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The “Effect of Education” on Kinship Ties in Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*

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Résumé

S'appuyant sur la philosophie de la femme de Mary Wollstonecraft et sur celle de l'enfance de John Locke, ce mémoire examine « l'effet de l'éducation » (Austen 211) sur les relations filiales dans le roman *Mansfield Park* de Jane Austen. Austen, comme de nombreux romanciers et auteurs de livres de conduite de son époque, aborde l'état de l'éducation au début du XIX^{e} siècle. Refusant les carcans genrés dans lesquels sont généralement cloîtrés les individus dès l'enfance, l'éducation, telle qu'elle est présentée par Austen, se concentre sur l'acquisition de la raison et de la vertu et implique, par conséquent, l'épanouissement de l'individu, le développement d'une conscience identitaire et un apprentissage qui se prolonge tout au long de la vie, ce qui amène l'individu à forger des liens interpersonnels forts avec autrui. Vivant au sein d'une société en mouvement, Austen observe également les implications de l'apprentissage social sur l'individu et ses relations. Le premier chapitre traite de l'éducation familiale et examine les façons dont divers types d'apprentissage contribuent à la formation de l'identité et en viennent à déterminer les relations interindividuelles. Ce chapitre compare et met également en contraste la conception de l'éducation d'Austen avec celle de Wollstonecraft et de Locke. Le deuxième chapitre s'intéresse à la relation interdépendante entre l'individu, la famille et la société, et présente dans quelle mesure les dynamiques de pouvoir à l'échelle individuelle et sociale déterminent les relations interpersonnelles. Ce chapitre se concentre sur l'inégalité et l'oppression inhérentes au colonialisme britannique, à l'esclavage et à l'assujettissement des femmes au début du XIX^{e} siècle, qui entravent le développement de liens profonds entre les individus, comme le montre le roman.

Mots-clés : éducation, liens de parenté, famille, Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, Mary Wollstonecraft, John Locke, féminisme, colonialisme britannique, esclavage

Abstract

Drawing on Mary Wollstonecraft's and John Locke's philosophies of female and childhood education, respectively, this thesis examines "the effect of education" (Austen 211) on kinship ties in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. Like many novelists and writers of conduct books during her lifetime, Austen addresses the state of education in the early nineteenth century. She proposes a more gender-neutral education that revolves around reason and virtue, like Locke and Wollstonecraft, and involves personal development and lifelong learning, which allows the individual to develop a sense of self and consequently form strong interpersonal bonds. Inhabiting a society undergoing rapid transformations, Austen also discusses the influence of social learning on the individual and their relationships. The first chapter addresses childhood education within the home and family and examines the ways various types of learning are instrumental to identity formation and determine relationships. This chapter also compares and contrasts Austen's conception of education with Wollstonecraft's and Locke's. The second chapter considers the interdependent relationship between the individual, the family, and society and discusses in which respect power dynamics in home and country determine interpersonal relations. This chapter focuses on the inequality and oppression inherent in British colonialism, slavery, and female subjugation in the early nineteenth century, which hinder the development of profound attachments between individuals, as shown in the novel.

Keywords: education, kinship, family, Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, Mary Wollstonecraft, John Locke, feminism, British colonialism, slavery

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Introduction

Jane Austen (1775-1817) lived and wrote during a tumultuous period of British history. King George III (1738-1820) ruled Great Britain from 1760 until his death in 1820 (Watson). As a result of the King's deteriorating mental health, his son George (1762-1830) acted as Prince Regent from 1811 onwards, marking the beginning of the Regency era (Watson).[1] During Austen's lifetime, George III dealt with notable political events such as the French Revolution (1789-1799), the French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1802), and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815).[2] Moreover, in 1801, the Parliament of Great Britain passed the Act of Union, which unified Great Britain with Ireland and formed the United Kingdom. The first period of the Industrial Revolution (1760-1830), which brought technological, socioeconomic, and cultural transformations, was also underway. British imperialism and colonialism gathered momentum as Britain acquired 20 new colonies between 1793 and 1815 and reached a population of 200 million in 1820, which was more than one-quarter of the world's population at the time ("British Empire").[3] Abolitionist movements concurrently flourished. England outlawed slavery in 1772; a group of abolitionists that included Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) established the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1789; and Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807 ("Abolitionism").[4] While there was more concern for racial than for sexual justice during the late eighteenth century, many women writers, such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797)[5] and Mary Hays (1759-1843),[6] advocated

[1] Austen published her six novels, namely, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), *Northanger Abbey* (1817), and *Persuasion* (1817), during the Regency period.
[2] Austen "writes about a very specific social group," what Stabler describes as "the rural élite during the period of the Napoleonic Wars" (377). See Appendix B of *Mansfield Park.*
[3] In 1814, Britain's imperial slave population reached 1.15 million, 634 000 of which were in the West Indies. See Hall, "Abolitionism" 205.
[4] In 1789, Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797), a former slave, published *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, an autobiographical account, which helped galvanize English citizens into political action. Slavery still existed in British colonies until the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833.
[5] See Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).
[6] See Hays's *Letters and Essays* (1793).

for women's rights (Todd, "Introduction" xvii). Finally, while still avant-garde at the time, late eighteenth-century English society began to consider children's rights, Enit Karafili Steiner argues in *Jane Austen's Civilized Women: Morality, Gender and the Civilizing Process* (109). Austen is, necessarily, a product of the society she inhabits.

Her third novel, *Mansfield Park* (1814), reflects the historical, political, social, and economic context in which it was written and clearly demonstrates Austen's preoccupation with radical transformations occurring in Britain.[7] *Mansfield Park* is more than merely a novel of manners relating the lives of a few middle-class English families: Austen's lengthiest novel is a microcosm of early nineteenth-century society. The novel addresses, often subtly, societal issues such as poverty, socioeconomic status, British colonialism, slavery, female subjugation, morality, gender politics, and identity politics. Supporting this idea, Margaret Kirkham, in *Jane Austen: Feminism and Fiction* (1983), dismisses the allegations that Austen's narratives discuss personal matters unconnected with societal transformations during her time (xxi). In the more recent work *Private Sphere to World Stage from Austen to Eliot* (2017), Elizabeth Sabiston similarly claims that Austen's "treatment, in *Mansfield Park*, of the Antigua material and of William Price's advancement in the navy," she argues, "shows an author keenly aware of the dawning of the British Empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but also aware of its abuses" (6). In effect, *Mansfield Park*, according to Sabiston, is an "implied panoramic novel" (14) since the narrative references but is never set within locations such as London and Portsmouth, which, she affirms, denounces patriarchal order and imperialism.[8] *Mansfield Park* is a simulacrum of early nineteenth-century English society, addressing societal issues within the writing itself.[9]

[7] I have not discussed religious transformations occurring at the time, such as the Catholic and Evangelic revivals of the early nineteenth century, since religion is mostly tangential to this thesis.
[8] See chapter 1 of Sabiston's *Private Sphere to World Stage from Austen to Eliot*.
[9] I employ Michel Foucault's notion of simulacrum. In discussing conceptualizations of history and historicity in "Foucault's Phantasms," Young describes Foucault's conception of historicity as a phantasm where the idea

Austen makes clear her awareness of contemporary discussions surrounding female education in *Mansfield Park*. As previously mentioned, several writers contributed to discourse on female education during Austen's lifetime and proposed, in varying degrees, more elaborate systems of education for girls and women. As such, it is no wonder that the theme of education recurs throughout Austen's novels, since, as Kathryn Sutherland details in "Female education, Reading and Jane Austen" (2014), extensive discourse around the state of female education was prevalent during Austen's lifetime. In her well-known companion to Jane Austen, *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen* (2015), Janet Todd describes anxieties surrounding education during the early nineteenth century:

> Education was a current cultural concern of the turbulent late eighteenth century, freighted with ideology and comprising both formal training and the fitting of a child for its proper social place. Cultural anxiety expressed itself in the flourishing of a genre known as the conduct book. Advice books had always existed, but the large number aimed at gentry and middle-class girls was a phenomenon of the revolutionary and transitional period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These works preached traditional feminine values of prudence, modesty, and continence and stressed Christian seriousness and restraint; keeping the focus firmly on marriage, they also advised a girl to hide any wit or learning she might possess and avoid improper physical display. (24)

Female education for middle- and upper-class women, Todd, as well as Kathryn Hughes in "Gender Roles in the 19th Century," explain, consisted of 'accomplishments' such as music, singing, drawing, dancing, and modern languages, as well as domestic skills such as

of history can only be addressed through tensions in writing. Young maintains that Foucault considers history as a retroactive construction. See Young's "Foucault's Phantasms."

needlework, which served the purpose of attracting a husband.[10] In other words, female education prepared women to fulfil their roles as wives and mothers. While conduct books promoted modesty, virtue, and inner beauty in women, LeRoy W. Smith recognizes that above all else, conduct books prepared women for matrimony since marriage was the "expected means for single young women to gain or retain social and economic security" (qtd. in Eddleman), akin to Wollstonecraft's recognition in *A Vindication* that "[marriage] is the only way women can rise in the world" (74). Following this idea, in her exploration of femininity in Wollstonecraft and Austen, Rachel Evans explains that women's very survival depended on marriage in the early nineteenth century. Women had little social and financial power, Evans clarifies, and were forced to figuratively sell themselves, a process that she maintains resembled slavery (20).[11] In this manner, female education "led to perpetual childhood, indiscipline, sexual fixation, boredom, and if not corrected by harsh experience, lifelong unhappiness" (24), Todd argues. Furthermore, much like Todd intimates in her description of conduct books circulating in the late eighteenth century, Hughes describes how conduct books proscribed 'masculine' intellectual pursuits. Women were expected to display conventionally feminine characteristics such as modesty and reserve, Hughes continues, and, women who gave themselves to such 'masculine' pursuits were called "Bluestockings"—a derogatory term, which commonplace signified women who were unfeminine and distasteful since women allegedly attempted to "usurp men's 'natural' intellectual superiority."[12] Following through on the distinction between a masculine and feminine education, Todd maintains that, like other female novelists of her time, such as Hannah More (1745-1833),[13]

[10] Hughes clarifies that women were "not expected to focus too obviously on finding a husband. […] Women were assumed to desire marriage because it allowed them to become mothers rather than to pursue sexual or emotional satisfaction." See Hughes's "Gender Roles in the 19th Century." See chapter 2 of Todd's *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen*.
[11] See chapter 2 of this thesis for more on slavery and female subjugation.
[12] Wollstonecraft, likewise, disparages the notion that women "must not aim at respect, lest they should be hunted out of society as masculine" (*A Vindication* 100).
[13] See More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799).

Jane West (1758-1852),[14] Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821),[15] Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849),[16] and Mary Hays,[17] Austen criticized the state of female education, in her novels, and in none more so than *Mansfield Park*, which leaves women in a state of childhood, and consequently, dependence (24). Sutherland adds the women writers Catharine Macaulay (1731-1791),[18] Wollstonecraft,[19] Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825),[20] and Hester Chapone (1727-1801)[21] to the list of women who denounced improper female education during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Austen participates in discussions of her time and contributes, in her novel, to the plight of female education in her own manner.

Austen was highly influenced by her contemporary, the eighteenth-century proto-feminist writer and philosopher Wollstonecraft. Austen does not mention Wollstonecraft in her literature or letters. Nonetheless, several literary critics, including Jane Stabler,[22] Miriam Ascarelli,[23] Devoney Looser,[24] Kirkham,[25] and others, believe Austen would have read Wollstonecraft's well-known work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), and posit a feminist connection between the two female writers. Claire Tomalin, Austen's biographer, also elucidates how Austen was most likely cognizant of Wollstonecraft's work, and even perhaps, Wollstonecraft herself:

> Sir William East, the father of one of George Austen's former pupils, was a benefactor of Wollstonecraft. Furthermore, Sir William was a neighbor and

[14] See West's *Letters Addressed to a Young Man: On his First Entrance into Life* (1801) and *Letters to a Young Lady* (1806).
[15] See Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796). Inchbald also translated August Friedrich Ferdinand von Kotzebue's (1761-1819) *Lovers' Vows.* See appendix A of *Mansfield Park.*
[16] See Edgeworth's *Practical Education* (1798).
[17] See Hays's "Improvements Suggested in Female Education" (1797).
[18] See Macaulay's *Letters on Education* (1790). See p. 180 of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication*.
[19] See Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).
[20] See Barbauld's "On Female Studies" (1826).
[21] See Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773). See p. 180 of *A Vindication*.
[22] See the introduction to *Mansfield Park*.
[23] See Ascarelli's "A Feminist Connection: Jane Austen and Mary Wollstonecraft."
[24] See pp. 31-2 of Looser's *Jane Austen and Discourses of Feminism*.
[25] See Kirkham's *Jane Austen: Feminism and Fiction.*

> friend to Austen's uncle, James Leigh-Perrot. After Wollstonecraft attempted suicide in 1796, Sir William was credited with being particularly kind to her during her recovery. While this does not specifically link Austen and Wollstonecraft, it makes it plausible that the Austen family knew of Wollstonecraft and her ideas. (qtd. in Ascarelli 158)

Regardless of whether Austen knew Wollstonecraft, it is very probable that Austen had read *A Vindication* since the two female writers have similar views on education. Wollstonecraft's moral and political treatise advocates for proper female education, which consists primarily of teaching reason and promoting virtue, and maintains that reason and virtue exist in both genders, a radical concept at the time.[26] She argues social reform requires proper female education and declares: "It is time to effect a revolution in female manners—time to restore to them their lost dignity—and make [women], as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world" (113). Women, she maintains, deserve civil and social rights and should, first and foremost, be considered as human beings. Austen reproduces many of these notions in her novels. "Austen, like Wollstonecraft, was tuned into one of the hottest issues of her time: women's role in society," Ascarelli writes in "A Feminist Connection: Jane Austen and Mary Wollstonecraft," and clearly states, "Austen was familiar with Wollstonecraft's work." Ascarelli further contends that Austen "cared passionately about the two issues at the core of Wollstonecraft's work: the concept that women are rational creatures and the belief that, in order for women to fulfill their potential as human beings, they must learn how to think for themselves." It is for this reason that Wollstonecraft criticizes the late eighteenth-century female education, which fails to adequately teach women reason and virtue and leaves, she argues, women in a state inferior

[26] *A Vindication* presents gender as binary. Gender inclusivity was not prevalent in the late eighteenth century. For more information on gender and sexuality in the eighteenth century, see chapters 5 and 6 of Perry's *Novel Relations.*

to man. In particular, Wollstonecraft objects to the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1712-1778) argument in *Emile, or On Education* (1762) that women exist to serve and please, a prevalent notion at the time. Wollstonecraft proposes a more gender-equal system of education in *A Vindication,* in the same fashion that Austen's novels participate in Enlightenment anti-Romantic feminism (179), as Mireia Aragay contends in "Possessing Jane Austen" (1999). Austen and Wollstonecraft propose similar advancements in female education, and, as Evans states, "the works of Wollstonecraft and Austen manifest this struggle and they became precursors to early feminist thought, calling for the equality of women through education" (22). Evans explains how Wollstonecraft appropriated a space to discuss women's rights in *A Vindication*, which impacted Austen, especially in her work *Mansfield Park*. The protagonist, Fanny Price, accords with Wollstonecraft's concept of the rational woman.

Wollstonecraft and Austen offer similar perspectives of women and family in their works. In her introduction to *Mansfield Park*, Stabler associates Austen with Wollstonecraft in the way that they both portray educated women as better mothers and wives (xii). Austen and Wollstonecraft share similar perspectives of women and family, Ascarelli contends, as both focus on the reasoning skills women need to function within a patriarchal society. "Austen's subject-matter is the central subject-matter of rational, or Enlightenment, feminism," Kirkham writes," and continues, "[Austen's] viewpoint on the moral nature and status of women, female education, marriage, authority and the family, and the representation of women in literature is strikingly similar to that shown by Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" (xxi). However, Austen discords with Wollstonecraft in the ways the latter advocates for a rational system of female education, which could potentially allow women to fulfil their roles as wives and mothers. In *Mansfield Park,* for

instance, education assists in the formation of identity and binds individuals and families together.

In her work of feminist philosophy, Wollstonecraft mentions her predecessor, John Locke (1632-1703), the highly influential seventeenth-century British philosopher, and his treatise on education, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), from which she appropriates several ideas, but also assesses the validity of certain concepts. Locke's treatise on education proposes methods to raise and educate children and primarily focuses on fathers and sons. Locke explores various subjects, from physical exercise, nutrition, clothing, habits, and sleep, to punishment and rewards, rules, modelling, religion, and manners. *Thoughts* was, and is, considered one of the most important philosophical works on education. It is no wonder that Wollstonecraft alludes to *Thoughts* in *A Vindication.* Most notably, Wollstonecraft assumes Locke's perspectives that the objective of education is to instil reason to promote virtue. Locke's insistence on reason—and that children are reasonable beings—is probably the most influential idea Wollstonecraft appropriates in *A Vindication.* According to Locke, childhood education revolves around moral education. He writes: "the great principle and foundation of all virtue and worth is placed in this: that a man is able to deny himself his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best, though the appetite lean the other way" (34).[27] In this way, self-governance and self-denial, which are possible through the exercise of reason, are also central to children's education. Moreover, Locke stresses how childhood education should occur in the home, between parents and children, and indicates that childhood experiences leave lasting impressions on the mind, ideas that Wollstonecraft explores in her work. The legacy of Locke's *Thoughts* is undeniable. Both Wollstonecraft and Austen were inspired by his treatise and were especially taken with his position on reason and virtue.

[27] I use modern capitalization rules.

