UNIVERSITY
OF OSLO

Master thesis

Jane Austen's Narrative Tapestry

Unveiling Gender Dynamics in the Abolitionist Discourse

Emma Julseth Brown

Secondary Teacher Training
30 ECTS Credits

Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages
Faculty of Humanities

Jane Austen's Narrative Tapestry

Unveiling Gender Dynamics in the Abolitionist Discourse

Emma Julseth Brown

Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages

Faculty of Humanities

University of Oslo

ENG4790 Master's Thesis in English

Secondary Teacher Training

30 ECTS Credits

Spring 2023

Supervisor: Louisa Olufsen Layne

2023

Title

Emma Julseth Brown

https://duo.uio.no

Abstract

This thesis delves deeper into an analysis of Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park* (1814) and its relevance within the abolitionist discourse. Following Edward Said's influential work, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Austen's writing has faced critical scrutiny. He asserts that Austen and authors like her, such as Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling, support and perpetuate British imperialist values in their writing. However, Said's interpretation excludes a proper discussion of how gender roles affected opportunities in Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This study has employed an intersectional approach to address this omission, combining postcolonial and feminist theories with a new historicist methodology. It explores the opportunities and limitations available to women writers of the Regency era and their ability to comment on slavery and the slave trade in a predominantly male-dominated public sphere. Furthermore, it argues that Austen skilfully alludes to these egregious institutions through carefully veiled and implicit commentary, employing the same contrapuntal technique Said promoted in his work. The narrative's commentary on slavery emerges in the margins, manifesting through Austen's intentional selection of words, metaphors, relationships, names, and British country houses. These elements shed light on Austen's ability to apply social criticism from the domestic sphere while navigating the societal expectations of her time.

Keywords: Jane Austen, Edward Said, Intersectionality, Postcolonialism, Feminism, New Historicism, Contrapuntal Reading, Eighteenth/Nineteenth Century, British Imperialism, Colonialism

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Louisa Olufsen Layne. Thank you for your invaluable guidance and support, and I am grateful for our engaging conversations about my thesis, as well as insightful exchanges about life after university.

Thank you to my partner for being the best mental support system during this process. You have inadvertently become an expert on everything Jane Austen, possessing more knowledge about her life and works than you ever expected.

Lastly, a huge thank you to my family for always supporting me and encouraging me in my endeavours. I am deeply grateful for the introduction to the captivating realm of literary classics, which inspired me to write this thesis.

Thank you.

Oslo, 1 June 2023

Emma Julseth Brown

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 1

1.1. Intersectionality in *Mansfield Park* 1

1.2. Mansfield Park and the World Stage 4

1.3. Abolitionism and the Feminist Movement 5

1.4. Decolonising the Imperialist Novel 7

1.5. Why is Jane Austen still relevant? 10

1.6. Imperialist Practices in the British Novel 14

1.7. The Absence of Gender 16

2. Marital Commodities 18

2.1. Women, Abolition, and Mental Slavery 21

2.2. The Price of Fanny 26

2.3. The Language of Patriarchy 27

2.4. The Masters of Mansfield 30

2.5. The Significance of Names and Places 32

3. The British Country House 36

3.1. The Desired English Order 36

3.2. Unveiling English Country Houses' Ties to Slavery 38

3.3. Parallel Plantations 41

4. Conclusion 46

Notes 51

Bibliography 52

1. Introduction

Jane Austen is not a blank slate to which we can ascribe our preferences. We can never know what she thought and what her life was like. Nobody can surmise this. However, we can search through history and interpret her writing by examining her novels in the context of the society in which she lived. This way, we gain a deeper understanding of the themes and ideas she conveyed through her work. John Wiltshire highlights Marcia McClintock Folsom's suggestion that the "[…] continuing power of Jane Austen lies not in her offer of escape and consolation but in her novels' 'extra-ordinary invitation to active reading'" (9). No matter how often we read her novels, there is always something new to discover. We can attempt to understand the opportunities and limitations Jane Austen faced throughout her life and writing career by closely reading her works and connecting them to the historical context of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries. It posits her as a real-life person and not a legendary myth on which we project our fantasies about life in Regency-era Britain. Patricia A. Matthew criticises Edward Said's treatment of Austen as a "[…] canonical figure rather than a writer whose work fits into Regency-era abolitionist discourse" (353). It is important to remember that Austen could not predict what place she would occupy in history. Matthew takes issue with Said's focus on Austen as primarily a canonical figure rather than contextualising her work within her time's specific social and political climate. The disagreement between Matthew and Said highlights the ongoing debate in literary studies about the role of postcolonial criticism. It emphasises the need to consider diverse critical approaches in literary analysis. Matthew's feminist approach seeks to understand Austen's work beyond the traditions of the literary canon, examining women writers' engagement with social and political issues in their contemporary setting. As I contribute to the discourse on Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park* (1814), I intend to offer a feminist lens to the analysis of the book. Through this lens, I seek to uncover how Austen engages with gender, power, and social hierarchies and how these dynamics relate to the broader historical context of colonial Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially concerning the issue of slavery.

1.1. Intersectionality in *Mansfield Park*

I aim to scrutinise the work through a new historicist framework to provide a more nuanced understanding of the feminist milieu during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which might have affected Austen's writing. My study of *Mansfield Park* will build upon the postcolonial readings of Edward Said, Patricia A. Matthew, and Brian Southam, among

others. These critics maintain that *Mansfield Park* should not be separated from political and social issues during Austen's time. They argue that her works should be situated within the imperial context and abolitionist discourse. Additionally, I will include the feminist readings of scholars such as Margaret Doody, Moira Ferguson, Jocelyn Harris, and Susan Fraiman. Their approach to *Mansfield Park* involves an analysis of the power dynamics and gender roles in Austen's contemporary society. They combine the feminist approach with a new historicist framework to contextualise the social, political, and economic realities which affected gender roles at the time. The new historicist framework will create a more accurate picture of the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries proto-feminist context, as this approach tries "[…] to read history and literature together, with each influencing the other" (Parker 269). New historicists hold the view that "apart from the basic facts […], it simply will not work to make claims about history by saying this or that happened […]. Just as it would be too simple to make broad-brush, absolute claims about a literary text" (Parker 269). Adopting this strategy is crucial, as a multi-faceted approach open to multiple interpretations allows for a more nuanced understanding. It acknowledges the complex relationship between literature and history as they mutually influence and shape one another. We will be able to explore the story in even greater detail by examining the use of names and places to understand the social and historical cues that might not be as evident to readers today as they were on *Mansfield Park's* publication in 1814.

My method of interpretation is to provide an intersectional reading which takes note of historical, societal, and gender factors which might have had an impact on Austen's ability to comment on public issues such as slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Kimberlé Crenshaw first coined the term intersectionality in 1989 "[…] as a way to help explain the oppression of African-American women" ("Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality: More than Two Decades Later"). In an interview with Crenshaw, she acknowledges that the term has become more widely used as "[…] a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects" ("Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality: More than Two Decades Later"). Today, intersectionality is a widely recognised framework embraced by various disciplines beyond law and social justice. In literature, it is used to illuminate how gender, race, and class intersect and overlap. This ties in with Said's postcolonial approach to power by considering how different forms of oppression and domination intersect and reinforce each other. I aim to apply this lens to my thesis, examining how women's novel writing during Austen's time intersects with the issues of slavery and the

slave trade. My objective is to uncover the covert metaphors and commentaries on slavery, especially in the context of Caribbean slavery. Specifically, I will examine how the modifications to the estate of Mansfield Park used to facilitate theatrical performances and the parallel between Mansfield Park and the Antiguan plantation reflect the impact of slavery. Moreover, I will explore the transformation of Fanny Price's character, which will shed light on how her relationship with Sir Thomas changes as he acknowledges her value in the marriage market. My thesis will argue that Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* contributes to the abolitionist discourse from a feminist perspective by equating women's experiences in marriage to those of enslaved people. Despite the controversy surrounding the equation of women's experience in marital union with those of enslaved people, I aim to situate this association within the historical context in which Austen wrote. My objective is to demonstrate that Austen's commentary on slavery merits closer examination, as it does not necessarily align with Edward Said's expectation that authors of the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries would openly condemn British involvement in the venture.

Austen critiques slavery and the slave trade in a subtle and more nuanced way than Said expects. Some critics would argue that side-lining the author's intentions behind the novel is the best approach to literature. This approach, spearheaded by Roland Barthes, was labelled the "Death of the Author," which he unfolded in his 1967 essay of the same name. According to Barthes, the reader should determine the meaning of the text, not interpret it through the lens of the author's intentions (Barthes). However, Said's critique of *Mansfield Park* examines the novel in connection with Austen as an author in the context of British imperialism. Thus, I will apply the same tactic as Said to highlight the historical context to supplement the novel's reading. Austen's employment of sarcasm and irony to liken women's marital lives to slavery is difficult to ignore. Even the novel's title would make it hard to disregard the historical events of Austen's time, as many critics connect it to the prominent Lord Mansfield, Lord Chief Justice, who denounced slavery in the widely covered Somerset case in 1772. In the aftermath of Said's ground-breaking essay, there has been criticism surrounding Austen's lack of critique towards slavery in her novels and how this indirectly benefitted her life through material commodities. However, an often overlooked issue is an examination of the possibilities available to women to enter the male-dominated public sphere and comment openly and critically against a business that had been important to Britain's economy since the 1600s (Solow 27). I will demonstrate that her gender hindered openly denouncing slavery and the slave trade, requiring her to apply a subtle strategy when

addressing the subject publicly. My main objective is to highlight the significance of *Mansfield Park* in the abolitionist discourse by contributing an intersectional feminist and new historical perspective to the debate. This thesis will begin by addressing the ongoing discourse surrounding Jane Austen's work, exploring the relationship between the British novel and the country's imperial and colonial enterprises. Subsequently, it will examine women's societal position and role in *Mansfield Park* in light of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Finally, the thesis will explore the connection between British country houses and slavery, focusing on the Mansfield Park estate and Sir Thomas Bertram's Antiguan plantation.

1.2. Mansfield Park and the World Stage

The novel follows the character of Fanny Price, a timid young girl from a poor, working-class family in Portsmouth sent to live with her wealthy aunt and uncle, Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, at their estate of Mansfield Park, in Northamptonshire. The Bertram family treat Fanny as an outsider during her upbringing at Mansfield. Although Fanny and her cousins receive the same education, they treat her differently due to her lower birth. In Regency-era Britain, status and social class were everything (Mortimer 61). However, she eventually finds solace in her cousin Edmund Bertram, with whom she develops a close relationship. Early in the narrative, Sir Thomas Bertram faces financial difficulties and leaves Mansfield to tend to his business in Antigua. In his absence, the young people of the family form close relations with the newcomers to the area, Henry, and Mary Crawford, who are visiting their sister, Mrs. Grant, at the nearby Parsonage. In Sir Thomas's stead, their aunt, Mrs. Norris, handles the affairs at Mansfield with varying degrees of success. On his return from Antigua, several scandals ensue, stemming from his physical absence and emotional detachment from his children. The excerpt highlighted the most in criticism of *Mansfield Park* is the silence which follows Fanny Price's question about the slave trade. In this scene, she speaks to her cousin Edmund Bertram about a conversation with Sir Thomas. In response to Edmund prompting Fanny to engage her uncle more in conversation, Fanny exclaims, "[…] Did not you hear me ask him about the slave trade last night?" […] there was such a dead silence! And while my cousins were sitting by without speaking a word, or seeming at all interested in the subject […]" (Jane Austen 155). The Bertram family's deafening silence following this question leaves the reader to speculate on its significance and implications. Is the family aware of Sir Thomas's actions in Antigua? Do they know that he enslaves people? Or are they generally agreed never to speak about the horrible origins of the wealth they enjoy? Although these questions are never explicitly answered, a thorough reading of *Mansfield Park* might reveal

more about these questions than previously imagined. However, Fanny's question is the only part of the novel which openly admits to the reality of slavery. Nonetheless, by examining the book thoroughly, the reader will find evidence of commentary on the institution of slavery cleverly concealed in the use of language, the creation of characters, the choice of places and names, and the characteristics and developments of relationships.

In Peter Smith's essay, "Mansfield Park and the World Stage", he points out that:

> […] it is Fanny who is the slave […]. *Mansfield Park* rests upon a symbolic equivalence established between the forced labour of African cane-cutters and that invisible figure who stands in the margin of every page Jane Austen wrote, the unmarried gentlewoman who has no money of her own. (207).

Many readers might protest the direct line between a West Indian slave and a gentlewoman who has never felt the crack of the whip on her back. The comparison between Fanny's situation and that of an enslaved African person downplays the severity of the injustices of slavery. The exploitation and forced labour, which caused incalculable harm and trauma, still resonates with their descendants today. Although Fanny faces challenges and limitations due to her gender and social status, she still benefits from the privileges and protection that come with her skin colour, her status as a free person, and her uncle's guardianship. However, we must approach this issue from the time of Mansfield Park's composition and not apply a modern lens. We must study the novel in its contemporary setting because our understanding of race and gender has evolved since the nineteenth century. If we apply our modern interpretation of the novel's themes without understanding the dominant ideologies of the time, we may misinterpret the intentions behind the creation of the story.

1.3. Abolitionism and the Feminist Movement

The critical examination should include the portrayal of the slave trade and its connection to women's societal position. The historical context does not absolve it from its responsibility to address such issues. Even though *Mansfield Park* was written when slavery and the slave trade were legal and, to some extent, socially accepted, it still has a responsibility to address these issues. These subjects are connected to gender and power dynamics, which are important to consider as literature shapes cultural attitudes and values. Although a modern lens cannot equate the issue of slavery and the problem of female subjectivity, the women's suffrage movement saw an irrefutable connection between these causes (Nym Mayhall 485). In the essay, *The Subjection of Women* (1865), John Stuart Mill, in collaboration with his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, created an analogy of slavery. They identified several similarities between enslaved people and married women. He wrote that "[…] custom dictated women's

acceptance of the marital state as their lot; women's legal personalities became subsumed under their husbands' upon marriage; husbands had virtual powers of life and death over their wives" as well as "[…] noting that wives had no legal right to refuse their husbands sexual relations, or to separate from abusive husbands without complicated legal manoeuvres entailing the establishment of desertion or cruelty and adultery" (Nym Mayhall 486). From beginning to end, most women were subservient to men in almost every way; first being their fathers' property, then their husbands' property, never owning their name, and never owning any property. The man in charge of their lives could decide everything, who they married, where they lived, what type of education they received, and more. Independent women existed but were more often the exception and not the rule.

The origins of the term feminism are attributed to Charles Fourier, who supposedly coined the term "féminisme" in his work *La Fausse Industrie,* published in 1835 (Offen 45). However, critics such as the historian, Karen Offen, have examined his texts confirming that the word "féminisme" is not to be found (45-46). Nevertheless, she explains that "[…] the celebrated paragraph in which Fourier insisted that "progress" in liberty for women was a precondition of general social progress […] reveals […] a "feminist" consciousness on Fourier's part" (Offen 46). Thus, it reveals that people were aware of feminist ideas earlier than what is generally considered the beginnings of the feminist movement. However, the term feminism was not in wide circulation until the late eighteenth century, for example, showing up in the French press as "le mouvement féminine" in 1891 (Offen 47). Thus, even though Mill wrote his slave analogy almost five decades after Austen's death, the connection between feminism and the abolitionist discourse did not appear out of thin air. Mary Wollstonecraft's work, "A Vindication of the Rights of Women", written in 1792, and Anna Letitia Barbauld's poem, "The Rights of Women," written in the same year as a response to Wollstonecraft's work, first set these ideas in motion. Even before the main suffrage movement gained momentum in the transition from the nineteenth- to the twentieth century, the analogy of the "slave woman" rode on the back of the abolitionist movement. Although Austen would not be familiar with the term feminism, these ideas were already circulating, creating an environment open to the criticisms of the marital state for women, which she often portrays in her work.

