

**“NO READING, NO CHINA, NO COMPOSURE”: RHETORICS OF EMPIRE IN JANE
AUSTEN’S *MANSFIELD PARK* (1814)**

by

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

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Abstract

British empire is often read as purely circumstantial to Jane Austen's novels, lacking any active politicized engagements from the author. Influential work from scholars like Edward Said task contemporary readers with uncovering the nuances of how empire underscores her marriage plots. The novel for Said that warrants this sort of literary and historical excavation of Austen is *Mansfield Park* (1814). My project joins a discourse of feminist responses to this reading from Laura Brown, Miranda Burgess, Susan Fraiman, Yoon Sun Lee, Emily Rohrbach, Chi-ming Yang, and Eugenia Zuroski. I argue that Austen requires no excavation for something that was never buried but instead, actively interwoven and illuminating through the many threads of *Mansfield Park*. The novel to me features a rich and reflexive registration of gendered empire found in its rhetorical provocations in Johnsonian tripartites like: "no reading, no China, no composure for Fanny" (Austen 185). Specifically, my thesis identifies metonymy as a colonial literary device of the text that metaphorically displaces and then aims to connect what begins as disparate into referents towards a patriarchal whole. In the case of this tripartite, "China" refers to heroine Fanny Price's possession of journals from the failed Macartney Embassy to China. "China" becomes a metonymy for Britain's colonial pursuits assembled with a woman's "reading" or education and self-composure. The preceding "no's" before each word of the tripartite also disassembles what is meant to be convened and conflated into a single reference for empire. I use metonymy therefore to identify this motion and attempt to suspend colonial and patriarchal appropriations of foreignness. It is in these suspensions of empire that I find Austen most strategically and productively inconclusive as opposed to passive. The irresolution of metonymies of words and worded objects in *Mansfield Park* interrupts the efficacies of empire

towards an ongoing reading of how its gendered legacies are constantly in composition and somehow oriented in how English women are to “read China”.

Lay Summary

Empire is often read as circumstantial to Jane Austen's novels. Scholars like Edward Said task readers with uncovering how empire underscores her marriage plots. The novel for Said that warrants this sort of literary-historical excavation of Austen is *Mansfield Park* (1814). I argue that Austen requires no excavation for something that was never buried but instead, actively interwoven and illuminating through many threads in the novel. Lines like "no reading, no China, no composure for Fanny" inspire my project of identifying how empire is written in the novel: a simultaneous assembly and disassembly of "China" or the histories of British empire with women's "reading" or education and "composure" or management (Austen 185). It is in these suspensions of patriarchal empire that I find Austen most strategically and productively inconclusive, provoking reflexivity on how empire and its gendered legacies are constantly in composition and somehow oriented in how women "read China".

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, and independent work by the author, Alyssa Sy de Jesus.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to two people, the first of which is my late friend and mentor Jim Wong-Chu. I would like to thank him for his encouragement towards pursuing and writing this project. Although he left us in 2017, I feel as though he is still here seeing me through and all too generously telling me that what I am doing is “a kind of magic”. I am including his poem “Recipe for Tea” (originally published in *Canadian Literature* in 1994) as part of my introduction. Jim, I am sorry that I did not get to read this poem with you the first time you asked me to. At the time I did not realize it would be our last chance. I hope writing a thesis influenced by similar themes and histories makes up for it in some way.

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Recipe for Tea

*(pronounce: thé or tèá
origin: fukienese/scottish dialect)*

a modest pot
enough for
four
small cups

insert tea

green or fermented
or in a
bag

(the first ships came to trade)

the area was fukien
the traders were scottish

the water
boiled separately

brought it back
bastardized it
made it mud
drowned in heavy cream
two, three teaspoons
of colonial sugar

keep your eyes
on the bubbles

shrimp eyes
crab eyes
fish eyes

in search for monopoly
planted in india
after their first crop: opium

the optimum is
crab eyes

crab clattering
before
fish
winking

(the second ships brought my forefathers)

high tea
high civilized tea
biscuits
crumpets
crystalized ginger
fragrant cinnamon spices

note:

the first pour
is not for drink

the best known tea party
was in boston

the tea was chinese
but none invited

pour only
to
cleanse
and awaken

steep briefly

discard

(the third ships brought me)

the second pour: discovery

the third pour: exhilaration

the final pour: afterthought

if

desired

repeat

by Jim Wong-Chu

Introduction

“It is a truth universally acknowledged that” a Jane Austen novel often follows its heroine “out of the library, into the ballroom, and up to the altar” (Austen 1, Susan Fraiman 72). Fraiman is describing the key stages at and social spaces in which Austen’s heroines are socialized. These stages are significant to Austen’s writing of Fanny Price’s navigations through the British colonial setting of *Mansfield Park*. My thesis chapters are thus organized according to the structure of Fanny’s mobilizations from the “library”, to the “ballroom”, and finally the “altar”. The first chapter will look at Fanny’s “library” and education in gendered empire. My second chapter will look at the “ballroom” and how Fanny’s prospects of marriage are weighed as she is coming out into British colonial society. Finally, my third chapter will look at the “altar” and the role Fanny’s developing taste plays into the choices that she makes for a marriage in empire. In each chapter I will point to how Fanny’s movements through “library, ballroom, and altar” are *oriented* (pun intended) towards or gesture in the direction of China. In all three stages or elements of Fanny’s story, I identify how China figures as a means of British patriarchal colonial projection – making it a locus for which gendered empire is both “read” and “composed” but also potentially critiqued (Austen 185).

In chapter sixteen of *Mansfield Park*, Austen writes the following Johnsonian Tripartite: “no reading, no China, no composure for Fanny” (185). This tripartite links together: “reading” or women’s literacy, “China” or Fanny’s reading of the Macartney embassy to China and therefore Britain’s imperial histories, and “composure” or self-control. The word in this passage that inspires my methodology is the word “composure”. It is the punctuating word of the tripartite, connoting it as both consequence and purpose of the sentence’s idea. “Composure” also describes how “China” becomes a metonymy and a referent for British colonial interests.

“Composure” names my project to identify metonymies towards colonial patriarchy in *Mansfield Park* and how they work. In his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Samuel Johnson’s first definition for “Composure” is “to form a mass by joining different things together”. This names the rhetorical metonymical function of the tripartite, which brings together what might be disparate. The word also means “to put together a discourse or sentence” and “[With printers.] To arrange the letters; to put the letters in order in the forms”. Austen’s use of the word “composure” is therefore a rhetoric of writing about writing and text; a device on both the level of literary form and material function. The word in the novel is also gendered because it refers to a heroine’s ability to maintain a type of restraint and be “Calm; serious; even; sedate”. “Composure” as a theme in my methodology frames my close-reading and feminist literary analysis of Austen’s reflexive writing and rhetoric on the modes of management of women in patriarchal British empire. “No Composure” names another aspect of my thesis in which I argue that Austen is writing gendered British empire in order to open up spaces that might imagine something beyond its systemic coherence and control.

When I use metonymy in my thesis to describe the bringing together of things, words, and concepts, I do not mean to suggest that metonymy performs a completely successful act of integration. As metaphor, it is an active deliverance or transport (ie, that long eighteenth-century word that describes and invokes the movement of feeling, bodies, and objects in British colonial contexts) of one meaning to another. “China” does not directly denote The Macartney Embassy – but Austen’s punning of it as metonymy for a historical event is what suspends British imperial history in process. I use metonymy to describe the motion and the attempt itself to suspend connection and at many times in *Mansfield Park*, colonial and patriarchal appropriation. It is Austen’s suspensions of empire that I find her to be most strategically inconclusive and therefore

provocative in her engagements in patriarchal empire. It is in her use of metonymy and what I read as different iterations of the device throughout the words and worded objects in *Mansfield Park* like “no China” that suspends these engagements most compellingly and productively for an ongoing reading of how empire and its gendered legacies are constantly in composition.

My close-readings for each chapter move between such words and worded objects that I perceive to follow Austen’s own structure. I am interested in how Austen’s usage of certain words in regard to imperial commodities engages with colonial gendered transports (both importation or displacement and, feeling) that activate *Mansfield Park*’s marriage plot. For instance in my first chapter I look at the word “matter” as it applies to “paper”. In the second chapter I look at words like “set” and “anxious” when it comes to Fanny’s jewelry. And in my final chapter I look at the exchange of dialogue between characters that facilitate the exchange of house pets and tea. My own close-reading of object to object, word to word, and word to object and vice versa is also both the effect and outcome of my own commitment to exploring Austen’s own style of writing—a style and structure that appears to be a reflexive colonial registry of things as words and words as things.

I went into my graduate studies to find community. So each of my chapters bring together the work of different scholars that support and also challenge my arguments. This thesis joins the ongoing response to Edward Said’s influential analysis of *Mansfield Park* as an incidental text of empire. My first and introductory chapter does the most to directly wrestle with his claims. Throughout my thesis I turn to the works of Laura Brown, Miranda Burgess, Susan Fraiman, Yoon Sun Lee, and Emily Rohrbach on Austen’s active written engagements in patriarchal empire. Eugenia Zuroski and Chi-ming Yang’s work guide me through a similar feminist framework that further discusses British imperial registrations and commodification of

Chineseness. My thesis features these voices and those of others intermittently with mine. I hope that in doing so, I have written and contributed to a collaborative project between myself and some of those whose work I admire in long eighteenth-century studies and beyond.

Chapter 1. “Introduce her properly to the world”: female education and the metonymies of empire in Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* (1814)

British empire in Jane Austen’s novels is often read as a purely circumstantial registration, lacking any active politicized engagements from the author. A most influential work on this analysis of Austen is Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). In his book, Said insists that in *Mansfield Park* “Austen is so summary in one context” of global empire yet “so provocatively rich in the other”, a highly localized Mansfield estate (96). He goes on to claim that it is “precisely because of the imbalance we are able to...reveal and accentuate the interdependence [between empire and domestic setting] scarcely mentioned in its brilliant pages” (96). Said aims to set an example for reading Austen wherein it is up to readers like himself to uncover “a rich and complex history, which...Austen herself would not, could not recognize” (93). He asserts that Austen is too deeply encased in British empire that she can only perpetuate its ideals when she writes about her home-bound heroines. Said’s reading of Austen has since been contested by feminist scholars like Susan Fraiman then and Miranda Burgess and Yoon Sun Lee now. My project contributes to the latter part of the discourse. Said sees Austen’s domestic positionalities as a detriment to the author’s own engagements with empire. But I argue that these same positionalities are reflexively written as detailed insightful suspensions of the structuring of gendered empire.

Counter to Said’s rigid compartmentalization between countryside and inter-national empire in the novel, *Mansfield Park* immediately opens by situating its heroine in empire on the premise of domestic planning in relation to patrilineage and land ownership. Its plot is put into motion by the adoption of Fanny Price, a poorer relation, into the Mansfield estate of the Bertram

family. Their intentions are to provide her with “an education [that will allow them to] introduce her properly into the world” and “society of this country” (Austen 6). “The world”, “society” and “country” already codes Fanny’s upbringing and the novel’s setting into British imperialism. The Oxford English Dictionary’s (OED) etymology of “the world” is colonial in its long eighteenth-century usage. “World” is defined by a human-centered navigation of place and space. The OED’s example of the word’s usage closest to *Mansfield Park*’s publication is from Austen’s own *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), in which the opportunistic John Willoughby says he “must rub through the world as well as [he] can” (Austen 335). Fanny’s coming of age from the domestic location of Mansfield is not meant to be “modest” (Said 88). Instead it is a key vantage point of “the world” and “globalization [as] the imposition of the same system of exchange everywhere” from a colonially-contingent center of British home-making (Gayatri Spivak 72). Counter to Said’s compartmentalization, Deidre Lynch names Austen as the one writer who “manages to ‘complete’ the novel’s rise because she manages to harmonize the interests of private life and social life” (4). My aim therefore is to legitimize the positionality of domestic feminized space in Austen’s novel as a richly written platform for identifying and therefore potentially critiquing the systems that condition a patriarchal management of empire.