Drawing on Wollstonecraft's and Locke's philosophies of education in *A Vindication* and *Thoughts,* respectively, this thesis examines the relationship between education and kinship in Austen's *Mansfield Park.* It explores how social learning (which occurs through modelling), experiential learning (which occurs through experience), and self-directed learning (which is initiated and directed by the learner), as well as formal and non-formal learning, are instrumental to identity formation and determine relationships. Following Naomi Tadmor's and Carol Beardmore et al.'s definitions of kinship and family as socio-cultural rather than biological constructs—defining family as circles of kin within and beyond households and families as "fluid entities with permeable borders and flexibility" (Beardmore et al. 5)—and Samuel Johnson's definition of kin as "relation[s] either of consanguinity or affinity" (1150), this thesis will consider "the effect of education" (Austen 211) on kinship in *Mansfield Park*, and examine biological and surrogate parent-child relationships, sibling bonds, marriage, friendship, and patrilineality.[28]

This thesis will also explore the interdependent relationship between the individual, the family, and society in the novel, and also, the ways and reasons early nineteenth-century British society and its radical and rapid transformations determined or at the very least impacted Austen's varied representations of kinship in *Mansfield Park* through learning.[29] To elaborate, systemic changes within the nation and beyond inevitably had implications for the social construction of reality of its population. It is therefore certain that Austen herself was formed by events occurring during her lifetime and discourse circulating at the time, as evinced in the way, as Kirkham and Sabiston maintain, discussions surrounding social

[28] See Tadmor's *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage.* Tadmor argues that fictive kinship, that is, people related to families through contract, acquaintance, friendship, or work, was as important for the meaning of family and kinship as relations of blood, marriage, and law. See Beardmore et al. 3. Todd also explains the language of kinship signified not only relations of blood and marriage, but also relationships and moral duties, such as filial, parental, sibling, and avuncular relationships and cousinage. See p. 140 of Perry's *Novel Relations*. See Tadmor, especially chapter 4 for details relating to naming conventions. See Beardmore et al.'s *Family Life in Britain, 1650-1910.*

[29] Ruth Perry indicates that the family is the intermediate between the individual and the society. See p. 13 of *Novel Relations*.

justice—such as gender, social, and economic inequality—seep into her novel. In *Mansfield Park*, Austen employs what Looser describes in *Jane Austen and Discourses of Feminism* as a "sneaky feminism" (5), meaning she subtly addresses social and political issues of her time, concealing and complicating her positions on such debates by narratives that may, at first, appear entirely domestic, or feminine, in nature.[30] In this way, Austen enters the sphere of 'masculine' discourse since she participates in intellectual debates (even when as a woman, she had no civil rights at the time) in ways that differentiate her from more openly radical revolutionaries such as Wollstonecraft and position her more closely with women novelists such as West and Edgeworth. Austen takes a different approach, marking in which respects social issues have implications for the very fabric of society, of the family, and even of the individual, and, more specifically, how individuals (learn to) relate to each other. A society that tolerates systemic forms of injustice, such as British colonialism, slavery, and primogeniture, to name a few, teaches its population values that corrupt the natural ties that bind them, and, as Wollstonecraft suggests in *A Vindication*, degrades humanity. Nevertheless, Austen mostly focuses on the domestic sphere and demonstrates how prevalent social issues have ramifications within the home and family, between parents and children, siblings, and other relations. Given that education primarily occurred in the home, it follows that the ways teaching and learning took place were impacted as well. In *Mansfield Park*, education forms the ways individuals think but is also determined by individuals and society, an interdependent relationship that suggests that changing one changes the other. This is what happens in the novel. The heroine, Fanny Price, is changed by the education she receives, and then changes the world she inhabits. Fanny transforms the ways individuals relate to each

[30] Looser explains that Austen uses "traditional romance plots to soften her ironic and perhaps more radical feminist messages. Austen's feminism is guarded" (5).

other, enables more authentic and affectionate kinship ties, and fashions a more stable and equal familial structure at Mansfield Park.

"Give a Girl an Education": Austen's Vindication of Education

Austen's third novel, *Mansfield Park*, revolves around childhood education and upbringing. The narrative relates Fanny Price's upbringing and how, at the age of 10, her wealthy aunt and uncle Lady Bertram and Sir Thomas "adopt" her to relieve Mrs. Price and Lieutenant Price, Fanny's parents, from the financial burden of raising a daughter.[31] Fanny's familial uprooting and education at Mansfield Park allow her to improve her mind and body. Through the years, Fanny develops from a fearful, unassertive, and uneducated child into a resolute, confident, and principled woman, capable of conscientious and critical thought. Fanny's instruction displaces her attachments from her biological family in Portsmouth onto her adoptive family at Mansfield Park, forever alters the people with whom she can relate, and culminates in her permanent integration into the Bertram family when she marries her cousin Edmund. The novel also addresses the significance of upbringing with the Bertram children, the Price children, Mary and Henry Crawford, and Mr. James Rushworth. In each case, parental figures—whether consciously or unconsciously, positively or negatively—form the minds, manners, and morals of children. Austen presents childhood education as a process that occurs in the home between parents and children and revolves around teaching reason and promoting virtue. Childhood education is also quintessential to the identity formation process. However, most parents and parental figures in *Mansfield Park* neglect parental duties and offer inauspicious role models, which impairs children's proper development into functional adults and upright citizens. Consequently, particular children adopt surrogate parents; Austen rewards these surrogate parents with filial love and esteem for their commitment to the pedagogical relationship, specifically, for effectively teaching children

[31] Legal adoption was introduced in Great Britain in 1926. See Murphy 350; Walker.

reason and modelling what the novel considers appropriate behaviour.[32] The education process provides opportunities for surrogate parents and children to mentally and emotionally bond and ensures they develop a relationship founded on genuine, mutual affection. The novel portrays education as a process the encourages bonding between the teacher and the student, which determines the child's ability to form healthy kinship ties in adulthood.

This chapter offers an examination of the ways *Mansfield Park* accords and discords with Locke's and Wollstonecraft's philosophies of education in *Thoughts* and *A Vindication,* respectively. The first part of the chapter will consider how Austen's novel aligns with views in *Thoughts* and *A Vindication*, while the second part will address how Austen's novel differs from and develops ideas from their works. Austen, in *Mansfield Park*, effectively vindicates the necessity of childhood education as it fosters authentic and profound relationships and promotes individual well-being in a manner that both replicates and reformulates perspectives in Wollstonecraft's and Locke's works. More specifically, this chapter will analyze the interdependent relationship between childhood education and kinship in Austen's novel and demonstrate how teaching and learning form identity and determine kinship ties.

Aligning Austen with Wollstonecraft and Locke

Wollstonecraft's philosophy of education in *A Vindication*, which revolves around teaching children reason, was undoubtedly influenced by ideas in Locke's *Thoughts*. The most important notion that Wollstonecraft adopts from Locke is his belief in the importance of reason. In *A Vindication*, Wollstonecraft defines education in one instance as "attention to a child as will slowly sharpen the senses […] and set the understanding to work" (86), which highlights observation, critical thinking, reflection, and, most notably, reason as intellectual

[32] Walker explains that the term surrogate, during Austen's lifetime, did not signify surrogate parenting. Foster or adoption was used to signify alternative forms of parenting. See "'In the Place of a Parent': Austen and Adoption."

abilities which children (should) acquire from parents, and reason, she defines, "the simple power of improvement; or, more properly speaking, of discerning truth" (122). Recalling Wollstonecraft's definition of education, Locke characterizes reason as "the discovery of the certainty or probability of such propositions or truths, which the mind arrives at by deduction made from such ideas, which it has got by the use of its natural faculties, viz. by sensation or reflection" (445). His definition focuses on the individual's ability to discern truth using intellectual abilities and knowledge acquired through inner and outer processes. Locke insists upon the importance of reason throughout *Thoughts* and declares "the right improvement and exercise of our reason [… is] the highest perfection that a man can attain to in this life" (189). Throughout his treatise, Locke frequently stresses the significance of teaching children reason and treating children as reasonable beings and believes that "[c]hildren are to be treated as rational creatures" (55), and further, "love to be treated as rational creatures" (102), ideas that also recur in Wollstonecraft's work. However, *Thoughts* is preoccupied with teaching children reason, and *A Vindication* is concerned with teaching girls (and women) reason. Wollstonecraft expands upon Locke's insistence on the importance of reason and asserts that women, like men, are rational beings and should be treated as such.

Locke, who describes how childhood education forms children's minds and manners, seems to have inspired Wollstonecraft in the way she understands the development of the mind. In *Thoughts,* Locke maintains that childhood experiences leave lasting impressions on the mind:

> The little, or almost insensible impressions on our tender infancies, have very important and lasting consequences: and there 'tis, as in the fountains of some rivers, where a gentle application of the hand turns the flexible waters in channels, that make them take quite contrary courses; and by this direction

> given them at first in the source, they receive different tendencies, and arrive at last at very remote and distant places. (2)

His account details how childhood experiences greatly impact the individual and illustrates how "the minds of children, [are] as easily turned, this or that way, as water itself" (2). Locke describes childhood experiences using the imagery of nature to demonstrate in which ways children's minds are malleable and capable of development. At the same time, his understanding necessarily entails that childhood experiences can harm children's proper development, which is the reason Locke also states that "errors in education should be less indulg'd than any. These, like faults in the first concoction, that are never mended in the second or third, carry their afterwards incorrigible taint with them, thro' all the parts and stations of life" (A2-3). Childhood experiences can impact the development of the mind, both positively and negatively. As such, proper education is necessary to ensure the mind develops and grows properly, according to Locke.[33] Similarly, Wollstonecraft explains the importance of childhood education on the formation of the mind, but, unlike Locke, her specific focus is women:

> The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove, that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity. (71)

According to Wollstonecraft, the late eighteenth-century state of female education prevents women from properly developing into capable adults. Female education focuses on superficial characteristics, such as appearance, a personal attribute that she contends loses value over time. For instance, she references Mr. Day's *Sanford and Merton* (1783-89) to

[33] I will explain Locke's conception of "proper" education and development in the following paragraphs.

illustrate how female education renders women weak of body and mind.[34] Wollstonecraft also criticizes the countless conduct books circulating at the time, which commonly promoted dissemblance, artifice, and dissimilation among women, such as the widely known Dr. John Gregory's *Legacy to his Daughters* (1761).[35] She instead proposes that women should cultivate mental and emotional skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Childhood education proves just as significant for Wollstonecraft as for Locke. However, Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* surpasses Locke's *Thoughts* in terms of gender equality. Wollstonecraft declares girls require equal attention as boys, as their minds have equal potential for development.

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft's philosophy of education mostly focuses on women, while Locke offers a more general system of education. Locke writes during The Restoration (1660-1700), while Wollstonecraft writes during The Romantic Period (1785-1832), which is not to say that the latter was a Romantic writer, but only to express that Locke's seventeenth-century context is different from Wollstonecraft's late eighteenth century. In fact, Wollstonecraft reacts against and criticizes certain late eighteenth-century societal issues, including the current state of female education at the time, which revolved around "frivolous accomplishments" (129) and dissemblance rather than reason and understanding. She is especially critical of teaching children that beauty is an essential personal quality for women and of teaching women to feign obedience to acquire a husband (84, 88):

> Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they

[34] See p. 108 of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication.*
[35] See p. 94 of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication.*

> be beautiful, every thing else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives. (84)

Marrying for wealth or status, Wollstonecraft maintains, signifies a violation of the self (211). She believes no education would be more beneficial than the education women receive (130-1) and affirms that "[n]ature, or, to speak with strict propriety, God, has made all things right; but man has sought him out many interventions to mar the work" (95). "[M]orality is very insidiously undermined, in the female world," Wollstonecraft continues, "by the attention being turned to shew instead of substance" (214), which further demonstrates her disdain for superficiality and artificiality. According to Wollstonecraft, honesty, transparency, and openness are natural qualities children are born with, and, she argues, are qualities parents should nurture rather than dissemblance (94). Be that as it may, it is important to mention certain inconsistencies in *A Vindication.* While Wollstonecraft believes principles of truth are innate (13) and argues "all our natural inclinations are right and good in themselves" (158), she also disagrees with Rousseau's claims in *Emile* that "a state of nature is preferable to civilization" (78) and "what is, is right" (158), meaning what is natural is good. In *A Vindication*, she further explains that civilization requires individuals to rise above their baser natures, which is possible through education, since reason, she argues, distinguishes human beings from animals (71-2, 79, 98). Wollstonecraft asserts that young children are *un*able "to discern good from evil" (159) much as Locke writes that "[o]ur first actions being guided more by self-love than reason or reflection, it is no wonder that in children they should be very apt to deviate from the just measures of right and wrong, which are in the mind the result of improved reason and serious meditation" (153). Thus, Wollstonecraft articulates how proper education can correct natural deficiencies but contradicts herself when she says that God "has made all things right." She also asserts that improper education harms proper development but then describes the inferior state of nature. Despite these contradictions,

Wollstonecraft clarifies that improper female education produces what she believes are widespread deficiencies in women.

Wollstonecraft might have developed Locke's aversion for affectation, an idea he discusses at length in his work. Locke, when discussing education in more general terms, criticizes affectation and states that "affectation is an awkward and forced imitation of what should be genuine and easy, wanting the beauty that accompanies what is natural; because there is always a disagreement between the outward action, and the mind within" (69). His conception of a 'natural' authenticity seems to have impacted Wollstonecraft's later work. In fact, Locke considers affectation a result of education, an idea that recurs throughout *A Vindication*:

> Affectation is not, I confess, an early fault of childhood, or the product of untaught nature: it is of that sort of weeds, which grow not in the wild uncultivated waste, but in garden-plots, under the negligent hand, or unskilful care of a gardener. Management and instruction, and some sense of the necessity of breeding, are requisite to make any one capable of affectation, which endeavours to correct natural defects, and always has the laudable aim of pleasing, though it always misses it; and the more it labours to put on gracefulness, the farther it is from it. For this reason it is the more carefully to be watched, because it is the proper fault of education; a perverted education indeed. (67-8)

Affectation, according to Locke, is taught. He believes children learn dissemblance through an improper education. Both Locke and Wollstonecraft are preoccupied with how education forms individuals. Locke appears more optimistic about education, while Wollstonecraft mainly focuses on criticizing the inherent issues with female education, which reveals how both philosophers are products of their different times.

Locke's and Wollstonecraft's notions of education prioritize the mind, rather than manners: education, for both of them, concerns *being* reasonable and virtuous rather than *behaving* reasonably and virtuously. Locke's and Wollstonecraft's understandings of education are fundamentally different from the conventional eighteenth-century definition. Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) defines education as the "[f]ormation of manners in youth" or simply "nurture" (676).[36] Johnson's simplistic definition stresses outward appearance, notably adherence to social norms of propriety and respectability through performance. Wollstonecraft's and Locke's ideas foreground inner qualities, such as mental and emotional abilities, for the simple purpose of personal improvement.[37] Locke also promotes self-improvement in his later treatise *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (1706), where he argues that "it is easy to perceive that men are guilty of a great many faults in the exercise and improvement of this faculty of the mind, which hinder them in their progress and keep them in ignorance and error all their lives" (4). He encourages individuals to continue learning throughout their lives, much as Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication,* encourages continual self-improvement. Supporting the idea that Wollstonecraft endorsed personal development, Todd, in her introduction to Wollstonecraft's work, states that she "believed in individual progress," and also, recognized that "with some changes everyone could improve" (xix). Education, for both Wollstonecraft and Locke, is about individual progress. More broadly, for Wollstonecraft, as opposed to Locke, personal improvement allows for familial and social reform.

Locke's and Wollstonecraft's perspectives—which are highly influenced by religious ideology—demonstrate that virtue is the primary objective of education.[38] Both promote the

[36] The term "nurture" here has no association with the psychologist Sir Francis Galton's (1822-1911) Nature vs. Nurture Theory (1869). See Wilson. In effect, Johnson defines nurture as "to educate" (vol. 2, 194).
[37] I will expand upon this idea later.
[38] Wollstonecraft grounds her beliefs in religion and states, "I build my belief on the perfection of God" (*A Vindication* 79), which entails that God's creations must necessarily be perfect.

acquisition of virtue, and maintain education promotes virtue. "'Tis virtue then, direct virtue," Locke states, "which is the hard and valuable part to be aim'd at in education" (84). In a similar manner, Wollstonecraft contends that "the heart, as well as the understanding, is opened by cultivation" (136) and that "every being may become virtuous by the exercise of its own reason" (86). Wollstonecraft and Locke believe the objective of education is to form upright, moral human beings, which demonstrates that while certain things have evolved during the century that separates *Thoughts* and *A Vindication*, certain aspects, such as religious ideology, have remained, at their core, relatively stable during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Evoking religious ideology, Locke's and Wollstonecraft's philosophies of education involve faith in the pre-eminence of virtue, given that both philosophers believe virtue contributes to well-being and happiness. The very first sentence of *Thoughts*, in fact, declares that happiness depends, almost entirely, on the individual: "[an individual's] happiness or misery is most part of their own making" (1), which sets the tone for the treatise, and associates an education that revolves around reason and virtue with happiness. Education, and more specifically reason, Locke asserts, promotes self-governance. Locke commends self-denial, which, he argues, contributes to lasting well-being and happiness, and states that "the principle of all virtue and excellency lies in a power of denying ourselves the satisfaction of our own desires, where reason does not authorize them" (42).[39] In a way that reproduces such ideas, Wollstonecraft maintains that proper education contributes to happiness: "the perfection of our nature and capability of happiness, must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, and knowledge, that distinguish the individual" (76). Education "form[s] the temper [and] regulate[s] the passions" (86), Wollstonecraft elaborates, and allows individuals to govern their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours (156, 172). She adds that "[m]odesty, temperance, and self-denial, are the sober offspring of reason" (155), which demonstrates that

[39] See pp. 34, 37, 42, 48, and 220 of Locke's *Thoughts.*

she believes reason promotes emotional and mental self-discipline. *Thoughts* and *A Vindication*, however, differ in the way Wollstonecraft specifically promotes reason and virtue in women so they may better accomplish their domestic duties, while Locke details, more generally, the advantages that reason and virtue provide.

Austen proposes her own philosophy of education in *Mansfield Park.* Certain aspects of Austen's literary representations of education align with Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* and Locke's *Thoughts*. Although *Mansfield Park* is the only Austen novel that follows the protagonist as she grows, develops, and matures from child to adult—or in other words, progresses from childhood to adulthood—the significance of upbringing and childhood education resounds throughout Austen's corpus. Her novels depict the family and, more precisely, parents as responsible for a child's education, similar to Wollstonecraft and Locke, whose philosophies of education describe how teaching and learning occur within the family. Austen's six major novels discuss parents' formative role on children and the ways in which it affects children's identities, personalities, and dispositions; the family, in short, is the civilizing force. Teaching and learning occur in the home, between parents and children, ideas that Locke and Wollstonecraft propose in their works. *Mansfield Park* portrays education as a parental responsibility and as a process that takes place in the home. Austen offers a comprehensive, satirical model of family and family dynamics and portrays a complex and interconnected network of relations. Austen includes childless families, an extended family, and a single-parent family, as well as biological, surrogate, and adopted family dynamics in her novel, thus offering a diversity of family models. The novel emphasizes the role of childhood education in forming functional adults and positions reason as quintessential to learning in a way that also recalls the works of Wollstonecraft and Locke.