The approach of comparing the plight of women with that of enslaved people, highlighting the limitations and restrictions placed on women's lives and the denial of their fundamental human rights, is seen in Austen's novel *Mansfield Park.* The character Maria

Bertram, trapped in a loveless marriage due to societal expectations, is an example of the effects of these restrictions. Additionally, as Smith mentions, Fanny becomes the metaphorical slave at Mansfield, parallelly commenting on both the issue of slavery and the struggles of women during that time. However, we must remember that it was mostly an efficient approach for white women, as black women still had to contest racial prejudice. Critics such as Audre Lorde and bell hooks have criticised this "white feminism", which has favoured the white woman's experience in matters of social and legal justice. Lorde writes in her essay, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," that "as white women ignore their built-in privilege of whiteness and define *woman* in terms of their own experience alone, then women of Color become 'other,' the outsider whose experience and tradition is too 'alien' to comprehend" (117). hooks also contests the idea of "common oppression," which combed over disparities in women's experiences, placing white women as the standard (127). She asserts that early feminism was "[…] a false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true nature of women's varied and complex social reality" (hooks 127). It is essential to recognise the limitations of white feminism and the need for intersectionality in the feminist movement. We are one step closer to dismantling systems of oppression when we include marginalised people in the discussion. If not, we silence their experiences and perpetuate the cycle of oppression.

1.4. Decolonising the Imperialist Novel

In Edward Said's book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), he measures Austen and other authors, such as Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling, by the same standards ("Narrative and Social Space" 66). His criticism towards British authors is that they supported the colonial project through their writing. Due to the lack of explicit opposition towards colonisation, and their depiction of abroad as exotic and inferior, he argues that they were complicit in the imperial project of their time (Said "Narrative and Social Space" 74). Thus, Said calls for literary criticism, which acknowledges that artistic production is fraught with politics and ideology and emphasises the importance of decolonising literature. However, Said does not discount these authors' place in the canon for their writings or lack of criticism towards unethical, imperial practices ("Jane Austen and Empire" 1124). Although I agree with Said's call to action, his decolonisation project is missing the feminist perspective within postcolonialism, as it is problematic to paint all authors with the same brush. Postcolonialism is challenging to define in a precise manner. However, the most critical issue raised by it is "[…] that the legacies of colonialism and imperialism are still with us, that they have

indelibly shaped the world as we know and experience it" (Jazeel 1). This field of study seeks to uncover how the world has been shaped by colonialist and imperialist practices, drawing from several disciplines, such as literature, history, and anthropology, among others (Jazeel 3). Even though the literary canon's standardisation of authors helps to identify the issues between the novel genre and imperial practices, I believe it fails to take note of unique opportunities and restrictions based on an author's gender, class, race, and social status. My intention is not to dismiss Said's interpretation of *Mansfield Park.* Instead, I would like to continue the conversation and contribute another perspective. Echoing Matthew, I believe Said overlooks that Jane Austen was a real-life woman constrained by gender limitations rather than a historical figure who deliberately wrote to fit into a specific genre in the literary canon. Although this is a simple notion, she could not predict her influence or how her novels would fit into the abolitionist discourse. Women's everyday lives were impacted by social norms, deciding what they could accomplish within these social and economic boundaries. I seek to determine the factors that may limit or create opportunities for Jane Austen to comment on the British empire and the transatlantic slave trade. As a white, middle-class woman, Austen had access to certain privileges denied to women of different racial backgrounds and lower socioeconomic status. However, her gender was a significant limiting factor regarding her opportunities to engage in public matters. Social norms and laws reinforced the separation of genders, limiting Austen's access to the public sphere. She was not free to comment on the slave trade and slavery in the same way as if she were a man.

Brian Southam has responded to Said's reading of *Mansfield Park*, concerning the issue of her position on the slave trade, by posing the questions: "Where does Jane Austen stand in this? With Sir Thomas, as Said believes? Or with her heroine? Readers of the novel will decide for themselves" (Matthew 352). These questions highlight the ongoing debate on Austen's position in the abolitionist context. Said writes:

> It would be silly to expect Jane Austen to treat slavery with anything like the passion of an abolitionist or a newly liberated slave. Yet what I have called the rhetoric of blame, so often now employed by subaltern, minority, or disadvantaged voices, attacks her, and others like her, retrospectively, for being white, privileged, insensitive, complicit. ("Jane Austen and Empire" 1124).

In this excerpt, Said places a political agenda onto the text, emphasising Austen's complicity in the imperial project. However, he seems to discount her ability to join the abolitionist movement from the domestic sphere, treating her references to the broader colonial world as mere coincidences rather than intentionally placed. Thus, he believes it is wrong to blame her for employing an imperial backdrop as he states that "Austen's awareness of empire is

obviously very different, alluded to very much more casually, than Conrad's or Kipling's" (Said "Jane Austen and Empire" 1119). However, it is essential to note that Said did not wish us to "[…] jettison her novels," as he believes that in time, by viewing *Mansfield Park* through a postcolonial lens, "[…] there will no longer be a dead silence when slavery [is][1] spoken of, and the subject [becomes][2] central to a new understanding of what Europe [is][3]" ("Jane Austen and Empire" 1124). Southam agrees with Said that the novel is implicated in a broader imperial domain. However, he does not attack her for being "[…] only vaguely aware of the details of [imperial][4] activities […]" ("Jane Austen and Empire" 1119). Southam believes Austen's views show up in the main character, Fanny Price, who is a "friend of abolition" (Matthew 352). The interpretation of this novel is somewhat contentious, and there is no clear conclusion about its place in the abolitionist discourse. Therefore, I will not prescribe an either-/or interpretation of Austen's position on slavery and the slave trade in this thesis. I aim to avoid engaging in polemics which examines Austen's authorship through a singular lens. Instead I will provide an intersectional approach which allows me to explore various components, such as gender, race, and class, and consider how these factors create a complex web of opportunities and limitations, ultimately shaping Austen's writing and political views. This thesis does not aim to ascertain Austen's stance on abolition. Instead, it seeks to explore how the role of gender in the abolitionist discourse affected Austen's possibilities to influence the issue of slavery publicly.

Said's main complaint is that British authors "[…] never advocate giving up the colonies […]," and "the *continuity* of British imperial policy throughout the nineteenth century […] is actively accompanied by this novelistic process, whose main purpose is not to raise more questions, […], but to keep the empire more or less in place" ("Narrative and Social Space" 74). Thus, Said claims that novelists of the nineteenth century used the British Empire as a convenient backdrop for their narratives. He asserts that these novelists reinforced and perpetuated the power structures of their time rather than challenging them. However, if we compare this to novels written today, can we expect these to comment on every possible fault with the current political and social system in a singular story? It is easy to criticise writers in hindsight, and it is vital to undertake this criticism. However, one must always consider the historical context to avoid creating an inaccurate picture of the past. Although they use their current social and political climate as a backdrop for their novels, it is also essential to understand that most authors write about what they know. Austen predominantly focuses on the middle classes, emphasising their domestic lives and

relationships with the upper classes. As a white woman of privilege, she may not have fully recognised the significance of writing more radical texts that could have addressed the experiences of women of other races and challenged British imperial practices. Even though there are several significant issues that are necessary to address, many novels fail to question or challenge the world around them. However, similarly to writers of the nineteenth century, middle-class authors today are criticised for not being sufficiently political (Childers 67). It raises the question of whether we should expect political challenges from all novels and writers or allow for creative license in works inspired by the real world.

At the time of her death in 1817, Austen had not yet attained the level of fame she would eventually achieve. On her deathbed, she had only earned £575 after tax, which in 2019, is valued at approximately £45,000 (Jones). Additionally, some of her novels were published by her family posthumously, including *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (Poplawski 58). Thus, she would not have been aware of the profound impact she would have on the literary world. Whether or not she successfully questioned the world around her depends on the critical lens through which we read her novels. Nonetheless, her books are continuously translated into discussions of modern-day issues and created the base for an ongoing debate about how we understand the past. Thus, I intend to add a perspective to the feminist discussion, building on the criticisms of other feminist critics such as Susan Fraiman, Jocelyn Harris, Deirdre Le Faye, John Wiltshire, and Moira Ferguson, among others. I will examine the instances in Austen's novel *Mansfield Park,* which point us closer to understanding how a woman in the nineteenth century could approach the subject in a socially acceptable fashion. Was she able to comment freely on slavery in her novels, or was her gender a hindrance to entering the political and public scene? My argument is that, yes, this was a hindrance. However, by applying her understated and covert writing style, she still managed to hint at and create powerful metaphors highlighting slavery. Although this reading of Austen does not determine her opinions, the evidence presented throughout this thesis will suggest that she may have had reservations about the slave trade. However, it is essential to note that these are suggestive, as we must acknowledge that information on her personal opinions is limited.

1.5. Why is Jane Austen still relevant?

The topic of this thesis is relevant today, as the historical repercussions of slavery and the slave trade are far from resolved. The recent payment of the debt from the Abolition of Slavery Act in 1833, made in 2015, is relevant information to consider. However, several

news sources have sensationalised this discovery without considering the intricacies of how banks tend to deal with longstanding loans and debts, which lies behind this loan's extensive down payment schedule. In an enquiry to the HM Treasury, legitimated by the Freedom of Information Act of 2000, the Treasury explained that the Slavery Abolition Act (1835) Loan "[…] was rolled over into the Government's gilt programme, ultimately into an undated gilt, the 4% Consolidated Loan (1957 or after)" (2). They further explain that a gilt is "[…] a financial instrument that pays coupons (interest payments) twice per year to the holder of the gilt, up to and including the date on which the amount borrowed is finally repaid" ("Freedom of Information Act 2000: Slavery Abolition Act 1833" 2). After 1957, the families had the option to claim the loan at any time, and thus, it was not necessary to redeem the 4% loan that year. Finally, the loan was paid back in full on 1 February 2015 due to the British Government's modernisation of their gilt catalogue, which required them to settle up with those families who had not previously redeemed their portion of the loan. Even though this discredits some of the news outlets' sensationalising the late down payment, it highlights the longevity of the business of slavery, especially concerning the economic reverberations.

Another detail which emphasises the longevity of the issue of British imperialism is that Caribbean Members of the Commonwealth are opting out of the organisation. The Caricom Reparations Commission (CRC) was established in 2013 by the Caribbean heads of government. CARICOM is an umbrella term for most countries in the Caribbean region, including countries such as Antigua, the Bahamas, Barbuda, St. Vincent, and Dominica, to name a few ("CARICOM"). The CRC is directing its mandate towards current European governments seeking reconciliation and compensation for the atrocities of the crimes caused by their predecessors. The CRC writes that:

> Victims and their descendants have a duty to call for reparatory justice. Their call for justice is the basis of the closure they seek to the terrible tragedies that engulfed humanity during modernity. […] The CRC sees the persistent racial victimization of the descendants of slavery and genocide as the root cause of their suffering today. The CRC recognizes that the persistent harm and suffering experienced today by these victims as the primary cause of development failure in the Caribbean. ("10-Point Reparation Plan").

This mandate from the CRC emphasises the continuing legacy of the transatlantic slave trade and its lasting repercussions on the people and the political, infrastructural, and medical state of countries in the Caribbean. It is relevant to this thesis to create an understanding of the lasting impacts of slavery on CARICOM countries and their relations to the previously colonising countries in Europe. The CRC has issued this mandate and stated that they want these European countries to make reparations, by monetary reimbursement, for the previous

countries' past conduct. At the moment of writing, these amends' fulfilment is still outstanding. As with the Slavery Abolition Act Loan's recent repayment, this is another factor that emphasises the issue's longevity and continual impact. Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade are still relevant today, and therefore I believe it is essential to recognise this in novels by famous, canonical authors such as Jane Austen.

The Jane Austen House Museum, situated in one of Austen's last residences, Chawton Cottage, reported that they intended to update the museum's display to include a more accurate historical framework for Austen's life and work. According to the staff at the museum, they "[…] are increasingly asked questions about this by our visitors and it is therefore appropriate that we share the information and research that already exists on her connections to slavery and its mention in her novels" ("A Statement from Jane Austen's House"). As often happens in the age of social media, their intention to update their displays was misconstrued and received backlash. Tabloids spread the belief that the museum was trying to discredit Austen's life and her novels. In response, the museum published a statement claiming that "the plans for refreshing the displays and decoration of Jane Austen's House have been misrepresented" and that "[…] we will not, and have never had any intention to, interrogate Jane Austen, her characters or her readers for drinking tea" ("A Statement from Jane Austen's House"). Their investigation intended to situate Austen and her family in a more accurate and detailed social, political, and historical context. Lizzie Dunford, director of the museum, responded to an inquiry by The Telegraph, telling them that "the slave trade and the consequences of Regency-era Colonialism touched every family of means during the period. Jane Austen's family was no exception" (Simpson). This backlash is part of the phenomenon called "cancel culture". The definition of "cancel culture" in the Cambridge Dictionary is "a way of behaving in a society or group, especially on social media, in which it is common to completely reject and stop supporting someone because they have said or done something that offends you" ("cancel culture"). Although this indicates the perceived rights or wrongs in society, it is contentious. On the one hand, it uncovers people's wrongs against other groups of people or causes and makes them accountable for their wrongful actions. On the other hand, this approach often does not allow individuals to learn from their mistakes, resulting in complete ostracism from society. The "cancellation" of people has been especially prominent after the Black Lives Movement gained momentum in 2013 after the African American teenager, Trayvon Martin, was killed without provocation by a white man carrying out a neighbourhood patrol. Following this horrific incident, an offensive began against the

widespread dominion of white supremacy, especially against symbols that represented this power (Thebault).

Austen's family legacy is not the only connection under investigation in the last few years. The National Trust, which is Europe's largest conservation charity, looks after woodlands, historic buildings, gardens, coastlines and more. In 2020 they published a report addressing the connections between colonialism and the properties they care for, in addition to potential links to the abolition of slavery and campaigns against colonial oppression. In the introduction to the report, they state that:

> […] a significant number of the collections, houses, gardens and parklands in our care were created or remodelled as expressions of the taste and wealth, as well as power and privilege that derived from colonial connections and in some cases from the trade in enslaved people. (Bailey et al. 5).

It is important to note that this report did not intend to ostracise and shut down the places the National Trust cares for and maintains. Instead, it was done to acknowledge the different histories these places possess and ensure that various perspectives, including properties connected to abolitionist support and resistance, are included to create a more detailed and accurate portrayal of Britain's heritage. Previously, the emphasis on preserving country houses embodying a patriotic English identity caused historians to overlook such histories. However, this report intends to highlight that the origins of wealth that went into the building and renovating these houses, as well as collections of objects within the houses, were in some places funded by overseas businesses. The report questions the idea of British identity as confined to mainland Britain. As Said stated, the export of English culture, such as the dissemination of novels to the colonies, has been considered a one-way street ("Narrative and Social Space" 75-77). However, the cultural influx from overseas territories has challenged English identity's previously perceived static nature. Historians Margot Finn and Kate Smith draw a timeline from the establishment of the East India Company in 1599 to the dissolution of the British Empire in the second half of the twentieth century. They remark that the "Empire fundamentally shaped elite British country houses in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, adding to the constellation of dynamic processes by which British built environments absorbed and reflected global material cultures" (Bailey et al. 8). This reflection of global influence might not seem explicitly evident in *Mansfield Park.* However, if we study the text meticulously and attempt to understand what historical references these details conceal, we uncover a new understanding of the novel's relation to the surrounding world.

1.6. Imperialist Practices in the British Novel

Two chapters from Edward Said's work, *Culture and Imperialism*, are essential to explain the background for this thesis, namely *Narrative and Social Space* and *Jane Austen and Empire*. Said's essays sparked a debate in Austen criticism regarding her and other contemporary authors' relationship to the British Empire, emphasising that seemingly apolitical works of literature can be complicit in the reproduction of imperialist power structures. The opening sentence of *Narrative and Social Space* states Said's position quite accurately:

> In *Mansfield Park*, which within Jane Austen's work carefully defines the moral and social values informing her other novels, references to Sir Thomas Bertram's overseas possessions are threaded through; they give him wealth, occasion his absences, fix his social status at home and abroad, and make possible his values, to which Fanny Price (and Austen herself) finally subscribes. ("Narrative and Social Space" 62).