While Said tasks readers with the challenge of reconciling *Mansfield Park* as both a “brilliant” novel and an informative but problematic imperial registry, I argue that the novel holds its complexities on its own without requiring Said’s suggested form of intervention (96). Supporting my argument is Nancy Armstrong’s own in which, she posits that in pioneering works of the English novel a question of individual identity and thought are by nature historicist (Armstrong 10). Novels as an emerging genre of Austen’s time are written and read as a direct method of rumination on how British citizens are thinking through their social environment.

As a late Romantic novelist, Austen does the work of colonial historiography. In his comparison between Austen and travelled male writers of empire like Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad, Said describes empire in *Mansfield Park* as “[allusive], casual...incidental [and] referred to only in passing” (89). But Emily Rohrbach dives deeper into Austen’s contributions to Romantic historiography “not as cultural phenomena or symptoms but as active intellectual and historical engagements that do not respect the normative cultural boundaries between gender and genre” (my own italicization, 17). Said’s identifications of the cruciality of empire to the plots and points of *Mansfield Park* are significant. But in comparing Austen to Kipling and Conrad, he allows himself to be biased by an inaccurate “boundary” on her “gender and genre”. His reading of *Mansfield Park* misses a rich “record of the processes of reading, thinking, feeling and forgetting that made imperialism possible” (210). I italicize Burgess’s use of the plural word “processes” to emphasize the “active” and multi-dimensional ways that Austen is writing through empire (Rohrbach 17). Austen’s work reflexively registers empire and at times opens up spaces in which a “distinctly critical account of British imperialism emerges” (Burgess 210). Austen does so through what I identify as her feminist rhetoric of empire which “[composes]” and assembles elements of empire, simultaneously participating in and exposing its systemic workings (185 Austen).

As I mentioned in my project introduction, “composure” is a key element in my analysis of Austen’s rhetoric of empire (Austen 185). Rohrbach’s distinction between “making” as opposed to only “representing” when she talks about Austen’s writing is helpful to my project on composure as an indication of “creative agency [in the] literary...process” specifically as a form of ongoing socio-political engagement (16). Austen’s writing style in and on empire is most prominent to me in her Johnsonian tripartite: “no reading, no China, no composure for Fanny”

(185). Through literary device she composes the conditions of Fanny's education in a metonymically-moded empire. In her study of Austen, Burgess writes that "narration [is] metonymy, tethering unknown social and economic circulations to the details of domestic life" (371). Austen's "China" tripartite does this work. What is key to Fanny's "learning" of China is how it is "held up to an ideal of comprehensiveness" as it (China) is linked to a British woman's "reading" or perception and "composure" or behaviour in the context of empire (Burgess 214). Through the literary device of metonymy Austen presents to us in just one tripartite, the systemic undertaking of British empire which looks to dominate places, people, and objects by way of rendering them referents unto itself. In this chapter, I perform close-readings of the ways in which Austen composes such metonymies around Fanny's gendered education in empire. Specifically I write on how various key metonymies refer back to Mansfield patriarch, Sir Thomas - a figure of metonymical management in patriarchal empire. These metonymies indicate specific ways in which Austen's novel about a heroine's coming of age is not simply entangled with but made essential to the structuring of empire – a structure that by its very own makings might be unsettled.

1.1 "Putting the map together": how women educate each other in empire

Earlier I quoted from Spivak's *Death of a Discipline* (2005), which is critical of the disciplinary divide between area studies and comparative literature. Spivak is concerned with these disciplines as academic colonial methods for how we make sense of and define "the globe" and "Globalization". Spivak's analysis brings light to Fanny's own curriculum in and of "the world", which includes the "emerging discipline" of geography (Burgess 212). In Johnson's dictionary, geography "in a strict sense, signifies the [human] knowledge of the circles of the earthly globe...in the largest sense of all, it extends to the various customs, habits, and

governments of nations”. The language of Johnson’s definition alone is disciplinary in his organization of the boundaries of this epistemological pursuit of “the world”. Geography, Johnson concludes, is a human-determined rendering of the world concerning how “nations” are to relate to each other in empire. Spivak notes how the global formed “in the aftermath of war” and becomes a framework for political conflict and competition (73). Similarly *Mansfield Park* is published after the false peace of the Napoleonic wars. Geography as an educational discipline in the novel thus concerns how nations discipline other nations into their own cartography. Fanny’s education is about how she must learn to be disciplined and “composed” in empire so that she might fulfill its metonymical “comprehensions” and become “a creature of imperial scope” (211, 214 Burgess).

Fanny’s education at *Mansfield Park* is a method of both classification and management of classed and gendered power relations. Fanny is disciplined by her female cousins who are character-metonymies to an uncle that she is only related to by marriage. In gender relations underscored by long eighteenth-century mercantile capitalism “women become the proxies for men...the female figure is made to bear responsibility for empire” (Laura Brown 16). As Sir Thomas’s daughters and with greater claim to his fortune and land, it is Julia and Maria Bertram’s place to put Fanny in hers in “the world” and specifically to address the notable gaps in Fanny’s education in geography. Julia and Maria make fun of Fanny’s inability to “put the map of Europe together...tell the principal rivers in Russia—or...[hear] of Asia Minor” (20). This “putting the map together” is more than the memorization of cartographic charts. It is a form of education that is “self-making in the service of empire-building” (Burgess 215). Julia and Maria establish their own selves at Mansfield by means of their education in inter-national empire.

Geography does not only provide the content for Fanny's education; it also determines the mode of her instruction. The kind of geographies the sisters demonstrate their knowledge on follow the dynamics of empire that they enact in their own viciousness towards Fanny. When Austen was writing *Mansfield Park*, the Ottoman Empire of Asia Minor was in decline largely due to the expansion of and aggression from the Russian Empire. These are geographies and territories based on one entity's domination over another. Julia and Maria's belittling of Fanny's geographical knowledge establishes a female homosocial dynamic at Mansfield that is not unlike the disciplining colonial dynamics of empire. Although Sir Thomas decides upon Fanny's adoption into Mansfield, it is his daughters, "[points] of contact" in empire, who cover the front lines of Fanny's education (Laura Brown 28).

1.2 Husband Material: patriarchal facilitation of women's education and social status in *Mansfield Park*

While Julia and Maria are responsible for teaching Fanny how she should "put" herself and the "map together", it is her male cousin Edmund Bertram who provides her with access to "the world". In Austen's society and in her novels, "women turn to marriage hoping to see more of the world" (Fraiman 66). Fanny's entry into "the world" and "society of this country" via her adoption at Mansfield comes to full fruition when she eventually marries Edmund. Similar to how Fanny's first encounter with Julia and Maria are written to indicate female homosocial and colonial relationalities, how Edmund first enters Fanny's narrative foreshadows a marriage coded in patriarchal empire and mediated by her education.

Edmund's first words of dialogue in the novel are: "What can be the matter?" (15). He says this to a crying Fanny who is only a week into her arrival at Mansfield and still struggling to adjust. Edmund asks if she is upset from a "[quarrel] with Maria and Julia? Or was she puzzled

about anything in her lessons that he could explain?" (15). In this passage Austen places a question about Fanny's relationship with the Bertram sisters right before one regarding her education. This implies that Edmund is in a higher patriarchal position to his sisters in matters of home and country wherein home is where colonial education is delivered. He is able to offer to Fanny solution to a conflict between her and the other women at Mansfield as well as further instruction on her "lessons". While Julia and Maria reproduce empire at Mansfield through the imposition of their superior knowledge in colonial geography to Fanny's, Edmund has authority in managing these very dynamics between them.

Patriarchy in family is further revealed as Edmund gets to know his cousin better. Despite his query, Fanny does not say to Edmund why she is crying so he concludes for himself that she is "sorry to leave [her] Mama" (15). In an attempt to comfort her, he encourages her to talk about her immediate family. He finds out that the "one who ran more in her thoughts than the rest...was William" (16). Fanny is not crying for her mother but for her brother. William Price takes patriarchal precedence when he is revealed to be "the darling" of both his mother and sister (16). That Edmund becomes the one whom Fanny may confide in about William makes him in this moment a surrogate brother to Fanny. Edmund as a stand-in at first for William and then later a husband conveys Fanny's patriarchal transfer between the men in her family. This incestuous journey from "[library to ballroom to altar]" in Fanny's life contributes to the structure of colonial metonymy in which empire again, aims to draw everything into a cohesion within its own system (Fraiman 72). William will also grow up to be, through Sir Thomas's sponsorship, employed by the navy and navigating "the world". William, who favours Fanny as a sibling in return, serves as a metonymical representation for Sir Thomas out on sea. While Julia

and Maria emphasize Fanny's lesser metonymy to Sir Thomas, Edmund and William are the means by which Fanny achieves closer links to him and therefore Mansfield and the world.

Edmund's use of the word "matter" is significant to anticipating their marriage in empire. He finds out that what will make Fanny happy is if she can write to William. The only dilemma being that she does not have any paper. He then tells her that he "will furnish [her] with paper and every other material" (17). "Matter" encompasses the things that Edmund makes available to Fanny in the "the world". Moral philosopher John Locke metaphorizes "the human mind: as a 'cabinet' or 'storehouse' emptied of all innate quality and waiting to be furnished with information from the world" (Armstrong 3). This framework for the English mind and education integrates the material with the immaterial in the historical context and manner of empire in which Englishness is a vessel that warrants procurement from the rest of the world. When the solution to the "matter" with Fanny is "material", Austen is engaging with eighteenth-century colonial moral philosophies.

"Matter" and "material" are instances of Austen's wordplay in the metonymies of empire. In Johnson's dictionary the first definition for "matter" is "body" and "Materials". The denotative usage in Edmund's question is "matter" as a form of concern or "import" or "importance". "Import" was colloquially used to mean both "importance; consequence" and "anything imported from abroad". As the son of a colonial plantation owner, Edmund matters to the "important" systems of the "import" of "bodies" in empire like Fanny's and its "materials" like paper. "Matter" also stands for "that which has particular relation, or is subject to particular consideration" and "The whole; the very thing supported". Matter is thus a mode of metonymy that brings what might be disparate together in the matters and materials that "support" empire. Furthermore the noun and verb "Mate" (putting together things and people) is derived from the

French and Spanish “matter” meaning to “subdue” but in English means “to marry”. This etymology reveals a patriarchal context to marriage. As the one who is concerned with Fanny’s matters and in a position to subdue them (and herself), Edmund facilitates Fanny’s metonymization into Mansfield and “the world” through the “matter” of marriage.

The medium and material of paper itself and writing is crucial to reading Edmund and Fanny’s relationship as one made in the context and service of empire. Paper is a medium for Fanny’s literacy in patriarchal correspondence. When Fanny arrives at Mansfield she knows how to “read, work, and write, but [has] been taught nothing more” (18). In the following passage, the better-educated Edmund oversees Fanny’s literacy and communication as a way to “furnish” her with what she lacks so far:

Edmund prepared her paper, and ruled her lines with all the goodwill that her brother could himself have felt, and probably with somewhat more exactness. He continued with her the whole time of her writing, to assist her with his penknife or his orthography.