The standard of education celebrated in *Mansfield Park* involves amelioration and authenticity rather than dissemblance, which evokes Locke's and Wollstonecraft's views. The

novel presents the harmful consequences of an education that focuses on accomplishments and comments on gender inequalities regarding education, much like Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication*. Female education, during Austen's lifetime, revolved around accomplishments and pleasing men, principally fathers and husbands. In a similar manner, Austen, in *Mansfield Park*, describes Maria and Julia Bertram's education, which focuses on "understanding and manners, not the disposition" and theoretical rather than practical knowledge. The narrator relates that their education "has no useful influence [… and] no moral effect on the mind" (364). Likewise, Mary's education revolves around accomplishments, which serve to procure an affluent husband, as evidenced in her belief that "[a] large income is the best recipé for happiness" (167). Fanny critiques Mary's education and claims, "[s]he had only learnt to think nothing of consequence but money" (343). These examples demonstrate that Maria, Julia, and Mary value superficial characteristics in others and in themselves, which hinders their ability to form profound relationships with family members and friends and encourages them to marry men for financial or social gain rather than affection, a process Wollstonecraft associates with prostitution (130).[40] Austen aligns more closely with Wollstonecraft than with Locke, as both female writers address issues surrounding female education, and in this respect, criticize an education that does not promote personal development in women.

Austen's understanding of education involves personal development, which echoes ideas in Wollstonecraft's work. The novel portrays the formation of the mind as a continuous process that all individuals—children and adults alike—should pursue. Whether it concerns individuals or estates, improvement is a recurring theme in Austen's works but is most prominent in *Mansfield Park*.[41] The novel presents education as a lifelong process of

[40] See p. 390n130 of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication.*
[41] See Cleere's "Reinvesting Nieces: Mansfield Park and the Economics of Endogamy"; p. 212 of Messina's "Fanny Price's Domestic Assemblages in Austen's Mansfield Park"; p. 23 of Todd's *Jane Austen*.

becoming, rather than a state an individual achieves once they reach adulthood. Austen fashions flawed and somewhat realistic, or unsentimental characters, which, given their natural weaknesses, can benefit from improvement, and thus she characterizes identity as fluid and malleable. Her characterizations align with Wollstonecraft's and Locke's ideals of individual progress, which occurs through education, and, more precisely, reason. For instance, Fanny recognizes the power of change: she observes how the shrubbery, which in the past she had "never thought of as anything, or capable of becoming anything," has, over time, grown and become "valuable" (163), in the same way that the Bertram family initially dismiss Fanny's potential but eventually learn to cherish her worth as she develops through the years.[42] The narrator praises characters who pursue personal growth and critiques those unwilling or unable to progress and applauds Fanny, Edmund, and even Sir Thomas for their willingness to become better individuals and learn from their mistakes. On the other hand, the narrator is critical of Mary's fixed mindset, Mrs. Price's aversion to change, and Henry's inability to reform, all qualities which contribute to their unhappiness and damage their relationships (54, 306, 366-7). Austen does not seem to criticize the characters' failings but rather their reluctance to change. Education is about becoming a better person, which, Austen seems to suggest in *Mansfield Park,* allows individuals to create better lives for themselves, much as Wollstonecraft and Locke suggest education contributes to happiness and well-being.

Education in *Mansfield Park* offers individuals the possibility of positive change and improvement. Like Locke and Wollstonecraft, Austen utilizes the imagery of nature to describe childhood education, perhaps because the natural world is ever-changing and ever-growing and consequently provides an accurate analogy for her understanding of learning and

[42] Although Sir Thomas initially perceives Fanny's worth because of her physical improvement and her growth into a marriageable young woman, he finally learns to value her as an individual.

development. In the novel, Fanny describes how the richer soil at Sotherton allows the evergreens to grow and thrive, compared to Mansfield Park. In the same way, she learns to thrive at Mansfield Park and develops her mind and body over the years (164).[43] In effect, Fanny perceives education differently than Mary Crawford, who believes personal improvement is tedious and futile since "there is no hope for a cure [for faults such as selfishness]" (54). Fanny's inner world is constantly evolving, while Mary's inner world is static. Yet, if behaviours are taught and learnt, it follows that they can also be unlearnt, even if this proves challenging and in some instances impossible, in the novel, given that habits acquired during childhood, Locke explains, are difficult to unlearn. Fanny appreciates the changes that can occur through learning. The narrator makes clear that she understands that behaviour is learned when she marvels, quite philosophically, at "the operations of time, and the changes of the human mind" (163), a perceptive observation that reflects how people and places change and develop over the years. Fanny also appreciates the influence and importance of family and location on the formation of the mind and temper. "[W]here nature had made so little difference," Fanny recognizes, "circumstances […] have made so much" (320). In this way, Austen's understanding of education as a lifelong process that offers the possibility of improvement aligns with Wollstonecraft and Locke. Austen reveals the malleability of human beings and their lives in her novel, an idea that she also complicates by attesting to the difficulty of unlearning habits.

Following the idea that behaviours acquired during childhood are difficult to modify, Austen associates improper education with harmful ways of being. In this way, Austen's *bildungsroman* is a cautionary tale warning against the dangers of improper education. In

[43] When Fanny visits her biological family at Portsmouth, she suffers physically and emotionally. Henry comments on her deteriorating health (and appearance). This seems to indicate that Mansfield Park, with its country air, abundant food, relatively calm atmosphere, and daily exercise provide a healthier lifestyle for Fanny, whose constitution, the narrator suggests, is fragile. More importantly, the narrator seems to indicate that Fanny's development into a marriageable women is consequential of her life at Mansfield Park.

Mansfield Park, Austen offers social commentary not only on gender inequality but also on childhood education. Improper childhood education, in the novel, negatively impacts the child's development and the socialization process, and later, proper functioning in adulthood. In a way akin to Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication*, Austen suggests in *Mansfield Park* that improper education produces selfish and self-indulgent adults, which proves detrimental not only to health and happiness but also to interpersonal relations. In the novel, most children who receive improper education display excessive selfishness and self-indulgence in adulthood. Henry Crawford "indulge[s] in the freaks of a cold-blooded vanity a little too long" (366) during his stay at Everingham and commits adultery with Maria and loses his beloved Fanny in the process. The narrator blames his habits, that is, selfish tendencies appropriated during childhood, as the origin of his moral crime, and consequently, misery. In the last chapter, the narrator describes the motives of Henry's adultery and claims that "the temptation of immediate pleasure was too strong for a mind unused to make any sacrifice to right" (367). Likewise, Maria and Julia have "never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers" (364) during childhood, which, according to Sir Thomas, leads them to act recklessly in adulthood. Having never been (successfully) taught restraint or self-denial, Tom engages in a hedonistic lifestyle at the expense of his well-being. Also, Julia marries Mr. Yates out of "selfish alarm" (366), Mr. Rushworth marries Maria out of "selfish passion" (364), and Maria and Julia love Henry out of "selfish vanity" (152). It is tempting to generalize Fanny's statement, as she observes the actors prepare a family production of *Lovers' Vows* that "selfishness […] seem[s] to govern them all" (104). The novel illustrates how selfish behaviour contributes to misery. Selfishness seems to govern interpersonal relations; love becomes an emotion infused with selfish desires and compulsions, rather than a genuine feeling of intense affection. Conversely, Fanny and Edmund control their selfish impulses, using reason, by carefully considering the motives that govern their behaviours.

Proper education promotes healthy behaviours, such as self-governance. In *Mansfield Park*, Austen demonstrates that behaviours, whether harmful or healthy, are acquired during childhood, and also, reason is central to conscious acts of selflessness and compassion, notions that emerge in Wollstonecraft's and Locke's works.

Unlike Fanny, however, most children neither acquire reason nor virtue in *Mansfield Park* due to improper education, which resembles the way Wollstonecraft offers widespread criticism of society and maintains that most individuals lack reason. The Bertram children, the Price children, and Mr. Rushworth lack both reason and virtue.[44] Tom has agreeable, easy manners but is thoughtless and inconsiderate; Maria and Julia are polite and charming but egocentric and often unfriendly; Edmund is upright, but his behaviour rarely reflects his principles. The Price children, according to Fanny, lack morals, and Mr. Rushworth is kind and considerate but also self-conceited and self-centred.[45] The novel illustrates how education promotes virtue and associates virtue with happiness. More profoundly, the novel demonstrates in which respects education directly impacts mental and emotional health. Austen's critical narrative voice in *Mansfield Park* offers a sombre representation of familial life and individual existence; the novel, however, also offers hope in the form of education, which affords the possibility of happiness, akin to perspectives in *A Vindication,* and, to a lesser extent, *Thoughts* and *Conduct.*

The novel foregrounds the importance of becoming a 'good' person, that is, a person with high moral standards who displays kindness, consideration, generosity, and empathy. In this way, *Mansfield Park* might be understood to reflect views in *Thoughts* and *A Vindication* in its emphasis on the value of virtue. *Mansfield Park* extols the virtues of reason, which

[44] The Bertram children and Mr. James Rushworth are, evidently, adults. At the beginning of the novel, however, Tom is 17, Edmund is 16, Maria is 13, and Julia is 12. Most of the novel takes place eight years later.
[45] Here, again, the novel invites readers to consider Fanny's perspective. Fanny only spends three months at Portsmouth during her visit, which might not be enough time for her to make an accurate judgement of the Price children. Also, Fanny is clearly biased.

produces independent, rational adults. The novel commends and rewards the few characters who display reason. For instance, Austen rewards Fanny's sense (*and* sensibility) with marriage and upward social mobility. More frequently, the novel illustrates the unfavourable repercussions of ignorance and folly. For example, the narrator describes the "folly of [Mrs. Price's] conduct" (4) when she marries Lieutenant Price, a man "without education, fortune, or connections" (3), which, arguably, contributes to their conjugal unhappiness; "the folly of [Julia's] choice" (355) when she elopes with Mr. John Yates, which triggers controversy in the Bertram household; and the "stupidity" and "selfish passion" (364) of Mr. James Rushworth when he marries Maria, which contributes to his conjugal unhappiness and divorce. Proper childhood education, in the novel, is associated with conjugal felicity and personal well-being. The narrator criticizes or punishes unreasonable and foolish behaviour, and, more precisely, criticizes such behaviour because, as in Wollstonecraft, such conduct leads to unhappiness.

In these ways, Austen's novel reproduces certain ideas in *A Vindication* and *Thoughts*. Nevertheless, *Mansfield Park* differs from Wollstonecraft's and Locke's works in several respects. Austen especially reworks Wollstonecraft's proto-feminist ideas and examines them within an early nineteenth-century context. Her novel offers an examination of female education that develops the idea of the rational woman.

Moving Beyond *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Wollstonecraft and Locke portray childhood education as a process that primarily occurs in the home between parents and children. The two philosophers suggest that mothers and fathers are equally responsible for children's education and upbringing. To be clear, *A Vindication* focuses on mothers and female education, and *Thoughts* focuses on fathers and

male education.[46] Wollstonecraft and Locke both iterate that parents are equally responsible for children's education. Wollstonecraft maintains that mothers and fathers equally fulfil parental duties in an ideal marriage (223-4), and Locke states that "[t]he well educating of their children is so much the duty and concern of parents" (A3). However, Wollstonecraft holds mothers more accountable than fathers for accomplishing parental duties. "Mankind seem[s] to argue that children should be left under the management of women during their childhood" (139), she asserts, and believes that "the care of children in their infancy is one of the grand duties annexed to the female character by nature" (233). Moreover, Wollstonecraft also offers harsher criticism of mothers than fathers. She criticizes mothers for failing to fulfil domestic duties and describes them as "overgrown children" (273), going so far as to claim that "many children are absolutely murdered by the ignorance of women" (278). Such complexities within *A Vindication* reflect changing family dynamics during the eighteenth century.

In her work, Wollstonecraft implicitly addresses the changing nature of motherhood and maternal responsibilities during the late eighteenth century. Previously, while mothers and fathers were equally responsible for childhood education, parental responsibilities were determined according to gender, as evinced in *A Vindication.* In effect, mothers and fathers had distinct roles and duties.[47] Fathers were expected to manage the household, govern the family, model appropriate behaviour, and provide an education for children. Fathers were the head and centre of the family, home, and kinship group and held power and authority, Beardmore et al. explains in *Family Life in Britain, 1650-1910*, a work which details changing family dynamics across time (9-10). Mothers were expected to raise and educate

[46] Locke explains, "the principal aim of my discourse, is, how a young gentleman should be brought up from his infancy, which, in all things, will not so perfectly suit the education of daughters; though, where the difference of sex requires different treatment, 'twill be no hard matter to distinguish." See page A6 of Locke's *Thoughts.* As for Wollstonecraft, the title of her work makes it clear that she focuses on female education.
[47] Parental responsibilities were even more gendered in the early nineteenth century than they are currently.

children and provide moral education. However, during the eighteenth century and early nineteenth-century, family dynamics, and more specifically, maternal and paternal responsibilities, changed. In her important work *Novel Relations* (2004), which describes changes in the structures of English families throughout the eighteenth century, Ruth Perry describes how a kinship based on consanguineal ties evolved into conjugal and affinal ties due to social, political, and economic developments in eighteenth-century England, which signifies that marital ties became increasingly more important than biological ties. Perry explains:

> The transfer at marriage of [women's] subordination from fathers to husbands, the movement from father patriarchy to husband patriarchy, the weakening of their ties with their brothers, and the increasingly child-centered nature of the family, probably resulted in a net loss of social power for women. Women lost power as sisters and daughters and gained it as wives and mothers. The strengthening of conjugal bonds and the weakening of ties of filiation—in combination with enhanced emphasis on primogeniture in inheritance—reduced the responsibility of parents for their daughters. (34).

Such changing dynamics entailed marriage gained social and economic significance and indicated that women's roles as mothers and wives became more important than their roles as daughters and sisters. Along the same lines, Deborah Simonton details in *Women's History* (2005) that mothers became increasingly responsible for children's upbringing and education during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as they were believed to possess natural inner instincts, which made them ideal educators (35, 68-70). In a similar vein, in *Daily Life in 18th-Century England* (2017), Kirsten Olsen details how mothers and motherhood became idealized during this period (52-3). Supporting the idea of changing maternal responsibilities, Simonton explains that motherhood became "women's social duty"

(68), a responsibility that positioned women at the centre of the civilizing process. Returning to *A Vindication*, Wollstonecraft, contrary to the prevalent belief in the centrality of the maternal role for women, promotes a relatively more gender-equal system of parental responsibility, but then, somewhat inconsistently, contends that proper female education would allow women to better fulfil their roles as mothers. She argues that only an educated woman can accomplish her domestic duties: "reason is absolutely necessary," she writes, "to enable a woman to perform any duty properly" (134). It is for such a reason that Wollstonecraft advocates female education: she declares "make female rational creatures" since women "will quickly become good wives, and mothers: that is,—if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and fathers" (264-5). Wollstonecraft's positions on female education and motherhood in *A Vindication* conflict, since she offers revolutionary views of female education but more conservative understandings of motherhood and family.

Mothers and fathers have not only the responsibility to raise and educate children, according to Wollstonecraft but also the important charge to model appropriate behaviour for children. In fact, Wollstonecraft, as well as Locke, prioritize homeschooling, to varying degrees, for this reason, as they believe parents (should) provide positive role models for children. It is important to note that Wollstonecraft also supports formal education and proposes free national schools for both boys and girls. She explains that formal schooling would help women develop reason and virtue and allow girls to fulfil their domestic duties.[48] Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft affirms, "children ought to be educated at home" (246), and Locke, similarly, encourages homeschooling and clarifies, "I cannot but prefer breeding of a young gentleman at home in his father's sight, under a good governor, as much the best and safest way to this great and main end of education" (85). Positive role models are critical during childhood, Locke maintains, as children learn through observation and imitation and

[48] See chapter 12 of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication.*

appropriate the behaviours and worldviews that they quotidianly observe (74, 94). He believes modelling is the most effective method of instruction and further argues that "of all the ways whereby children are to be instructed, and their manners formed, the plainest, easiest, and most efficacious, is," he maintains, "to set before their eyes the examples of those things you would have them do, or avoid" (103-4). For this reason, children must be surrounded by positive role models since "[o]bservation will rub off, as [children] grow up, if they are bred in good company," Locke asserts, "but if in ill, all the rules in the world, all the correction imaginable, ill not be able to polish them" (74). In the same fashion, Wollstonecraft, who primarily focuses on mothers, decries maternal deficiency because she believes "[t]he weakness of the mother will be visited on the children" (263). It is principally for this reason that she advocates so strongly for female education since education prepares women for motherhood.

In *A Vindication*, Wollstonecraft promotes proper female education and especially the acquisition of reason and virtue in women, which signifies she positions women and men as equals since reason was considered a masculine quality in the late eighteenth century. Disputing the idea that reason was a masculine quality, she vilifies male writers such as Rousseau who associate reason with men: Wollstonecraft mocks the commonplace belief that "[women] were made to be loved, and must not aim at respect, lest they should be hunted out of society as masculine" (100). She disagrees with the idea that men are associated with intellect and women are associated with emotion. Moreover, like the many writers on female education, such as More, West, Hays, and others, she addresses the debate surrounding gender and education and states:

> [F]rom every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women […] but if [arguments against masculine women] be, against the imitation of manly virtues, or, more properly speaking, the attainment of those talents and virtues,

> the exercise of which ennobles the human character, and which raise females in the scale of animal being, when they are comprehensively termed mankind;—all those who view them with a philosophical eye must, I should think, wish with me, that they may every day grow more and more masculine. (72)

Wollstonecraft argues reason is a human quality. In this way, reason—the capacity to think and discern truth—permits women to become fully human. Also, reason makes women free, independent beings. Following such ideas, Wollstonecraft repeatedly iterates that women must learn how to think, rather than how to obey (182, 189, 192). She posits that "education deserves emphatically to be termed cultivation of the mind which teaches young people how to begin to think" (247), an idea that she might have appropriated from Locke. Indeed, education should consist of teaching children how to think, Locke explains in *Conduct*, where he disparages "[individuals] who seldom reason at all, but think according to the example of others […] for saving themselves the pains and trouble of thinking and examining for themselves" (5). Individuals may acquire bad habits or harmful thought-processes in youth, Locke specifies, but education can remedy undesirable behaviours. Locke believes that individuals must utilize reason to discover truth rather than blindly accept others' information and opinions. Recalling Locke's beliefs on childhood habits and self-reflection, Wollstonecraft explains that "few people act from principle" and contends, "present feeling, and early habits, are the grand springs" (182). "[Most] people take their opinions on trust to avoid the trouble of exercising their own minds" (210), Wollstonecraft argues, and, further maintains that few people self-reflect (64). When male writers such as Rousseau claimed female inferiority, Wollstonecraft proposed a more gender-neutral education based on the notion that the soul was "unsexed" (Todd, "Introduction" xix), a proto-feminist position that distinguishes her from Locke.

Furthermore, in *A Vindication*, Wollstonecraft details how proper female education allows women to form their identity. Wollstonecraft discusses how female education regulates how respectable women should behave. She compares how "[m]en are allowed by moralists to cultivate, as nature directs, different qualities, and assume the different characters" whereas "all women are to be levelled, by meekness and docility, into one character of yielding softness and gentle compliance" (169). Women, as opposed to men, are expected to develop the same character, which prevents them from acquiring a sense of identity and individuality. Wollstonecraft maintains, wisdom and virtue require knowledge of self and other: "If we mean, in short, to live in the world to grow wiser and better, and not merely to enjoy the good things of life, we must attain a knowledge of others at the same time that we become acquainted with ourselves" (188). Proper education provides women with the intellectual and emotional abilities to acquire a sense of self, which she contends women lack during her time.