He emphasises Austen and her characters' fiscal and social dependence on imperial overseas possessions. Said is accurate in his presentation that the landed gentry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries heavily relied on wealth to keep up the pretence of their social order and class status (Mortimer 61). He gives examples of other novels with an imperial backdrop, such as Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, and Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*. Said compares the English and the French novel, arguing that the former is a distinct entity in and of itself. Due to the instability of France's political situation at the turn of the century, with the French Revolution, the Terror, and finally, Napoleon seizing power and subsequently proclaiming himself Emperor in 1804, led to a less stable imperial presence and identity for the French than the one the British managed to maintain (Said "Narrative and Social Space" 63). This instability is briefly mentioned in *Mansfield Park* when Sir Thomas speaks about his return journey where there was an "[…] alarm of a French privateer […]" (Jane Austen 141). Thus, when British authors wrote their novels using elements of the British Empire as a backdrop for their narratives, these works were more closely entwined with British identity and culture than any other imperial nation.

Said highlighted that criticism of the novel genre has omitted almost entirely the significance of imperial and colonial possessions. He asserts that these aspects are taken for granted and that they primarily serve as an exciting background for the novels rather than diving into the implications of this backdrop (Said "Narrative and Social Space" 64). In this chapter, he introduces a new way of approaching a text, calling it "contrapuntal reading" (Said "Narrative and Social Space" 66). A contrapuntal reading attempts to view a text from two different perspectives. In the postcolonial context, this would mean reading a text from both the coloniser and the colonised points of view. One method of contrapuntal reading is first to take

note of what is explicitly stated in, for example, a novel. Next, the reading should focus on representations hiding in the margins of the text. In performing such a reading, potentially forgotten or repressed voices then emerge, creating a more representative and historically accurate picture, or as Said describes it, a "[…] contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it" ("Narrative and Social Space" 66). Thus, the most prominent and the marginal voices simultaneously emerge, creating a more balanced and accurate narrative. Most famously from this chapter is Said's interpretation of what implications lie within the novel genre. He remarks that:

> I am not trying to say that the novel – or the culture in the broad sense – "caused" imperialism, but that the novel, as a cultural artefact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other. Of all the major literary forms, the novel is the most recent, its emergence the most datable, its occurrence the most Western, its normative pattern of social authority the most structured; imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible I would argue, to read one without in some way dealing with the other. (Said "Narrative and Social Space" 70-71).

Said attempts to show that the historical timeline of the birth of the Western novel lines up more or less with the rise of Western imperialism. Thus, Said implies that it is possible to connect novels, especially by British authors, as supplementary vehicles that contribute to imperialism's expansion and sustain its practices. I wish to build part of my discussion of *Mansfield Park* on this understanding of the novel as implicated in the broader imperialistic culture of Britain. Additionally, I intend to implement the contrapuntal reading, which Said presents as critical to a thorough understanding, taking what is marginal in *Mansfield Park* and bringing it to the forefront of the discussion. I aim to augment the contrapuntal reading of the novel by incorporating a gendered dimension, which I believe is lacking in Said's interpretation.

Said finds Austen's mercantilist use of Antigua reprehensive, considering that the overarching theme he identifies in *Mansfield Park* is morality. However, I would argue that Said does not recognise the significance of Austen's satirical and understated writing style. He explains that "[…] Sir Thomas's infrequent trips to Antigua as an absentee plantation owner reflect the diminishment of his class's power […]" (Said "Jane Austen and Empire" 1123). Although we cannot be sure of what Austen's intentions were with including Antigua in her narrative, we need to take her writing style, social class, and gender into consideration. As mentioned, we must consider women's possibilities for commenting on the public and political sphere. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that Said does not discount *Mansfield Park* as belonging to the literary canon. He states that:

> Yes, Austen belonged to a slave-owning society, but do we therefore jettison her novels as so many trivial exercises in aesthetic frumpery? Not at all, I would argue, if we take seriously our intellectual and interpretative vocation to make connections, to deal with as much of the evidence as possible, fully and actually, to read what is there or not there, above all, to see complementarity and interdependence instead of isolated, venerated, or formalized experience that excludes and forbids the hybridizing intrusions of human history. (Said "Jane Austen and Empire" 1124).

He wished to place the novel in the proper historical context, highlighting what had previously been ignored and placing importance on its use of imperial dominions. Here, Said invites the reader to explore and interpret Austen's work from several perspectives, broadening our knowledge about the historical context in which she lived. Rather than attempt to guard Austen's untarnished reputation, we must confront the uncomfortable truths about the Regency era and her writings. We must deromanticise this period and Austen's works and recognise that she was not infallible or immune to problematic occurrences of her time. Said writes that "[…] everything we know about Austen and her values is at odds with the cruelty of slavery" ("Jane Austen and Empire" 1124). Again, I want to reiterate that I do not intend to discount Said's discussion of *Mansfield Park* but rather add a perspective to the continuing conversation surrounding the novel. Despite the recent cancel-culture controversies surrounding Austen, even Said did not view his reading as justification for her removal from the literary canon.

1.7. The Absence of Gender

In the last paragraph of the chapter, *Narrative and Social Space,* there is an attempt to remedy the absence of gender in Said's discussion:

> The capacity to represent, portray, characterize, and depict is not easily available to just any member of just any society; more-over, the "what" and "how" in the representation of "things", while allowing for considerable individual freedom, are circumscribed and socially regulated. We have become aware in recent years of the constraints upon the cultural representation of women, and the pressures that go into the created representations of inferior classes and races. ("Narrative and Social Space" 80).

Said acknowledges that individuals may not be free to express themselves in all forms or within a particular society, as social and legal structures heavily influence this. Susan Fraiman, however, critiques Said for his inattention towards the feminist criticism of Austen. Although he mentions that "we have become aware in recent years of the constraints upon the cultural representation of women," he "[…] makes no mention of Margaret Kirkham (1983) or Moira Ferguson (1991) […]," scholars specifically addressing the slavery theme in *Mansfield Park* from a feminist perspective years before the publication of Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (Fraiman 816). Although the last paragraph attempts to portray the difficulties authors might encounter based on gender, race, and class, I agree with Fraiman that it is a rather feeble attempt. Throughout the chapter, he never discusses the limitations placed upon people of different genders and classes in relation to novel writing. Said should have explored this point further,

especially considering women authors of the Regency era. Instead, the limited commentary feels like an afterthought by Said. He neglects a proper discussion of the societal possibilities and restrictions available to the different genders, excluding the recognition that women authors had to navigate the social landscape differently than their male counterparts. The reality was that expressing opinions on controversial political matters, such as slavery and the slave trade, could damage the reputation of the women authors and their families.

In Said's defence, I would suggest that his focus on postcolonial and racial matters might serve a specific purpose. Again, as with Austen, I cannot surmise Said's intentions when writing these chapters. Nonetheless, there might be an explanation for why he omits intersectional issues, primarily focusing on postcolonial criticism. One reason might be that if he performs a reading considering the factors of "cultural representation of women, and the pressures that go into the created representations of inferior classes and races," it could dilute his argument (Said "Narrative and Social Space" 80). Political matters often present situations where advocating for only one cause may seem necessary, such as in cases of ideology or policy. In the 1970s, during the height of the feminist and civil rights movements, black women were never fully included in the two factions. Within the civil rights movement, "gender issues were not addressed, [and][5] the vision of equality for blacks was seen as adequately encompassing black male and female experience" (Langston 163). Liberal feminism, on the other hand, "[…] has been critiqued for its white middle class focus," which "[…] overlooked racial and class differences" (Langston 165). In response, "some Black power feminists started their own organizations, partly out of frustration with black male sexism and white women's racial insensitivities" (Greene 10). In simple terms, black men only had one prominent area of fundamental human rights undermined. On the other hand, black women had race and gender issues to contend with (Crenshaw 1277). Although the civil rights movement and the feminist movement shared a common goal of gaining equal rights, they had the conviction that fighting for more than one cause, such as race and gender, would weaken their arguments and create conflicts that made it challenging to reach their goals. Perhaps this is what Said had in mind when writing *Culture and Imperialism.* If he were to perform an intersectional reading of *Mansfield Park,* his argument might not have had the impact it did. The message would come across more efficiently by presenting a singular, postcolonial focus. Although I believe this approach is valid, it nonetheless creates an inaccurate picture of the whole situation which Black feminists were attempting to challenge. Nevertheless, Said's method was effective, opening discussions of an almost unexplored area

of Austen studies. Thus, I intend to build upon Said's postcolonial analysis, adding an intersectional, gender-focused, new historicist reading of *Mansfield Park*. This approach will allow for a deeper examination of the portrayal of women and their roles as marital commodities during the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries.

2. Marital Commodities

Some believe Austen wrote many letters of political significance to her sister Cassandra. A considerable number of these letters were burnt by Cassandra, strengthening this suspicion. Although many letters survive, Austen's niece, Caroline Austen, recorded that Jane's "[…] letters to Aunt Cassandra […] were, I dare say, open and confidential – My Aunt looked them over and burnt the greater part […]" (Le Faye xii). Perhaps these letters might have shed more light on Austen's political views. Another factor which ties into this is that Austen's writing would affect the status of her family name. In the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries England, status was everything. An example of how vital status was at the time is portrayed in Ian Mortimer's book, *A Guide to Regency Britain*, where he writes about the reasons for duelling between men. He notes that "[…] the greater your reputation, the more important it is that you do everything that you can to defend it" (Mortimer 107). The same applies to every family of consequence in the established social order. Thus, her actions as a novel writer could influence the family's position in society, harm Jane and Cassandra's marital possibilities, and afflict her brothers' naval careers in the Royal Navy. Cassandra may have decided that burning Jane's letters would be the best way to protect her sister's legacy.

For female authors such as Austen, several factors are essential to highlight to understand her societal position. First and foremost, being a woman limits which spheres she is allowed to access. During this period, women of Austen's social class were, for the most part, expected to only concern themselves with issues such as becoming accomplished women, securing a husband, and focusing on homemaking. Dashielle Horn notes that "British culture of the time understood women as either married or unmarried: wives or widows, maids waiting to marry, or spinsters doomed to their fate by an inability to attract a husband" (237). At the time, marriage would be considered a public matter due to the economic advantages of unity between wealthy families. Women were typically not involved in the transactional aspect of marital affairs. The woman's part of the equation was to occupy herself with trying to appear as the most amiable and handsome version of herself. An example in *Mansfield Park* is when Sir Thomas learns of his daughter Maria's engagement with Mr. Rushworth. Although he later concerns himself with his daughter's happiness in this

marriage, his first response is to consider the advantages such a connection might have for himself:

> Sir Thomas, however, was truly happy in the prospect of an alliance so unquestionably advantageous, and of which he heard nothing but the perfectly good and agreeable. It was a connexion exactly of the right sort – in the same county, and the same interest – and his most hearty concurrence was conveyed as soon as possible. (Jane Austen 32).

The potential advantage of a match with Mr. Rushworth is that it could afford Sir Thomas more power through financial and political support. Additionally, Jane Stabler notes that they would have similar economic and political concerns, "[…] as the landed interest fought hard to prevent the abolition of mantraps to catch poachers, to maintain high rents, and to fix high prices for agricultural produce" (397). In a conversation between Mary Crawford and Mrs. Grant, they discuss Mr. Rushworth's and Sir Thomas's connection, contemplating Mr. Rushworth's future. Mrs. Grant muses, "I dare say he *will* be in Parliament soon. When Sir Thomas comes, I dare say he will be in for some borough, but there has been nobody to put him in the way of doing anything yet" (Jane Austen 126). Thus, Sir Thomas is not the only one aware of the potential political advantage of the match. If he manages to engage a position for Mr. Rushworth in the House of Commons, he will have an ally to support him in cases of Parliament. One such point, which was close to absentee planter's hearts, was to prevent the abolition of the slave trade. Gaining Mr. Rushworth as a family member and securing him a position in Parliament could strengthen Mr. Rushworth's loyalty and garner support for Sir Thomas's interests. Marrying daughters to wealthy, land-owning men, or marrying other MPs' daughters, was a common practice to secure one's own business and accumulate even more wealth (Stabler 407). The issue of supplying daughters with a dowry would be a drop in the ocean compared to the revenue that would most likely come from a familial connection between the wealthy. Claudia L. Johnson points out that:

> […] women serve in many cultures as the currency of exchange between men, and by using Maria to form an alliance with a man of Mr. Rushworth's stature, Sir Thomas would seem to agree that this is what his daughters are for. ("Mansfield Park : Confusions of Guilt and Revolutions of Mind" 119).

Thus, considering Maria as a currency of exchange, the marriage market resembles the sale of human flesh. She is a commodity traded between Sir Thomas and Mr. Rushworth, each serving their individual interests. Maria, on the other hand, has been indoctrinated to believe that it is her "duty" and "moral obligation" to marry Mr. Rushworth against her better judgement (Jane Austen 31).

One might argue that the reason Austen did not publicly comment on or write about slavery was due to the surveillance and scrutiny of society. Social norms are powerful, so this

might explain her silence. If she was to comment on the heavily contested slave trade outright and in a castigating manner, she might face serious consequences. Austen gives us an example in *Mansfield Park* when Mrs. Rushworth, previously known as Maria Bertram, runs off with Henry Crawford, leaving her husband behind. Whilst Henry gets away with "[…] the public punishment of disgrace […] we know, not one of the barriers which society gives to virtue. In this world the penalty is less equal than could be wished […]" (Jane Austen 368). Equally, Mr. Rushworth "[…] was released from the engagement to be mortified and unhappy, till some other pretty girl could attract him into matrimony again […]" (Jane Austen 364). Maria, on the other hand, accompanied by Mrs. Norris, suffers a harsher fate as society and Mansfield Park banish them from their midst, "[…] an establishment being formed for them in another country, remote and private […] with little society […]" (Jane Austen 365). Surprisingly, when Fanny's father, Mr. Price, reads about the scandal in the newspaper, he exclaims, "But by G – if she belonged to me, I'd give her the rope's end as long as I could stand over her. A little flogging for man and woman too, would be the best way of preventing such things" (Jane Austen 345). It would seem like people of lower social classes, such as the Price family, are less inclined to pardon a man for improper behaviour. However, the focus lies on Maria being perceived as belonging to a father figure, which grants him the authority to punish her for deviating from social norms. Although Stabler writes that flogging was a common punishment in the Navy, it invokes ideas of the whip used to torment enslaved people on plantations (Stabler 418).

However, nineteenth-century social norms dictated widely differing punishments for men and women of the middle and upper classes. Austen's comment that "the penalty is less equal than could be wished," uncovers feelings of discontent towards the differences in public treatment based on gender (365). Therefore, I believe there are significant differences between male and female authors in this period and that Said's grouping of these paints a false picture of the situation in society. The powerful social norms created widely different opportunities for men and women, and Austen was aware of this. Even though Austen's persona has attained almost mythical properties as a canonical figure, she was still a regular person with hopes, dreams, and challenges that affected her life choices. On the one hand, she seems to use her female characters as vehicles to convey her own opinions and criticisms of the society in which she lived, especially concerning the marriage market. On the other hand, however, her female characters are sometimes portrayed as flawed, unlikeable, and lacking in agency. Although we should not equate any of the characters' personalities with Austen's

disposition, we need to view these female characters as mediums through which she could express herself in the public sphere without severe repercussions to herself and her family's reputation. It reflects her nuanced understanding of the social, political, and cultural forces which impacted and shaped women's lives.