(Austen 17)

This passage is a metaphor for Edmund’s patriarchal role in Fanny’s education and composure (both in writing and behaviour) in empire and how he takes on this role for William. He is the one who “prepares” and “rules” the boundary of her social “lines”. As wielder of the “penknife” and “orthography”, he is in a position to provide her with a type of support premised on directing and correcting her.

Edmund’s supervision of Fanny’s letter-writing to William is part of Fanny’s continuing education towards a literacy of colonial geography. Edmund is providing Fanny with the first of many pages of paper she will use to correspond with William who will eventually be at sea. In their letter-writing, Fanny and William participate in “a geographical education conducted

through polite letters in maintaining the conventions to the maintenance of British national and imperial competence” (Burgess 212). Fanny’s correspondence with William is important to how her local education participates in British colonial cartography. Edmund’s role in “furnishing” the correspondence between William and Fanny reinforces the patriarchal determination of Fanny’s education and communication in “the world”.

It is also Edmund who ensures the mobilization of Fanny and William’s correspondence in empire and that the letter “will...go to post” (16). Edmund assures Fanny: “Yes, depend upon me it shall: it shall go with the other letters; and, as your uncle will frank it, it will cost William nothing” (16). There is an almost-excessive amount of punctuation in Edmund’s speech. The colon, semi-colon, and commas convey the mobility in his words and even illustrates an image of the delivery of Fanny’s letter. In describing this postal process and how it will be financed, Edmund’s speech lays out a metonymical route between Fanny, himself, and William that ultimately draws from Sir Thomas.

Paper as colonial economy is part of Austen’s writing in empire and how richly Fanny and Edmund’s first depicted encounter in the novel derives from this history. Eighteenth-century paper is made and processed from the imported rags of slaves and sailors and local lower classes (Burgess 366). As such, it was an industry that relied on class disparity, slavery and colonial globalism. The Bertrams of Mansfield are directly involved in this paper-industry when we consider how “Sir Thomas Bertram [travels] above the tools and produce of slavery and the raw material of paper” (Burgess 140). When Edmund provides paper for Fanny and secures the plantation-owned “frank” from Sir Thomas, he delivers to her as her future “mate”, the matters and materials of empire at Mansfield.

By invoking the material of paper in her own text at a crucial point of her marriage plot, Austen is metatextually and rhetorically engaging in gendered empire. In its long eighteenth-century use and consumption, paper “works...metonymically” as a “stand-in for...underlying economic conditions” (371). In Austen, these conditions are illuminated via the developing relationship between Fanny and Edmund. As a word and prop that Austen writes into the novel, “paper” activates the metonymies between Edmund, Fanny, and William that makes possible their relational participations in empire with and through Sir Thomas. It also tethers Fanny’s own coming-of-age into colonial metonymy by directly and materially putting her into contact and complicity with colonial expansion and slavery. As Mansfield’s future mistress she begins her time there “furnished” with a material commodity of empire. Paper as literary material also manifests the reader’s own metatextual complicity into the metonymies of empire. The paper itself from which *Mansfield Park* is read, is linked to the colonial economies of both the novel and the industries that circulate it in empire. In writing about paper as she does on paper to her readers, Austen’s rhetorical engagements in the “matters” of gendered empire extend to the material realities of reader and author despite Said’s claim of how these historical registrations are “scarcely mentioned in [her] pages” (Said 96).

1.3 “No reading, no China, no composure”: Gendered empire, unsettled

Fanny and Edmund’s relationship begins with establishing the patriarchal and colonial conditions of their relationship through writing. In this section I examine how the question of “reading” in empire defines a turning point in their relationship and in Fanny’s maturity by close-reading the line “No reading, no China, no composure for Fanny” (185). Besides indicating Fanny’s continuing education in empire, I analyse how Austen uses “China” in *Mansfield Park* to rhetorically disclose the compositions and systemic undertakings of metonymical gendered

empire. “China” in Fanny’s “reading” is also key to how these metonymies might become unraveled or de-“composed” in Austen’s novel.

The tripartite appears in chapter sixteen when Fanny is now a young adult. Edmund finds Lord Macartney’s journals from the 1792 embassy to China in Fanny’s room. During the eighteenth century and “until 1800 an integrated world economy was dominated by China” (Markley 2). The appearance of the journals in Fanny’s library indicates her continuing education in the empires of “the world”. Edmund playfully calls reading the journals “a trip into China” (Austen 185). He suggests this “trip” to her as a way to detract from the conflict of their conversation. The purpose of his visit to Fanny is to gain her support on his decision to act in his brother’s home-production of Elizabeth Inchbald’s *Lovers Vows* (1798). Although he is initially against the project, Edmund is eventually enticed by the opportunity to act out scenes with his romantic interest, Mary Crawford. He tells Fanny that he must step in and play Mary’s lover in the play or else she will be forced to act with “a young man very slightly known to any of [them]” (182). Despite his reasoning, Edmund becomes a hypocrite to Fanny when she expresses how she is ultimately “sorry to see [him] drawn in to do what [he] had resolved against” (183). The Macartney Embassy as it appears in these passages is a metaphor for Edmund’s own failed negotiations with Fanny as well as a depiction of how “China” is metonymically employed in women’s education in empire.

Like her writing of the Ottoman Empire in the first chapter, Austen’s historical references are key to her satire, which strategically identifies how empire influences social dynamics at Mansfield. According to Chi-ming Yang, China is often used as “a placeholder for British historical concerns and cultural anxieties...designed to achieve a specific didactic end” (15). Yang’s use of the word “placeholder” for this very purpose is applicable to this scene when we

consider how “China” becomes a metonymical “placeholder” for the Macartney Embassy and for Edmund’s own concerns. In an attempt to distract her from her disapproval, he exercises his patriarchal “didactic” authority over her education in empire by paternalistically recommending her “trip into China”. He also uses the language of mobility when he calls it a “trip”, effecting his facilitation again of Fanny’s social movements in gendered empire. “Trip” also connotes his patriarchal geographical authority in orienting Fanny’s navigation in the world. Satirically, the history of the embassy also works as a placeholder for identifying Edmund’s failure to gain Fanny’s endorsement and determine the course of her alliances. Lord Macartney’s goal was “to obtain a number of concessions from the Qianlong Emperor that would have transformed British relations with the Ch’ing dynasty” (Jonathan Spence viii). He was to negotiate for: exclusive British trading ports; more lenient trading policies and tariffs; and to have a fixed British presence and political representation in the capital. The embassy was an attempt on Britain’s part to convince Chinese officials to grant more British power and control of Chinese land and trade. Wanting to protect his own economy and unimpressed by Macartney’s gifts and lack of cultural literacy, the Emperor refused all of these requests. Macartney’s mission “failed to open up reciprocal markets in China” (Sarah Cheang 361). Edmund also fails to earn “approbation” from Fanny for whom there is “no reading, no China, no composure” (Austen 173, 185). Austen therefore evokes “China” as allegory for the implications of empire in the dynamic between her hero and heroine.

Like Britain’s reliance on China’s resources and commodities, Edmund’s dependence on Fanny in this scene foregrounds patriarchal empire’s reliance on women’s complicity. The “China” tripartite indicates how education is a means by which this complicity is taught, recruited, and managed. Austen is linking together: “reading” or women’s education; “China” or

the history of empire; and “composure” or women’s behaviour. “Composure” as the punctuating word of the tripartite brands its metonymical reason and function. In Johnson’s dictionary, “composure” means “to form a mass by joining different things together”, “to place any thing in its proper form and method” and “to constitute by being parts of a whole”. “Composure” manifests a colonial rhetoric of the tripartite that brings together different parts in order to complete a “proper form” of referents towards a “whole”. The order of the words in the tripartite also reveals the steps taken to integrate women into patriarchal colonial metonymy. “No reading, no China, no composure” imparts how it is first through education that women learn of empire’s histories and dynamics and then become “composed” into its system. The tripartite reinforces the mechanics of how women are to become complicit in empire like Julia and Maria demonstrate in chapter one of the novel. Edmund’s attempt to gain Fanny’s endorsement for his playacting, includes a proposed “trip into China” laying out her female responsibilities in upholding empire. Edmund’s patriarchal dependence on Fanny in empire also presents her ability to compromise his agenda and how he must therefore attempt to “compose” her into “reading China”.

Austen’s writing of China responds to a long eighteenth-century tradition of how “China” in the English imagination is specifically adopted into the management of British women in empire. This type of control involves how patriarchy defines how women are to earn their social capital. Fanny’s “reading” of “China” framed by Edmund as an imaginative “trip into” the country, reflects how “fantasies of China were produced through the agency of upper-class women who were able to shape ‘China’ in Britain, even as their male relatives—army officers, diplomats, and traders—were attempting to shape China abroad” (Cheang 386). Austen’s juxtaposition of “composure” with “China” speaks to women’s crucial role in meaning-making

in empire. When Fanny is “brought up” into the world via her adoption at Mansfield, she is being taught how to “compose” it for and on the home front.

The scene between Edmund and Fanny takes place in the “East Room”, which “had been their school-room” and where their former governess Miss Lee lived (178-9). This “schoolroom” is where “the lessons are structured around the history of empires...and the systematic comprehensions of space and the systems that order it” (Burgess 125, 211). The East Room remains a library of sorts, housing “books, which [Fanny] was still glad to keep there” like Macartney’s journals (Austen 179). Fanny taking up in Miss Lee’s former quarters, associates her with the task of upholding the legacy of female education in empire at Mansfield. Austen also describes Fanny as the East Room’s “almost equally mistress” foreshadowing how she will eventually become mistress of the entire property (176). “China” appears in Fanny’s curriculum when Austen is relaying to us her heroine’s evolving education in empire as well as spatial and social position in the household.

Austen’s tripartite depicts patriarchal management of women in empire through education but it also opens up a space for potential critique when we consider the three “no’s” that precede “reading”, “China”, and “composure”. Placing the negative “no” before each word suggests an undoing of these metonymical links. “No” to “reading”, “China” and “composure” “for Fanny” portrays a disruption of Fanny’s education wherein the disruption is coming from the heroine herself. I argue that such rhetorically layered passages in Austen “insist on the contradictory nature of Austen’s novels, which both reproduce conventional beliefs at the same time, subject those beliefs to scrutiny” (Fraiman 62). In writing the tripartite, Austen makes available to us for exposure, the metonymical mechanics of patriarchal empire. “No composure” also comments on and perhaps even protests against female education and writing for patriarchal

empire's purposes. Earlier again Austen makes a point (in another tripartite) that Fanny arrives at Mansfield knowing "how to read, work, and write but...nothing more" (18). Young Fanny is guided by Edmund in her literacy and correspondence in empire. But by chapter sixteen, there is "No reading" and "no composure" or writing "for Fanny", marking her disillusionment with him. "Composure" in Johnson's dictionary also means "to put together a discourse or sentence" and "[With printers.] To arrange the letters; to put the letters in order in the forms". I read "No composure" as Austen's own feminist critique of patriarchally-determined authorship. As a line that holds multiple and layered meanings—both composing and questioning patriarchal empire—the tripartite sustains and attests to the rich complexity of Austen's own reflexivity of women's authorship in empire.