Pursuing the idea that education allows individuals to develop a sense of self, in *A* Vindication, Wollstonecraft addresses, possibly involuntarily, the longstanding philosophical discussion about the link between reason, emotion, and identity. Identity first emerges as the notion of mastery of self—during the classical period with Plato and during the Hellenistic period with the Stoics—a concept which regards reason as superior to emotion; during the early modern period, mastery of self becomes essential to the disengaged self, that is, an individual who can objectively consider its world and consequently govern themselves (Alcoff 325-6; Baltzy; Kraut; Taylor 21, 514).[49] The eighteenth-century German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) later theorizes that an individual's subjectivity, a person's possession of conscious experiences and agency, develops through a formative

[49] Freedom, for Plato, is only possible if human beings have control, or are master of, their baser impulses and desires and exhibit reason. See Hall, "Plato" 25-6; Taylor 115.

process where the world transforms and influences the individual's core (Alcoff 327; Gulick). Hegel contends that while an individual has no power over the given, they can negate the given, or the world (Alcoff 327). This interdependent relationship between the individual and the world suggests the Other has power over the formation of the self. Hegel, however, posits that the individual's capacity to negate the given allows for some autonomy (327-8). Agency is possible through a critical distance between the individual and the world, which allows the individual to engage with and objectify the world rationally. Individuals possess the ability to form and reform their sense of self, and thus, identity becomes not simply appropriated from others but consciously chosen, which indicates that individuals can control and regulate who they are and want to be. Following these conceptions of identity and identity formation, Wollstonecraft argues that education and the acquisition of reason allow individuals to govern their emotions (91, 97), without which, she contends, individuals are governed by emotions, a process she describes as being "the weathercock of its own sensation" (139). Much like the notion of mastery of self, she prefers reason over passion, and states "[l]et […] reason teach passion to submit to necessity; or, let the dignified pursuit of virtue and knowledge raise the mind above those emotions which rather imbitter than sweeten the cup of life, when they are not restrained within due bounds" (97). Wollstonecraft believes that reason generates capable, free, and autonomous citizens with a strong sense of self. In much the same way, an identity, which involves knowledge of self, is essential for individual and collective welfare. A sense of self offers individuals the possibility to form healthy relationships based on esteem.[50]

[50] In her discussion of identity in *A Vindication*, Wollstonecraft mentions that individuals must have a strong sense of self to form attachments. Esteem leads to friendship and love, according to Wollstonecraft (183): "esteem, the only lasting affection, can alone be obtained by virtue supported by reason. It is respect for the understanding that keeps alive tenderness for the person" (170). Relationships, according to the female philosopher, should be founded on authentic rather than counterfeit feelings.

While Austen reproduces several ideas from *A Vindication* and *Thoughts i*n *Mansfield Park*, she also complicates several of Wollstonecraft's and Locke's views. First and foremost, Austen's depictions of parenthood are products of an early nineteenth-century context. *Mansfield Park* presents conflicting representations of parental roles and responsibilities, which reflects changing family dynamics in the early nineteenth century. Austen presents mothers and fathers as equally responsible for childhood education, much like Wollstonecraft and Locke. *Mansfield Park*, written between February 1811 and the summer of 1813, reflects the period of transition between longstanding family dynamics and the emergence of the modern concept of the family.[51] Accordingly, *Mansfield Park* portrays conflicting representations of parental responsibilities concerning education. In the novel, mothers—Lady Maria Bertram, Mrs. Frances Price, and Mrs. Rushworth—are responsible for raising and educating children and managing the household. Fathers—Sir Thomas Bertram and Lieutenant Price—are expected to govern the family and provide financial sustenance. Mothers occupy a central role in the home, where children dwell. In this way, childhood education seems to be a predominantly maternal responsibility. However, *Mansfield Park* presents differing representations of parental roles. Sir Thomas feels responsible for his children's education, even more so than Lady Bertram, and holds himself accountable for their actions. Sir Thomas adheres to traditional gender roles and responsibilities, which hold both mothers and fathers accountable for their children's education. Mr. Price, on the other hand, takes little responsibility for his children's education and upbringing, which reflects more modern conceptions of paternal responsibility. Yet, Austen's portrayals of motherhood also conflict with ideas circulating during her lifetime. As an illustration of this, Austen does not idealize motherhood: "The novel," as Barkley claims, "strips away idealizations of familial sentiment [and …] maternal fondness" (216), which differs from more modern

[51] See p. xxxvii of Stabler's introduction to *Mansfield Park.*

conceptions of the family during the early nineteenth century. Lady Bertram, Mrs. Price, and Mrs. Rushworth lack the supposedly 'universal' mother instinct.[52] The novel offers contradictory depictions of parental duties, which reflect changing family dynamics and gender roles in England, a transformation in kinship structures Perry describes in *Novel Relations* and "Family Matters." Ironically, in *Mansfield Park*, the confusion surrounding parental responsibilities signifies neither mothers nor fathers provide proper education for their children. Austen addresses and questions socially assumed beliefs surrounding motherhood and fatherhood, as well as the very meanings of mother and father.

The novel holds mothers and fathers to double standards and severely judges mothers for any shortcomings but readily absolves fathers for negligence or faults concerning children's education, which resembles Wollstonecraft's approach towards parental responsibility in *A Vindication*. Indeed, the characterization of mothers in the novel demonstrates how the narrator offers a severe appraisal of mothers for failing to attain social expectations of motherhood. For instance, Lady Bertram, Mrs. Price, and Mrs. Rushworth lack the means and resources to provide proper education for their children: "Lady Bertram pa[ys] not the smallest attention [to the education of her daughters]" (16); Mrs. Price, "neither t[eaches] nor restrain[s] her children" (306); and Mrs. Rushworth does not succeed in teaching her son reason, as he is pronounced a "very stupid fellow" (32), as "ignorant in business as in books" (156). Accordingly, the narrator adjudges Lady Bertram is "indolent" and cannot be bothered "to perform what should have been her own" (30); Mrs. Price is "easy and indolent" and a "dawdle" (306), and her children are "brought up in the midst of negligence and error" (312); Mrs. Rushworth is "well-meaning"—but also "prosing" and "pompous"—and thinks only of "her own and her son's concerns" (60).[53] The novel

[52] Theorists today usually agree that the idea of a maternal instinct is a construction. See Gilroy 26.
[53] When Fanny visits Portsmouth, Austen utilizes Fanny's voice, as opposed to the narrator's, to criticize the Price family members, a process Kate Gemmill describes as ventriloquism. See Gemmill's "Ventriloquized

unequivocally criticizes mothers, approximating an *ad hominem* argument, inasmuch as the narrator refuses to take their circumstances and efforts into consideration. For instance, Mrs. Price lives in relative poverty, has a large family, and receives little assistance from Lieutenant Price; Mrs. Rushworth is a single mother; and Lady Bertram lives in the country, while her husband spends most of his time in town, working at Parliament, circumstances that the narrator refuses to acknowledge.[54] Mothers, in the novel, receive harsh criticism for being unable to accomplish their maternal duties.

Conversely, *Mansfield Park* offers a forgiving portrayal of Sir Thomas and Lieutenant Price, who, like Austen's mothers, are unable or unwilling to provide proper education for children. The narrator pities "poor Sir Thomas, […] the longest to suffer" (362) for allowing his ambition and avarice to corrupt his intentions concerning his children's upbringing, even though his remorse appears fleeting. Sir Thomas rationalizes the "errors in his own conduct" (362) concerning his children's education: Tom's illness offers rehabilitation and personal reform, Edmund's romantic disappointment prevents a dangerous match, and Julia's elopement proves financially profitable (362-3). As for Maria, Sir Thomas justifies his behaviour and claims, "[principle] must have been wanting within, or time would have worn away much of its ill effect" (364). The narrator easily pardons Sir Thomas and sympathizes with his sorrow. The narrator's pity and empathy for Sir Thomas— the novel's primary authority figure who supports British colonialism, slavery, and patriarchal order—diminishes any blame he may avow. Similarly, Mr. Price seems to neglect his family and his paternal responsibilities completely but receives little notice from the narrator or protagonist, perhaps because, as Fanny relates, she expects no better from her father (305). Austen holds mothers

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Opinions of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma*: Jane Austen's Critical Voice." Perhaps readers are meant to examine and consider Fanny's perspective, which is, arguably, overly severe. Fanny has high expectations of her Portsmouth visit, and her mother, but only finds great disappointment, which must inevitably influence her judgement. See p. 306 of *Mansfield Park*. Austen uses dramatic irony to demonstrate that even the reasonable Fanny is occasionally misled by her sensibilities.

[54] Downie contends Sir Thomas has been mostly absent during his children's upbringing. See p. 745 of Downie.

more liable for parental deficiencies. In this way, Wollstonecraft and Austen differ. Wollstonecraft severely criticizes mothers, but she, nevertheless, also offers criticism towards fathers. Thus, *Mansfield Park* holds mothers, and not fathers, accountable for children's education and represents motherhood as a responsibility and fatherhood as a choice.

Much like Wollstonecraft, Austen characterizes maternal deficiency—specifically mental incapacity and faults in character—as the source of all defects in childhood education and upbringing. The narrator admonishes mothers for maternal irresponsibility, while fathers avoid severe condemnation for their heedlessness. In fact, the narrator attributes Lady Bertram's disregard towards her children's education to faults in character but describes Sir Thomas's "mismanagement" (363) of his children's education as merely an error in judgement. The narrator also describes Mrs. Price, who "mismanage[s]" (307) her household, the "abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety" (305), as a "slattern" and an "ill-judging parent" (306), while Mr. Price only exhibits undesirable manners and habits (305). Simply put, the novel criticizes mothers for who they are and fathers for what they do. The reasons for which Austen offers harsher criticism of mothers and motherhood is significant and align her to some degree with Wollstonecraft. Austen, like her predecessor, denounces the state of female education, which prevents mothers from providing proper education for children. In *Mansfield Park*, mothers are expected to furnish an education they have never received, which is hardly fair and highly problematic, and reveals the unrealistic and unreasonable expectations of motherhood, and more significantly, the hereditary consequences of improper female education. Wollstonecraft and Austen agree that female education allows individuals to fulfil their roles as mothers, fathers, wives, and husbands. Austen, unlike the more radical Wollstonecraft, in no way advocates for more rigorous female education. Yet, Austen, like Wollstonecraft, as Ascarelli and Todd state in "A Feminist Connection: Jane Austen and Mary Wollstonecraft" and *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen,* respectively, is

interested in the condition of women and mothers. *Mansfield Park* reveals early nineteenth-century social anxieties surrounding motherhood, namely, the difficulties mothers experience regarding the unrealistic expectations surrounding childhood education and upbringing.

In *Mansfield Park*, neither mothers nor fathers provide children with proper role models, which reveals a fundamental flaw in Wollstonecraft's and Locke's premises that education should primarily occur in the home between parents and children. The novel demonstrates that many children appropriate parents' harmful behaviours and thought processes. Austen suggests in *Mansfield Park* that without proper education, children blindly appropriate opinions and imitate behaviours parents or parental figures model. For instance, Mary assumes her aunt Mrs. Crawford's "faults of principles" and "perversion of mind" (358). Fanny and Edmund claim "the faults of the niece [are] those of the aunt" (51) and argue Mary would have been different "had she fallen into good hands earlier" (361). Edmund believes Mary has been "spoilt" (357) and her mind has been "corrupted" (358) by her upbringing with her aunt and uncle and decries her education, which, he believes, has tainted a "woman whom nature ha[s] so richly endowed" (357). Similarly, Henry Crawford, raised by Admiral Crawford, whom he considers "more than a father" (231), has set a "bad domestic example" (366), which has "ruined" (366) and "spoiled him" (34). The novel repeatedly insists that Mary and Henry's upbringing with their aunt and uncle has proved detrimental to the development of their identities and dispositions. These examples align with Austen's views on modelling with Locke's notion that proper education ensures that individuals learn to reflect on the behaviour they observe (Locke 103-4). Mary, Edmund believes, appropriates opinions without necessarily reflecting on her personal views; Edmund reprobates Mary and asserts, "[y]ou are not judging from yourself, but from prejudiced persons, whose opinions you have been in the habit of hearing. […] You are speaking what you have been told" (87). In Mary's case, assuming another's perspectives without

consideration entails she upholds irrational or prejudiced opinions. In this way, *Mansfield Park* reveals the harmful consequences of improper education for both parents and children. However, Austen offers a more intricate representation of childhood education than Wollstonecraft, since Austen, as opposed to Wollstonecraft, recognizes that personal choice plays a crucial role in teaching and learning and greatly contributes to identity and behaviour. Moreover, while Locke maintains, in *Conduct*, that choice is an instrumental factor in adulthood behaviour, Austen, again, complicates such notions, as she includes and positions women within an early nineteenth-century context where women's and men's agency differs quite drastically, but is also undergoing transformations.

In *Mansfield Park*, personal choice, along with childhood education or upbringing, plays a role in determining adulthood behaviour. In the novel, in certain instances, personal choice governs behaviour more than education because the education children receive is inadequate. In this way, Austen complicates Wollstonecraft's belief that individual reform entails social reform. For instance, when Mary and Henry Crawford arrive at Mansfield Park and move in with their sister Mrs. Grant and her husband Dr. Grant, Mrs. Grant judges that her sister and brother have been influenced by their uncle Admiral Crawford and aunt Mrs. Crawford, who raised them after their biological parents' death, misappropriating what she believes are biased and detrimental opinions regarding matrimony. Mary believes marriage involves dishonesty and states, "I consider that [marriage] is, of all transactions, the one in which people expect most from others, and are least honest themselves" (37). Similarly, Henry considers marriage confining and believes that all women are duplicitous (36). Mary and Henry also believe that marriage involves deceit. Indeed, Mary maintains that she "know[s] so many who have married in the full expectation and confidence of some one particular advantage in the connexion, or accomplishment, or good quality in the person, who have found themselves entirely deceived, and been obliged to put up with exactly the

reverse" (37), a bold statement that reveals her preconceived notions concerning what she considers the fraudulent nature of matrimony. As such, marriage becomes a game of sorts, where individuals use trickery to ensnare a spouse. This is evident in the ways that Henry plays with Maria's, Julia's, and even Fanny's affections, and Mary stages performances for Edmund, as they each hope to gain their interests' affections. Mrs. Grant believes that Mansfield Park—particularly interactions with the Bertram and Grant households—will influence Mary and Henry, who will acquire more healthy perspectives of marriage: Mrs. Grant tells Mary, "[y]ou are as bad as [Henry], Mary; but we will cure you both. Mansfield shall cure you both, and without any taking in. Stay with us, and we will cure you" (37). Mrs. Grant has a more realistic view of marriage and believes that although marriage may bring disappointment, marriage may also offer contentment. She understands that individuals can change and that interactions with others frequently influence an individual's beliefs. She reiterates that Henry and Mary will improve. In fact, Mrs. Grant's treatment towards Mary and Henry when they come to reside with her resembles Sir Thomas's treatment of Fanny when the latter comes to live at Mansfield Park. As the narrator explains, Mrs. Grant fails to consider that Mary and Henry do not necessarily want to be "cured" (37). Mrs. Grant appears to be correct during most of the novel, as Mary and Henry begin to change through their interactions with Fanny and Edmund. Mary comes to appreciate the value of love in marriage, and Henry realizes that some women—like Fanny—are sincere.[55] Mary and Henry are almost "taken in" (36), as they often describe marriage, and come very close to marrying for love.

What ultimately determines the outcome of Mary's and Henry's lives are their choices: Mary categorically refuses to marry Edmund, a second son without the means to

[55] Mary initially prefers Tom, the eldest son, because of his status, but comes to love Edmund, the second son, for who he is.

provide the affluent lifestyle she desires, and Henry returns to his deep-rooted ways as he seduces Maria. Mary and Henry endeavour to adapt themselves to the inhabitants of Mansfield Park, but in the end, as Edmund proclaims, "habit, habit carrie[s] it" (360). The outcome of Mary's and Henry's romantic affairs aligns with Locke's position on self-directed learning. In *Conduct*, he specifies that while parents must inculcate children with reason, the teacher can only promote reason, and the child must cultivate it (54). In *Thoughts*, he also clarifies that habits formed in childhood are almost impossible to change in adulthood. In this way, individuals usually adhere to the habits they form during youth, which occurs in *Mansfield Park* for most characters. Mary and Henry are both reluctant and powerless to discard the habits they acquire during their upbringing. Mrs. Grant's usage of the term "cure" is accurate, as Mary and Henry's beliefs prove detrimental to their well-being and contribute to their unhappiness. In *Mansfield Park,* identity formation is nebulous: individuals can—theoretically—change, but, in practice, many choose to remain as they are. In this way, Austen's characterizations of Mary and Henry evoke Hegel's notion that agency is possible through a critical distance between the individual and the world, but in the novel, they mostly lack the resources to develop reason, which denies them of agency over their lives. In the same vein, Austen offers a more convoluted depiction of adulthood behaviour and demonstrates that reason does not necessarily produce free, autonomous citizens, as Wollstonecraft suggests in *A Vindication.*

Nonetheless, the narrative reveals the power of personal choice, which offers the possibility of positive change through education, that is, the possibility of self-improvement. Contrary to Wollstonecraft and Locke, Austen demonstrates that education requires a conscious choice not only from the teacher but from the student.[56] Proper education requires

[56] In this way, Austen subtly addresses the rights and responsibilities of children, which was an emerging discussion around the early nineteenth century.

a conscious subject capable of considering the world and discerning truth, processes that must be intentional. Personal choice becomes equally significant for Fanny than for Mary and Henry. Fanny, unlike the Crawford siblings, does not unconsciously internalize the values of her authority figures. She observes her family members and friends, thoughtfully considers their behaviours and often disapproves of what she witnesses. Fanny regularly rejects the values and beliefs her entourage possesses. Also, she has little in common with her biological parents Mrs. and Mr. Price or her adoptive parents Lady Bertram and Sir Thomas. Fanny shares few personal characteristics with her biological and adoptive parents or the members of the Price and Bertram households, for that matter. Indeed, Fanny is uniquely herself. Her personality traits—her reserve, self-depreciation, earnestness, modesty, patience, extreme timidity, and sensitivity—exist almost exclusively in her. Her sense of identity is further revealed in the way that Fanny internalizes the treatment she receives at Mansfield Park, which influences her self-perception, but nevertheless learns to overcome the limited (and oppressive) viewpoints of those who surround her.[57] In such a way, the development of Fanny's identity reflects the process Hegel describes as "temporary engagement with the aim of separation" (328), which signifies the Other is both without and within. In effect, Fanny discovers her authentic self through interactions with others. She acquires a stable sense of self and finds her place in the world through careful reflection, and considers the kind of person she wants to be. Austen's depiction of Fanny might be aligned with Hegel and Wollstonecraft, who maintain agency is possible through reason. Moreover, Fanny even refuses the influence of her cousin Edmund, her mentor and role model, once she reaches maturity and prefers to follow the guide within herself, that is, her (mostly) reasonable mind. Fanny learns to think differently than Edmund, to think for herself. Already in chapter 3,

[57] For instance, when Fanny visits her biological family at Portsmouth, she treats them in a similar manner as to the way she was and is treated at Mansfield Park, that is, she treats them as if they are inferior.