2.1. Women, Abolition, and Mental Slavery

In Margaret Doody's book *Jane Austen's names: riddles, persons, places*, she discusses a political connection which is highly pertinent to the debate of *Mansfield Park*. The women's suffragette movement and abolitionism were closely linked (Greene 11-12). As discussed earlier, middle to upper-class women were some of the fiercest abolitionists, heading many of the anti-slavery rallies of their time. The famed suffragist and women's rights activist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, wrote in a speech titled "Address to the Legislature of New York," delivered on January 24, 1854, that "the wife who inherits no property holds about the same legal position that does the slave on the southern plantation" (Stanton 9). In hindsight, the comparison between the enslaved person and the woman's plight is controversial, as it is inappropriate and insensitive to equate these non-homogenous experiences. The slave's life was uniquely horrific due to inhuman treatment, including torturous methods used by their owners and overseers to control them. However, some suffragists and abolitionists used this rhetoric to highlight the oppressive nature of societal, patriarchal structures that denied both women and enslaved people their rights. In *Mansfield Park,* we see tendencies towards this comparison, represented chiefly by Fanny Price. Additionally, Doody studied the naming of the Ward sisters. There are three Ward sisters. Maria Ward marries Sir Thomas Bertram and becomes Lady Bertram. The second sister, Miss Ward[6], becomes Mrs. Norris when she marries the Reverend Mr. Norris. The last sister, Frances Ward, marries beneath her station to Mr. Price, a lieutenant in the Marines, becoming Mrs. Price. The significance of the name Ward is not to be dismissed. As Doody explains, the word ward "[…] can mean a guard – or a person or thing guarded. A legal ward is a person under the governance of another, as an orphan not yet twenty-one can be 'a ward of the court'" (Doody 127). Further, she points out that the word "ward" applies to many of the women at Mansfield. Most of these women are under the governance of a man for most of their life, whether it be a father, a guardian, a brother, or a husband.

Initially, the Ward sisters are under the guardianship of their uncle. When Maria Ward becomes Lady Bertram, "All Huntingdon exclaimed on the greatness of the match, and her uncle, the lawyer, himself, allowed her to be at least three thousand pounds short of any

equitable claim to it" (Jane Austen 3). From this small excerpt, we see the transaction which happens between Maria's uncle and Sir Thomas. Her uncle lowers her dowry, as her beauty provides enough value to justify a price reduction. Through Maria's marriage to Sir Thomas, her uncle and the Ward family have gained a valuable connection. Marriages of the landed gentry, upper classes, and royalty were usually business transactions used to gain status by being associated with the "right" families and procuring financial advantages (Bailey 1). When Fanny is grappling with the proposal from Henry Crawford, the only advice Lady Bertram gives her is "[…] you must be aware, Fanny, that it is every young woman's duty to accept such a very unexceptionable offer as this" (Jane Austen 261). As Doody also emphasises, the fact that this is "[…] the only piece of advice, which Fanny had ever received from her aunt in eight years and a half […]" is enough evidence of Lady Bertram's sentiments towards the state of marriage (Jane Austen 261). Austen's satirical writing style makes it essential not to overlook this commentary. Lady Bertram's passivity towards her children is also notable:

> To the education of her daughters Lady Bertram paid not the smallest attention. She had not time for such cares. She was a woman who spent her days in sitting, nicely dressed, on a sofa, doing some long piece of needlework, of little use and no beauty, thinking more of her pug than her children […], guided in everything important by Sir Thomas, and in smaller concerns by her sister. (Jane Austen 16).

Lady Bertram's disinterest in her children and reliance on Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris to make decisions may stem from her recognition of her powerlessness in society. Upon completing her purpose in life, she gives up trying as her one value in this world has disappeared. She becomes "[…] of little use and no beauty […]" (Jane Austen 16). Doody reinforces this interpretation by describing that "the captive and largely isolated Lady Bertram becomes trained by her marriage into almost total passivity" (Doody 129). She has provided Sir Thomas with an heir and a spare, as is her duty, and is no longer required to undertake anything. The only thing that interests her is her pug (Jane Austen 16). Sir Thomas also disregards her comforts when he sends Fanny away to Portsmouth, "[…] obtaining [permission][7] rather from submission […] than conviction" (Jane Austen 291). Lady Bertram's case directly parallels some aspects of the slave trade. If we consider the simple mechanics of selling a person from one master to another, taking away their independence and self-governance, Lady Bertram fits the bill.

If we look at the other Ward sisters, Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Price, we see they have a lot more power despite their life's direction. Mrs. Norris takes up a prominent position at the Mansfield estate in Sir Thomas's absence, undertaking the role of overseer of what I have

decided to call “the plantation of Mansfield Park”. Although she is married off to Mr. Norris by her uncle, she takes matters into her own hands to elevate her position and status. However, she is still under Sir Thomas’s thumb as he drives her out of Mansfield at the novel's end. Mrs. Price, on the other hand, disobeys her family and marries beneath her, “[…] to disoblige her family, and by fixing on a lieutenant of the marines, without education, fortune, or connexions […]” (Jane Austen 3). However, the stress of raising ten children necessitates the help of Sir Thomas to lighten the financial burden. Fanny, on the other hand, is Sir Thomas’s actual ward, the latter “[…] who seemed to stand in the place of her parents […]” (Jane Austen 245). Sir Thomas takes Fanny under his wing and brings her up amongst his children. Despite this, he takes pains to make sure Fanny and his children know that there are differences between them. Sir Thomas states this clearly in a discussion with Mrs. Norris about her upbringing, stressing the importance:

> […] to preserve in the minds of my *daughters* the consciousness of what they are, without making them think too lowly of their cousin; and how, without depressing her spirits too far, to make her remember that she is not a *Miss Bertram*. (Jane Austen 9).

This statement makes clear Fanny’s position at Mansfield Park. Lady Bertram uses Fanny as her maid, seeing “[…] no harm in the poor little thing, and always found her very handy and quick in carrying messages, and fetching what she wanted” (Jane Austen 16). Additionally, Lady Bertram disregards any emotional distress she causes Fanny when there are talks about Mrs. Norris taking over as her guardian. She claims, “It can make very little difference to you, whether you are in one house or the other” (Jane Austen 20). Although Fanny seems to ease quickly into the way of life at Mansfield, this might be due to a self-delusional practice to preserve her sanity. During her time in Portsmouth, she discounts that “[…] she had known the pains of tyranny, of ridicule, and neglect […]” at Mansfield, imagining a different reality than the real one (Jane Austen 119). The messages Fanny has received about her social standing have led her to accept the poor treatment as normal. In talks with Edmund, she sorrowfully remarks, "I can never be important to any one,” as she is convinced of her insignificance (Jane Austen 21).

However, we may be able to come to Sir Thomas’s defence due to his material assistance to the Price family. Austen writes that “Sir Thomas did not forget to do what he could for the children of Mrs. Price; he assisted her liberally in the education and disposal of her sons as they became old enough for a determinate pursuit […]” (Jane Austen 17). Yet, Austen’s choice of wording that he aids Mrs. Price in “disposing” of her sons further proves his mercenary view on people. Sir Thomas’s actions and thoughts reveal that although

children can be a drain on resources, they can be used as valuables, readily traded. However, Sir Thomas's material aid saves their children from an impoverished future. How Austen describes Fanny's inner turmoil demonstrates the toll her treatment at Mansfield has taken on her self-worth. I would argue that Austen's portrayal of Fanny and the Ward sisters in *Mansfield Park* parallels the oppression of women and enslaved people. She is critical of the treatment of Fanny and the Ward sisters in this patriarchal society, and by extension, she presents a critique of slavery. Austen portrays their limited opportunities and freedom of choice, which makes a broader statement about societal oppression, including slavery. In both cases, individuals are subject to the control of others and lack agency in their own lives, as is evident in Fanny and the Ward sisters' lives. As mentioned earlier, such a comparison is problematic. At the time, however, it was a compelling commentary from a domestic perspective. The closer examination of Fanny and the Ward sisters contradicts and invalidates Said's critique of Austen, who accused her of being too casual in her criticism of politics and the surrounding world ("Jane Austen and Empire" 1119).

He makes it abundantly clear that Fanny and his daughters, Maria and Julia, "[….] cannot be equals. Their ranks, fortune, rights, and expectations will always be different" (Jane Austen 9). Her aunt Norris constantly reinforces this idea to Fanny. When the Grants invite Fanny to dinner at the Parsonage, Mrs. Norris makes sure to quash any notions Fanny might have by insisting that "[…] people are never respected when they step out of their proper sphere. Remember *that*, Fanny" (Jane Austen 172). Fanny, on the other hand, has constantly been reminded of this by her aunt since she first arrived at Mansfield, so "she rated her own claims to comfort as low even as Mrs. Norris could […]" (Jane Austen 173). Although this last interaction occurred years after her first arrival at Mansfield, this type of treatment has been there from the very beginning:

> Nobody meant to be unkind, but nobody put themselves out of their way to secure her comfort. […] Fanny, whether near or from her cousins, whether in the schoolroom, the drawing-room, or the shrubbery, was equally forlorn, finding something to fear in every person and place. She was disheartened by Lady Bertram's silence, awed by Sir Thomas's grave looks, and quite overcome by Mrs. Norris's admonitions. Her elder cousins mortified her by reflections on her size, and abashed her by noticing her shyness: Miss Lee wondered at her ignorance, and the maid-servants sneered at her clothes; and when to these sorrows was added the idea of the brothers and sisters among whom she had always been important as playfellow, instructress, and nurse, the despondence that sunk her little heart was severe. (Jane Austen 11-12).

Although she gradually becomes more comfortable at Mansfield over the years, the initial impression sticks with her and ingrains a fearful respect for the place. She is always nervous around her uncle and constantly terrified at the very thought of him, incessantly criticised by her aunt Norris, and never entirely accepted by the Bertram girls. Edmund is the only person

who cares to hear her opinions, although she often cautiously delivers them. Fanny's existence at Mansfield is one of constant agitation, never entirely at ease under its roof. If we consider this in the context of early feminism's strategy of comparing women's situation to the slave, we can see a direct parallel. Fanny is removed from her true family, where she is valued as a "playfellow, instructress, and nurse" amongst her siblings. Then, one day, she is "torn from them" by the master of Mansfield Park to come and live amongst them against her will (Jane Austen 290). During her upbringing at the estate, she is not included as a family member and is treated poorly by its inhabitants, who break down her sense of self-worth, creating a mousy-like shadow of a person.

Additionally, when she stays in Portsmouth for a while, she is never entirely accepted amongst her closest family. Fanny hopes to be received by an overjoyed mother who has missed her dearly. However, the reality of the situation is quite different. Only a week after the commencement of her stay, Fanny gives way to feelings of disappointment in her family:

> She might scruple to make use of the words, but she must and did feel that her mother was a partial, ill-judging parent, a dawdle, a slattern, who neither taught nor restrained her children, whose house was the scene of mismanagement and discomfort from beginning to end, and who had no talent, no conversation, no affection towards herself; no curiosity to know her better, no desire of her friendship, and no inclination for her company that could lessen her sense of such feelings. (Jane Austen 306-07).

The emotional neglect is generally reserved for the girls in the Price family, as Mrs. Price's actions reveal that "her daughters never had been much to her" (Jane Austen 306). Fanny most severely feels this, as she expected better treatment with her natural family than in her uncle's family circle. However, the explanation may be that girls were less valuable, as they did not provide an income to the household. This is portrayed when Mr. Price receives Fanny at Portsmouth. He "[…] observed that she was grown into a woman, and he supposed would be wanting a husband soon, seemed very much inclined to forget her again" (Jane Austen 299). Her sister Susan, who is used to this treatment by her parents, is less affected by this neglect as she has brothers and sisters to lean on for support. Fanny has William and Edmund to rely on. However, these two are not always reliable, as William is at sea, and Edmund is distracted by his love for Mary Crawford. Fanny's displacement from her natural family has made her a stranger in what was once her home. Her siblings, who were once her closest companions, barely recognise her. Unfortunately, her long absence has made her parents and siblings view her as an outsider. Although this is not nearly as severe as the treatment of slaves, the displacement of enslaved peoples' children was common. In most cases, they never saw them again. I would argue that we can see Fanny's relocation as a covert metaphor, comparing her displacement to a slave's experience. Fanny is taken from her home at an early

age, used as a maidservant by the Bertram family, and is forgotten by her family in Portsmouth, as they do not expect to see her again. Although this comparison is highly contentious, we must see it from Austen's historical and social context.

2.2. The Price of Fanny

After Sir Thomas returns from Antigua, he arranges a ball for Fanny and her brother, William, who is on leave from the Royal Navy. During this ball, Sir Thomas hopes to present Fanny in a favourable light for Mr. Crawford. The description of Fanny clearly emphasises her mercenary value; "She was attractive, she was modest, she was Sir Thomas's niece […]" (Austen, 318). Henry Crawford also sees Fanny in a similar light, calling her "[…] an interesting object […]," who is "[…] dependent, helpless, friendless, neglected, forgotten" (Jane Austen 213, 33). This portrayal depicts Fanny as an attractive commodity, embodying the desirable traits of young women at the time and portraying her as a defenceless pawn in the marital game. Additionally, she belongs to Sir Thomas, which further strengthens her financial and social worth. Although Sir Thomas does not take credit for her appearance, his thoughts reveal that "[…] he was pleased with himself for having supplied everything else: education and manners she owed him" (Jane Austen 216). He seems highly aware of his feelings of ownership towards Fanny. This sentiment is echoed at the end of the novel, where he thinks that "Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted. His charitable kindness […]" had resulted in raising "[…] a prime comfort for himself. His liberality had a rich repayment, and the general goodness of his intentions by her, deserved it" (Jane Austen 371). Austen's choice to write that Sir Thomas received a "rich repayment" highlights the mercenary aspect of his so-called liberality. It portrays Fanny as a high-risk investment, which finally yields capital (Rowney 55). However, he also reflects on his treatment of Fanny, shedding light on how his estimation of someone's value parallels his interactions with them. He assesses his treatment of her by musing that "he might have made her childhood happier, but it had been an error of judgement only which had given him the appearance of harshness, and deprived him of her early love […]" (Jane Austen 371). Although Sir Thomas admits that he could have made life easier for her growing up, the result was a compliant and good-natured adopted daughter who became a suitable wife for his son Edmund.

There is an instance in the narrative where we understand that Sir Thomas has reevaluated Fanny's worth and intends to improve the treatment she receives from him. He visits her in the East room, which has been at Fanny's disposal since the beginning of her residency at Mansfield, since the rest of the family "[…] reckoned [it][8] too small for

anybody's comfort" (Jane Austen 304). There has never been a fire lit in this room since she first began occupying it. When Sir Thomas is made aware of this, he exclaims that "It is highly unfit for you to sit, be it only half an hour a day, without a fire. You are not strong. You are chilly. Your aunt cannot be aware of this" (Jane Austen 244). What is remarkable about this exchange is that this is the first time he has objected to the absence of a fire, as he has previously visited Fanny in the East room. Out of the blue, he is concerned for Fanny's health. We can be sure, however, that this concern is not focused solely on her well-being. Sir Thomas's punishment of Fanny for rejecting Mr. Crawford's proposal is to send her to Portsmouth. Like many other ports in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Portsmouth is a cramped and dirty place ridden with deadly diseases (Mortimer 22-23). Sir Thomas knows Fanny's health is fragile and still sends her off, risking a severe illness or death. Thus, the sudden anxiety towards lighting a fire in the East Room is evidently a concern for Fanny's mercenary value in the marital market.