1.4 Conclusion: "Memorials of Critique"

Through Fanny Price's education, Austen's work depicts how a feminized domestic positionality provides a rich perspective. *Mansfield Park's* rhetorics and metonymies convey social and geographical navigations and orientations of "the world" that are being "composed" together according to the policies and practices of British patriarchal empire. In suspending its colonial compositions via Fanny Price's composition into Mansfield, the novel is "capable of serving the British nation's geographical ends [as it is] equally capable of preserving the memorials that allow a questioning of Britain's imperial history" (Burgess 231). The richness of Austen's writing in empire is in how it holds these multiple functions at once through layered rhetoric. Said's influential reading of *Mansfield Park* evidences how "Austen...was [often misidentified] as that real object of high aristocratic culture, rather than as the conflicted reproduction and recuperation of it" (Clara Tuite 5). For my own project, it is lines like "No reading, no China, no composure for Fanny" that challenges Said's Austen and supports Tuite's.

The tripartite maintains gendered empire in process ultimately leaving it as unfinished for readers as Fanny's own conflicted feelings for Edmund in chapter sixteen. It is through this absence of complete resolution via Austen's ability to metonymize and disrupt those same metonymies that her work continues to dynamically leave "memorials" for a feminist critique of empire. What *Mansfield Park* links and unlinks in its metonymies is where we might see how the text is already doing what Said aims to take credit for.

Chapter 2. “See Fanny dance”: how gendered social mobilizations rhetorically link to mobilizations of British empire in *Mansfield Park*

In my first chapter, I wrote about how Fanny Price’s education at the Mansfield estate of her uncle is a gendered education in empire that patriarchally directs, recruits and relies on women’s complicity in delivering and upholding the curriculum. My close-reading of this dynamic is in the metonymies of *Mansfield Park*, which depict a colonial method of “[composing]” together disparate parts and displacing them from origin in an attempt to manage and convert them into referents towards a male-defined English whole (Austen 185). These metonymies I argue, are a testament to Austen’s reflexive rhetorical engagements in empire. In the novel all roads point to patriarch and plantation owner Sir Thomas, who funds the education of his children and ward. In this chapter I examine the ball as a continuation of how the Bertrams educate Fanny Price and “introduce her properly into the world” and “society of this country” from the imperial vantage point and activations of the Mansfield home (Austen 6).

The ball determines and defines Fanny’s physical and social movements through empire. Susan Fraiman writes that Austen’s heroines are meant to move “*out of the library, into the ballroom, and up to the altar*” (72, my own italicization). In Fraiman’s description of this course, the ball bridges and facilitates movement between the starting point of the library and the destination of the altar. The ball is a mechanism of movement for how “women turn to marriage to see more of the world and to increase their personal mobility” (66). I argue that Fanny’s “personal mobility” is linked to and modelled after empire’s larger colonial mobilizations of objects, practices, and people. Austen’s rhetoric around the ball and what it mobilizes in Mansfield reveals how structures of gendered empire are put into motion but also how they

might be precarious in their assembly and movement. These precarities of empire's movements in *Mansfield Park* offer a potential site of critique in the many moving parts of the novel.

In this chapter, I close-read Austen's moving parts and their various modes of mobilities attached to a ball "given principally for [Fanny's] gratification" (Austen 280). I begin by presenting how the ball is ultimately a patriarchal project administered by men who extend and manage their enterprise in empire by directing the movement of women's bodies and sensibilities on the home front. I then close-read Fanny's role as a woman in upholding these mobilities via how she is to dress herself for the ball in the male-sponsored materials of empire. These objects metonymize Fanny's material complicity in the mobilizations of Sir Thomas's business in Antigua built on the forced transport and enslavement of black bodies. Lastly, I argue that how Fanny ultimately chooses to wear her ball-jewelry, unearths fractured and revolutionary movements in empire that results in a haunting irresolution to the "composure" metonymy as a literary device in itself attempts to structure (Austen 185).

2.1 "To See Fanny Dance": Fanny's continuing education and how men direct women's movements in empire

In *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Samuel Johnson describes a ball as "An entertainment of dancing, at which the preparations are made at the expence of some particular person". Johnson's definition identifies a source of financial responsibility and in *Mansfield Park*, this "particular person" is Sir Thomas. Although the ball again is "given principally for [Fanny's] gratification", who does the giving determines the social hierarchies and metonymies at Mansfield. Fanny's "gratification" is conditional on Sir Thomas's generosity. The idea for the ball also comes from Fanny's brother William Price who inspires a "desire of seeing Fanny dance [that makes] more than a momentary impression on his uncle" (296). The ball as

something instigated by William and sponsored by Sir Thomas makes it a patrilineal and patriarchal project in which the modes and course of Fanny's social and physical movements are set and determined by and between her male relatives. While it is a form of mobility, Fanny's dancing is still confined to the parameters of her uncle and brother's design. "To see Fanny dance" at the ball activates her literal and figurative movements towards integration into Sir Thomas's autonomy over the metonymies in and at *Mansfield Park*.

The ball as an "expenditure" on Sir Thomas's part, signifies his material investment in Fanny's ability to expand upon his enterprise in empire through marriage. Leading up to Sir Thomas's decision to host a ball for Fanny, she perceives in her uncle "a kindness which [astonishes]" her as "he had never been so kind" and with emphasis on Austen's part, "so very kind to her in his life" (208). His kindness is expressed in "observing with decided pleasure how much [Fanny] was grown!" (208). While this interaction between them does not "[lack] all emotional integrity...its bliss is qualified by Austen's shrewdly complex understanding of marriage as an economic and social institution" (Fraiman 66). In the context of long eighteenth-century mercantilism in empire, "the woman is an object both of romantic admiration and of commodification" (Laura Brown 13). Sir Thomas's newfound affection in Fanny is the result of his investment in her upbringing in empire. His monetary expenditure on a ball for Fanny is a means by which he can further materially metonymize her as a referent to his wealth and social influence. The ball also serves as a form of sponsorship from him towards her own metonymization to a future husband.

The ball is a continuation of how the colonial dynamics between Fanny and her future husband Edmund are fostered at Mansfield. Sir Thomas's "expenditure" is directly funded by a business in empire that again colonizes and exploits land resources and forced captive labour.

The ball is an example of how what is colonially produced in Antigua, is processed and consumed into the gendered domestic space and practices of Mansfield. In my first chapter I referred to Miranda Burgess's research on paper and discussed how Edmund's "[furnishing]" of Fanny "with paper and every other material" as way to make her feel welcome at her new home, portrays how the men at Mansfield supply her with the materials of empire and in effect, recruit her complicity into its system of consumption (Austen 16). Long eighteenth-century paper is literally produced on the backs of enslaved people in a process of boiling and whittling down their clothing and rags into a white pulp. The whiteness of the finished product eliminates all traces of the dissimilarity of the original materials. White paper enacts colonial metonymy's violent incorporation. What Sir Thomas and Edmund provide for Fanny through paper, a ball, and eventually marriage, involves the literal laundering of the Bertram's exploits in empire. The ball is meant to activate the gendered modes of mobility or "dancing" required to process these funds.

In organizing a ball at Mansfield, Sir Thomas wishes to re-import a colonial social practice. Austen describes him as being "well engaged in describing the balls of Antigua, and listening to what [William] could relate of the different modes of dancing which had fallen under his observation" (Austen 294). A ball at Mansfield works to sustain the active circulations of British empire out and back again to Britain as they are witnessed and participated in by Fanny's male relatives. William's own exposure to "different modes of dancing" is the result of his service in the British Navy – a gendered and colonial vocation of navigating "the world". Sir Thomas and William's "desire to see Fanny dance" illustrates how she is recruited into mobilizing empire for them at Mansfield. This transference of imperial duty illustrates how "the whole enterprise of mercantile capitalism [is laid upon] the female figure who consumes its

products instead of in the male who profits from her consumption” (Brown 117). The ball as a gift for Fanny, reinforces a colonial system of gendered empire in which English women and their bodies are made responsible for domesticating and therefore executing and legitimizing men’s imperial campaigns. This duty is framed into a benefit or source of “gratification” (Austen 208).

The ball as a form of men’s management of women’s movement and “gratification” is evident in the following passage from *Mansfield Park*:

The ball was now a settled thing, and before the evening a proclaimed thing to all whom it concerned. Invitations were sent with dispatch, and many a young lady went to bed that night with her head full of happy cares as well as Fanny.

(Austen 298)

The first few lines of this passage begins with "dispatch" of the news on paper invitations to the ball funded by Sir Thomas, affecting "happy cares" in "young ladies" and then presumably having this happiness land into Fanny as well. Like Fanny’s education in empire the invitations and the feelings they are meant to elicit, travel a patriarchal system that begins with a man and then to women for redistribution amongst each other. This is a consistent patriarchal process of socialization at Mansfield for Fanny. The course of Fanny’s social mobility in this respect, follows the movements of patriarchal empire in which men authorially “dispatch” the circulation of objects and customs for women to consume and participate in. Women then sustain what men dispatch amongst themselves. The method of invitation “dispatched” in this passage, identifies a social conditioning that is meant to “settle” Fanny as a woman into Sir Thomas’s metonymy in empire.

“Settle” does not just describe Sir Thomas’s decision to host the ball. It is also the purpose of “setting” Fanny in her place in the metonymy of gendered empire. Six pages of Johnson’s dictionary is dedicated to the word “Set” alone, relaying its significance during what Brown calls “the first major age of English imperialism” (3). I argue that the meanings of “Set” are responses to long eighteenth-century conceptions of revolution. Eleanor Ty conceptualizes how the word “revolution” defines the science, politics, and the industry of female authorship of the age. “Revolution” names the knowledge developing around the movement of physical and heavenly bodies as well as political upheaval. Austen’s writing of Fanny furthering her movements “into the world and...the society of this country” by dancing at a “ball” (another term for the sun according to Johnson’s dictionary) is engaged in Ty’s framework for revolution, which identifies women’s literary engagements with the gendered politics of Fanny’s social and physical movement (Austen 6). In the final section of this chapter, I will return to Ty’s work on revolution as political deconstruction. For this section, Ty’s project is helpful for contextualizing the patriarchally-perceived necessity of “settling” and managing women’s physical and social movements in empire.

“The ball” as a “settled thing” and “a proclaimed thing” by Sir Thomas, enacts the patriarchal launching and then halting of women’s movements. Determining and then containing female revolution or movement is a means to maintaining patriarchal mobility. Brown identifies eighteenth-century empire as “[an] age of powerful consolidation of a consensus on the universal benefits of economic expansion” determined by men in power (3). The ball as a “settled” social practice in empire, is an example of how women’s movements are composed into “consolidation” and “consensus” as a form of “benefitting”, justifying, and laundering the colonial economic expansions of Sir Thomas. Brown’s analysis further applies to the

metonymical attempts at composure in *Mansfield Park*. The ball as a “benefit” bestowed unto Fanny by her plantation-owning uncle, is a method of composing her within his metonymy. A definition for “Set” that connotes metonymy is “a number of things suited to each other; a number of things of which one cannot conveniently be separated from the rest”. Along with his description for the act of writing, Johnson also uses the word “compose” in one of his many definitions for “Set” and “Settle”. “The ball” as a “settled thing” indicates Austen’s writing of the conditions of mobilizing and setting gendered colonial metonymy.

“Settle” also foreshadows Fanny’s fate in Austen’s marriage plot in empire. Some definitions for “Settle” in Johnson’s dictionary are: “To fix in any way of life”, “any place” and “To make a jointure for a wife”. “Settle” describes how Fanny is meant to “fix” and “settle” into a “way of life” at Mansfield through her marriage with Edmund, Sir Thomas’s son. the word “fix” does not just connote repair. In Johnson’s dictionary all nine definitions for the word have to do with ceasing movement. Most notably definitions like “to withhold from motion” and “to cease wander”. Austen’s rhetoric on the ball therefore engages with the directing and management of mobilizations in empire as forms of socialization.