Fanny, 15, tells Edmund, "I cannot see things as you do" (22). Austen presents the formation of Fanny's identity as what Hegel describes as a process of negation. In a way that reflects such a process, Fanny's ability to negate the given grants her the power to form a sense of self. Through reason, Fanny acquires subjectivity and, consequently, agency, which aligns with Wollstonecraft's belief that reason contributes to freedom and independence. Fanny utilizes her agency to fashion the life she desires and find fulfilment. What differentiates Fanny from other characters is her ability to reason. Given that Fanny is the only character that fully utilizes reason, Austen seems to imply that childhood education, especially female education, in *Mansfield Park*, and perhaps as it exists in the early nineteenth century, is insufficient; children receive inadequate training regarding critical thinking, which hinders the identity formation process. The novel also demonstrates how childhood education provides children with a foundation for learning but should not be considered sufficient in itself, as individuals must also utilize the skills and knowledge they acquire, which is a choice the individual makes. The world Austen imagines in *Mansfield Park* offers a complex representation of identity formation, which primarily occurs within the home and through interactions with family. Although personal identity is partly shaped through interactions with others, most notably during youth, the novel also depicts personal choice, in adulthood, as a signifier of an individual's character.

Austen also offers individuals an alternative that differs quite drastically from ideas in *A Vindication* and *Thoughts*: children have the agency to circumvent parental irresponsibility by adopting surrogate parents who assume the parental role and its inherent responsibilities. Her representations of surrogate parents in *Mansfield Park* are indicative of the changing nature of family during the early nineteenth century, where familial ties and responsibilities were being redefined. Most notably, Edmund and Fanny assume a surrogate parent-child relationship when Fanny arrives at Mansfield Park. Fanny selects her cousin because her

aunts and uncle are inattentive to her needs. Fanny and Edmund's decision to assume a surrogate parent-child relationship is significant, as parents cannot usually choose children, and, in the same way, children cannot usually choose parents. Edmund's decision to act as a surrogate parent is shown through his roles of protector, caregiver, and, most significantly, educator, the latter being a predominantly maternal responsibility. Edmund teaches Fanny reason: Edmund's attention is central to Fanny's mental development, the narrator maintains, as "[Edmund] recommend[s] the books which charmed her leisure hours, he encourage[s] her taste, and correct[s] her judgment[.] [H]e ma[kes] reading useful by talking to her of what she read[s], and heighten[s] its attraction by judicious praise" (18). Furthermore, Edmund models "strong good sense and uprightness of mind" (17), which Fanny acquires. Fanny receives an education Wollstonecraft would have probably commended. The education she obtains at Mansfield Park conflicts with the education Mrs. Norris proposes for her niece when the aunt tells Sir Thomas, "[g]ive a girl an education" (5).[58] Most significantly, Edmund resolves one of the main problems with female education during Austen's time—the irrational expectation that mothers had to teach children when they had not received a proper education themselves—and ends the cycle of improper education. When Fanny visits Portsmouth, she mimics the treatment she received from Edmund, much as children imitate parents' behaviour. Fanny assumes a maternal role for Susan because, just as Fanny is neglected at Mansfield Park, Susan is neglected at Portsmouth. The transferral of maternal instinct from Edmund to Fanny, and presumably from Fanny to Susan, demonstrates that hereditary traits that usually occur through blood can occur through education. For Austen, education occurs

[58] The passage reads: "Give a girl an education, and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well, without farther expense to anybody. A niece of ours, Sir Thomas, I may say, or at least of yours, would not grow up in this neighbourhood without many advantages. I don't say she would be so handsome as her cousins. I dare say she would not; but she would be introduced into the society of this country under such very favourable circumstances as, in all human probability, would get her a creditable establishment." See pp. 5-6 of *Mansfield Park*. To use Sir Thomas's words, Mrs. Norris considers Fanny a good she must "secure" (6), a good that will bring profit and advantages. Wollstonecraft denigrates such forms of education which focus on material gain.

in the home, but not necessarily between biological parents and children, which distinguishes her from Locke and Wollstonecraft.

Edmund and Fanny's surrogate parent-child relationship—as surrogate mother and child—reveals the constructed nature and fluidity of gender roles and responsibilities. The novel deconstructs the traditional association between motherhood, maternal instinct, and femininity, and associates motherhood with the male gender, an unconventional idea in the early nineteenth century. Austen seems to imply that traditional gender classifications were too rigid and that gender fluidity, or at least non-conformity, in terms of roles and responsibilities, allows individuals to form strong familial ties. Edmund assumes a maternal role and thus inhabits a traditionally female space. His actions support proper female education and might thus be aligned with Wollstonecraft's proto-feminist views. It is worth noting that Edmund, given his gender, has received a formal education, including professional education, to become a clergyman; it is problematic that a man holds power to offer or withhold knowledge and skills, as Edmund does for Fanny and his sisters respectively. The narrator does not give an apparent reason why Edmund assists his cousin Fanny and ensures she receives a proper education but does not assist his sisters Maria and Julia. Interestingly, Austen gives Edmund the space to offer his perspective, like the numerous men who comment on female education in eighteenth-century conduct books. He declares that "[m]others certainly have not yet got quite the right way of managing their daughters. I do not know where the error lies. I do not pretend to set people right, but I do see that they are often wrong" and continues, "such girls are ill brought up. They are given wrong notions from the beginning" (40). Austen openly voices her criticism of female education through a male character and not through a female character—an approach that seems to

contradict with Wollstonecraft's position in *A Vindication*, as the philosopher contests male writers of conduct books.[59]

Austen also differs from Wollstonecraft in the manner that she, in *Mansfield Park*, advocates for female education for the purpose of personal improvement, and not so women can better fulfil domestic duties, as Wollstonecraft proposes. From his perspective, Austen's formulation of education more closely associates education with virtue. Religious ideology influenced Austen's educational philosophy, as it did Wollstonecraft's and Locke's.[60] In effect, J.A. Downie mentions in "Rehabilitating Sir Thomas" that Christian morality is central to *Mansfield Park* (755). It should be stressed that Austen does not necessarily praise upright characters, but rather their desire to be good. She famously declared that "[p]ictures of perfection […] make [her] sick and wicked" (Austen-Leigh and Austen-Leigh). However, Fanny is often either esteemed or disliked because of her ostensible perfection; the novel continuously reminds readers of Fanny's virtue and the firmness of her principles (230, 275, 336, 368). In her companion to Austen's novels, Todd maintains that *Mansfield Park* "is resented for according predominance to morality at the cost of comedy and vigour" (82) and argues that its supposedly didactic goal inhibits readers' enjoyment of the novel. However, Stabler, in the introduction of *Mansfield Park*, claims that Fanny is neither an angel, as Henry describes her, nor perfect (xx). Austen's values are evident, it is true, but she does not moralize, just as Todd writes that the novels "do not insist on a didactic goal" (*Cambridge* 23) and explains that while Austen read sermons and moral exhortations, she does not write conduct books. Reflecting these notions, *Mansfield Park* does not present Fanny as a model of perfection but rather demonstrates the influence of education on Fanny's character, which grants her the mental and emotional competencies to behave virtuously throughout the novel,

[59] Voicing her critique of education through Edmund is further complicated by the fact that Edmund becomes a clergyman, and thus embodies religious ideology.
[60] See Todd's introduction to *Mansfield Park.*

defying and resisting temptation and social pressure. Furthermore, Fanny receives an education that would have been considered somewhat, but not entirely, masculine in nature during the early nineteenth century. Fanny refuses to learn how to dance, draw, sing, or play music (15). Her education involves mental, emotional, and spiritual learning, with the goal of improvement, rather than accomplishments whose main objective is matrimony. In this way, Fanny might be aligned with Wollstonecraft's ideal woman, who is at once rational and virtuous.

In *Mansfield Park*, Austen demonstrates that education provides the skills necessary for children to be self-reliant and self-reflective and to become their own moral compass. Such views, in *Mansfield Park*, complicate ideas in *Thoughts* and *A Vindication* since both Locke and Wollstonecraft believe children are unable to distinguish good from evil or discern truth. Fanny receives an education that allows her to find an authentic sense of self. She acquires intellectual abilities and finds autonomy in the way she is able to think for herself. Fanny believes, "[w]e have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be" (324). She is incredibly thoughtful and carefully analyzes the individuals around her, namely, their body language, facial expressions, and discourse. Observation and reflection become a cycle of self-discovery which allow Fanny to find her place in the world and her identity through interactions with others. The novel follows the perspective that individuals must look to themselves for guidance. In addition, Mary's account of her friend Mrs. Janet Fraser's marriage further supports this idea. Mrs. Fraser accepted her husband's marriage proposal after her friends and family members advised her to marry him. Mrs. Fraser regrets listening to the advice she received, as she is unhappy in marriage. These examples indicate that Austen seems to believe that individuals possess natural abilities within themselves, an idea she supports with Fanny's description of the "natural light of the mind" (311), which implies that individuals possess the skills necessary

to distinguish the right path and that they possess an innate morality. More importantly, Fanny's knowledge of self, her sense of self, provide some form of autonomy, which allows her to find her place in the world Austen creates, a process that aligns with Hegel's identity formation process.

Fanny's education affords her the agency necessary to create a space for herself at Mansfield Park with the Bertram family. She fashions her own family, which does not exactly reflect the changing family dynamics of the time where the family one is born into grew less important than the chosen family of marriage, as Perry suggests in "Family Matters" (323). Fanny instead creates her own ideal of familial belonging. The narrative transforms the familiar eighteenth-century situational archetype, as described by Perry in *Novel Relations*, of "being cast out of a family or taken into a family," and displays an "intense anxiety about family membership, represented variously as extreme loneliness, longing, or long-deferred but finally perfect happiness" (8). Fanny's return to Mansfield Park, after her long absence, demonstrates Fanny's changing affections:

> When she had been coming to Portsmouth, she had loved to call it her home, had been fond of saying that she was going home; the word had been very dear to her, and so it still was, but it must be applied to Mansfield. That was now the home. Portsmouth was Portsmouth; Mansfield was home. (338)

It takes an absence for Fanny to realize how much she has changed during her stay at Mansfield Park. Time away permits her to reflect and compare the Price and Bertram families and homes. She discovers that her place belongs with the Bertram family and returns to what Henry describes as the "free air, and liberty of [Mansfield Park]" (322), which is a comment at once ironic and realistic. In her discussion of this realization, Stabler suggests that Fanny masters the skills necessary to integrate into society as a gentlewoman, but this transformation comes at a cost as she becomes alienated from her biological family at

Portsmouth (viii).[61] In the same way that conjugal ties became more important than blood ties during the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, in *Mansfield Park*, the chosen family becomes more important than the biological family.[62] Most importantly, the process of choosing a family is only possible through the acquisition of a stable sense of self, which arises from a proper education.

In this way, Austen reveals how education determines kinship ties in *Mansfield Park.* As opposed to Wollstonecraft, who believes that female education allows women to become better mothers and wives, Austen approaches education as a means to form authentic attachments with others. In the novel, childhood education, and specifically reason, is associated with identity formation. Most characters receive improper childhood education, which entails they mostly lack knowledge of self and other. The novel repeatedly describes how characters have difficulty developing self-awareness and self-knowledge, and struggle to understand themselves. In other words, individuals often fail to either acquire or use reason, which signifies they have difficulty forming a sense of self, which consequently hinders their ability to identify with others. Thus, identity is shown to be essential in forming relationships. Moreover, in *Mansfield Park*, most characters neither demonstrate mastery of self nor are they effectively disengaged from the world around them, which entails they are unable to form a sense of self. For instance, Edmund is governed by his love for Mary, Maria and Julia are governed by their passion for Henry, and Henry is governed by his vanity when he pursues Maria. Also, characters struggle to understand others and often misinterpret and

[61] It is important to note that Fanny has not written to her family members, except for her brother William, and has not maintained relationships with her parents and siblings, just as they have not necessarily maintained the tie. Also, she does necessarily make herself welcome at Portsmouth, as she spends most her time in the attic with Susan. Had Fanny remained at Portsmouth, and never lived with the Bertram family, perhaps she could have been as content as she discovers she is at Mansfield Park. When she leaves Portsmouth, at the beginning of the novel, she is quite homesick.

[62] Both Perry and Mary Jean Corbett understand Austen within an early nineteenth-century context where English families, influenced by societal changes, began to look beyond a kinship orientation based on blood relations to a kinship founded on conjugal ties. See Corbett's *Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage and Incest: From Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf* and Perry's *Novel Relations.*

misunderstand each other. Many characters create a false representation of others in their minds, only to be disillusioned in time. For instance, Edmund realizes the fictitious image of Mary he created in his mind: he says, "I had never understood her at all, it had been the creature of my imagination" (360). Misunderstandings also govern such relationships as those between Sir Thomas and his children, and Henry and Fanny. Individuals are limited by their inability to reason properly, which signifies they lack agency over their lives. As such, most characters have difficulty forming authentic relationships with others.

Moreover, proper education forges a strong relationship between the teacher and student, as the teaching and learning process provides opportunities to bond. In *Mansfield Park*, education occurs in the home. Parents who educate their children are rewarded with filial love. Fanny declares that "in return for [Edmund's] services she loved him better than anybody in the world except William" (18). In the same way, Susan comes to love Fanny for her attentions (328). The education process forms a strong and healthy relationship between teacher and student, between surrogate parents and children. *Mansfield Park* portrays education, namely intellectual and moral growth, as central to affectionate parent-child relations, positioning ties of mind, rather than ties of blood, as primary indicators of familial love, akin to Wollstonecraft, who states that "natural affection, as it is termed, I believe to be a very faint tie, affections must grow out of the habitual exercise of a mutual sympathy" (234). "Familial improvement in *Mansfield Park*," Paula Marantz Cohen writes in "Stabilizing the Family System at Mansfield Park," "focuses on the quality of the interactive bond rather than the quality of the blood line" (678). Moreover, education grants individuals mental and emotional skills—reason and virtue—to form healthy kinship ties. Individuals foster authentic, selfless attachments founded on mutual affection and esteem. Relationships become about who characters are rather than blood or birth, much as Peter W. Graham argues in *Jane Austen & Charles Darwin: Naturalists and Novelists* that marriage or blood relations

do not necessarily imply a meaningful relationship (76). *Mansfield Park* demonstrates the significance and influence of childhood experiences education on identity formation, providing individuals with the skills to navigate the world and form strong relationships with others.

Mansfield Park might be aligned with proto-feminist ideas in Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication*, which justifies the necessity of female education, and perspectives in Locke's *Thoughts*, which defends the importance of childhood education. The novel conveys the essential role of education on identity formation and the individual's ability to form healthy kinship ties. Education becomes a process that connects individuals, and further, allows for authentic connections between individuals. In this case, *Mansfield Park* proves more radically political and less sentimental than *A Vindication*, as the novel promotes individual progress for progress' sake, without the negative connotation, rather than promoting female education for women to more successfully fulfil domestic duties. Austen successfully advocates for the necessity of childhood education by demonstrating how proper education allows individuals to acquire the necessary skills to function within society and family and illustrates the ways education is associated with health, happiness, and authentic love in adulthood.

"The Free Air and Liberty of [Mansfield Park]"?: Bondage and Bonding in Home and Country

The heroine of *Mansfield Park* permanently integrates into the Bertram family, attains upward social mobility, and escapes poverty when she marries the man she loves, her cousin Edmund. Familial bonds, rather than marital bonds, secure Fanny to the Bertrams; Fanny's alliance to Edmund is only possible after her wealthy and powerful uncle Sir Thomas, the paternal and patriarchal figure, recognizes her value, receives her as a chosen daughter, and approves the union he previously opposed.[63] Fanny is seemingly assimilated into the Bertram family since she appropriates her uncle's manners and principles and becomes the model of an obedient and submissive daughter. Beneath her outward passivity, compliance, and bashfulness, Fanny manifests prodigious resistance and resilience, despite her vulnerable state, and exhibits agency over her life and will. She refuses blind obedience, relentlessly confronts family members, and remains resolute to her principles and desires, all with apparent docility. Fanny experiences relative freedom and independence as opposed to other female characters, Sarah Marsh explains in her analysis of British colonialism in *Mansfield Park,* given that she neither rightfully belongs to the Price nor Bertram family, and thus evades parental authority (216).[64] She has the liberty to choose Mansfield Park and the Bertram family over Portsmouth and the Price family. Remarkably, Fanny transforms Mansfield Park, a home that allegedly but never truly cures individuals, and ultimately restructures family dynamics. Fanny's reason and virtue, acquired through education, positions her as head of the household: she displaces the oppressive and domineering Sir Thomas. Fanny instils new family dynamics grounded on equality and morality and offers

[63] For this reason, Stabler compares *Mansfield Park* to both Charles Perrault's *Cinderella* and Shakespeare's *King Lear*. See p. xxvi.
[64] See Marsh's "Changes of Air: The Somerset Case and Mansfield Park's Imperial Plots."

alternative methods of governing the family other than submission and obedience. With her newfound position and power, Fanny will presumably guide the Bertram family towards authentic attachments and mutual love and heal the existing dysfunctional relationships between individuals. From this perspective, the power dynamics between Fanny and Sir Thomas serve as a microcosm for broader power struggles during the early nineteenth century, such as those stemming from British colonialism, slavery, and female subjugation. In *Mansfield Park*, Austen provides a complex examination of familial and social power dynamics and various characterizations of the ways education perpetuates various forms of subjugation. As an alternative, she also offers individuals the possibility of freedom and resistance through education. The education Fanny receives at Mansfield Park—an education that accords in many ways with Wollstonecraft's idyllic education in *A Vindication*—form Fanny, and she, in turn, transforms her home and family.