2.3. The Language of Patriarchy

Sir Thomas attempts to manipulate Fanny's experience of reality instead of admitting that the household members have treated her poorly. He expresses that "[…] I think too well of you, Fanny, to suppose you will ever harbour resentment on that account. You have an understanding which will prevent you from receiving things only in part, and judging partially by the event" (Jane Austen 244). In this passage, he guides her through her emotions, trying to fabricate a new understanding of the treatment she has received and manipulating her reality. He continues by saying that "you will take in the whole of the past, you will consider times, persons, and probabilities, and you will feel that *they* were not least your friends who were educating and preparing you for that mediocrity of condition which *seemed* to be your lot" (244-45). He lays the groundwork for how he expects her to behave and react and stresses the gratitude Fanny owes him for taking her in and bringing her up in better circumstances. By emphasising that they were only "educating and preparing [her][9] for that mediocrity of condition which *seemed* to be [her][10] lot," he expects her to be grateful for the poor treatment she has received, as they believe they have done more than is expected of people of their status. Sir Thomas notes, "Though their caution may prove eventually unnecessary, it was kindly meant […], that every advantage of affluence will be doubled by the little privations and restrictions that may have been imposed" (Jane Austen 244-45). He exempts the Bertram family from faults by twisting reality, trying to make Fanny see that all her mistreatment has been to her advantage. He even admits to there having been "privations" and "restrictions" in

her upbringing, but he downplays the severity of these by employing the word "little" in front of these words. Additionally, Christopher Stampone emphasises the implication and use of words such as "gratitude," "duty," and "obligation" (198). He connects the use of seemingly innocent words to what a "[…] villain in a Gothic romance often demands of a heroine – the complete subjugation of her mind and body […]" (Stampone 198). He emphasises that although these words and sentiments seem benign, they are the tools of language of British patriarchy which "[…] aims at the submission and mental enslavement of individuals – especially women" (Stampone 198). Although these words do not appear in the excerpt above, Sir Thomas's expectations that Fanny should feel sentiments of duty, obligation, and gratitude are clear. He charges her as "self-willed, obstinate, selfish, and ungrateful […]," attributes which are not welcome in a woman during this time (Jane Austen 250). The fire that Sir Thomas makes sure is lit in the East Room also manipulates Fanny's feelings of gratitude. She exclaims, "I must be a brute, indeed, if I can be really ungrateful […] over that too great indulgence and luxury of a fire upstairs" (Jane Austen 252, 57). Sir Thomas manipulates Fanny into believing that having a fire is a luxury that requires repayment. He admits to the neglect, subjugation, and manipulation of Fanny by himself and others in the household, revealing that he is highly aware of his expectations that she be submissive and tractable owing to her dependence upon them.

One might question whether bringing her to Mansfield in the first place was charitable. She is left in a state of limbo, never fully belonging anywhere. She is not of the landed gentry class that her cousins belong to, and she cannot return to the working-class way of life as she has become accustomed to grander comforts. Sir Thomas's "[…] prime motive in sending her away had very little to do with the propriety of seeing her parents again, and nothing at all with any idea of making her happy" (Jane Austen 289). As discussed in the previous paragraph, Sir Thomas knows what he is putting Fanny through. He knows she will not fit in with her family in Portsmouth, as she has become too accustomed to higher, material, and proprietary standards. Sir Thomas muses that:

> […] a little abstinence from the elegancies and luxuries of Mansfield Park, would bring her mind into a sober state, and incline her to a juster estimate of the value of that home of greater permanence, and equal comfort, of which she had the offer. It was a medicinal project upon his niece's understanding, which he must consider as at present diseased. (Jane Austen 289).

In examining his language more meticulously, we should take note of words such as "abstinence," "sober," "medicinal," and "diseased". Here, we unveil the patriarchal language used to submit Fanny to Sir Thomas's will. He uses a vocabulary which portrays her as

intoxicated by "[…] a residence of eight or nine years in the abode of wealth and plenty [which][11] had a little disordered her powers of comparing and judging" (Jane Austen 298). Stabler notes that this type of vocabulary echoes the language found in conduct books during Austen's time, which portrayed women as afflicted or diseased if they failed to conform to the prescribed social norms of their gender (415). Thus, Sir Thomas's language concludes that Fanny has not been adequately trained, as she does not consent to Sir Thomas's wish to accept Henry Crawford's proposal. He intends to break her down and mould her into a submissive woman. Consequently, exiling her to "her father's house would, in all probability, teach her the value of a good income […]," sober her up, cure her, and make her realise that the offers of an abode at Mansfield Park, or with Henry Crawford are not permanent (Jane Austen 289).

Sir Thomas's intention behind this scheme is to remind Fanny of her place in the social order and that she is not in command of her own life. As Sir Thomas realises, Henry Crawford possesses both money and connections, and a refusal from Fanny would prevent Sir Thomas from reaping the benefits of the alliance. Although materially secure, she does not have total freedom, which ties her status as a woman to that of an enslaved person. Nonetheless, there is a significant difference between the two, as Fanny still has the power to protest. Although Sir Thomas attacks her mentally, he never raises a hand against Fanny, as he would probably have if one of his slaves in Antigua revolted against him. Sir Thomas cannot resort to the same punishment as Fanny's whiteness protects her. Instead, he sends her back to her family in Portsmouth. Although this might not seem a significant sentence, Fanny grows weaker during her time in Portsmouth. Throughout the narrative, we are often reminded of her fragile constitution. However, her early years in Portsmouth were spent in poverty, which may have stunted her growth and affected her health in the long term. The realities of life in Portsmouth in the early nineteenth century were harsh. Diseases and cramped housing combined created a brutal environment for people. Death resulting from poor living conditions was not uncommon at the time (Mortimer 284-88). Austen writes that Sir Thomas "[…] thought his niece in the most promising way of being starved, both mind and body, into a much juster value for Mr. Crawford's good company and good fortune" (324). Thus, Sir Thomas's punishment of Fanny is more severe than previously presumed. Austen knows this, and her contemporary readers were most likely aware of the foul conditions in port cities at the time. Although he cannot serve Fanny with the same punishments he would with his slaves, he still pushes her to the absolute limit, tormenting her physically and mentally by risking her life in his "experiment" (Jane Austen 324). This is one

of the moments we see Austen's covert commentary on slavery shine through. Although the treatment of Fanny is not as severe as plantation owners were towards their slaves, he applies techniques of mental enslavement to secure her submission and obedience. Through this examination, we glimpse Sir Thomas, the enslaver.

2.4. The Masters of Mansfield

Applying Said's technique of contrapuntal reading from a new historicist, and feminist perspective, the marginal becomes central to the understanding of *Mansfield Park.* Said's argument that Austen's use of external colonial possessions is too casual may be contested through Fanny's experiences at Mansfield. Much like Sir Thomas's slaves, he treats Fanny as a possession, a servant, taking her from her family in Portsmouth under the guise of benevolence and treating her poorly until she increases in marital value. However, even after her escalating significance, Sir Thomas rules with an iron fist. At the end of the ball held for Fanny and her brother William, he advises her to go to bed. However, "[…] 'advise' was his word, but it was the advice of absolute power […]" (Jane Austen 220). This command, Sir Thomas admits, serves the purpose of "[…] recommend[ing][12] her as a wife […]" to Mr. Crawford "[…] by shewing her persuadableness" (Jane Austen 220). Fanny and Sir Thomas's relationship is eerily reminiscent of the power relations between master and slave. Fanny knows she cannot resist his commands. Whether Austen intended this interpretation cannot be known. Still, we can see parallels between Fanny's mistreatment by Sir Thomas and speculate on how he acts on his sugar plantation in Antigua. This treatment of Fanny comes to a head when Tom Bertram falls ill closer to the novel's end. As a result of a bout of rambunctious partying, he almost dies of a high fever. The Bertram family do not know how to proceed, which results in Fanny's summoning from Portsmouth at the request of Sir Thomas. Fanny is aware that her purpose is to nurse Tom back to health, as well as to be a comfort to Lady Bertram. Although Sir Thomas's experiment has recently treated her harshly, he expects her to forget her poor treatment and serve them. Fanny answers her master's commands and acts like an indentured servant in the Bertram household, constantly being obedient and of service to the family.

An excellent interpretation of Edmund Bertram's character comes from Christopher Stampone's article "Obliged to yield: The Language of Patriarchy and the System of Mental Slavery in Mansfield Park". Edmund Bertram, who most people would read as Fanny's closest friend and biggest supporter, takes on a new role in Stampone's understanding of the relationship. Throughout this thesis, I have positioned Sir Thomas as Fanny's master.

However, Stampone emphasises another character who displaces Sir Thomas's position as master of Fanny's feelings and actions. He argues that "more than any other figure in Austen's narrative, Edmund elicits feelings of gratitude and obligation in Fanny, and he forms her mind and bends her to his will using those feelings" (Stampone 201). This manipulation of her mind, starting from childhood and resulting in their marriage, reminds us of the modern-day term "grooming". The concept refers to a relationship between two people, where the less experienced person is guided by, the more experienced person, the latter forming their beliefs and views of the world (Winters and Jeglic 4-5). Edmund and Fanny's relationship is eerily similar to this concept. Although marriage between cousins was common during this period, a passage in the first chapter of *Mansfield Park*¸ reveals some of Austen's thoughts about the matter. Sir Thomas is concerned that Tom or Edmund might find her a suitable wife when he first takes her in. However, Mrs. Norris appeases him by claiming that if "[…] they breed her up with them from this time, […], she will never be more to either than a sister" (Jane Austen 6). If we consider Austen's ironical approach towards marriage in most of her novels, we understand that the relationship between Fanny and Edmund requires greater attention. Another excerpt from *Mansfield Park* reveals Edmund's views on the women in his life through his choice of vocabulary. When Fanny is struggling to choose between the necklace given to her by Mary Crawford and the one given to her by Edmund, he urges her to pick the former's offering, saying that "'I would not have the shadow of coolness arise,' he repeated, his voice sinking a little, 'between the two dearest objects I have on earth'" (Jane Austen 206-07). Instead of using words such as "people," "women," or "friends," he chooses to call both Mary and Fanny his "dearest objects". Again, this reveals the patriarchal language which subjugates women to an inferior position. Turning back to Stampone's interpretation of Edmund, he emphasises that "Edmund does not always realize the extent to which he manacles Fanny […]. Nevertheless, continual gratitude causes Fanny to feel 'obliged' to her cousin for his kindness and attention" (201). When he tries to convince Fanny to accept Mr. Crawford, he urges her to "[…] prove yourself grateful and tender-hearted; and then you will be the perfect model of a woman […]" (Jane Austen 272). Due to the grooming process which has taken place since childhood, Fanny's true attachment lies with Edmund, not Sir Thomas. She strives to gain his approval by trying to be the "perfect model of a woman" and prove her gratitude, which binds Fanny in a form of mental slavery to Edmund.

Austen's writing style employs Said's contrapuntal approach, using marginal commentary to illuminate the complexities of her world. She writes the marginal with

intention, leaving it up to the reader to interpret the inferred and suggested in the novel. Moira Ferguson has described Fanny as "[…] the eurocentrically conceived 'grateful negro' in pre-abolition tales who collaborated with kind owners and discouraged disobedience among rebel slaves" (Ferguson 124). Additionally, Stampone argues that Fanny is "[…] someone whose mind – and therefore whose will – has been manacled by the system of patriarchy," and in this case, being manacled to Edmund through her confused feelings of love for her master (Stampone 201). From a modern perspective, it would be more natural to agree with Stampone that Fanny is the victim of mental enslavement rather than bodily enslavement. Even though this is the case, it is nonetheless a form of subjection. Fanny grapples with feelings of gratitude and duty while simultaneously struggling to fulfil both her masters' wishes. As I have argued earlier, the close relationship between abolitionism and feminism used similarities between the slave and the woman, especially in the marriage market. Although the severity of captivity and punishment between the two cannot be equated, severe limitations were placed on women's lives during the early nineteenth century. Austen's portrayal of Fanny showcases her deep understanding of the limited legal and social mobility available to women during her time. While Said may not fully acknowledge it, I believe that *Mansfield Park* provides insight into Austen's political beliefs through marginal commentary which imitates the very technique of contrapuntal reading he promotes in his book. However, whether these allusions are discovered or not is left to the reader.

2.5. The Significance of Names and Places

To further understand Austen's commentary on the public and political sphere, I will continue by performing a close reading of the names of persons and places included in the narrative. At first glance, one might assume these names are coincidental. However, a more meticulous investigation reveals a novel more closely connected to reality than previously thought. The names in *Mansfield Park* offer insight into Austen's world and the issues she may have been aware of, such as the political turbulence concerning the slave trade before and after the passage of the Abolition of Slavery Act in 1807 (Reid 159). It is important to note that although Austen's work is primarily centred on the domestic sphere, she frequently mentions the world her characters are surrounded by in a seemingly casual fashion. Though these allusions might not strike the reader as significant, I believe these references to be intentional on Austen's part. Jocelyn Harris emphasises that "women writers, especially after the French Revolution, were smartly slapped down for putting their heads above the domestic trench. Austen's commentary on politics had therefore to be implicit, covert, encoded, [and][13]

oblique" (Harris 148). The implicit commentary is imperative to understand Mansfield Park and its depiction of slavery accurately. Thus, Austen had to approach the public sphere by concealing her opinions through an intricate writing style, heavily wrapped in irony, metaphors, similes, and clever puns. New angles to understand the novel are revealed through a methodical and meticulous unwrapping of names and places.

In recent years, Professor Devoney Looser has uncovered new details concerning the Austen family's ties to the institution of slavery and abolition. One crucial factor she notes is that the Austen's "[…] affiliations to slavery and colonialism changed over time, from 1760 to 1840. During the period of that time when she was alive, 1775 to 1817, there were also immense changes afoot" (Balli). Her father's and brother's activities in connection with the institution of slavery reflect this evolution. Looser agrees with the scrutiny that the Austen family has been subjected to in recent years due to George Austen's role as principal trustee of an Antiguan sugar plantation. However, she has uncovered that George "[…] would not have been expected to run the plantation and he likely received no compensation in this role" (Balli). Additionally, Jane's brother, Henry Thomas Austen, "was a delegate to an anti-slavery convention in London in 1840" (Balli). On Jane's part, Looser emphasises how she not only comments on slavery and the slave trade in her novels *Mansfield Park, Emma,* and *Sanditon,* but she also wrote in a letter to her sister, Cassandra, in January 1813, that "[…] I am as much in love with the Author as I ever was with Clarkson or Buchanan […]" (Le Faye 207). Thomas Clarkson was one of the most famous activists of the anti-slavery movement during Austen's time. Additionally, Jane's residency in Bath overlapped with another famed abolitionist, William Wilberforce, who was in league with Clarkson (Wilberforce et al. 4). Gabrielle D. V. White also points out the passage in *Mansfield Park*, where Fanny quotes William Cowper: "Does it not make you think of Cowper? 'Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn your fate unmerited'" (Jane Austen 44). White suggests that Austen, who considered Cowper as one of her favourite authors, was likely to be well-informed about the abolition campaign, particularly given that "Cowper's tirade against slavery […] [in][14] his epic length poem *The Task* is severe, and leads up to the question: 'We have no slaves at home – then why abroad?'" (White 1). Her brother, Henry Austen, wrote a *Biographical Notice of the Author* in the prologue of the posthumous publication of the 1818 version of *Northanger Abbey,* and *Persuasion*. He notes that Jane's:

> […] reading was very extensive in history and belles lettres; and her memory extremely tenacious. Her favourite moral writers were Johnson in prose, and Cowper in verse. It is difficult to say at what age she

> was not intimately acquainted with the merits and defects of the best essays and novels in the English language. (Henry Austen xv).

Thus, considering her fervent and wide range of scholarship, it would be strange if Austen was not highly aware of the political turmoil of her time. Harris also writes about Austen's connections and how she would have learned about political information from different sources, most notably from her brothers, who had posts in the British Navy (143). She writes that because of these connections, "Jane must therefore have been extremely well-informed about such public events, but the family always denied that she concerned herself with politics, and she revealed how talking politically was off-limits for women" (Harris 143-44). However, it is essential to note that these revelations do not conclude her views and opinions on slavery and the slave trade. Nonetheless, it confirms to some extent that mentions of slavery in her novels were most likely not arbitrary but highly calculated measures.