“Fix” appears early on in the novel when Mrs. Price, Fanny’s mother, receives a letter of invitation from her sister Mrs. Norris to raise Fanny at Mansfield: “Mrs. Price seemed rather surprised that a girl should be fixed on, when she had so many fine boys” (Austen 11). “Fixing” on “a girl” instead of “so many fine boys” prioritizes correcting and “settling” women over of men. Eventually we find out that “Fanny, with all her faults of ignorance and timidity, [becomes] fixed at Mansfield Park...[growing] up there not unhappily among her cousins” (21). Mansfield is meant to fix and settle Fanny’s movement in “the world” through particular forms of gendered management. At her uncle’s house, she is “introduced properly into the world” in which she may

move about and “dance” but with limits to when, where, and how. Fanny’s confinement to a “way of life”, “place”, and eventually “jointure” at Mansfield speaks less to Austen’s limitations (by Said’s estimations) as a writer and more profoundly to her (Austen’s) articulations on the limited conditions of women’s mobilities and revolutions in “the world”.

“Fix” in relation to women’s responsibilities towards the “settling” of patriarchal empire appears at another notable point in the text. Later in chapter forty-seven, Mary Crawford laments and reasons that Fanny’s rejection of Henry launches him into an extramarital affair with Maria Rushworth nee Bertram. Mary tells Edmund that “[Fanny] would have fixed him” (Austen 529). While *Mansfield Park* acknowledges how some men like Henry and not just women must be “fixed”, this management happens through the efforts of women. Mary’s interpretation of the scandal is an example of how her own “happy cares” of seeing her own brother “fixed” and “settled” relies on Fanny. Fanny’s determined responsibilities in empire towards the men in her life (and Mary Crawford’s relaying of these same responsibilities to her) are further illustrated in the question of “how she should be dressed” (298).

2.2 Of Balls and Chains: a registry of gendered materials moving in empire

Fanny’s most “anxious consideration” in regards to the ball is the question of “how she should be dressed” (Austen 298). Women’s fashion is a key component of their participation in “the world” and in long eighteenth-century patriarchal empire. The materials of the gendered industry serve as a “historical referent in the early eighteenth century—the products of mercantile capitalism” (Brown 112). Sir Thomas is part of the emerging class of merchant capitalists of the time period. As his ward, Fanny’s concerns over “how she should be dressed”, represents the material role women play in this economy. Dressing for a ball exhibits a metonymical method of how women are recruited into the management of their own material

self-representation as a reflection of men's enterprise in empire. Fanny's anxiety speaks to how she has convinced herself "to bear the responsibility of empire" for a project that is for her but not by her (16). Sir Thomas's "agency [as] acquisitive subject" and Mansfield patriarch "[is] concealed and deflected through the fantasy of a universal collaboration in the dressing of the female body" (116). Fanny's "anxious considerations" in regards to her material participations in empire must transform into the "happy cares" of "many a young lady" that work to "conceal and deflect" the circulation of men's colonial and violent acquisitions in empire. "Anxious considerations" relay the weight of empire on Fanny's coming of age.

For Fanny "the greatest distress of all [is that] she had nothing but a bit of ribbon" to hold her brother's gift of an amber cross" (Austen 298). The ribbon is an example of how "new commodities...available in new kinds of spaces" become circulated in gendered empire (Deidre Lynch 4). Fanny's "bit of ribbon", arrives in Britain via colonial transports. In Johnson's dictionary, a "ribbon" or "riband" is described as "A filet of silk; a narrow web of silk, which is worn for ornament". Silk is one of many Chinese inventions that Europeans have historically attempted to acquire and reproduce by their own means. Such commodities that once conveyed "what was unusual and distinct about China—both its material and its design—was adapted to and mastered by Western taste" (Kowaleski-Wallace 59). Silk is not native to Britain but it becomes staple to forms of fashion like ribbons via colonial trade. Fanny's assessment of the ribbon as an unfavourable match to her cross, demonstrates shifting material cultural practices based on Britain's history with other empires like China.

The silk ribbon's insufficiency to hold up William's cross speaks to Austen's grasp of the histories of empire and conquest as they play out in women's dress and practices in empire. The incompatibility of Chinese silk with an Italian amber cross embodies Italy's transition away from

leading European trade with China. Since “antiquity to the end of the eighteenth century (e.g. coinciding with the end of Qianlong Emperor’s reign, 1711–99)”, Italy was at the forefront of European relations with China (Maurizio Martinelli 493). At the time of *Mansfield Park*’s publication, the British East India company already dominated the tea trade in China (my research on this history is informed by the works of Robert Gardella, 1994; Paul A. Van Dyke, 2020; and Sarah Besky, 2020). This happens despite Lord Macartney’s failed negotiations with the Qianlong Emperor—a moment in history Fanny is reading about in Chapter sixteen. The cross as European Christian symbolism becomes relevant to Italy’s waning relations with China, which also happens at the time of “the anti-Christian campaign launched by Emperor Qianlong” (496). The campaign mostly targeted Italian missionaries but long after the emperor’s reign, a “new political climate resulting from British victory in the Opium War (1840–42)” ushered in a generation of Italian missionaries who “were able to assert their authority, unhampered by the native practices and requests from their Chinese followers” (496). The “consequence” of these shifting attitudes from Italian missionaries, “[led] to a century of alienation and hostility between them and the Chinese Catholics” (497). Perhaps Austen was in tune with the changing tides between various empires when she writes about silk’s incompatibility with William’s Cross. The historical dynamics represented by Fanny’s ball jewelry situates the dilemma of her cultural material expressions in empire as they come to represent female virtue. In an 1801 issue of *British Lady’s Magazine*, cross pendants were meant to “bestow even to a modern belle a certain nun-like air” (Diana Scarisbrick 353). The magazine prescribes material representation for Christian female virtue as part of a woman’s participation in mercantile capitalism’s modernity. Fanny’s “anxious considerations” are engaged in gendered material culture as an exercise in empire’s histories and modes of self-representation.

Silk as Fanny's only option presents a suitor and would-be suitor with the perfect opportunity to "furnish" her with a better "material" to hold William's cross (Austen 16). Edmund gifts Fanny a golden chain. The eighteenth century saw the transition towards the gold standard – the assigning of gold's value to paper money. Edmund providing Fanny with gold is a continuation of his "furnishing" her with the "materials" of empire like paper to write to William. Edmund sustains her connection to William through facilitating her consumption of colonially-produced commodities. Edmund's (a future clergyman) chain in relation to the Amber cross and silk ribbon, also engages the history of Christian morality as an implementation of European empire in China. Edmund's gold chain and William's "cross [are] a significant [objects]: [representing]...Christ and...the symbolic value gold was supposed to have, but also the global economy of trade, speculation, and imperial incursion" (Alexander Dick 170). In wearing gold to the ball "Fanny must see herself as part of the status economy that...Sir Thomas [insists] she acknowledges" (170). The preference for Edmund's gold over silk implicates Fanny into a process of "settling" into and contributing to the standardizations of empire being set by Sir Thomas's metonymy.

"Chain" as both a noun and a verb, indicates the patriarchal and colonial conditions at Mansfield that make it possible for Edmund to gift Fanny with gold in the first place. The first definition for "chain" in Johnson's dictionary is "a series of links fastened one within another", connoting the metonymies of what the material is meant to hold and link in *Mansfield Park*. The Bertrams are able to afford gold chains because of their plantation in colonized Antigua. Another definition for "chain" is "A bond; a manacle; a fetter; Something with which prisoners are bound". In his entry for "To Chain", Johnson is unambiguous about the term's denotations to the slave trade. One of his definitions for "to chain" is "to bring into slavery". For "chain" to mean

both an object of status-adornment and an instrument of human imprisonment, effects both a metaphorical and literal link between the industries of women's jewelry and slavery in empire. I draw these connections to emphasize how the same technology of chains are used on various bodies managed in empire and how the types of chains indicate related but distinct forms of subjection that privilege some over others. Brown is mindful of how "the woman and the slave are significantly connected in this [mercantilist colonial] narrative, even though their positions and roles differ substantially" (13). Women uphold these differences when they "occupy both ends of the chain of imperial plunder...[as] both its object and its subject, even as they occupy both ends of...exchange" (Sussman 106). Sussman's analysis highlights how British women's role as both "object and subject" makes them both subject to and perpetrator of patriarchal colonialism, facilitating the "exchanges" of practices and materials in empire. Fanny's chain in *Mansfield Park*, ties the complicity of gendered material culture with the larger violent workings of empire.

Another one of Johnson's definitions for "Chain" is: "A line of links with which land is measured". To measure land in the unit of "chains" projects a colonial perspective and scaling of land. Like metonymy, chains are meant to incorporate and entrap what is initially disparate into a whole. Holding all three meanings mentioned in Johnson's dictionary, "Chain" accounts for Austen's scaling of gendered empire. Yoon Sun Lee sets the stage for Austen's "scale-making" and argues that it "involves more than the representation of geographical space, cultural location, or even historical specificity. We can think of it as the act of representing the conditions of referentiality" (172). These "conditions of referentiality" support my own argument of Austen's metonymical rhetoric of empire. Lee writes that Austen's scale-making "connects time and space with the gestures and movements of the body and of the mind, rather than geographical or

geopolitical formations” (173). While Lee’s work is useful to my own project in identifying Austen’s scale-making and writing on empire’s mobilizations, I diverge from her analysis in how Austen’s use of detail in scale ultimately “abstracts” the geopolitical and geographical (185). Instead, I read Austen’s scale-making as detailed place and politics-making via the material and social mobilizations of character Fanny Price. Fanny’s jewelry for instance materializes and substantiates (instead of abstracts) Mansfield’s activations of larger empire via Fanny’s accessorized and dancing body. The chain she wears around her neck, reveals to us the precise unit of measurement and gold standard if you will, of the Mansfield estate scaled according to gendered empire. Fanny’s chain emphasizes how Mansfield does not only function as a microcosm of material gendered empire, but also as a central location in which networks are activated and incorporated into every part of the imperial system’s structure. Fanny’s dancing embodies and mobilizes a unit of measurement, the gold chain, that makes Mansfield the place and social setting that it is in empire.

2.3 The revolution will be dressed: Fanny’s moving “fractured artifacts”

Fanny also receives a necklace from Mary Crawford, which Mary reveals after the fact to really be a gift from Henry. According to Johnson’s dictionary, a “necklace” is “An ornamental string of beads or precious stones, worn by women on their neck”. But Austen describes the necklace in the novel being made “of gold, prettily worked” (285). In gifting Fanny gold, Mary aims to facilitate Fanny’s incorporation into the materialized male metonymy of her brother Henry. Mary tells Fanny: “with the necklace I make over to you all the duty of remembering the original giver. . . . [the sister] is not to be in your mind without bringing the brother too” (285). In making her necklace a referent to her own brother, Mary not only identifies her own metonymy to Henry but attempts to recruit Fanny into it too. Mary knowingly attempts to transfer her

“happy cares” and imperial commodities to what Henry “dispatches” as a man in empire to another woman. Fanny refuses to be incorporated into a metonymy for Henry via Mary when Austen reveals through indirect discourse, how “Miss Crawford, complaisant as a sister, was careless as a woman and a friend” to Fanny (287). The statement also reveals how women might betray each other in empire for the sake of male-centered metonymy.

