism on Austen fan fiction.

From this research I have concluded that Austen fan fictions should be considered unfeminist texts, and it is the conservative influence of the heritage industry that is in part responsible for this encoding. In light of this conclusion, I argue that this thesis is significant to the field of Textual Studies because it applies previous critical theoretical knowledge to a new field. The field of fan fiction has been largely overlooked by literary critics because it is seen as less important than other fields of literary study (Hellekson and Busse 134). I argue that popular culture productions like fan fictions give us a better insight into Anglo-American cultural markers than others productions; because fan fiction is produced by fans, rather than mass market clearing houses or scholars with specific agendas, cultural tendencies appear threaded throughout, often unintentionally. Even though the fan fictions studied in this thesis were advertised as mainstream novels, they are grounded in the basic characteristics that demarcate a fan fiction from other types of literature.

While many Austen film adaptations have at this time been studied in depth, the realm of published fan fiction has been left relatively untouched, making this thesis significant for its focus on a previously overlooked field.