Margaret Doody asserts that "names of places in Austen's novels are chosen with equal care. The name of an estate or a village is never insignificant. First names and surnames always matter" (4). The man believed to be the inspiration for the novel's title and estate is Lord Mansfield. He was named Lord Chief Justice in 1756 and became famous for his verdict in the Somerset case. This case involved the enslaved American James Somerset, who escaped from his master, Charles Stewart when they came to England. As a result, Stewart attempted to claim his property back, which then led to the case Somerset v Stewart. During the court proceedings in 1772, Lord Mansfield decreed that "The state of slavery … is so odious, that nothing can be suffered to support it but positive law" (Doody 336). The Somerset v Stewart ruling, which was supposed to be limited to the case, was widely interpreted to mean that English law did not condone slavery on its lands. It led to the widespread emancipation of slaves who resided in England and Wales. However, it did not extend to British colonial territories (Doody 336). Turning back to the novel *Mansfield Park,* we can with almost certainty determine that the use of the name Mansfield was not an accident on Austen's part, especially when considering the underlying theme of slavery. However, some critics argue that they could interpret the name Mansfield differently. John Wiltshire entertains the connection between Mansfield Park and Lord Mansfield, but he supplies another interpretation which might explain where the inspiration for the title could originate. He emphasises the victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. One of the famous ships was the Minotaur, under Captain Mansfield's command (Wiltshire 6-7). As Jane's brothers were sailors, Wiltshire believes she would be privy to such details, perhaps inspired

by this (7). Mention of the navy is common in Austen's novels, which would support Wiltshire's claim.

However, Doody's interpretation is the most probable for several reasons. It is essential to take note of Austen's other works, such as *Emma* (1815) and her unfinished novel, *Sanditon* (1817). In *Emma*, there are more prominent references to the slave trade. Susan Fraiman writes that the character "Jane Fairfax likens the commodification of British women by the 'governess-trade' to that of Africans by the 'slave-trade,' hinting that the sale of 'human intellect' is no more tolerable than the sale of 'human flesh'" (Fraiman 813). She also notes that this well-known passage is "surprisingly unremarked upon in *Culture and Imperialism* […]" (Fraiman 813). Additionally, the most notable allusion to British colonial ventures is the character of Miss Lambe in *Sanditon*. Miss Lambe is mixed-race, or as described in the novel, "half mulatto" (Baugh 449). This term was commonly used during Austen's time. In this thesis, however, I will refrain from using this term further as it is offensive and outdated. However, what is interesting is that she is a wealthy heiress from Antigua, her father is a plantation and slave owner on the island, and her mother is an enslaved person on his plantation. This character has an uncanny likeness to Lord Mansfield's daughter. He adopted his nephew's mixed-race child, Dido Belle, who was born into slavery. Under the legal doctrine, *Partus sequitur ventrem*, all children born to enslaved women were automatically considered the enslaver's property, usually becoming slaves themselves (Morgan 1-2). Lord Mansfield raised Belle as a free woman and gave her an inheritance (Doody 337). As Belle's father, Sir John Lindsay, was a Royal Naval officer, Austen's brothers would probably know something of the business ("Dido Elizabeth Belle"). Thus, we might surmise that Austen's use of Mansfield is far from coincidental, emphasising the need to study names to understand her novels' social and historical significance completely.

Another important name is the surname Lascelles. Although they are only briefly alluded to, Austen's contemporary audience would likely be familiar with this family name. After Maria Bertram marries Mr. Rushworth, they take up a house in London for that year's social season. The Season is an annual period, roughly from May to August, where the upper classes gather in the cities to participate in various social events and gatherings (Bray). As Mary Crawford points out, Maria Bertram "[…] will open one of the best houses in Wimpole Street. I was in it two years ago, when it was Lady Lascelles's […]" (Jane Austen 309). This family name is critical to highlight due to the real-life Lascelles family's connections to the slave trade and slave plantations in the Caribbean. The friend which Mary Crawford speaks of

is most likely based on Anne Lascelles, who was married to Edward Lascelles (Doody 126). However, Doody points out that Anne Lascelles never assumed the title of Lady Lascelles, as she died before Edward became the first Earl of Harewood (126). Harewood House and the Lascelles family had a longstanding legacy as plantation owners, slaveholders, and slave-trading in Barbados, starting with Edward's uncle, Henry Lascelles of Yorkshire (Dresser 94). As Doody emphasises, "naming 'Lady Lascelles'" not only helps to date the time frame of the novel, it also reinforces the theme of slavery […]" (126). Thus, there is a double connection to slavery in the novel *Mansfield Park.* The use of the name Lascelles, and the link to a country house, namely Harewood House, builds a strong case for Austen's commentary on the business of slavery and the wealth it supplied to British country houses.

3. The British Country House

3.1. The Desired English Order

In Said's chapter, *Jane Austen and Empire*, he delves deeper into *Mansfield Park*. His chapter begins by exploring how British culture has been linked to imperialism since the sixteenth century and how these overseas possessions have influenced the shaping of the culture. He argues that while scholars have extensively analysed the plot and structure of literature in terms of temporality, they have tended to overlook the use of "[…] space, geography, and location" (Said "Jane Austen and Empire" 1115). It is vital to note the utilisation of space in the novel and examine the intentions behind these spatial elements. In the connections between the British Empire and the English country house, the investigation of space is pertinent. By interrogating newly built country houses such as Mansfield Park, we see material and fiscal links to the British Empire. Another aspect of Austen's writing he criticises is when she wraps up everything neatly at the novel's end. She writes, "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest" (Jane Austen 362). Said calls this ending the "desired English order," which is a common feature in British novels ("Jane Austen and Empire" 1118). This, he explains, is closely connected with the imperial mission, the creation of a British identity exported abroad and used to justify the "assumption of native backwardness and general inadequacy to be independent, 'equal,' and fit" (Said "Jane Austen and Empire" 1112). Thus, when Austen quickly wraps up the plot in an ordered structure; Fanny Price marrying Edmund Bertram, William Price's naval career successfully launched, the banishment of Mrs. Norris and Maria Bertram, and Susan Price's inclusion in the household, taking Fanny's place as a companion to Lady Bertram, Said connects this to the comprehensive

idea of preserving a perfect picture of English ideological and cultural superiority ("Jane Austen and Empire" 1112). He believes Austen is attempting to ignore the issues by quickly wrapping up the ending. However, I think Austen was aware of the problems that should have been discussed and examined further, such as slavery and marriage. Yet, she avoids exploring the controversial issues in depth, possibly due to her understanding of the challenges faced by a woman openly criticising current political and social norms.

Said argues in his chapter, *Narrative and Social Space,* that English novelists take colonial possessions abroad for granted, overlooking the contentious nature of British dominions and the lack of challenge to this in their novels. Further in Said's discussion of *Mansfield Park,* he considers Austen's choice to base Sir Thomas's fortune on a sugar plantation in Antigua. Although his business in Antigua is not specified, several critics, Said included, presume that Sir Thomas owns a plantation and slaves at his estate in the Caribbean (Stabler 394). However, a hint about this is disclosed by the character Mary Crawford when she likens Sir Thomas to "[…] some of the old heathen heroes, who, [performed][15] great exploits in a foreign land […]" (Jane Austen 86). The Caribbean was a place of English and French colonial competition. After the French Revolution in 1789, "revolutionary ideas from France [were][16] being exported there […]," sowing the seeds of ideological ideas of freedom and labour (Said "Jane Austen and Empire" 1119). These revolutionary ideas would lead to slave revolts, which created enormous difficulties for plantation owners, such as loss of life and a diminishment in production. Slave revolts could be one of the reasons Sir Thomas must travel to Antigua himself, as the narrator tells us that Sir Thomas's "[…] circumstances were rendered less fair than heretofore, by some recent losses on his West India estate […]" (Jane Austen 19). Brian Southam has suggested other grounds for difficulties. One suggestion is that soil exhaustion may have contributed to the losses if the narrative occurred between 1805-07. Soil exhaustion means the soil is depleted of nutrients, so it can no longer support the crop. As a result, it would reduce the amount of sugar produced on the plantation, leading to a decline in profits (Stabler 396). If, however, the novel takes place between 1810-13, the lack of profit might result from a diminishing workforce following the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. As British plantation owners were no longer permitted to import new slaves, access to workers declined (Stabler 396). Both these factors led to a decrease in British profits and can be presumed to be one of the main reasons Sir Thomas had to travel to Antigua.

3.2. Unveiling English Country Houses' Ties to Slavery

In response to Said's chapters in, *Culture and Imperialism*, I would like to highlight the significance of country houses in rural England. Corinne Fowler states that "[…] Said underestimated the extent of country houses' Caribbean and East India company links" in his analysis of *Mansfield Park* (362). This link offers a new understanding of the issues and challenges of Said's critique of Austen's supposed silence on slavery. In recent years, English country houses have become symbols of the complex and often troubling history of Britain's involvement in slavery and colonialism. English country houses were often built and maintained with wealth obtained through some connection to slavery and the slave trade. As I intend to draw a link between slavery and the Mansfield Park estate, I must highlight the real-life evidence supporting my claim with this connection. In Nicholas Draper's examination of British country houses, he emphasises the Slave Compensation Commission as evidence (17). Following the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833, the British state agreed to compensate former enslavers and others who benefitted from the institution of slavery. The sum amounted to 20 million pounds in 1833 (Draper 17). They compiled a comprehensive list to identify slaveholders and other beneficiaries to determine who was entitled to compensation. It is important to note that not everyone submitted their name to this list due to the undesirability of being connected to slavery at this time. Although this list provides an overview of which families and estates were involved in the business, it is essential to note that this only gives us a picture of estates' holdings 20 years after *Mansfield Park's* publication. Thus, these families may not have been associated with slavery in 1814.

It is essential to note the limitations of the data gathered by the Slave Compensation Commission before delving deeper into the connection between country houses and slavery. Draper points out three factors, the first being that the list "[…] does not include the name of the estate for which the award was made […]", secondly "[…] the Parliamentary Papers list itself carries no indication of whether the recipient of an award was resident in the colonies or an absentee resident in Britain […]", and thirdly, "[…] the list does not record the capacity in which the recipient was awarded compensation" (17-18). Thus, with these issues in mind, it is challenging to link slaveholders directly to a British country house and to what extent they received compensation after the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833. Draper notes that in the Register of Claims for Antigua, there were "[…] 1,027 awards in total for the island, of which 151 were for £500 or more; 120 of these were to absentees in Britain" (20). Additionally, they easily identified around 40 country houses with "[…] slave owners or other beneficiaries of

slave compensation" (Draper 20). Mansfield Park gains a new dimension when considering the connection between English country houses and imperialism. Only in the past thirty years, following Said's ground-breaking interpretation of Mansfield Park, have scholars begun to pay attention to the historical context and implications of the novel's setting. There is enough evidence connected to slavery and plantations in Antigua to interpret the connection to a certain extent in Austen's novel. If we explore the relationships between British country houses and overseas possessions and businesses, we can find a parallel to this with the fictional Mansfield Park and its Antiguan connection.

Madge Dresser emphasises the various ways in which properties in England are linked to the institution of slavery. She distinguishes between "'slavery-based' properties and those with more general 'slavery associations'" (Dresser 29). She created a list which was later improved by researchers at English Heritage and University College London, which listed the following criteria:

> An owner is assumed to be linked to slaving interests:
>
> 1) by directly investing in slave ships or insuring them;
>
> 2) by indirectly investing in slave trading by buying shares in the Royal African Company or the South Seas Company;
>
> 3) by the providing trade goods to Africa or the slave plantations or dealings in slave-produced goods from the plantations;
>
> 4) by plantation ownership directly purchased or inherited, or obtained through marriage or by lending money to a defaulting planter;
>
> 5) by holding colonial office or otherwise being involved in the administration of slave colonies;
>
> 6) by 'employing' enslaved people either at home or in the colonies. (Dresser 29).

Thus, Sir Thomas most certainly falls under the 4th category and perhaps the 6th category if we presume he enslaves people on his plantation. Due to his status as a member of Parliament in the House of Commons, he may also fit into the 5th category (Stabler 395). Although we cannot know whether Sir Thomas voted for or against bills passed on the abolition of the slave trade, his position as an absentee planter would point to his inclination towards continuing the practice of the slave trade. These factors are crucial when applying a new historicist approach to analysing *Mansfield Park.* As Said advocated for political criticism of nineteenth-century literature, examining the historical context to understand Austen's world and the various influences that shaped her writing is crucial. By exploring the theme of English country houses, we can better identify potential sources of inspiration which found their way into Austen's novels.

In Fowler's reading of *Jane Austen and Empire*, she criticises Said's suggestion that "[…] Sir Thomas's plantations 'guarantee' Mansfield Park's stability" (370). She claims that even though Sir Thomas manages to reassert control of his possessions in Antigua, this is only temporary. Said acknowledges in historical hindsight that there was a decline in the stability of sugar wealth, thus contradicting the guarantee of Sir Thomas's Antiguan income. The difficult circumstances surrounding the sugar business were well-known to people who could afford this commodity. In 1791 and 1792, sugar boycotts erupted across the nation, spearheaded by antislavery advocates who turned their attention to the domestic consumption of sugar (Sussman 49). What is remarkable about this boycott is that women mostly fronted these campaigns. Laura Brace highlights that these campaigns created "[…] an interesting moment of rupture and resistance, where the division between the public and the private, the political and domestic, cannot be neatly drawn" (490). I would argue that Austen's choice of a sugar plantation in Antigua can be read as a criticism of the institution of slavery. The novel was her chosen platform to highlight the continuing existence of plantations in the Caribbean. Although Austen has been criticised for only focusing on trivial domestic matters, we must remember that women's activism could be accomplished from the domestic sphere. The blurred lines between private and public during the sugar boycotts showcases the possibility for women's domestic activism. *Mansfield Park* serves as a reflection on the broader colonial movement, and Austen's choice of a sugar plantation in Antigua can be read as a form of domestic activism criticising the institution of slavery.

Further evidence of the connection between slavery and British country houses is Austen's emphasis on improving houses in the novel. These modifications might seem marginal and unimportant to the narrative, but they must be funded somehow. As is mentioned in the story, Sir Thomas's business in Antigua is "[…] a large part of his income […]," making it evident that the funding for the theatricals might come mainly from his unsavoury dealings with slavery (Jane Austen 29). However, it is essential to note that some of his income also derives from tax collection from his tenants on the Mansfield Park estate. Nevertheless, this is a minor part of Sir Thomas's wealth. In his absence, they begin to set up a play. Initially, Edmund is set against this plan, voicing his concerns about the costs of outfitting the billiard room as a stage. His brother Tom, however, dismisses Edmund's concerns by stating that:

> Yes, the expense of such an undertaking would be prodigious! Perhaps it might cost a whole twenty pounds. […] and as the carpenter's work may be all done at home by Christopher Jackson himself, it will be too absurd to talk of expense […]. (Jane Austen 101).

As modern readers, we might not detect those twenty pounds as a considerable sum. However, this detail is not to be overlooked. The Bank of England's inflation calculator reveals that £20 in 1810 amounts to £1266 in March 2023 ("Inflation Calculator"). The National Archives has another function in its calculator, where we may see what £20 in 1810 could buy. This included one horse, four cows, 22 stones of wool, three-quarters wheat, and 133 days of wages for a skilled tradesman ("Currency converter: 1270-2017"). Although the Bank of England's calculator is more up-to-date than The National Archives currency converter, it is interesting to note which commodities were possible to purchase with this money, as this reveals that it was not an insignificant amount of money. Thus, Tom's dismissal of the expenses of the play is worthy of note. It is a testament to the upper classes' wilful disregard for the origins of their wealth. Even though Tom travelled to Antigua with Sir Thomas, this experience does not seem to have taken a toll on his conscience. He continues to spend his father's money at the same rate without considering the origins of this capital. Doody supports this claim by relating that "Austen knows from within how the conscience can harden in relation to money: […] They have large resources of complacency and teach themselves how to suppress sympathy and conscience" (48). We can conclude that the theatricals at Mansfield Park are implicated in a broader, global issue since the central part of Sir Thomas's income derives from Antigua. The funds which buy costumes, pay for the carpenter's labour, and purchase the green curtain most likely stem from the backs of enslaved people. Perhaps it is this connection Said wished Austen could have made more apparent and explicit. Since a deep understanding of the historical context is required to identify the link between wealth and slavery, the novel is not as straightforward in condemning the institution as Said wished. While Austen's intention regarding a commentary on slavery remains unclear, it emphasises the upper classes' casual relationship with money.