Deceived by Mary and not at all romantically interested in Henry, Fanny’s preference again is to wear the chain from Edmund. She finds consolation in the fact that Henry’s necklace is too large for the cross, foreshadowing the immorality of his affair with Maria Rushworth. That Edmund’s chain fits into William’s cross also indicates and in further phallic metaphor, what is meant to be a more compatible match between Edmund and Fanny. Edmund however, insists that Fanny still wear the necklace as a token of gratitude to their friends (and in part, his own admiration for Mary). Fanny resolves to ultimately see Mary’s gifting of the necklace as an act of kindness so she resorts to wearing Henry’s necklace along with William’s cross on Edmund’s chain. As Fanny dances at the ball, her body literally mobilizes the patriarchally-acquired materials of empire. At the same time, Fanny’s choice of wearing jewelry from William, Henry, and Edmund leans more towards compromise than harmony. To refer back to Ty, Fanny’s dancing at the ball may be read as both a revolution around the center of the Mansfield universe, Sir Thomas – or a revolution against his metonymy in empire.

“Revolution” bears seemingly opposite meanings in Johnson’s dictionary. In relation to physical and astronomical movement, it describes the “Course of any thing which returns to the point at which it began to move”. But politically and socially it means “Desertion; change of sides” and “To fall of from one to another. It denotes pravity or rebellion”. If we are to think of “revolution” in relation to the mechanics of mobilizing metonymies of empire in *Mansfield Park*,

we can consider how on one hand it applies to Fanny's inevitable "return to the point at which she" at Mansfield was equipped with what she needed to "[begin] to move" in the world. She is meant to return as referent to Sir Thomas. But on the other hand, her jewelry at the ball "fall of from one another" in light of their material histories in empire and the complexity of her having to navigate between her own relationships with Edmund, Henry, Mary, and William. She also "deserts" the Bertram's original plan that she should not marry their sons. Fanny is a long eighteenth-century figure of "revolution", encompassing through her own physical and social movement all of its meanings at once. I argue that in sustaining both "return" and "rebellion" in the figure of Fanny, Austen's text is revolutionary in how it suspends of the complexity of multiple meanings that come and move together in generative tension.

Fanny's jewelry presents a discordant display of colonial materials moving in empire. They are arguably "the broken relics [of a] history [that] never resolve themselves, as the collections of an imperial nation" that aims towards "a narrative of upwards and outward progress...[but] they persist, each in its irreducible quiddity, bearing the fractured traces of competing histories" (Burgess 225). Fanny's dancing while she is adorned with "the collections of an imperial nation" is meant to mobilize Sir Thomas's economy in empire. But instead her jewelry features turbulent and shifting "fractured histories". Burgess also writes how "Fanny's standing in the novel, at once immobile (that is, without will) and portable (the frequency with which we find her being moved)...serves as a reminder of the complex series of vehicles that transport her and others in the period" (235). Fanny's mobility in empire is determined patriarchally for her, limiting the scope of her agency and movement. But in wearing what are ultimately "fractured traces of competing histories" that elicit "anxious considerations" in her,

Fanny's dancing at the ball produces a movement that is at once mobilized by and deconstructive of empire (Austen 298).

2.4 Conclusion: the “anxious considerations” of patriarchal empire

Fanny Price is brought to Mansfield not solely for her benefit but for her benefactor, Sir Thomas's. Her marriage to Edmund conveys her duty to upholding the chains that maintain Sir Thomas's metonymy over Mansfield through the mechanisms of empire. As the novel's hero, Edmund succeeds in fulfilling Sir Thomas and William's “desire to see Fanny dance” “out of the library, into the ballroom, and up to the altar”. At the beginning of the novel and their relationship, he is available to help with “anything in her lessons that he could explain” (15). As young adults, he provides her with the chain that would soothe her “anxious considerations” around her coming out ball. The compatibility of Edmund's chain with William's cross furthers Edmund's role in facilitating and maintaining the incestuous and homosocial patrilineal relations between the Bertram and Price families. Although Edmund's work in empire is geographically limited compared to his father, brother Tom, and cousin William, the chain he gives Fanny reinforces (pun intended) his role with incorporating her and her family into the patriarchal metonymy of Sir Thomas. Edmund and Fanny's romance is one that develops out of Austen's engagements with how patriarchal metonymy is mobilized in *Mansfield Park*.

In writing about “balls” and “chains”, Austen writes the points at which the chains are linked in a woman's education and dressing, revealing where they assemble but in potentially fractured ways. Brown writes that “through commodification or through difference—women can disturb the coherence of mercantile capitalist ideology either way they come to it, in part because they are so essential to its self-representation” (21). Fanny's vital role in the Mansfield chain of order and metonymy is what makes her both its object of activation but also a figure whose

“anxious considerations” identify the disparity of what must be seen as “coherent”. *Mansfield Park* depicts "a girl who is growing up to make choices, even as it portrays her struggling in the grasp of a complex mechanism whose interests are not hers" or as Austen puts it, feelings "[sobered]...even under the prospect of a ball given principally for her gratification" (Fraiman 86, Austen 298). But this ball is not just about Fanny’s gratification. Its production relies on a patriarchal network of empire that relies on her complicity in maintaining networks and commodities of what is violently and inhumanely produced across Mansfield and Antigua. Austen’s rhetoric on metonymy takes us into the mechanisms of how patriarchal empire is mobilized by women’s bodies, exposing the fractures it seeks to suture.

Chapter 3. “Preferring tea to anything”: British appropriations of China into gendered taste in Jane Austen’s rhetorics of empire

In arguing for Austen’s rhetorical engagements in empire, my project uses a framework of identifying the metonymies in *Mansfield Park* that attempt to convert subjects into mere referents towards a patriarchal colonial whole. Fanny Price is raised in her uncle Sir Thomas Bertram’s home at Mansfield as a metonymical part of his enterprise in empire. Her life at Mansfield consists of her consumption of materials produced in and imported across empire that tether her to its economies. In my previous chapters I also wrote about Austen’s registrations of China in Fanny’s coming of age: the Macartney Embassy journals in her curriculum and the silk ribbon she might wear to the ball. In this chapter I delve further into how Fanny’s social mobilizations are specifically *oriented* towards China, a rival empire of Britain. I pun to emphasize Austen’s engagements with an orientalism that appropriates Chinese materials into evaluating a woman’s social capital in a British imperialistic rendering of “the world” (Austen 7). I identify how a British nationalistic process of converting China into a metonymy for Englishness is deployed towards Fanny’s integration into Sir Thomas’s metonymy.

I draw attention to what Eugenia Zuroski terms as “things Chinese”. Zuroski’s project looks into how “modern English selfhood first takes shape through strategies of identifying with rather than against certain forms of “China”” (Zuroski 1). Zuroski uncovers an earlier pre-orientalist rendering of China into English selfhood that performs identification over exoticization through expressions of a material culture that are “not yet fixed as...commodities in the modern sense of these terms...[but] animated by literature to perform kinds of imaginative work in excess of their material histories” (Zuroski 2). Things Chinese as literary activity in

empire entails the writing of Chinese objects as they are acquired and consumed through shifting forms of a British national identity reconciling with its colonial globalizations. These things Chinese “[do] not refer to any measure of cultural authenticity, but rather to the broad category of objects—including Chinese export commodities and comestibles” (Zuroski 2). In *Mansfield Park*, things Chinese become the objects with which Fanny Price orients herself into her adulthood in relation to Sir Thomas and eventually her role as Mansfield’s future matriarch.

Austen’s registrations of things Chinese in the form of pets and tea inform my study of Fanny’s coming of age in gendered empire. These types of global “commodification [are] one of the most frequent means by which imperialist ideology utilizes the figure of the woman” in literature (Laura Brown 14). English women’s grooming and breeding of “pets...in particular...were both sign and product of the expansion and commercialization of English economy and society in the eighteenth century” (44). In regards to tea: “the female territory of the tea table with its imported essentials of coffee, tea, and chocolate—came to stand for trade, prosperity, luxury, and commodification of synecdoche that pervades the literary culture of this period” (44). Pets and tea as imperial commodities written into a synecdoche or metonymy for empire are the very things Chinese that I examine in this chapter. Like my preceding chapters, I will also discuss how pets and tea as registrations of China in the novel shift inconsistently with a “fluidity and instability of meaning in eighteenth-century literary texts” (Zuroski 1). This fluidity speaks to the subjectivity of China as materialized culture in British navigations of and management of national identity.

This chapter draws on the subjectivity of taste and the thing Chinese in *Mansfield Park* as testament to Austen’s reflexive engagements in empire and therefore how her text contributes to continuing discourses on global taste. In the first section of this chapter, I draw attention to Lady

Bertram's pet Pug as a thing Chinese that mediates women's shifting homosocial relations in patriarchy. In the following sections, I write on Fanny's taste for tea as a sign of her successful patriarchal education, which signals her readiness for a marriage in empire and elevated place in Sir Thomas's metonymy at Mansfield. Taste for things Chinese as something that activates subjectivities in Fanny's social capital, presents us with Austen's written suspensions of patriarchal empire. Considering the imperial histories between China and England, *Mansfield Park* features "Austen's provisional reckonings and understanding of history as process" (Emily Rohrbach 14). Austen's metonymies of "no reading, no China, no composure"—a tripartite wherein a particular text *on* China becomes "China"—maintains "the tug between what the narrator and characters say and what the narrative does" (111). In its written and therefore deliberate conflation or "composure" of "reading" and "China" with a woman's self-possession, the metonymical tripartite goes beyond mere historical depiction and into cultural process. It is in these rhetorical suspensions of China that *Mansfield Park* reveals how empire is always present in all corners of domestic life but also how the very mechanisms that reproduce these localized imperialisms are often irresolute and therefore fragile.

3.1 Bringing Up Fanny: how things Chinese facilitate patriarchal homosocial relations between women in *Mansfield Park*

Mansfield Park engages with how rising global mercantilism in the long eighteenth-century, and its potential repercussions on British national identity, is constantly reconciled through the figure of the woman and her consumption of things Chinese. Yang uncovers how "the example of China successfully and surprisingly combines two presumable antithetical entities: virtue and commerce" (7 Yang). The conservatism of virtue is initially incompatible with the expenditure of "commerce". However, a new world economic order "dominated by

China” required a renegotiation of how Chinese-ness should be conceived off according to British subjectivity (Markley 2). These “new modes of ‘consumption’ and ‘exchange’ give way to new models of ‘morality’” that recruit women’s participation (Sarah Cheang 365). The gendered taste for things Chinese reveals how female chastity is ultimately a patriarchal project utilized towards empire’s control of women’s bodies and identities in pursuit of patriarchal expansion across the globe. Cultural and material significations for a woman’s chastity and social status vary according to British empire’s navigations of global economies. Austen’s writing of things Chinese engage with these shifting significations gendered cultural consumption. In *Mansfield Park*, the thing Chinese in the form of a pet dog mediates women’s shifting social and class status.

Beginning in the long-eighteenth century small dogs associated with Chinese origin were fashionable companions for women and were “considered a favourite accessory of doting women and evidence of both England’s mercantile expansion and the expanding appetites of female consumption” (Yang 151). As a thing Chinese, the small dog establishes women as the “point of contact” of empire via the commodification of China and in this case, living creatures (Brown 28). Breeding Chinese dogs in England made way for “fantasies of China...produced through the agency of upper-class women who were able to shape ‘China’ in Britain, even as their male relatives—army officers, diplomats, and traders—were attempting to shape China abroad” (Cheang 386). The pet dog conveys empire’s ability to domesticate and commodify the threat of rivalling empires and economies that warrant the male-assigned professions of “army officers, diplomats, and traders” in the first place. The practice of keeping Chinese pets uncover the significant role women play in mediating the cultural capital of empire on the British home front.