Wollstonecraft's views on the interdependence of the individual and society align with the way Austen portrays the influence of society on the individual and vice versa in *Mansfield Park.* Society plays a central role in the formation of identity, Wollstonecraft maintains in *A Vindication*, where she writes that "[m]en and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinion and manners of the society they live in" (86). Pursuing the idea that individuals are formed by society, early nineteenth-century British society tolerated and sustained several forms of social injustice, which signifies that, according to Wollstonecraft, values such as oppression, dominance, and inequality must have inflected individuals' personal identity. Even so, individuals fashion and form the society they inhabit, which illustrates the interdependent relationship between the individual and the society. Austen's novel reflects these notions. In *Mansfield Park*, Austen depicts a society that tolerates inequality and injustice, namely in the structures of British colonialism, slavery, female subjugation, and primogeniture. This entails that individuals inhabit a world that

communicates that certain individuals are worthy of more rights than others, based on aspects such as race, gender, status, or class. Such prejudices justify various types of oppression. In addition, individuals learn that their value as a human being is fixed and determined by an Other.[65] Austen provides, in her novel, a means of resistance and change. Education can reform the individual, which can reform society. Social change, Austen seems to suggest, occurs at the individual level through education.

Addressing Forms of Bondage in *Mansfield Park*

Mansfield Park, written and published less than a decade after the Abolition Act of 1807, which abolished the Slave Trade in the British colonies and the transportation of slaves in British ships, addresses the subject of British colonialism.[66] The very title of the novel refers to the Mansfield Judgement, according to Christine Kenyon Jones in her examination of themes of slavery in *Mansfield Park* and Stabler in her introduction to Austen's novel.[67] The British politician and judge William Murray (1756-1788), the first Earl of Mansfield, also known as Lord Mansfield, ruled in the famous *Somerset v Stewart* (1772) case (Llewellyn). Lord Mansfield judged that James Somerset, a Black slave, born in Jamaica, whom Charles Stewart had purchased in Boston, Massachusetts, a British colony at the time, and transported to England, Kenneth Morgan and Derrek A. Webb detail in *Slavery and the British Empire* and "The Somerset Effect" respectively, was free, given that slavery was prohibited in

[65] By "determined by an Other," I mean that the individual experiences an oppressive subjectification. Identity is determined an outside force, which gives power to the Other. For more on identity, see Alcoff's "Who's Afraid of Identity Politics."

[66] The novel's setting has been contested. Downie makes a convincing argument that the novel takes place during the years 1806 to 1808; if this is the case, Sir Thomas travels to Antigua in 1806, Tom returns in 1807, and Sir Thomas returns in 1808. Downie attributes Sir Thomas's delay to the Abolition Act of 1807, and the possible disposal of the Antigua plantation. See p. 431-3 of "Chronology of Mansfield Park" for more details. There is no evidence that Sir Thomas sells the plantation. However, the narrator's statement that, "[Sir Thomas's] business in Antigua had latterly been prosperously rapid, and he came directly from Liverpool, having had an opportunity of making his passage thither in a private vessel, instead of waiting for the packet" (Austen 140), gives some indication of buying and selling, as Liverpool was a main trading point. See p. 407n140 of Austen's *Mansfield Park.*

[67] See Jones's "Ambiguous Cousinship: Mansfield Park and the Mansfield Family."

England.[68] Webb further relates that the Mansfield Judgement subsequently fuelled the abolitionist movement in England, which eventually led to the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. Furthermore, in Kirkham's examination of Austen within an early nineteenth-century context, she discusses Austen's awareness of contemporary discourses relating to slavery; she seems to have been reading Clarkson's abolitionist work *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade* (1808) while writing Mansfield Park (117).[69] Following the idea that Austen was aware of political and moral debates occurring in Britain, Moreland Perkins writes in "Mansfield Park and Austen's Reading on Slavery and Imperial Warfare":

> While [Austen] was writing *Mansfield Park*, in a letter of 24 January 1813 to her sister Cassandra she associates this man of peace, Thomas Clarkson, with a man of war: 'I am reading a Society-Octavo, an Essay on the Military Police [Policy] & Institutions of the British Empire, by Capt. Pasley of the Engineers, a book which I protested against at first, but which upon trial I find delightfully written & highly entertaining. I am as much in love with the Author as I ever was with Clarkson.

Austen admired the influential abolitionist Thomas Clarkson, who facilitated the Slave Trade Act of 1807. Clarkson helped form the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787, Morgan explains, and, for twenty years, the society fought to abolish the slave trade by presenting information to Parliament and proposing measures in the House of Commons,

[68] See p. 156 of Morgan's "Slavery and the British Empire." and p. 456-7 of Webb's "The Somerset Effect." Morgan explains: "In 1771 Somerset, who had not been manumitted, ran away from his master. He was captured and placed in irons on a ship in the River Thames intended for Jamaica. The case was brought before Mansfield at the Court of King's Bench through the instigation of the philanthropist Granville Sharp. Mansfield pondered over his decision for seven months but then ruled that English law did not support the keeping of a slave on English soil and so Somerset must be discharged. This was a limited decision: it meant that slaves could not be forcibly returned to masters in England but it did not end slavery in Britain and, in fact, slaves were still sold on British soil thereafter. Nevertheless, it was a blow for the plantocracy and widely publicized by abolitionists" (156).

[69] See Kirkham's *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction* (1983).

which helped to transform racist perspectives in England during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Pursuing the idea that Austen was aware of discourse surrounding British colonialism and slavery, Moira Ferguson argues in "Mansfield Park: Slavery, Colonialism, and Gender" that "Mrs. Norris's surname recalls John Norris, one of the most vile proslaveryites of the day," whom Austen would have known, given she read Clarkson's abolitionist work (qtd. in Kirkham 70). Austen's abolitionist inclinations are further hinted at, Stabler and Perkins explain, in her adoration of the English poet William Cowper's (1731-1800) *The Task* (1785), which contests the slave trade. Essentially, "[E]verything we know about Austen and her values," Edward Said argues in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), "is at odds with the cruelty of slavery" (96). Her position on slavery is evident in her novel.

Austen participates in discussions on British colonialism and slavery, which were prevalent during the early nineteenth century. In effect, when Austen was writing *Mansfield Park* between the years 1811 and 1813, the brutality and injustice of slavery preoccupied much of Britain's population, a fact which Austen would have inevitably been aware, Perkins argues. Nonetheless, by no means is *Mansfield Park* about slavery; the novel, however, raises, reveals, and discusses what Marcia McClintock Folsom describes as issues of "domination and resistance" (83) in her work "Power in *Mansfield Park*," not only through explicit references to colonialism but also, as Stabler explains, by "link[ing] a series of tense domestic scenes with the bigger picture of a nation in transition" (vii). Thus, Austen hints towards societal issues occurring during her time: "*Mansfield Park*, far from being the work of conservative quietism that much twentieth-century criticism has turned it into," Kirkham asserts, "embodies Jane Austen's most ambitious and radical criticism of contemporary prejudice in society and in literature" (qtd. in Downie 739). In her novel, Austen seems to suggest that a society that tolerates forms of injustice is problematic, as individuals are formed the society they inhabit, a perspective that recalls Wollstonecraft's understandings of

the ways society determines the individual in *A Vindication.* Austen's personal views might be aligned with those of a society that allows forms of injustice to endure, but one that also resists such oppressive realities. In *Mansfield Park*, she tackles such contentious discussions and offers an examination of power relations both in home and country.

Austen engages in such discussions by the very mention of British colonialism and slavery in her novel, which were contentious issues in Britain at the time, and by setting the novel on an estate funded by such controversial economic endeavours. The Bertram family's wealth and status originates and relies on Sir Thomas's plantation in Antigua, an island in the West Indies, where slavery was legal.[70] Said, among others, argues Sir Thomas's plantation was most probably a sugar plantation (89). Although critics such as J.A. Downie,[71] Brian Southam,[72] and Marsh[73] disagree about the source of Sir Thomas's wealth and claim no certain evidence exists in the text, there is no doubt as to the importance, even the centrality, of the plantation's profits as they determine the Bertram family's financial and social situations. The novel repeatedly reminds readers of the potential economic consequences of Sir Thomas's financial difficulties due to problems in Antigua and the urgency of living frugally until such matters are resolved (24, 25, 29, 101). The financial problems Sir Thomas encounters regarding the plantation are tied to the Abolition Act, according to Avrom Fleishman and Ferguson, and what is more, Sir Thomas's voyage to the West Indies resembles the kinds of voyages that occurred during the time (qtd. in Cleere). Fleishman specifies that the financial losses that Sir Thomas experiences correspond to dangerous living conditions in the West Indies, which led to a devastatingly high mortality rate for the slaves (qtd. in Cleere). It is evident that the family's income and social standing depend on the

[70] Antigua was colonized in 1632 and gained its independence from Britain in 1981. Slavery in Antigua was abolished in 1834. See Niddrie et al.
[71] See Downie's "The Chronology of *Mansfield Park*."
[72] See Southam's "The Silence of the Bertrams: Slavery and the Chronology of *Mansfield Park*."
[73] See Marsh's "Changes of Air: The Somerset Case and *Mansfield Park*'s Imperial Plots."

systemic oppression and exploitation of human beings. Therefore, it can be inferred, as Marsh argues, that slavery pervades every aspect of the Bertram family's existence (218). There would be no Mansfield Park without Sir Thomas's plantation, Said claims, and writes that "[t]he Bertrams could not have been possible without the slave trade, sugar, and the colonial planter class" (94). Indeed, the wealth generated by slave labour funds the Bertram household's genteel lifestyle, the Bertram children's education, and Sir Thomas's charity to the Price family, including Fanny's adoption. This reflects a historical reality: sugar plantations were incredibly profitable at the time (Hellie). Sugar, Elizabeth A. Bohls explains, became an essential part of England's economy (5). "[T]he maritime economy of the Atlantic," she writes, "drove the booming prosperity of the eighteenth-century British Empire, and the Caribbean slave colonies comprised its core" (4). Presumably, Sir Thomas's position as slave-owner and his resulting wealth helped forward his position as a member of the House of Parliament. Austen sets her novel on an estate financed by slavery, which must, inevitably, corrupt the Bertram household's morality.

The members of the Bertram household are aware of the provenance of their wealth but either feign ignorance or purposely avoid the topic, which indicates that they probably understand the horrors of British colonialism and slavery. Considering the prominence of slave labour for Mansfield Park inhabitants, it is peculiar that they never discuss the source of their wealth. Fanny enquires about the slave-trade and feels curiosity and pleasure, but the family responds to her question with "dead silence" (155), to which various significations—such as boredom, disapproval, and shame—have been ascribed by critics such as Marsh and Stabler.[74] The silence about the slavery, which occurs "off-scene" in the novel, perhaps signifies an intentional obliviousness, or a metaphorical and literal looking-away, in other words. Wilful ignorance drives the Bertram household (and certain aspects of British

[74] See Marsh 218; Stabler xxxi.

society), Perkins explains: "[I]gnorance of an evil that is hidden from sight—ignorance of geographically distant brutality in the slave trade, ignorance of the absence of religious principles within the Bertram children—enable[s] the evil to continue." Conversely, Downie argues in "Rehabilitating Sir Thomas" that the dead silence about the slave trade is not specifically a critique of the family but of Maria and Julia, and the issue is with their manners (753). Maria's and Julia's responses seem to refer to boredom, as they sit "without […] seeming at all interested in the subject" (155). But what about the other members of the household? What about Tom, Edmund, Lady Bertram, Mrs. Norris, and even Sir Thomas? While the novel refers to Sir Thomas's business in Antigua several times throughout the narrative, Austen never provides space for characters to share their perspectives on slavery. Even Fanny's question appears almost insignificant, as Edmund briefly mentions her enquiry between other discussions, namely on Sir Thomas's return, Mary's qualities, and Maria's forthcoming wedding. In this way, Marsh portends *Mansfield Park* addresses imperial hypocrisy, that is, the fact that Britain disapproved of slavery on British soil but silently consented to slavery on colonial land in order to benefit from financial incentives (212). To elaborate, the abolition of slavery in Britain necessarily meant that British subjects had to have their plantations in colonies. Slavery, in the novel, remains latent, existing only in its backdrop, but it nevertheless permeates life at Mansfield Park, which stands six thousand kilometres away from Antigua.

Continuing along with the idea of silence, it is problematic that, first, the novel never discusses life in Antigua, and second, that a middle-class white woman—Austen—chooses not to discuss slavery openly in her novels, when she, personally, opposed slavery. In addition, Austen's position as a middle-class woman, Susan Fraiman suggests in "Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism," influences and weakens any abolitionist claims *Mansfield Park* may have (809). However, *Mansfield Park* implicitly

discloses Austen's disapproval of slavery through the characters' resistance and rejection of oppressive regimes. The fact that Fanny and Edmund settle at Thornton Lacey and not Mansfield Park at the end of the novel, Fraiman argues, reveals Austen's disdain for what Mansfield Park represents (811). By referencing slavery in a novel that addresses education and upbringing, Austen associates familial and social learning, hinting towards the societal changes that were taking place surrounding British civil rights and women's rights. British colonialism and slavery inevitably corrupt interpersonal relations in the Bertram household, helping to preserve forms of inequality and oppression in the home between individuals.

Sir Thomas's participation in British colonialism and his profession as a slaver contribute to the formation of his identity and corrupt his principles. Austen's depiction of Sir Thomas recalls Wollstonecraft's abhorrence for professions that involve ambition and avarice, as well as professions with "great subordination of rank" since these, she argues, are "highly injurious to morality" (81).[75] Wollstonecraft believes in a more equal distribution of wealth and resources and claims both poverty and "elevation [are] insuperable bar[s] to the attainment of either wisdom or virtue" (80). Indeed, she claims professions influence an individual's sense of self (82). Colonialism entails the domination and exploitation of people, and slavery involves the oppression of human beings.[76] Sir Thomas, as slave-owner, supports and perpetuates the systematic oppression and exploitation of human beings. Necessarily, he believes individuals are positioned on a hierarchal scale, akin to what the Swedish physician Carl Linneaus' (1707-1778) proposes in his revised edition of *Systema Naturae* (1758), which classifies *homo sapiens* into six categories (qtd. in Nussbaum 73-4).[77] Sir Thomas, a

[75] Wollstonecraft disapproves of professions that demand blind submission from superiors, such as the clergy and the navy, and argues that ambition corrupts. See pp. 81-2 of *A Vindication*. Austen and Wollstonecraft views differ, here. Austen portrays both the clergy and navy and respectful professions. See appendix D of *Mansfield Park* for more on Austen and the navy.
[76] For more on colonialism and slavery, see Hellie; Kohn and Reddy; Nowell.
[77] Linnaeus categorizes homo sapiens, according to geographic region, skin colour, facial features, hair texture, and social organization, into the six following categories: homo sapiens, wild man, American, European, Asiatic, and African. See p. 73 of Nussbaum's "Women and Race."

wealthy and powerful European white man, certainly positions himself as superior to the Black African slaves he possesses to justify their enslavement. His participation in colonialist endeavours and slavery maintains the status quo and ensures that Sir Thomas retains his privilege. In her discussion of war, religion, and morality in *Mansfield Park*, Todd, similar to Wollstonecraft, maintains that Sir Thomas's profession, notably his professional ambition and avarice, undermine his morality (*Cambridge* 83). Sir Thomas exemplifies the totalitarian value "might makes right" through his support of immoral and racist practices. As a patriarchal and paternal figure, and head of the Bertram household, Sir Thomas is expected to model appropriate behaviour and embody principles for his family members to emulate. *Mansfield Park* frequently emphasizes his authority and respectability, and yet his profession and behaviour demonstrate he is no paragon of virtue. Sir Thomas's profession tarnishes his reputation, contaminates life at Mansfield Park, and corrupts his familial relations.

Sir Thomas's profession and his support of colonialism and slavery are reflected in his behaviour at Mansfield Park and his management of the Bertram household. Several literary critics, such as Said, Ferguson, and Todd, associate Sir Thomas's patriarchal authority with his position as slaver. Sir Thomas treats his family members as subjects and demands blind submission and obedience. He expects absolute compliance from his wife, children, niece, and sister-in-law and becomes antagonistic when they refuse to submit to his will. Todd argues that Mansfield Park resembles a prison because of Sir Thomas, as he commands and controls his family members and suppresses life, laughter, and pleasure (*Cambridge* 84-5). Fanny, for instance, claims, "There [is] never much laughing in his presence […] I cannot recollect that our evenings […are] ever merry, except when my uncle [is] in town" (154), and thus reveals the oppressive nature of his presence. The Bertram household is despondent under his rule and rejoices in his absence: Lady Bertram discovers Edmund easily replaces her husband; the children feel unrestrained from his repressive authority; and Mrs. Norris

fantasizes about his early death. Upon Sir Thomas's return, the family feels the change deeply: "Under his government, Mansfield was an altered place. Some members of their society sent away, and the spirits of many others saddened—it was all sameness and gloom compared with the past—a sombre family party rarely enlivened" (153). These examples support the arguments from critics such as Said and Ferguson, who liken Mansfield Park to a plantation. It is essential to recognize and understand that the dysfunctions of *Mansfield Park* are frivolous when compared to the brutality of slavery; the African slaves in Antigua suffered under terrible conditions, namely constant heat and labour, meagre nutrition, disease, and widespread, brutal violence, as Mike Dash relates in his research on slavery in Antigua, whereas the Bertram family, without seeking to minimize their suffering, experience a comfortable and affluent lifestyle. The work on sugar plantations, Morgan explains, was "backbreaking," and there was a "wide range of diseases, and [a] high mortality rate among black workers" (15). In comparison, the Bertram family experiences a life of ease and comfort. Nonetheless, as Todd argues, Sir Thomas's governance of Mansfield Park resembles, to some degree, the governance of his Antigua plantation, as does his restoration as absolute patriarchal and paternal authority (*Cambridge* 83). In ways that reinforce such a comparison, Said likens Sir Thomas's return to Mansfield Park to his visit to Antigua and claims, "Sir Thomas does exactly the same things—on a larger scale—in his Antigua 'plantations'" (87). Sir Thomas's profession entails the degradation of human beings. The inherent values of British colonialism reveal themselves in his interactions with family members, whom he treats as subordinate individuals under his supreme authority. In these ways, domestic and professional tyranny might be tentatively aligned, at least in the sense that they reflect the brutality and authoritarian tendencies of Sir Thomas's character. What is certain is that Sir Thomas's profession engenders harmful values, which damage his

interpersonal relationships, and more importantly, cause extensive suffering abroad and at home.