3.3. Parallel Plantations

To understand the connection between the estate of Mansfield Park and Sir Thomas's Antiguan plantation, we must examine the direct parallels between the two estates through personal characteristics and family structures. As previously mentioned, Sir Thomas's visit to his plantation in Antigua is an endeavour to regain control over the property and address the financial underperformance of his investment. Although he is mostly absent throughout the narrative in *Mansfield Park*, his influence and opinions are frequently disclosed, especially throughout planning the play *Lovers' Vows.* Mansfield's younger inhabitants keenly feel his control. Edmund, who has taken on responsibility for the household members in his father's

absence, attempts to dissuade the others from bringing the play to fruition. He protests his brother Tom's insistence upon executing the play, saying, "I cannot agree with you; I am convinced that my father would totally disapprove it" (Jane Austen 100). In response to Edmund's protestations, Tom exclaims, "Don't act yourself, if you do not like it, but don't expect to govern everybody else" (Jane Austen 101). Tom's accusation that Edmund attempts to govern the other household members reveals that Edmund has taken on the position of moralistic master, trying to echo his father's beliefs. However, Edmund's claim is not strong, as Miss Crawford's wiles coerce Edmund to join the play, quickly weakening his position.

Another character who attempts to gain authority at Mansfield Park is Mrs. Norris. In Ferguson's study, she identifies Mrs. Norris's character as similar to an overseer at a plantation (121). An examination of Mrs. Norris's surname supports this comparison. Ferguson recalls the name John Norris, who was "[…] one of the most vile proslaveryites of the day" (121). Austen would be aware of the infamous Norris, "[…] having read Thomas Clarkson's celebrated *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* in which Norris is categorically condemned" (Ferguson 121). The employment of an overseer was quite common in Caribbean plantations, especially when the owner was an absentee planter. Absentee planters were rarely, if ever, present on the estate they owned. They appointed overseers who dealt with the daily business of controlling the estate and the slaves (Ragatz 21). This system is paralleled at Mansfield Park. Mrs. Norris takes it upon herself to manage the estate's inhabitants under the guiding principles of Sir Thomas. He has left in the wisdom that "Mrs. Norris's watchful attention, and in Edmund's judgment he had sufficient confidence to make him go without fears for their conduct" (Jane Austen 26). It was not uncommon that overseers on plantations would become intoxicated by their power, resulting in acts of torture, execution of disobedient slaves, and other morally questionable decisions in the pursuit of greater financial output on the plantation (Ragatz 22). Although Mrs. Norris does not exercise her power to such an extreme, she overreaches her position in the household by pursuing objectives that ultimately do not serve Sir Thomas's best interest. While preparing for the theatricals, she reprimands Fanny for not helping enough with the costumes. Mrs. Norris complains that she has been "[…] slaving myself till I can hardly stand […]" (Jane Austen 130). The seemingly casual use of the word "slaving" requires closer attention. Austen was known to revise her manuscript multiple times and was very precise with her word choices. Johnson writes that Austen "[…] routinely employs a lexicon of politically sensitive terms, themes, and narrative patterns […] and that she […] often discusses politics

all the time without making announcements about it beforehand" ("The Female Novelist and the Critical Tradition" xxiv-xxv). Austen was also heavily influenced by literary and cultural trends. Thus, we should not ignore nuances which might seem inconsequential. If we turn our attention back to the use of the word "slaving," the fact that Mrs. Norris employs it is far from coincidental. As the overseer of the Mansfield plantation, Mrs. Norris's allusion to slavery in a seemingly casual situation begs us to question Austen's intentions. Although this might not be an overt critique of slavery, she draws attention to the institution through the actions of a seemingly villainous, female character, drawing her name from a real-life "proslaveryite" (Ferguson 121).

On Sir Thomas's return to England, he slowly discovers that Mrs. Norris's actions have been far from beneficial. Although he has been informed of his daughter's engagement by post, he has had no previous acquaintance with Mr. Rushworth. He discovers that Mr Rushworth is "[…] an inferior young man, as ignorant in business as in books, with opinions in general unfixed, and without seeming much aware of it himself" (Jane Austen 156). Consequently, he questions whether Maria's entering the engagement was prudent. From the outset, Maria has shown signs of desperation to escape the constraints of her father's authority. Her thoughts reveal that "[…] independence was more needful than ever […]" and the "[…] restraint her father imposed […]" on her at Mansfield had become unbearable (Jane Austen 158). Maria thinks that "the liberty which his absence had given was now become absolutely necessary. She must escape from him and Mansfield as soon as possible, and find consolation in fortune and consequence, bustle and the world, for a wounded spirit" (Jane Austen 158). The language used here, with words like "independence," "restraint," "liberty," "absence," "escape," "consolation," and "wounded spirit," reveals Austen's subtle, yet powerful commentary on the suffocating position of women in a patriarchal society. Additionally, during the family party's visit to Mr. Rushworth's estate, Sotherton, Maria's need for liberty is further manifested. In conversation with Mr. Crawford in the gardens, she exclaims that "[…] unluckily that iron gate, that ha-ha, give me a feeling of restraint and hardship. I cannot get out, as the starling said" (Jane Austen 78). The last sentence is a quote from Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768). Stabler explains that "[…] the narrator is contemplating the Bastille as 'a house you can't get out of' when he hears the starling and makes a vain attempt to set the bird at liberty" (402). The imagery uncovers Maria's feelings of imprisonment at Mansfield, comparing the estate to the Bastille prison in Paris and herself being a bird trapped in a cage. The iron gate, representing

"restraint" and "hardship," also evokes powerful imagery of iron manacles used on enslaved people and serves as a metaphorical barrier trapping Maria within the oppressive confines of patriarchy (Normandin 145). Although there is a vast difference between the privileged white woman entrapped in marriage and the slave, Austen draws on this analogy in *Mansfield Park.* Maria's desperation to escape her father, the master of the Mansfield plantation, who practically sells her to Mr. Rushworth, is similar to how enslaved people sought to flee their enslavers (Johnson "Mansfield Park : Confusions of Guilt and Revolutions of Mind" 119). As she marries Mr. Rushworth, she realises that "fortune and consequence" do not heal her "wounded spirit" as she believed they would. Instead, it is another form of confinement.

Maria's escape from Mr. Rushworth awakens Sir Thomas to his senses. Her actions make him realise that leaving his daughters under Mrs. Norris's supervision was foolhardy, perceiving that "[…] the excessive indulgence and flattery of their aunt had been continually contrasted with his own severity" (Jane Austen 363). Ultimately, he faces the consequences of being an absent father and leaving the moral guidance of his children to his overseer. Finally, he understands that "[…] he had but increased the evil by teaching them to repress their spirits in his presence so as to make their real disposition unknown to him" (Jane Austen 363). Connecting this management to his Antiguan plantation, we can draw a direct parallel of misgovernance. As mentioned, Sir Thomas might be heading to Antigua to deal with an unmanageable overseer on his plantation. Similarly to his re-establishment of control in Antigua:

> He had to reinstate himself in all the wonted concerns of his Mansfield life: to see his steward and his bailiff; to examine and compute, and, in the intervals of business, to walk into his stables and his gardens, and nearest plantations. (Jane Austen 149).

Upon discovering that they have been planning to set up the play *Lovers' Vows*, Sir Thomas questions his overseers' judgement, expressing his disappointment; "He could not help giving Mrs. Norris a hint of his having hoped that her advice might have been interposed to prevent what her judgement must certainly have disapproved" (Jane Austen 147). Sir Thomas realises he has left his estate and its inhabitants in incapable hands. Similar to his experience in Antigua, he has made a poor choice of who to trust with his possessions.

Considering the parallel between the Antiguan estate and Mansfield Park, we can distinguish a similarity in how detrimental outside knowledge of the inner workings of the estate would be to Sir Thomas's reputation. As the issue of slavery was controversial in England during this time, most plantation owners were keen to avoid being connected to

overseas properties (Barczewski 71). It is why plantation owners in England built magnificent houses and manors in the countryside. It was an attempt to distance themselves from the ugly business, trying instead to blind people with their opulence and status instead (Dresser and Hann 14). When Tom suggests bringing in an outsider to join the play, the shield of respectability would be damaged, exposing the impropriety of the people inhabiting Mansfield. Upon Sir Thomas's return, he has difficulty getting rid of Tom's friend, Mr. Yates, the latter being blissfully unaware of Sir Thomas's disapproval of the play. When speaking with Mr. Yates, "Sir Thomas listened most politely, but found much to offend his ideas of decorum" (Jane Austen 144). Although Sir Thomas is keen to remove Mr. Yates from Mansfield immediately, he must keep up appearances by respectably dealing with him. If Sir Thomas does not act according to the manners expected of him, it will damage the seal of propriety and the reputation of Mansfield. Similarly, he attempts to censure the play *Lover's Vows* at Mansfield by eradicating "[…] every outward memento of what had been, even to the destruction of every unbound copy of Lovers' Vows in the house, for he was burning all that met his eye" (Jane Austen 149). This censorship, eradicating all evidence of impropriety which might harm his reputation, is similarly reflected in his endeavour to conceal his proceedings in Antigua. Austen does not delve further into the details of his stay in the Caribbean, except when Sir Thomas reports the appropriate parts to his family, such as describing the balls of Antigua (Jane Austen 196).

As mentioned earlier, Fanny asks Sir Thomas about the slave trade, which he answers with a "dead silence" (Jane Austen 155). This dead silence demonstrates that the subject is taboo and off-limits, possibly because Sir Thomas wishes to shield his family from the atrocities he is responsible for in Antigua. As previously discussed, Austen has been heavily criticised for her silence on slavery. However, I believe this may have been a strategic decision on her part, given the limitations placed on women's voices in the Regency era. As Johnson asserts, Austen's "[…] apparent 'silence' on matters political is a creditable choice of strength rather than a decorous concession to 'feminine' weakness or ignorance" ("The Female Novelist and the Critical Tradition" xxv). The silence reinforces the power dynamics within the household and the broader imperial and political sphere. There seems to be a parallel agreement between the domestic and the public through the accepted silence upon the issue of Sir Thomas's Antiguan plantation. Through the strategic use of silences, hierarchical structures, relationships, names, places, and deliberate wording, Austen skilfully sheds light on the complacency and moral blindness of characters who benefit from the institution of

slavery. This strategy also draws attention to how societal structures silenced voices, placing them on the margins of life and perpetuating social and political injustice (Johnson "The Female Novelist and the Critical Tradition" xxv). By highlighting the silencing and marginalisation of certain voices, Austen invites readers to reflect on the broader societal consequences and the complicity of those who benefit from such silences.

4. Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to situate Jane Austen in the abolitionist discourse. It has aimed to ascertain how she comments on the institution of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade in her novel *Mansfield Park.* In recent years, critics have scrutinised Austen for her perceived lack of attention to the broader imperialistic culture to which she belonged. Based on Edward Said's famed criticism in his book, *Culture and Imperialism*, this thesis has discussed *Mansfield Park's* possible complicity in furthering British colonial and imperial practices of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries. British authors' use of the British Empire as a backdrop for their narratives has fuelled postcolonial criticism towards Austen. This thesis has attempted to refute Said's assertion that Austen's use of the broader world is casual. However, a meticulous study of her novel *Mansfield Park* reveals a different story altogether. This thesis has placed Austen within an intersectional framework, focusing on more than postcolonial criticism. It has included a feminist and a new historicist approach to situate *Mansfield Park* in a more accurate historical, political, and cultural context. Rather than aiming to ascertain whether Austen approved or opposed slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, it has sought to provide a reading of the novel which considers issues of gender, class, and race which play a pivotal role in the opportunities and limitations to comment on slavery in the public sphere. This thesis has examined instances in the narrative of *Mansfield Park,* which begs the reader to reconsider previously conceived notions about the novel.

This discussion has aimed to establish that being a woman in a patriarchal society in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries created hindrances to openly participating in and denouncing public practices and policies. It has argued that Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* contributes to the abolitionist discourse from a feminist perspective by equating women's experiences in marriage to those of enslaved people, acknowledging the complexities of this comparison from a modern perspective. However, the analysis of *Mansfield Park* indicates that Austen achieves this through an implicit writing style, employing covert commentaries on slavery through metaphors, relationships, names, word choices, and country houses. My findings reveal that Fanny becomes the metaphorical slave at

Mansfield Park, tying into the suffragist movement's likening of women in a patriarchal society to the slave. Again, it is essential to note that this comparison belongs to the past, as it ignores the blatant discrepancies between a white woman's treatment in society and the enslaved person's harrowing existence. Also, examining the relationships between characters such as Fanny Price, the Ward sisters, Sir Thomas Bertram, Maria Bertram, and Edmund Bertram reveal how Austen manages to comment on slavery and the slave trade through power relations. Fanny becomes a displaced slave, initially taken from her family in Portsmouth by Sir Thomas, the master of the Mansfield plantation. During her residency at Mansfield, she grapples with obeying two masters simultaneously. Sir Thomas functions as her actual warden, while Edmund binds her in a state of mental slavery, having unwittingly conditioned her to feel indebted to him since arriving at Mansfield Park. Lady Bertram and Maria Bertram become pawns in the marital market, the former given to Sir Thomas through a transaction with her uncle and the latter being bestowed upon Mr. Rushworth in a plight to gain influence and wealth. Austen's use of names such as Mansfield, Norris, the Lascelles, and Ward, discloses Austen's unique ability to place hints about the real world in the fictional world of *Mansfield Park.* These names connect to people associated with slavery and the slave trade and ideas of unbalanced power relations in a patriarchal society. Moreover, a multitude of words, such as "gratitude," "duty," "obligation," and "objects," to name a few, serve as instruments of British patriarchal language to subjugate women and bind them in a form of mental slavery. Lastly, by drawing a parallel between Sir Thomas's Antiguan plantation and the "plantation of Mansfield Park," the narrative situates itself within the broader sphere of imperialism, portrayed through a domestic lens. These findings contribute to Said's postcolonial interpretation of *Mansfield Park* by implicating the novel in the broader imperial context. However, the details uncovered in this thesis reveal an author who is more acutely aware of the public and political domain than previously imagined in Said's criticism.

In conclusion, Austen's novel, *Mansfield Park*, fits into the abolitionist discourse by being a proto-feminist text, as feminism was not a widely used concept until the late nineteenth century. Whether the implicit commentary on slavery was effective, however, is questionable. As this thesis has shown, to understand Austen's covert writing style, one must have a firm understanding of the historical and political context of eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries Britain and its imperial and colonial practices. Here, my argument encounters issues. As scholars approach the subject of slavery in *Mansfield Park*, they assume that readers during Austen's time possessed extensive knowledge about the imperial and colonial practices

she alludes to in her novel. However, those not privileged enough to receive an education may have missed the novels' broader imperial commentary. As discussed in this thesis, Austen's education was not common practice amongst all women of her societal station, much less those of lower social class. Thus, even women of similar social status may not have understood the implicit criticisms of slavery she unveiled in *Mansfield Park.* Many families had ties to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, so Sir Thomas Bertram's possession of an Antiguan plantation may not have perturbed her readership. However, these themes might have been more perceptible to male readers, as they were generally more involved in the public sphere, for example, being in Parliament or working as a crew member on naval vessels. Whether she broke through to the public sphere depends on who picked up the novel.