In order to convey her character's class, Austen writes a canine companion called "pug" for Lady Bertram. Beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines "pug" as "a term of endearment for a person (or, occasionally, an animal); also applied to a plaything, as a doll or pet". In occupying a liminal space between "person", "animal", and "object", the word "pug" conveys the malleability of "Chineseness" in the service of British subjectivity and commodification. "Pugging" also describes the preparation of clay for both structures and objects of display by rendering it more pliable. As an act of making, molding, and shaping, "pugging" connotes the act of composing that applies to biological dog breeding as well as how women are socially bred in empire.

Much like the tiny dog, breeding underscores Fanny's arrival at *Mansfield Park*. "Breed her up... in the world and society of this country", says Aunt Norris to Sir Thomas (Austen 7). These characters engage in an "eighteenth-century discourse of breeding encompassed ideas of biological and educational improvement" and an "attention to applying selective breeding practiced upon animals to human animals" (Yang 164). The question of whom Fanny ought to breed with is part of the discussion of her adoption at Mansfield. Aunt Norris's recommends that if they "breed [Fanny] up with them from this time...she will never be more to either [Bertram brothers] than a sister" (Austen 7). These first few pages of the novel bluntly engage with questions around "pure origins", "cross-species" and "cross-cultural mixture" to be navigated through and resolved as "future metonyms of Englishness and empire" (144). Fanny's potential position in the household is premised on and reduced to whether she might make a potential mate or additional offspring to the family. Both options are concerned with how she might benefit or disadvantage the genealogy of the Bertrams. Breeding in *Mansfield Park*, whether it is social or biological, is a question of how Fanny should be metonymized into Mansfield.

Breeding is a homosocial process between the women in the novel. It is mainly women who facilitate the breeding and show clubs of Chinese dogs in Britain. These clubs were often depicted as “sisterhoods” (Cheang 382). These local communities of women engage in “notions of sisterhood can never be separated from imperialistic mechanisms and models” (382). The same patriarchal homosocial facilitation between women apply to Fanny’s adoption at Mansfield. Fanny’s arrival at Mansfield is literally organized and negotiated between sisters. Aunt Norris is the mastermind of the adoption of her own sister’s (Mrs. Price) child into her other sister’s home (Lady Bertram). The relationship between these three sisters in the novel is defined by their contributions to breeding either by design or reproduction as a form of metonymy to Sir Thomas’s Mansfield.

As the thing Chinese, Pug becomes a means by which Lady Bertram relates to Fanny in gendered empire on the basis of social and biological breeding. In Chapter thirty-three, Fanny receives a proposal from Henry Crawford. Lady Bertram tells Fanny that “it is every young woman’s duty to accept such a very unexceptional offer” (Austen 386). This is despite Fanny’s protestations that her aunt “cannot wish [her] to marry...for [Lady Bertram]...would miss [her] too much for that” (386). Fanny is referring to how her aunt had “always found her very handy and quick in carrying messages, and fetching what she wanted” (22). Beginning in the 1600s until the early twentieth century, the OED assigns “fetch” as an action “chiefly of dogs”. Lady Bertram who tends to “[think] more of her pug than her children”, can only think of Fanny’s value in terms of a pet who is bred up to breed. She expresses excitement over the union she imagines between Fanny and Henry in terms of breeding. “We certainly are a handsome family!”, she triumphantly exclaims (Austen 386).

Lady Bertram further expresses her enthusiasm for the potential match when she tells Fanny “the next time Pug has a litter you shall have a puppy” (387). The exclusivity of such a gift is emphasized when Fanny’s aunt tells her that it will be “more than [she] did for Maria” when Maria was first engaged (387). It is through a potential marriage to a man of “good estate” that Fanny might become financially secure and earn social capital with her aunt - the reward of which is the thing Chinese. This is an instance of how “the China trade played a critical role in shaping species categorization” (Yang 144). Fanny as the “stupid” cousin is initially categorized below the Bertram sisters (Austen 22). But when Henry proposes to her, she is placed above them. The uplifting of Fanny’s social status is marked by the gift of one of Pug’s puppies to her. This demonstrates how the thing Chinese mediates categorization between women not solely based on biological but social breeding. Lady Bertram expresses her enthusiasm for Fanny’s proposal from Henry through a fostering of female kinship that supersedes the biological and is “more” than what she is willing to do for her own daughter Maria. The thing Chinese becomes the means by which women’s social status is renegotiated at Mansfield. Pug’s breeding as a proposed reward for Fanny’s breeding encapsulates this social mobility within the confines of a woman’s role towards expanding male metonymy in empire. Henry’s attentions as a marker for social status among the women at Mansfield is also evident in how he inspires a rivalry between Julia and Maria. On the question of who would sit next to him on a carriage ride, he chooses Julia. Henry’s selection of Julia over Maria for a seatmate is haunted by sounds of “the barking of Pug in his mistress’s arms” as the party rides off (95). Pug as the thing Chinese provides a soundtrack to the mobility of English women’s bodies and status, led by a man in the driver’s seat.

3.2 “He would have nothing but tea”: the patriarchally-determined process of how things Chinese become British

Lady Bertram participates in things Chinese through Pug. For her husband, it is tea. When Sir Thomas arrives home at Mansfield from Antigua, he asks for tea. Austen’s rhetoric in the following lines conveys Sir Thomas’s insistence on the matter: “[he] resolutely declined all dinner: he would take nothing, *nothing* till tea came—he would rather wait for tea” (my own Italicization, 211). Sir Thomas showing his preference for tea (a valuable commodity of empire) upon his arrival home signals the cultural capital of the beverage. Drinks made from colonial imports like “coffee and chocolate were more popular in public venues such as London’s coffee-houses,” but “Chinese tea was the beverage of choice in private homes” (Zuroski 83). Tea is what transports and facilitates the dynamics of empire between Britain and China into Mansfield.

Tea represents a British ability to purchase and contain a rival empire, China, inside of a cup and the British body. But at what point does something once considered to be a distinctly “‘Chinese’ luxury” start to “[recede] into the background: its presence [attesting] to nothing more than [part of] a normal order of things in English spaces” (Zuroski 112, 122). Both Beth Kowaleski-Wallace and Zuroski examine Jonas Hanway’s 1757 *An Essay on Tea*. The essay condemns the beverage and its Chinese origins, asserting its dangerous effects on English bodies. As a counterpoint to Hanway’s essay, Samuel Johnson wrote about tea’s compatibility with the English body on the grounds of its neutrality. Johnson’s argument is hegemonic in its claims that “tea has no special qualities, positive or negative, that affect the people who drink it...for tea is as English as Dr. Johnson himself” (Zuroski 156, 157). Although controversial to some readers (and the university librarian who helped me search for the article), Hanway’s stance was still a legitimate way of “reimagining Chinese objects during the second half of the eighteenth century”

(Zuroski 157). But by the end of the era it is Johnson's perspective on tea's English "unremarkability" becomes the more dominant one (Zuroski 112). Regardless of its branding as distinctly Chinese or not, the thing Chinese is a medium for British projections of nationalist identity in the arena global empire.

When Fanny Price is reading about the Macartney Embassy in chapter sixteen, she is reading about the history of tea. Macartney's embassy was largely motivated by acquiring more British control over a Chinese-led tea economy. Although his 1793 mission failed, by the time of *Mansfield Park's* 1814 publication, the British East India Company dominated the tea trade in China (Paul A. Van Dyke, 2020). Sir Thomas's preference for tea is emphasized by the conflict this preference is met with, indicating Austen's engagements in British taste-making as an imperial pursuit. While waiting for his tea, Sir Thomas regales his family with tales of his voyage:

...and in the most interesting moment of his passage to England, when the alarm of a French privateer was at the height, [Mrs. Norris] burst through his recital with the proposal of soup. "Surely my dear Sir Thomas, a basin of soup would be a much better thing for you than tea. Do have a basin of soup." Sir Thomas could not be provoked.

(Austen 211)

The word Austen uses is "provoked", a word to name the ensuing satirical conflict between two characters at Mansfield. But the word also connotes to a sense of battle (conjured in part by Sir Thomas's story) between the sexes on taste. In the end however, Sir Thomas's defenses remain strong as the household patriarch who wins over Aunt Norris and we find out which consumable is more appropriate for a British homecoming.

Both “tea” and “soup” appear in Johnson’s dictionary. Johnson attributes the word and the dish “soup” to French origin. The only other place it appears in besides its own entry is in his description for “cabbage”. His own research on the vegetable reveals how it “was formerly more cultivated in England than at present; and some esteem this kind for soups”. Although this practice of preparing what he calls a “strong decoction of flesh for the table” and what the OED similarly defines as “ a liquid food prepared by boiling, usually consisting of an extract of meat with other ingredients and seasoning”, might originate in France, its ingredients as it is prepared in England are largely and historically local to British soil. “Soup” names a practice of borrowing foreign methods to prepare local ingredients. At the time that Mrs. Norris insists on serving Sir Thomas soup, the dish has established itself as part of the local cuisine. Sir Thomas’s inclination for tea over soup may be read as a preference for the thing Chinese over the Western dish. However if we are to take into account Johnson’s own defense of the Englishness of tea, we can read this as a moment of conversion instead in which the thing Chinese becomes British. This conversion process involves a man telling a woman what he prefers to consume upon returning home from his colonial enterprise. Austen’s rhetoric of emphasis on Sir Thomas’s preference for tea (“nothing, nothing but tea” and “could not be provoked”), depicts active taste-making on his part. Sir Thomas’s insistence on tea upon his return from Antigua represents his role as Mansfield patriarch to deliver to his home the spoils of empire and demonstrate the modes of its patriarchally-determined consumption. Drinking soup does not display his patriarchal power in empire as much as tea does. Historically, tea also demonstrates a more recent conquest over materials traded in empire.

Insisting on “nothing but tea” features Sir Thomas in the act of self-making towards “a model of the modern subject: an individual in whom the desire for foreign things is organized as

part of the privatized economy of sexuality and self-regulation” (Zuroski 3). Tea signifies not just the social and economic capital Sir Thomas aims to bring to Mansfield. Like his wife’s Pug, it is the thing Chinese that mediates his management of women’s statuses or “sexuality and self-regulation” at Mansfield. After asking for tea the second thing he asks for is to see Fanny. He “[observes] with decided pleasure how much [Fanny] was grown!” (208). In my second chapter, I close-read this same scene as a sign of Sir Thomas’s pride in Fanny’s ability as a young woman to expand and mobilize his metonymy and own estate through marriage. In this chapter, I would like to emphasize how both tea and Fanny present ways for Sir Thomas to regulate colonial taste and the “privatized economy” of her sexual and self-regulation upon his arrival.

The sight of Fanny’s “health and beauty” gives “joy” to his own face that in contrast is “worn” in the “hot climate” of Antigua (208). At recognizing how she might alleviate her uncle’s tiredness, “every tender feeling was increased” in Fanny as she comes to understand his “delight...in being again in his own house, in the centre of his family” and the center of local colonial Britain (208). This is an instance of what Srinivas Aravamudan calls “tropicopolitanism”, which “combines the idea of the [colonized] tropic with that of the [colonizing] cosmopolitan” (4). Tropicopolitanism “inaugurates the self-valorization of the metropolitan subject”, providing a way to define the European metropolis via its distance and difference from the tropical in terms of climate (5). Fanny’s post-Antigua interaction with her uncle reinforces a gendered colonial system in which English women’s “health and beauty” benefit as a result of how English men become “worn” in “hot climates” as a dynamic of patriarchal gendered exchange. Asking for tea and subsequently Fanny, illustrates the responsibility of women to soothe and process what colonial violence has worn. Like tea and the

thing Chinese, Fanny is to establish herself into Sir Thomas's metonymy of patriarchal empire through a domestication process of "composing" and cooling its violence.