In accordance with the detrimental effects of oppressive structures in *Mansfield Park*, Austen seems to suggest that Sir Thomas's profession as a slaver hinders his ability to form healthy relationships. As a plantation owner, Sir Thomas learns to dominate and control groups of individuals. Recalling Wollstonecraft's belief that forms of bondage degrade humankind, Sir Thomas's professional experiences inevitably influence his familial relationships, as his dealings with others are grounded in domination. Sir Thomas tyrannizes over his family members, occasionally exhibiting narcissistic tendencies, and often lacks empathy, enjoys flattery, and uses manipulation. The Bertram household feels little, if any, affection for Sir Thomas, as the narrator never alludes to feelings of love or warmth between Sir Thomas and his family members. Downie defends Sir Thomas in "Rehabilitating Sir Thomas" and argues he reforms towards the end of the novel since he recognizes the errors of his ways. It is clear that Sir Thomas accepts the errors in managing his children's education, as the narrator relates in the last chapter, and yet, Sir Thomas does not change his ways. He continues to perceive his family members as subjects rather than human beings, expects obedience, and overvalues wealth and connections. What is more, several characters in the novel, Marsh contends, are dependent on Sir Thomas, such as wives, daughters, sisters-in-law, seamen, slaves, and second sons (215), a situation which remains unchanged at the end of the novel. Also, his relationships with Tom, Julia, and Fanny only flourish because these characters submit to his authority. Throughout the novel, Sir Thomas's familial bonds are formed through servitude and obedience, which, Austen implies, derives from the values he acquires through his profession. Sir Thomas remains the patriarchal figure at Mansfield Park, which might suggest that to abolish the structures that perpetuate oppression proves impossible, at least in the novel.

Oppressive power relations in society also have important effects on specific relationships in *Mansfield Park.* Most notably, Sir Thomas and Fanny's uncle-niece/father-daughter relationship might be associated with the slaver-slave relationship, according to critics such as Said and Ferguson.[78] Colonizers often justified colonization, the process of establishing control over peoples and places, Said and Ferguson contend, with the argument that colonialism supposedly benefited indigenous populations, much as slavery allegedly civilized native populations, who were deemed inferior, dependent, and barbarous (Said 80; Steiner 113-4). "Almost all colonial schemes," writes Said, "begin with an assumption of native backwardness and general inadequacy to be independent, 'equal,' and 'fit'" (80). In a way that evokes colonial endeavours, Sir Thomas, having never encountered his niece, assumes, without any indication of the fact, that Fanny is ignorant and uneducated, and expects "gross ignorance, some meanness of opinions, and [a] very distressing vulgarity of manner" (Austen 8-9). Sir Thomas believes Fanny will require improvement and imagines her upbringing at Mansfield Park, surrounded by the Bertram household, will provide "an education" (9). The Bertrams feel a sense of superiority and feel entitled to advance the improvement of the Other, Steiner argues in her discussion on emancipating Fanny. This tendency is also central to imperialistic and patronage projects and resembles practices around slavery (112). In such a way, Sir Thomas believes the Bertram household will have a positive influence on Fanny and fears that had she been older, she could have had a harmful impact on his daughters, which recalls racist ideas inherent in British colonialism and slavery. Sir Thomas assumes the Bertram family is superior to the Price family in terms of wealth, status, morality, and education, and encourages his family members to treat Fanny as inferior. He clearly distinguishes himself from Fanny and expects the distinction, and further, power dynamics—of oppressor and oppressed—to exist within their relationship:

[78] See Said's *Culture and Imperialism.* See Ferguson's "*Mansfield Park*: Slavery, Colonialism, and Gender."

> [Sir Thomas wants to] preserve in the minds of [his] daughters the consciousness of what they are, without making them think too lowly of their cousin; and […] without depressing [Fanny's] spirits too far, to make her remember that she is not a Miss Bertram. […] [T]hey cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations will always be different. (9)

Sir Thomas positions the Bertram family as superior to the Price family in terms of wealth, status, and opportunity and seeks to perpetuate the current power dynamics between the two families. In this way, Fanny's adoption, Cleere argues, entails "a collective recognition of her inferior social status" (8), as Sir Thomas "is resolute about the class division that must be erected and maintained between Fanny and her cousins" (3). Sir Thomas is excessively concerned with maintaining power, preventing social mobility between classes, and controlling who belongs to his family. Also, those who enter the family, he believes, must acquire his principles. For this reason, Fanny's education resembles the assimilation process, as Sir Thomas expects Fanny to appropriate the dominant and purportedly superior culture presented by the Bertram household, much as Cohen contends that "[t]he novel traces the conventionalization and assimilation of this outsider role until it becomes part of the central internal dynamic of the family system" (679). Suggesting the physical labour performed on the plantation, Fanny performs physical labour for the Bertrams, such as needlework and gardening, and often suffers emotionally and physically from the exertion of her work. "Fanny's family value," Cleere maintains, "is increasingly derived from her utility as a form of domestic labor" (4). Despite these arguments, it is primordial to mention that as with the comparison of Mansfield Park to a plantation, likening Fanny to a slave minimizes the brutality of slavery, and, as a White, English woman, Fanny experiences considerably more freedom than Black African slaves (Marsh 215). Fanny enjoys a comfortable lifestyle with an abundance of food and has a tranquil room of her own, a reality that could not be farther from

what slaves experience in Antigua. What is more, Fanny has the possibility, the power, to transform, to some extent, the structures that render her powerless.

Gesturing Towards Forms of Subjugation at Mansfield Park

The power dynamics between Fanny and Sir Thomas reflect to some degree the state of female subjugation common in early nineteenth-century households. *Mansfield Park* addresses the oppressive nature of patriarchal order and patrilineality in early nineteenth-century British society and portrays the various forms of subjugation middle- and lower-class women faced in the home under fathers, husbands, and male relatives. The comparison between colonialism and subjugation was prevalent during Austen's lifetime, John Wiltshire argues in "Decolonising *Mansfield Park,*" where he writes that the novel reproduces some of the conventional late eighteenth-century rhetoric which compared young English women and slaves (qtd. in Steiner 111). In a similar manner, Said compares British power abroad to power structures within *Mansfield Park* and argues that the novel "connects the actualities of British power overseas to the domestic imbroglio within the Bertram estate" (95). In a way that aligns slavery and female subjugation, Fraiman, similar to Said, suggests that "Austen invokes slavery to rebuke it, but the barbarity she has in mind is not the slavery in the West Indies but a paternal practice she depicts as possibly analogous to it" (812). "[T]he slaver trade," Fraiman continues, "offers a convenient metaphor. It is a figure made possible by the confluence of abolitionist and feminist discourses emergent in Austen's day, and it takes for granted—as several scholars have argued Austen did—that slavery is a moral offense" (812). In *Mansfield Park*, Said and Fraiman suggest, Austen incorporates discourse about slavery not for abolitionist purposes, but rather to reveal the many ways women experience subjugation in early nineteenth-century English society. While this may be true, this argument is complicated by the fact that Austen, as previously discussed, was personally

against slavery. Again, this comparison is highly problematic, in the same ways that comparing Mansfield Park to a plantation and Fanny and Sir Thomas's relationship to a slaver-slave relationship is controversial. Following this argument, Fraiman writes that

> The imperialist gesture is to exploit the symbolic value of slavery, while ignoring slaves as suffering and resistant historical subjects. […] Ideologically, moreover, the implications of its use are mixed: though evacuating the specific content of slavery in the New World, placing its greatest emphasis elsewhere, this figure also turns on a moment of imagined commonality between English women and African slaves, a potentially radical overlap of outrage. (813)

While many women writers, including Wollstonecraft, took advantage of abolitionist discourse to comment on female subjugation, and more specifically, women's (lack of) civil rights, or "the natural rights of mankind" (67), as Wollstonecraft designates them, there is an unconscionable quality in associating two very disparate and disproportionate forms of oppression. Yet, Austen's use of slavery as a literary metaphor is far from innovative. In fact, *A Vindication*, for instance, describes female subjugation using terms such as "enslave" (103), "slave" (102, 103, 121, 124, 148), "emancipate" (101), and "subjugated" (104) and describes patriarchal figures as "tyrannic kings" (112), "absolute monarchies" (103), "sovereign man" (101), and "master" (150). In such a way, Wollstonecraft compares female subjugation to slavery, and associates women with "the poor African slaves" (225) to align both forms of oppression in British society, which implies that if individuals supported or opposed one, they necessarily must support or oppose the other.[79] Austen, like Wollstonecraft, seems to incorporate issues of British colonialism and slavery in her novel

[79] Wollstonecraft also declares that men have no right to "enslave my sex" (103) and argues that "[women] may be convenient slaves, but slavery will have its constant effect, degrading the master and the abject dependent" (*A Vindication* 67).

more for feminist than abolitionist purposes, perhaps because she was more cognizant of the realities women faced in early nineteenth-century England.

During the early nineteenth century, women became increasingly dependent on men for financial sustenance. Unmarried women faced increasing pressure to find a husband, a reality Austen was aware of and preoccupied with, as evinced in her portrayals of women and marriage in *Mansfield Park.* During Austen's lifetime, changing family dynamics in England due to societal transformations, Perry details in *Novel Relations*, meant marriage became progressively more important for families to accumulate wealth, which endangered women's already precarious financial and social situations. To elaborate, Perry describes the realities women faced: women were financially and socially dependent on male relatives for sustenance and survival as they could rarely inherit property and had few ways of earning a respectable living.[80] Following the idea that marriage became increasingly important for women to obtain financial security, Wendy Moore writes in her discussion on love and marriage in eighteenth-century Britain that female relatives had to be disposed of, most often through marriage, as wealth accumulated in the paternal line.[81] Most women were entirely reliant on men; women, then, were not free, or, not as free as men. Austen was preoccupied with the condition of women and, in fact, Austen's heroines, including Fanny, Perry explains, are unmarried women or daughters in a kinship system that was gradually disinheriting daughters, both in a psychological and financial manner (323). Austen's female characters in *Mansfield Park* are, as is generally the case in early nineteenth-century society, bound by their lack of rights, which renders them dependent on men for survival.

Austen was conscious of the financial and social difficulties women faced in the marriage 'market' as the theme recurs throughout her novels, including *Mansfield Park*,

[80] See p. 219 of Perry's *Novel Relations,* as well as Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters,* for more on work opportunities for women.
[81] Wendy Moore chronicles the development of marriage throughout the eighteenth century, as people increasingly married for love rather than money. See "Love and Marriage in 18th-Century Britain."

where marriage is the only means women possess to obtain financial security, but where marriage also forces women into an alternative state of male dependence. By way of illustration of how Austen associates marriage with money, the narrative begins with descriptions of the Ward sisters' unions in terms of economic transactions: "Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the *good luck* to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram […] and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequences of a handsome house and large income"; "Miss Ward […] found herself *obliged* to be attached to the Rev. Mr. Norris […] with scarcely any private fortune" earning "less than a thousand a year"; and Miss Frances married Lieutenant Price, a man "without education, fortune, or connexions" "to *disoblige* her family" (3; emphasis added). Marriage, for the Ward sisters, is an economic transaction, grounded on duty, obligation, and necessity. Indeed, the novel only describes these alliances in terms of wealth and status and foregoes motives of love, affection, or esteem. Similarly, Maria marries Mr. Rushworth, a man she "despise[s]" (364) for financial reasons, that is, for his twelve thousand pounds a year, which will "give [her] the enjoyment of a larger income than her father's, as well as ensure [a …] house in town" (31), mirroring her mother's motives for marrying. Maria seeks freedom from paternal authority but ultimately displaces one form of confining male authority with another. Julia, likewise, marries Mr. Yates to escape Sir Thomas's restraint. Mary, on the other hand, refuses to marry for love since she believes that individuals "should [only] marry as soon as they can do it to advantage" (34). Mary remains unmarried, which may give the impression that she has the freedom to circumvent social expectations. However, she spends the rest of her days living with her relatives, which demonstrates that she does not have the opportunity to live independently, as her brother Henry does, for instance. These examples confirm Ascarelli's suggestion that "[a] close reading of Austen's work reveals that she, like Wollstonecraft, was very aware of marriage as an economic

institution." This is the case in *Mansfield Park,* where women are forced to enter into relationships for sustenance and subsistence since marriage is the only means women have to obtain financial security.

In ways that also recall Wollstonecraft's disdain for marrying for wealth, Austen demonstrates in her novel that women's financial and social dependence on men corrupts all feelings of authentic attachment between men and women. Austen suggests that marrying for reasons other than love, such as wealth, ambition, or financial security, corrupts matrimonial ties. In this way, Austen interrogates the patriarchal system that forces individuals to marry for money rather than mutual affection. Since female education inculcates women with the notion that their value stems from marriage, such an education might also prevent women from forming profound attachments with men and teach them to value wealth and status over love and friendship. In effect, the novel only offers disheartening representations of marriage. Lady Bertram and Sir Thomas appear mutually indifferent; Mrs. Price and Lieutenant Price seem to avoid one another; Mrs. Norris feels little the loss of her husband Mr. Norris; Mrs. Crawford and Admiral Crawford disagree on everything; Mrs. Rushworth and Mr. Rushworth despise and disdain each other; and Mrs. Grant and Mr. Grant's union appears a burden (18, 32, 364). The narrator's depictions of marriage seem to demonstrate that a marriage fails to offer conjugal felicity as wives and husbands feel little affection or esteem for each other. Women's financial and social dependence on men, and a female education that focuses on accomplishments, prevents women and men from forming relationships founded on authentic feelings of affection and esteem.

In *Mansfield Park*, women's financial and social dependence on men also harms romantic relationships between individuals who feel genuine affection and esteem for each other. The only potentially healthy and happy romantic alliance occurs at the end of the novel, between Fanny and Edmund. The cousins feel mutual, but not equal, affection and

respect for each other. Fanny and Edmund's relationship is founded on love rather than money, Perry argues in "Family Matters," as they have no financial incentive to marry, which indicates that wealth does not corrupt their motives (327-30). Ambition or avarice does not taint Fanny's love for Edmund, but Fanny nevertheless stands as much, if not more, to gain from marriage as other female characters. Fanny acquires financial security, freedom from poverty, and a home, as well as a comfortable life of relative ease. She recognizes and appreciates the financial aspects of marriage. This is especially evident during her visit to Portsmouth, where she even comes to understand the appeal of marrying Henry to escape what she perceives as the chaotic Price household. Henry, likewise, recognizes his power and the advantages marriage can offer Fanny. When speaking with his sister Mary about the match, he describes the life he could offer Fanny as opposed to Edmund and Sir Thomas: "Edmund! True, I believe he is, generally speaking, kind to her, and so is Sir Thomas in his way; but it is the way of a rich, superior, long-worded, arbitrary uncle. What can Sir Thomas and Edmund together do, what do they do for her happiness, comfort, honour, and dignity in the world, to what I shall do?" (233). As Henry explains, marriage would offer Fanny more freedom and power, albeit in a position of financial and social dependence. Henry makes clear the comfort and security matrimony affords women and the insecurity women face when dependent on male relatives, which indicates Austen's awareness of the realities women experience. Fanny—whether at Portsmouth or Mansfield Park—is financially and socially dependent on male relatives. Nevertheless, what differentiates Edmund and Fanny's relationship is that they treat and recognize each other as equals, even though, as a woman, Fanny, is financially and socially dependent on Edmund. The novel suggests that gender equality and financial freedom are necessary for authentic romantic love, realities that do not exist, for the most part, in the early nineteenth century between men and women.

For this reason, *Mansfield Park* eulogizes the sibling bond and describes Fanny and her older brother William's fraternal relationship as the strongest, healthiest, and most admirable because their love is founded on equality and mutual affection and esteem, even though William's gender allows him more power and freedom than Fanny. In fact, literary critics, such as James Thompson in his comparison of sibling and conjugal ties, have often discussed how Austen portrays, in her novels, sibling relationships as the "strongest natural human ties."[82] In the same way, Deborah J. Knuth Klenck claims in her discussion of how good brothers make good husbands that the most profound relationships in *Mansfield Park* are between brothers and sisters. Siblings ties, as opposed to matrimonial ties, had little to impede a close bond, since, as Perry maintains, siblings were equal in terms of class, birth, mental capability, and genetic endowment in the eighteenth century, even though brothers and sisters did not have the same legal power. These historical realities are reflected in the ways in which Fanny and William are presented as relatively equal in terms of age, status, wealth, and power. In many ways, equality governs sibling relationships, but also, in the novel, freedom and selflessness are more present within sibling bonds than within other types of relationships, such as parental or romantic ties. To elaborate, in her examination of parent-child relations, Wollstonecraft finds that the love parents have for children is a form of self-love, which indicates that the love is tainted by selfish motives (232), whereas sibling relationships, on the other hand, involve more equality. Returning to Fanny and William, their love, Austen's novel implies, is incorruptible, as neither stands anything to gain from the relationship except friendship. The brother and sister equally value their sibling bond, which ensures that their love transcends time, distance, and absence. The purity and sincerity of their love is so powerful that it affects all who admire their bond. Equality, Austen seems

[82] See Thompson's "Sororadelphia, or 'even the conjugal tie is beneath the fraternal.'"

to suggest, provides a strong foundation for relationships, which is problematic given the social inequality that governs much of British society during her lifetime.

For a novel that acclaims the sibling bond, *Mansfield Park* offers mostly bleak representations of fraternal relationships; changing family dynamics and the resulting economic pressures corrupted not only conjugal ties but also sibling bonds. Limited resources signified brothers and sisters had to compete. This reality is exemplified in the novel, where, for example, Maria and Julia compete over Henry because he represents financial security, and Susan and Betsy argue over Mary's silver knife. Therefore, financial inequality also impedes sibling relationships. The Ward sisters' sororal bond suffers because of their differing social status, more than time or distance. The narrator explains that "the ties of blood [become] little more than nothing," or "a mere name" (336). Also, Tom and Edmund's differing inheritance and expectations, presumably, affect their relationship, mostly when Tom's debt removes his younger brother's opportunity to receive the Mansfield living, and consequently, financial security. The narrator decries that "[f]raternal love, sometimes almost every thing, is at others worse than nothing" (184). As such, Fanny and William's sibling bond is strong not because they share the same blood, but because they are friends. Friendship thus becomes the most admirable relationship.[83] This aligns with Wollstonecraft's idealization of friendship, which she calls the "most holy band of society" (96) and describes as a relationship based on attachment and esteem (144-5). She continues:

> Friendship is a serious affection; the most sublime of all affections, because it is founded on principle, and cemented by time. The reverse may be said of love. In a great degree, love and friendship cannot subsist in the same bosom; even when inspire by different objects they weaken or destroy each other, and

[83] This reflects an eighteenth-century reality in which, as Tadmor explains "the term 'friend' had a plurality of meanings that spanned kinship ties, sentimental relationships, economic ties, occupational connections, intellectual and spiritual attachments, sociable networks, and political alliances" (167). See *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*.

> for the same object can only be felt in succession. The vain fears and fond jealousies, the winds which fan the flame of love, when judiciously or artfully tempered, are both incompatible with the tender confidence and sincere respect of friendship. (145)

Friendship, she contends, involves respect and invites confidence, whereas love, she describes as transient and fragile. Austen's depiction of friendship might be aligned with Wollstonecraft's views in the way that Fanny and William respect and communicate freely with each other and become closer over time. However, Austen and Wollstonecraft differ in how Austen appears more pessimistic about the possibility of friendship between brothers and sisters because these exist within an economic and social system grounded on primogeniture and patrilineality, which perpetuates and promotes sibling inequality and dependence.