A significant and unexpected finding in this thesis is that Austen applies the same contrapuntal technique in her writing as Said's approach to novels. A contrapuntal reading involves an initial interpretation of the text by analysing what is explicitly stated, followed by a second reading that brings to light the implicit voices and meanings residing in the margins. Combining these two readings, the explicit and the marginal, enhances our understanding of a literary work. At the outset of writing this thesis, I had not considered viewing Austen's writing style as a form of contrapuntal technique. The direct attention and addressing of British imperial and colonial practices do not appear in *Mansfield Park.* Yet, the marginal becomes central throughout my study of her covert commentaries, metaphors, parallels, and examinations of relationships, names, word choices, and country houses. This thesis has discussed that the implicit commentary on slavery may be intentional on Austen's part. Women of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries had to be careful in their criticism of public affairs, in this case, British involvement in slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Yet, Austen's writing style uses the margins of her novels to her advantage, making sure that the use of, for example, names and places are far from coincidental and perhaps recognisable to her primary audience. Thus, Said's argument that Austen casually applied an imperial backdrop to her narrative falls apart, as the contrapuntal technique is present in the writing of *Mansfield Park.* Austen's marginal commentary about the world may have been intentional, as the language in the novel reveals that she was aware of the social and political issues of her time, especially considering women's position in the patriarchal system. The contrapuntal technique has a dual function in *Mansfield Park.* First, Austen intentionally uses the margins, hiding her criticism in plain sight. Secondly, it is up to the reader to apply a contrapuntal reading of the novel. Thus, the contrapuntal technique is

supplied both by the author and the reader. However, it is left to the reader whether they are able to understand the implicit method of commentary, which uses the marginal as a building structure rather than a plot line. This thesis has confirmed that even the slightest interrogation of the novel reveals an awareness of the broader imperial context, carefully wrapped in a neat package of domestic order. In conclusion, I would argue that what Said called Austen's casual use of British imperial and colonial ventures is a purposeful strategy used to leap over the boundaries that hindered women from entering and engaging in the public sphere.

This thesis has used an intersectional approach to substantiate the abolitionist interpretation of *Mansfield Park,* including feminist and postcolonial theories and a new historicist methodology. However, some scholars have suggested that the novel is not solely linked to the abolitionist discourse. Critics such as Gordon Leah[17] and John Wiltshire[18] have focused on religious language and imagery throughout the novel, and Laura Mooneyham White[19] has explored the connection between gender and religion. Additionally, in reviewing names and places, Margaret Doody has discussed the probability of *Mansfield Park* being a critique of the monarchy and royal family members. Thus, studying a text from different theoretical perspectives changes its interpretation. However, building upon this thesis, further research of *Mansfield Park's* position in the abolitionist discourse may be done by exploring the links between books and their power to perpetuate and reconstruct the broader cultural atmosphere. By identifying the social, political, and cultural ideologies embedded in a text, we may, in turn, gain a more thorough understanding of how novels influence and maintain prevailing beliefs and values which still have effects today. Such an investigation would be especially relevant in connection with the Caricom countries' call for monetary reimbursement due to the British Empire's lasting impact on infrastructure and development in these countries. Additionally, one may continue researching the connection between abolitionism and domestic activism in *Mansfield Park* and other works of Austen and contemporary female authors. Furthermore, continuing the portion of the thesis, which explores patriarchal control, one may research how the Church, the clergy, and religious values play a role in the subjugation of women in *Mansfield Park.* One may also explore how these religious values are modified to justify the practice of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Finally, one could examine how the novel adapts to other forms of media, such as the 1999 film *Mansfield Park,* directed by Patricia Rozema, which explicitly critiques slavery.

Although this thesis does not arrive at an absolute conclusion on Jane Austen's position on slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, it has demonstrated the limitations she faced in

openly and explicitly commenting on the atrocities of the business. Her gender was pivotal in restricting her access to the public domain and her opportunities to effect change. However, the novel *Mansfield Park* has managed to fuel debates over two centuries after its publication, demonstrating the continuing interest in examining Austen's and her contemporary writers' works in the context of abolitionism. Said writes in his chapter, *Narrative and Social Space,* that:

> "[…] just because Austen referred to Antigua in *Mansfield Park* or to realms visited by the British navy in *Persuasion* without any thought of possible responses by the Caribbean or Indian natives resident there is no reason for us to do the same." ("Narrative and Social Space" 66).

This call to action from Said may be explored in future research, reimagining her novels from the side of marginalised people whose voices do not appear explicitly in her work. Placing these marginalised voices at the forefront of the action would create a different understanding of the past, where not only the white, privileged coloniser's perspective and culture is the nexus of history. As frequently happens, the winner's perspective often prevails in the history books and the literary canon. Therefore, we must reconsider how cultural products such as the novel create a partial representation of history and fabricate a one-sided understanding of the past. We gain a multilateral version of the past by answering Said's call for a contrapuntal reading, which places the marginal voices on equal footing as the dominant voices. A continual examination of the historical context and marginal voices is necessary to fully grasp the importance of cultural artefacts such as the novel, helping to understand the past more accurately and comprehensively. In conclusion, this thesis has contributed to the field of Austen studies by providing an intersectional reading, combining postcolonial and feminist theories with a new historicist methodology. It has challenged Said's understanding of Austen's position as a novelist in the British imperial and colonial context. It has also developed his ideas of contrapuntal reading and studies of the marginal, creating a different understanding of Austen's writing concerning slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Austen did comment on slavery; however, her approach to the subject has defied our assumptions and expectations.

Notes

[1] My edit – change of verb form.

[2] My edit – change of verb form.

[3] My edit – change of verb form.

[4] Added word to explain context.

[5] My edit – added word.

[6] Her first name is not mentioned in the novel.

[7] My edit – added word to explain context.

[8] My edit – added word.

[9] My edit – added word.

[10] My edit – added word.

[11] My edit – added word.

[12] My edit – change of verb form.

[13] My edit – added word.

[14] My edit – added word.

[15] My edit – change of verb form.

[16] My edit – change of verb form.

[17] See Gordon Leah's article, "Jane Austen's 'Religious Principle': Reflections on re-reading her novel, Mansfield Park" (2020)

[18] See John Wiltshire's book, *The Hidden Jane Austen* (2014)

[19] See Laura Mooneyham White's book, *Jane Austen's Anglicanism* (2013)

Bibliography

"10-Point Reparation Plan". *CARICOM Reparations Commission*, https://caricomreparations.org/caricom/caricoms-10-point-reparation-plan/. Accessed 15 February 2023.

"A Statement from Jane Austen's House". *Jane Austen's House*, https://janeaustens.house/a-statement-from-jane-austens-house/. Accessed 20 February 2023.

Austen, Henry. "Biographical Notice of the Author." *Northanger Abbey : And Persuasion*, J. Murray, 1818, pp. iii-xix. *Nineteenth Century Collections Online: European Literature, 1790-1840: The Corvey Collection*.

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park.* Oxford University Press, 2008. *Oxford World's Classics*, James Kinsley.

Bailey, Frances et al. "Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties Now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery." edited by Dr Sally-Anne Huxtable et al., National Trust, September 2020, pp. 1-115. https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/binaries/content/assets/website/national/pdf/colonialism-and-historic-slavery-report.pdf.

Bailey, Martha. "The Marriage Law of Jane Austen's World." *Jane Austen Society of North America*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1-17.

Balli, Emily. "New Information Uncovered on Jane Austen's Family Ties to Slavery and Abolitionism." *ASU News*. June 14, 2021 https://news.asu.edu/20210614-regents-professor-devoney-looser-uncovers-new-information-jane-austen%E2%80%99s-family-ties-slavery. Accessed 10 March 2023.

Barczewski, Stephanie. "West Indian Planters." *Country Houses and the British Empire, 1700-1930*, Manchester University Press, 2016, pp. 69-89.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, edited by Barry Keith Grant, Blackwell, 2008, pp. 97-100.

Baugh, Victoria. "Mixed-Race Heiresses in Early-Nineteenth-Century Literature: Sanditon's Miss Lambe in Context." *European romantic review*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2018, pp. 449-58, doi:10.1080/10509585.2018.1487373.

Brace, Laura. "Bodies in Abolition: Broken Hearts and Open Wounds." *Citizenship Studies*, vol. 18, no. 5, 2014, pp. 485-98, doi:10.1080/13621025.2014.923701.

Bray, Patricia. *A London Season*. Diversion Publishing Corp., 2012. https://archive.org/details/londonseason012076mbp.

"cancel culture". *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cancel-culture.

"CARICOM". *CARICOM Reparations Commission*, https://caricomreparations.org/caricom/. Accessed 15 February 2023.

Childers, Mary M. "Virginia Woolf on the Outside Looking Down: Reflections on the Class of Women." *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1, 1992, pp. 61-79, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26284317.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241-99, doi:10.2307/1229039.

"Currency converter: 1270-2017". *The National Archives*, https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result. Accessed 7 April 2023.

"Dido Elizabeth Belle". *Women in History*. *English Heritage*, https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/histories/women-in-history/dido-belle/. Accessed 7 April 2023.

Doody, Margaret Anne. *Jane Austen's Names : Riddles, Persons, Places.* The University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Draper, Nicholas. "Slave Ownership and the British Country House: The Records of the Slave Compensation Commission as Evidence." *Slavery and the British Country House*, edited by Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann, English Heritage, 2013, pp. 17-28. https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/slavery-and-british-country-house/slavery-british-country-house-web/.

Dresser, Madge. "Slavery and the West Country Houses." *Slavery and the British Country House*, edited by Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann, English Heritage, 2013, pp. 29-42.

Dresser, Madge and Andrew Hann. "Introduction." *Slavery and the British Country House*, edited by Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann, 2013, pp. 13-16.

Ferguson, Moira. "Mansfield Park: Slavery, Colonialism, and Gender." *Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1991, pp. 118-39, doi:10.3366/olr.1991.006.

Fowler, Corinne. "Revisiting Mansfield Park: The Critical and Literary Legacies of Edward W. Said's Essay Jane Austen and Empire in Culture and Imperialism (1993)." *Cambridge journal of postcolonial literary inquiry*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2017, pp. 362-81, doi:10.1017/pli.2017.26.

Fraiman, Susan. "Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism." *Critical inquiry*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1995, pp. 805-21, doi:10.1086/448775.

"Freedom of Information Act 2000: Slavery Abolition Act 1833". edited by Information Rights Unit, *HM Treasury*, 31 January 2018, pp. 1-2. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/680456/FOI2018-00186_-_Slavery_Abolition_Act_1833_-_pdf_for_disclosure_log__003_.pdf.

Greene, Christina. "Women in the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements." 2016, pp. 1-18, doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.212.

Harris, Jocelyn. *Satire, Celebrity, and Politics in Jane Austen.* Bucknell University Press, 2017.

hooks, bell. "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women." *Feminist review*, no. 23, 1986, pp. 125-38, doi:10.2307/1394725.

Horn, Dashielle. "Choosing Spinsterhood: Enacting Singleness in Persuasion." *Persuasions : the Jane Austen journal (Print version)*, vol. 38, no. 38, 2016, pp. 236-44.

"Inflation Calculator". *Bank of England*, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator. Accessed 7 April 2023.

Jazeel, Tariq. "Postcolonial Theory and Geography." *Postcolonialism*, 1 ed., Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, pp. 1-21.

Johnson, Claudia L. "The Female Novelist and the Critical Tradition." *Jane Austen : Women, Politics, and the Novel*, The University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. xiii-xxv.

---. "Mansfield Park : Confusions of Guilt and Revolutions of Mind." *Jane Austen : Women, Politics, and the Novel*, The University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 94-120.

Jones, John Avery. "Jane Austen's Income: Insights from the Bank of England Archives." Bank Underground, https://bankunderground.co.uk/2019/08/02/jane-austens-income-insights-from-the-bank-of-england-archives/. Accessed 1 April 2023.

"Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality: More than Two Decades Later". *Columbia Law School*, https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later. Accessed 10 April 2023.

Langston, Donna. "Black Civil Rights, Feminism and Power." *Race, Gender & Class*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1998, pp. 158-66, http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.uio.no/stable/41675328.

Le Faye, Deirdre. *Jane Austen's Letters.* 4 ed., Oxford University Press, 2011.

Lorde, Audre. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." *Sister Outsider : Essays and Speeches*, Crossing Press, 2007, pp. 114-23.

Matthew, Patricia A. "Jane Austen and the Abolitionist Turn." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 61, no. 4, 2019, pp. 345-61, doi:10.7560/TSLL61402.

Morgan, Jennifer L. "Partus Sequitur Ventrem: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery." *Small axe : a journal of criticism*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1-17, doi:10.1215/07990537-4378888.

Mortimer, Ian. *The Time Traveller's Guide to Regency Britain: A Handbook for Visitors to the Years 1789-1830.* The Bodley Head, 2020.

Normandin, Shawn. "'As the Starling Said': Quoting Laurence Sterne in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park." *Notes and queries*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2022, pp. 145-46, doi:10.1093/notesj/gjac024.

Nym Mayhall, Laura E. "The Rhetorics of Slavery and Citizenship: Suffragist Discourse and Canonical Texts in Britain, 1880-1914." *Gender & history*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2001, pp. 481-97, doi:10.1111/1468-0424.00240.

Offen, Karen. "On the French Origin of the Words Feminism and Feminist." *Feminist Issues*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1988, pp. 45-51, doi:10.1007/BF02685596.

Parker, Robert Dale. "Historicism and Cultural Studies." *How to Interpret Literature*, Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 268-96.

Poplawski, Paul. *A Jane Austen Encyclopedia.* Greenwood Press Aldwych, 1998.

Ragatz, Lowell Joseph. "Absentee Landlordism in the British Caribbean, 1750-1833." *Agricultural History*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1931, pp. 7-24, http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.uio.no/stable/3739564.

Reid, Ahmed. "Sugar, Slavery and Productivity in Jamaica, 1750-1807." *Slavery & abolition*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2016, pp. 159-82, doi:10.1080/0144039X.2015.1061815.

Rowney, Matthew. "Yam Grounds and Sugar Time: A Contrapuntal Reading of Mansfield Park." *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2023, pp. 55-76, doi:10.1353/srm.2023.0006.

Said, Edward W. "Jane Austen and Empire." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Julie Rikvin and Michael Ryan, 2 ed., Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp. 1112-25.

---. "Narrative and Social Space." *Culture and Imperialism*, 1 ed., Vintage Books, 1993, pp. 62-80.

Simpson, Craig. "Jane Austen's Tea Drinking Will Face 'Historical Interrogation' over Slavery Links." *The Telegraph*. 18 April, 2021, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/04/18/jane-austens-tea-drinking-will-face-historical-interrogation/. Accessed 3 March 2023.

Smith, Peter. "Mansfield Park and the World Stage." *Cambridge quarterly*, vol. XXIII, no. 3, 1994, pp. 203-29, doi:10.1093/camqtly/XXIII.3.203.

Solow, Barbara L. *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System.* Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Stabler, Jane. "Explanatory Notes." *Mansfield Park*, edited by James Kinsley, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 393-419.

Stampone, Christopher. ""Obliged to Yield": The Language of Patriarchy and the System of Mental Slavery in Mansfield Park." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2018, pp. 197-212, doi:10.1353/sdn.2018.0011.

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. *Address to the Legislature of New-York, Adopted by the State Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Albany, Tuesday and Wednesday, February 14 and 15, 1854*. Weed, Parsons and Co., 1854. *Nineteenth Century Collections Online (NCCO): Women: Transnational Networks*, https://go-gale-

com.ezproxy.uio.no/ps/i.do?p=NCCO&u=oslo&id=GALE|AYNLXZ466276124&v=2.1&it=r&sid=primo.

Sussman, Charlotte. "Women and the Politics of Sugar, 1792." *Representations*, no. 48, 1994, pp. 48-69, doi:10.2307/2928610.

Thebault, Reis. "Trayvon Martin's Death Set Off a Movement That Shaped a Decade's Defining Moments." *The Washington Post*. 25 February 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/02/25/trayvon-martins-death-set-off-movement-that-shaped-decades-defining-moments/. Accessed 3 March 2023.

White, Gabrielle D. V. *Jane Austen in the Context of Abolition: "A Fling at the Slave Trade"*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Wilberforce, Robert I. et al. *The Life of William Wilberforce: In Five Volumes.* Murray, 1839.

Wiltshire, John. "Exploring Mansfield Park: In the Footsteps of Fanny Price." *Persuasions : the Jane Austen journal (Print version)*, vol. 28, 2006, pp. 1-11.

Winters, Georgia M. and Elizabeth L. Jeglic. "Introduction." *Sexual Grooming : Integrating Research, Practice, Prevention, and Policy*, Springer, 2022, pp. 1-14.