Tropicopolitanism as a framework for reading Sir Thomas's return to Mansfield from Antigua depicts a gendered process of English women's and the thing Chinese's role in obscuring the plantation. In writing tropicopolitanism as process however, Austen rhetorically allows the plantation to haunt Mansfield. Tea as Sir Thomas's beverage of choice coming home from his plantation, reinforces the role of things Chinese in the exploitations of empire. In order to appeal to the British palate, Chinese tea is sweetened by sugar which is historically produced by colonized black labour. The market for Chinese tea makes its own dire contributions to the African Trade of the long eighteenth century. The Trade maps empire across "the industrial centers of Europe, Africa, and the Americas [and] its primary commodity was black bodies, sold and bought to provide free labor to the plantations...whose primary products—coffee, sugar, tobacco—were needed to satiate the culture of taste and the civilizing process" (Simon Gikandi 2). Gikandi's work is crucial to pointing out the dual hypocrisies that sustain colonial taste. The era of establishing a Western ideal of individual freedoms, identity, and autonomy was an era that benefited from colonization and enslaved labour. Tea in *Mansfield Park* as the thing Chinese that Sir Thomas requests upon his arrival, maps empire and its violent work between Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia.

3.3 "Preferring tea to anything": Fanny demonstrates her taste in tea and empire

When Sir Thomas returns from Antigua, it is up to the women to see through the tea service. Lady Bertram is assigned by her husband to "speak for tea directly" and "hurry Baddeley" their butler for it (211). It is her domestic duty to oversee the serving of empire inside the British household but it is ultimately for men like Sir Thomas to decide what should be

served. Serving tea involves the simultaneous composure of a woman's material environment and her own body. The following illustrates how a woman of the long eighteenth-century would serve the coffee or tea:

The vessel's physicality instructs the user, civilizing her behaviour and bringing her to execute a properly graceful social performance: deftly grasping the pot by the handle with one hand, securely holding the lid with the other, gracefully pouring the liquid, and silently returning the pot to the table...tames both the foreign object and the mistress of the table through one set of gestures.

(Joanna M. Gohmann 159-60)

Gohmann's analysis applies to how a woman managing the thing Chinese for British consumption also involves the displayed-management of her own body. Although this service is outsourced to Baddeley, Sir Thomas asks his wife to arrange for it leaving the responsibility ultimately to her. The thing Chinese does not just establish Sir Thomas's own conspicuous consumption in empire. It also becomes the means by which he organizes these gendered social roles in the metonymy of his colonial estate. His re-settling into his home after having been "worn" by Antigua is marked by his gendered social delegations around tea. Brown writes that "the ambiguities and anxieties of this transitional periods [of global empire] seem to be concentrated in the figure of the woman, who stands for the whole complex and unresolvable problem posed by the early history of capitalism" (Brown 134). It is through composing women's bodies and roles that the anxieties of empire's foreign infiltrations might be managed (my second chapter explores these "anxious considerations" for Fanny in further detail) (Austen 298). In *Mansfield Park*, scenes of serving tea indicates how well or not a household and a woman appears to be in order. As the beverage that is offered upon the arrival of British persons

moving across locations, it also orients their positionalities and participations in the metonymy empire.

In Chapter thirty-eight, Fanny's mother offers tea to Fanny and William when they first arrive at Portsmouth. Like Sir Thomas who would have "nothing, nothing but tea", Fanny and William "both declare they would prefer it to anything" (441). As wards of Sir Thomas, the two Price siblings demonstrate an alignment of their taste with his. Taste orients their physical and social arrival in empire. Fanny's arrival at Portsmouth sees her movement "out of the library, into the ballroom, and [finally] up to the altar" (Susan Fraiman 72). She is sent to Portsmouth by her uncle as an attempt to humble her towards Henry Crawford's proposal, which he offers to her after her coming out ball. Although Fanny is still reluctant to follow the course of marriage her uncle intends for her, her preference for tea upon arrival at Portsmouth indicates how she is learning to move across empire from him. Fanny's sense of metonymy for Mansfield even surpasses her own uncle's taste when her romantic interest Edmund turns out to be a better and more metonymical match (on account of his being Sir Thomas's son) for her than Henry. Revelations on Henry's character occur to the Bertrams during Fanny's time at Portsmouth when the affair between Henry and Maria is exposed. Fanny's time at Portsmouth serves as a crucial step towards the altar as it presents the culmination of her taste in both men and the thing Chinese as metonymical opportunities towards her uncle.

Tea indicates the "order of things in English spaces" and in the novel, the level of composure to the patriarchal metonymies of Mansfield and Portsmouth (Zuroski 122). Fanny's internalization of her education on taste from her uncle is evident in her own assessment of tea and order at Portsmouth. She observes that "After sitting for some time longer...there was still

no appearance of tea” (444). The absence of tea indicates an absence of patriarchal order in the Price household. Fanny immediately makes the following comparison:

“...in her uncle’s house there would have been a consideration of times and seasons, a regulation of subject, a propriety, an attention towards everybody which there was not here.” (446)

Using Mansfield as a model she has been disciplined into (my first chapter looks at the disciplining of Fanny Price as a method of colonial categorization through the education she receives at Mansfield) Fanny deduces that the absence of tea at her childhood home speaks for a disordered “unregulated” network affecting the very “times and seasons” at Portsmouth. Unlike her uncle’s house, the inhabitants of Portsmouth are not as strictly accounted for their roles regarding metonymy to her father.

Chapter forty-eight features another scene of disarray regarding tea and Officer Price. Fanny makes the following observations around the family “tea-board”:

There was neither health nor gaiety...marked by her father’s head, to the table cut and notched by her brothers, where stood the tea-board never thoroughly cleaned, the cups and saucers wiped in streaks, the milk a mixture of motes floating in thin blue, and the bread and butter growing every minute more greasy than even Rebecca’s hands had first produced it.

(Austen 511)

In Portsmouth, the tea-things are stale and contaminated with “motes”. The colour of milk, locally sourced in England has turned an ill “thin blue” with the “bread and butter...more greasy than ever”. The filthy tea-board is composed of English drink and food rendered unconsumable, suggesting that a failure to manage the thing Chinese corrupts the quality of English nourishment. The unruly scene is quite literally “marked by her father’s head”, presenting a

contrast between the two paternal heads of Portsmouth and Mansfield. Officer Price makes a bad figurehead for the metonymy of his home. The table itself is “cut and notched” by his own male descendants further illustrating a lack of discipline towards his patrilineal and patriarchal metonymy. This affects the ability of the women of the household to carry out their role in maintaining order. Austen writes about how the “bread and butter” was “more greasy than even Rebecca’s hands had first produced it”. While the delegation of order at Portsmouth falls to the “father’s head”, it is the women’s “hands” who undertake the work of setting the tea-board. It is this labour of preparing the thing Chinese for British consumption that keeps women occupied into the metonymy of patriarchal empire. The contrast between Mansfield and Portsmouth in regards to tea, reinforces this very system through Austen’s writing of Fanny’s observations.

Fanny has some reprieve in one of her other younger sisters, Susan. Upon arrival at Portsmouth, Susan is the one who manages to serve the much-delayed tea. For this, “Fanny was very thankful. She could not but own that she should be very glad of a little tea, and Susan immediately making it, as if pleases to have the employment all to herself” (447). Susan’s successful performance and labour in gendered empire wins both Fanny’s heart and eventually, Susan’s own place in the Mansfield household. Susan takes up Fanny’s post by Lady Bertram’s side, leaving Fanny free to marry Edmund and perpetuating a patriarchal homosocial system between women and sisters in upholding the order and metonymies of Mansfield. In *Mansfield Park*, there is a stark composition of how “women and tea drinking...become linked in important ways, despite the fact that nothing inherently makes tea a feminine commodity” (Kowaleski-Wallace 131). Tea as the thing that generates Fanny’s esteem for Susan and her (Susan’s) eventual recruitment into Mansfield’s metonymy illustrates how the thing Chinese establishes women’s homosocial relations and statuses in patriarchal empire.

The marriage plot of *Mansfield Park* however, maintains a most provoking “gap” that activate the historiographic process of this late Romantic novel (Rohrbach 38). See Austen’s passage on Fanny and Edmund’s courtship:

...her warm and sisterly regard for him would be foundation enough for wedded love. I purposely abstain from dates on this occasion, that every one may be at liberty to fix their own, aware that the cure of passions, and the transfer of unchanging attachments must vary much as to time in different people. I only entreat everybody to believe that exactly at the time when it was quite natural that is should be so, and not a week earlier, Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny as Fanny herself could desire.

(Austen 499-500)

Austen leaves the timing of when Edmund and Fanny’s feelings and marriage (one that is meant to uphold metonymical empire) might be “[fixed]”, to the reader. In doing so, her text maintains a suspension of empire’s would-be efficacy similar to the “no reading, no China, no composure for Fanny” tripartite. Yoon Sun Lee reveals the sophistication of Austen’s meticulous scaling and abstractions of time and space. In this case, Austen has abstracted the timing of a key point in Edmund and Fanny’s marriage plot. While Lee’s framework might read this as a type of detailing that scales into a de-politicized abstraction, I want to put forward an alternative reading: Austen’s abstraction of the feelings that apparently “quite [naturally]” take place between the cousins provides a space for reflexivity on the incestuous and metonymical marriage. By leaving readers to determine the “consideration of times and seasons, a regulation of subject, a propriety, an attention towards everybody which” at the end of this novel “[is] not here”, the text inspires us to be reflexive of our own ideas in regards to our own estimation of a proper time that two

characters should eventually fall into a union made in the manner of colonization (Austen 446). What *Mansfield Park* strategically “scarcely [mentions] in its brilliant pages” suspends for us an inexhaustible platform with which to confront our own complicity and orientations in gendered empire (Said 96).

3.4 Conclusion: reading China with no composure

Fanny Price’s story is one of a woman being actively “bred”, groomed, and composed (as in made and managed) in empire regardless of her birthright (the one circumstance of birth that allows for her social mobility is having been born to a sisterhood of women). In *Mansfield Park*, things Chinese are meant to “compose” Fanny into Sir Thomas’s metonymy (Austen 175). The tripartite “no reading, no China, no composure” in chapter sixteen speaks to Fanny’s ongoing education in gendered empire at her uncle’s house as a form of discipline that relies on appropriating the consumption of foreign materials into a British woman’s lifestyle. “Composure” in the tripartite denotes conduct and connotes the act of writing, activating Austen’s text with a rhetoric of metonymical gendered managements into empire. But as I mentioned in my previous chapters, the “no’s” that precede “reading”, “China”, and “composure” complicate the very structure the tripartite initially means to uphold. “No reading, no China, no composure” again maintains what Rohrbach calls “the tensions between what a text “says” and what it “does” and is “evidence of a historical experience that cannot be fully told in semantic terms” (38). Austen uses semantics as a way to identify the limits of her own text to mediate what imperialism looks to settle into composure. What her rhetoric ultimately maintains are the ongoing fluxes of imperial mediation as process itself. The tripartite includes the word “China” but “China” ultimately remains un-composed and still un-read “for Fanny” and as a result, the reader. “China” in *Mansfield Park* is in constant composition and question. In the case

of things Chinese like pets and tea, we observe their subjectivities as materials of gendered empire in how they must consistently be bred or set respectively; reproduced and renegotiated into the Mansfield home and into Englishness. When it comes to a registration of imperial histories and its material cultures, Austen's text remains always in the process of composing what empire looks to manage resulting in a productive irresolution that gestures to its gaps and fissures.

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