Austen's novel further questions this issue in its treatment of the English right of male primogeniture, or the right for the firstborn legitimate male child to inherit the parent's estate, which, during Austen's lifetime, was detrimental to interpersonal relationships, especially sibling relationships.[84] In her examination of brothers in Austen's novels, Susan Allen Ford explains that brothers' roles and responsibilities evolved during the eighteenth century (103).[85] Conduct literature, she argues, encouraged brothers to model appropriate behaviour and offer assistance, advice, and protection (106). In particular, as Perry explains in her chapter on brotherly love, brothers were expected to offer social and sexual protection by providing financial assistance and support, housing (when necessary), legal advice, and escorted travel (*Novel Relations* 147, 151-4). Brothers represented patriarchal power, Perry contends, and, after the father's death, brothers took on the responsibilities of fathers,

[84] See "Primogeniture and Ultimogeniture."
[85] See Ford's "'Exactly What a Brother Should Be'? The Failures of Brotherly Love."

especially for unmarried women (153, 157). Because of the privileges of their gender, brothers had more agency than sisters. This became problematic during the eighteenth century when consanguineal ties weakened, which signified that once brothers married, they owed primary duty to their conjugal family (157). As such, brothers had little incentive to help sisters, except familial honour, since these expectations were not legally required and were entirely voluntary (157-8). Unmarried women were thus placed in an even more financially and socially precarious situation. Marriage became increasingly important, as it was one of the only ways women could acquire financial stability and avoid financial and social dependence on male relatives. Often, unmarried women were forced to serve male relatives and endure certain situations to ensure they were not abandoned. Following this idea, Evans explores the similarities between Austen's and Wollstonecraft's representations of the conditions of women in their works and explains:

> The threat of being left with nothing was ever present for women in the early nineteenth century, which manifested itself in a type of behaviour that made them slaves to men to ensure that they would never be abandoned. This critique of the master slave relationship between men and women shows how Austen engages with Wollstonecraft's argument that there is a master-slave relationship implicit in gender politics. (21)

Evans associates primogeniture and patrilineality with slavery to reveal oppressive nineteenth-century structures which perpetuated female subjugation, much as Stabler maintains in the introduction to *Mansfield Park* that Austen like Wollstonecraft "linked feminism to the general struggle for political and social reform" and argued that "the abstract rights of woman [are] inextricably linked with the abstract rights of men and that the tyranny of man, husband, king, primogeniture, and hereditary privilege must all cease" (xix). Again, both Austen and Wollstonecraft associate female subjugation with other forms of oppression

present in society. These social structures are evident in *Mansfield Park*, where, as Ford explains, most brothers fail to fulfil their brotherly responsibilities (106). Tom models inappropriate behaviour for his younger siblings, as Ford contends (106, 112); Tom denies his brother of a living; Tom and Edmund fail to offer their sisters protection; Henry models inappropriate behaviour for his sister Mary and refuses to offer her a home after Admiral Crawford invites his mistress to live with him. Brothers are unwilling to fulfil their responsibilities in the novel, which reveals how primogeniture and patrilineality are harmful to sibling bonds, as sisters are dependent on brothers, and brothers are responsible for sisters. In such a way, Austen suggests that equality and independence are necessary for healthy sibling bonds.

For the same reasons, Austen reproduces in *Mansfield Park* Wollstonecraft's and Locke's views on equality between parents and children. Parents should consider children as equals, Wollstonecraft argues, as mothers and fathers who expect blind obedience hinder children's proper development into functioning adults and consequently damage the parent-child relationship (179). In her consideration of the ways blind obedience harms children, she further contends that proper parenting naturally promotes affection between parents and children, but subjugation impedes the acquisition of principle:

> The simple definition of the reciprocal duty, which naturally subsists between parent and child, may be given in a few words: The parent who pays proper attention to helpless infancy has a right to require the same attention when the feebleness of age comes upon him. But to subjugate a rational being to the mere will of another, after he is of age to answer to society for his own conduct, is a most cruel and undue stretch of power; and perhaps as injurious to morality. (235)

Parents who fulfil their duties form authentic attachments with children and inspire filial admiration and respect, Wollstonecraft maintains (238). In her discussion on parenting, she especially highlights the importance of friendship between parents and children (282). In much the same way, Locke argues in *Thoughts* that treating children as unequal and inferior beings hinders the formation of the parent-child bond. Children require more liberty as they grow, Locke argues, as increasingly more freedom positions the parent and child on more equal terms, which ensures friendship between parents and children (33-4). He adds that parents should treat children like adults and communicate freely and openly with children, which allows the child to develop into an independent and capable adult and increases the love and esteem the child feels for the parent (44-7, 134-6). It is important to note that Locke believes fathers must instil paternal authority when children are young and requires obedience and submission from young children (44) but explains that parents must gradually relinquish such authority, a position that Wollstonecraft is critical of since she argues that children, including young children, who are forced to obey "lose vigour and industry" (237). Yet, Wollstonecraft seems to agree with Locke on the point that blind submission teaches children subjugation and produces a climate of dominance rather than collaboration and cooperation. Locke would probably have agreed with Wollstonecraft in the way she argues that "slavish bondage to parents cramps every faculty of the mind" (237) and that subjugation in childhood prepares children for subjugation in adulthood. Like Wollstonecraft and Locke, Austen challenges the notion that parent-child relations should be founded on domination and absolute authority.

The prevalent depiction of parenting, in *Mansfield Park*, as a hierarchical relationship where the parent wields authority and knowledge, which they may (or may not) impart on the child, reveals Austen's views on parent-child relations, which, she suggests, should be founded on equality and freedom. The novel's primary parental authority, Sir Thomas,

expects absolute filial obedience and consequently fails to inspire love and respect in his children. In effect, the Bertram children learn to circumvent his authority and hide their true dispositions and inclinations in his presence. Their rebellious behaviour, the narrator suggests, directly results from Sir Thomas's repressive authority. Unequal power dynamics are nowhere less evident than in Fanny's relationships with the Bertram parental figures Mrs. Norris, Lady Bertram, and Sir Thomas. From the very beginning, Mrs. Norris teaches Fanny to be subservient and display her gratitude through service.[86] Fanny learns to enjoy being useful and assists the Bertrams, especially her aunts and cousins (28, 129-130, 290, 293, 307). Most prominently, when Fanny visits Portsmouth, she fantasizes about and longs to provide service for the Bertrams at Mansfield Park, whom she believes, dearly require her assistance:

> Could she have been at home, she might have been of service to every creature in the house. She felt that she must have been of use to all. To all she must have saved some trouble of head or hand; and were it only in supporting the spirits of her aunt Bertram, keeping her from the evil of solitude […] She loved to fancy how she could have read to her aunt, how she could have talked to her, and tried at once to make her feel the blessing of what was, and prepare her mind for what might be; and how many walks up and down stairs she might have saved her, and how many messages she might have carried. (339)

Her fantasies—in which she imagines herself at the centre of familial sorrow, offering emotional support and service for the Bertram family—provide comfort during her Portsmouth visit, soothing her feelings of neglect and insignificance. Fanny romanticizes the role of a servant and envisions her service as quintessential to familial happiness and comfort.

[86] Mrs. Norris convinces Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram to adopt a daughter, rather than a son, because she would not have been able to use a boy as she uses Fanny, that is, as a servant. See Stabler xxix; Steiner 112.

Her daydreams are nevertheless based in reality, as Fanny's arrival, after her long absence, provides comfort to the remaining Bertram family members. Fanny finds satisfaction, and oddly enough, self-confidence, in service, which reveals how she has ascribed value to labour, and more precisely, exposes the unhealthy nature of her familial relationships. Fanny, indeed, perceives love as a reward for service and believes that when "she [is] useful, she [is] beloved" (362). She also rewards labour with love; Fanny comes to love Edmund "[i]n return for [his] services" (18). In such a way, Fanny, Stabler argues when she addresses the protagonist's subjectivity, becomes subjugated at Mansfield Park, and internalizes the treatment she receives from the Bertram household (xxviii). Accordingly, Fanny's behaviour resembles what George Boulukus describes as "the grateful slave," where the slave is grateful and subservient to the master, a comparison that Anne K. Mellor also makes when she aligns Fanny with Maria Edgeworth's story "The Grateful Negro" (1804), whose main character, Caesar, internalizes his subjection (qtd. in Steiner 122).[87] "Fanny should be read as herself a slave," Mellor further argues, "disciplined by Aunt Norris, the overseer from the 'White House,' and 'chained' in a marriage with Edmund, a marriage she has been manipulated into seeing as desirable" (202n42), which is a hyperbolic comparison. Yet again, one must be careful when comparing Fanny to a slave so as not to minimize the horrifying conditions slaves experienced. What is more certain is that the form of patronage that occurs in the novel, Clara Tuite explains, functions as "a reciprocal but highly inegalitarian form of social linkage" (qtd. in Steiner 111), which evokes forms of subjugation present in British social structures. Relatedly, the treatment Fanny receives demonstrates the ease with which family members disregard, or even tolerate, abusive behaviour, Stabler argues (xxvii). Austen implies that the unequal terms that govern their relationships are the cause of Fanny's mistreatment, which indicates, more broadly, that inequality and submission hinder kinship

[87] See Boulukus's "The Prehistory of the Grateful Slave."

ties. *Mansfield Park* proposes that relationships require equality and freedom. Genuine love between individuals only develops where equality reigns and individuals have equal power.

Fanny's vulnerable and oppressed state forces her to find alternative methods of resistance: she utilizes her role as servant to create a space for herself at Mansfield Park, a place she considers home, with the Bertram household, her chosen family. The narrator describes Fanny's life at Mansfield Park in terms of assault, as Steiner describes it, and maintains that as the novel advances, Fanny evolves from an inconsequential family member to a person of convenience, to a permanent member of the Bertram household (109, 122). In a similar manner, Stabler explains, in the introduction to the novel, that Fanny "produces a surprising number of verbal outbursts, corrections, and resolutions directly contradicting her social superiors" (xvii) throughout the novel, and thus finds her voice and defends her principles and beliefs on several subjects. Those who read Fanny as silent and meek are mistaken, Stabler further claims, since she subverts paternal and patriarchal authority (xvii-iii). Fanny utilizes dissimulation, feigned ignorance, and false compliance, or seeming deference, respect, and love, as methods of resistance, since, as Folsom argues, she is in a position of powerlessness as a poor, young, dependent woman (84-6). Fanny's thought processes, Folsom continues, become her most powerful weapon of opposition and protection since her financial and social dependence prohibits her from openly resisting the powerful members of the Bertram household (85). For instance, Fanny displays gratitude and fears to appear ungrateful. When her uncle labels her as "selfish, and ungrateful" (250) because she defies his advice, she suffers terribly (251). In an analysis of Fanny's gratitude, Folsom claims that "[Fanny's] excessive gratitude covers her distress and perhaps might be construed as a moment of feigned ignorance" (86) as "dissimulation is a necessary weapon for the powerless" (91). Irrespective of the methods Fanny utilizes, she manages, at the end of the novel, to free herself from poverty and attain upward social mobility by marrying the man she

loves, and more significantly, the man she chooses. While Fanny internalizes her subjugation, she also simultaneously displays incredible resistance.

Fanny's resistance demonstrates that subjugation is taught and can, therefore, be unlearnt. It is Fanny's education that provides her with the skills necessary, most notably reason, to resist the powerful, which reflects Wollstonecraft's belief that education offers the individuals, or rather women, the tools to free themselves. Fanny refuses to blindly obey the authority figures at Mansfield Park, and adheres to her principles and follows her own internal guidance, as exemplified, for instance, in the way she refuses Henry's marriage proposal. She willingly endangers her place with the Bertram family when she resists Sir Thomas's paternal authority, namely, when he attempts to convince her to marry Henry. Fanny acts according to what she believes is right because adhering to her principles is more important than pleasing and obeying her uncle. This is an instance of incredible resistance because, although Fanny neither belongs to the Price or Bertram family, Sir Thomas nevertheless "stand[s] in the place of her parents" (245), which signifies, as March explains, that Fanny, according to social conventions, owes her paternal figure filial obedience (218-9).[88] In such a way, her actions are consistent with Wollstonecraft's perspectives, the latter who declares "[s]trengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience" (90). Fanny's mind is certainly strengthened through education, as her reason allows her to thoughtfully consider the match and determine that Henry would probably not make a good husband for her, a conclusion she comes to based on his prior behaviour towards Maria and Julia. In large part, it is this decision that enables Sir Thomas to recognize the resilience and resoluteness Fanny exhibits and ultimately accept her as a daughter. In

[88] Then again, Fanny can resist because she does not have the same responsibilities as Maria and Julia, who have been raised to become wives whereas Fanny has not. Fanny, it appears, has been raised to serve the Bertram family.

essence, Fanny acts as if she is free, which grants her power. Her resistance is what ties her to the Bertram family.

Fanny has the ability to resist patriarchal figures within the home but does not have the capacity to circumvent societal forms of female subjugation, which signifies that her power is limited to the domestic sphere. In other words, Fanny cannot fully overcome her subjugation, Steiner asserts, but she prevails "by both remaining in the game and bending its rules" (123), which is to say that Fanny, as a woman, is still restrained by economic, social, and political inequality between genders. In the same vein, Austen, like Wollstonecraft, can only transgress boundaries within certain limitations, Evans argues (21). Austen can only comment on power relations and reveal the ways women are oppressed by certain societal structures in early nineteenth-century society but does not have the power to alter the structures themselves or function outside of them. In *Mansfield Park*, she addresses this relationship between education and power, as Steiner portends:

> [Mansfield Park], by giving voice to repressed subjectivity and deliberately associating it with gender, participates in the contemporary debate related to 'the revolution in female manners.' The novel particularly addresses the question of the civilizing process in terms of education and personal improvement, as performed in inegalitarian relationships such as patronage. (108)

Austen gives space to, in her novel, Fanny, a protagonist who, perhaps, symbolizes many women in the early nineteenth-century who are bound by such "inegalitarian relationships" and must find ways to function within a system that is, in many respects, partial to men. Fanny's education grants her some form of power to resist patriarchal authority and maintain self-respect, which is one of the main points *A Vindication* proposes. Much like Wollstonecraft, Austen seems to suggest in her novel that education offers individuals agency

over their lives. Fanny, indeed, acquires agency over her life: After her three-month absence, Fanny chooses to return to Mansfield Park, as opposed to her initial adoption, which her family arranged without her consent or approval.[89] She marries the man she chooses and finds a sense of belonging with the Bertram family. Fanny acquires a life she chose.

At the end of the novel, Fanny displaces Sir Thomas, becomes the Bertram family's moral compass, and consequently equalizes family dynamics. "Fanny's weakness becomes power in weakness, Sir Thomas's power becomes weakness in power," Cohen argues and elaborates that "at the conclusion of the novel, they are shown to complement each other as relative equals in a dialectic in which they become virtually identical" (689). Fanny and Sir Thomas's relationship evolves throughout the novel, as the niece and uncle come to understand and appreciate each other and, consequently, raise in each other's estimations. To consider them as equals perhaps accords Fanny with too much power. However, it is evident that Fanny's decision to remain at Mansfield Park is an act of resistance, which transforms the dominant culture, as Steiner states (122). Fanny transforms the Bertram household: she unites the family and allows individuals to form more profound and authentic relationships. She models reason and virtue for the household and guides individuals towards the skills necessary for genuine attachments. Individuals learn to recognize and appreciate others as human beings rather than subjects or objects. In effect, her choice to return to Mansfield Park demonstrates that more important than blood is belonging.

To put it otherwise, relationships in *Mansfield Park* primarily develop through "affinity" rather than "consanguinity"—or blood—and thus offer more modern representations of kinship ties and familial structures. Austen's narrative revolutionizes conventional eighteenth- and nineteenth-century depictions of relationships and positions the mind rather than the heart at the core of interpersonal bonds. Relationships develop through

[89] Fanny's disapproval of the adoption is evident from her reaction when she initially arrives at Mansfield Park.

the teaching and learning process. In a similar manner, Erin A. Spampinato interprets the novel as a homosocial *bildungsroman* where the new family structure at Mansfield Park is ruled by affection rather than birth order (496).[90] To indicate that kinship ties develop through affection is incomplete, given that what binds individuals in the novel is not affection but intellectual similarities, which then promote affectionate relationships. What is certain is that, as Said states that "the central group that finally emerges with marriage and property 'ordained' is not based exclusively upon blood" (84). Moral and mental education replace blood as markers of personal and collective identity and as signifiers of interpersonal bonds.

Mansfield Park explores various forms of power relations in the early nineteenth century, in home and country. The novel offers representations of oppressive power dynamics, such as British colonialism, slavery, female subjugation, and financial disparity, and discusses the ways and reasons unequal power dynamics prove harmful to both the individual and society. The novel also suggests that education can potentially afford more individual and social equality and freedom. Education allows the oppressed the tools to free themselves from, or at least to circumvent or oppose, oppressive structures.

[90] See Spampinato's "Tom Became What He Ought to Be: *Mansfield Park* as Homosocial *Bildungsroman*."

Conclusion

Rapid transformations during early nineteenth-century English society had extensive implications on social, familial, and individual life. Such changes are evident in Austen's portrayals of the family at Mansfield Park. The novel offers an illustration of the many ways individuals relate to each other during Austen's lifetime, which is complicated by changing familial structures and the consequent shifting roles and responsibilities of family members. In Austen's novel, kinship ties are formed through teaching and learning, namely, childhood education, which occurs in the home between parental figures and children, and non-formal education, which occurs through interactions with others. Through education, individuals learn how to relate to and treat each other, whether in (un)healthy or (un)equal manners.

Austen draws on her contemporary Wollstonecraft and her predecessor Locke to establish her own philosophy of education in her work of fiction, where she proposes, among other things, that education determines kinship ties. Austen may be aligned with Wollstonecraft and, to a lesser degree, Locke in their insistence on an education that revolves around reason and virtue but also differs from the two philosophers in certain respects. Her novel suggests that female education serves more than preparation for marriage and motherhood, a radical idea that distinguishes her from Wollstonecraft. What is more, Austen proposes that education functions not only to form self-governing adults, as Locke suggests, but is the very fabric that binds individuals, families, and societies together. Austen utilizes both traditionally masculine and feminine discourses as she addresses intellectual debates of her time and considers the implications of such issues within the domestic sphere. In these ways, her more subtle feminism is evident in *Mansfield Park*, where Austen advocates for an education that equalizes and unites all and offers individuals more healthy ways of relating to each other.

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