



مجلة جامعة السعيد للعلوم الإنسانية

Al – Saeed University Journal of Humanities Sciences

[journal@alsaeeduni.edu.ye](mailto:journal@alsaeeduni.edu.ye)

Vol (8), No(2), Aug., 2025

المجلد (8)، العدد (2)، 2025م

ISSN: 2616 – 6305 (Print)

ISSN: 2790-7554 (Online)



## Role of Women in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century English Society as Depicted in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*

**Dr. Abdulrahman Ahmed Mohammed No'man**

Assistant Professor of English Literature, Ibb University

Head of English Department, University of  
Science and Technology, Taiz

**Dr. Ahmed Taher Abdu Nagi**

Associate Professor of English Literature

College of Education, Taiz University

Associate Professor of English Literature

College of Humanities and Administrative Sciences

Al Janad University, Taiz

**Maria Mohammed Al-Hoboker**

University of Science and Technology, Taiz

تاريخ قبوله للنشر 2025/8/2م

تاريخ تسليم البحث 2025/6/3م

[journal.alsaeeduni.edu.ye](http://journal.alsaeeduni.edu.ye)

موقع المجلة:

## دور النساء في مجتمع القرن التاسع عشر الإنجليزي كما تجسده رواية مانسفيلد بارك للروائية جين أوستن

د/ عبدالرحمن أحمد محمد نعمان

أستاذ الأدب الإنجليزي المساعد، مركز اللغات، جامعة إب  
رئيس قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة العلوم والتكنولوجيا، تعز

د/ أحمد طاهر عبده ناجي

أستاذ الأدب الإنجليزي المشارك، كلية التربية، جامعة تعز  
أستاذ الترجمة والأدب الإنجليزي المشارك  
كلية العلوم الإنسانية والإدارية، جامعة الجند، تعز

ماريا محمد الحبوكر

جامعة العلوم والتكنولوجيا تعز

### الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة دور النساء في المجتمع الإنجليزي في القرن التاسع عشر كما يظهر في رواية "مانسفيلد بارك" لجين أوستن، مع التركيز على كيفية تصوير الرواية للشخصيات النسائية ضمن القيود الاجتماعية والثقافية لتلك الفترة. من خلال استخدام تحليل أدبي نوعي يعتمد على الأطر النسوية والاجتماعية-التاريخية، تستعرض هذه الدراسة كيف تنتقد أوستن وتعرض أدوار النساء، خصوصاً من خلال شخصية فاني بريس. تتناول الدراسة التوقعات المجتمعية المفروضة على النساء، مع تسليط الضوء على التوتر بين الرغبات الشخصية والواجبات الاجتماعية، وكيف تشكل هذه القوى تجارب وخيارات الشخصيات النسائية. تبرز الدراسة الطرق التي تُقيد بها النساء في الرواية من خلال أوارهن العائلية، التبعية الاقتصادية، والبنية الطبقية الصارمة في إنجلترا في أوائل القرن التاسع عشر. تكشف النتائج عن نقد جين أوستن الضمني لهذه القيود، وكذلك تصويرها لنقاط الجندر والطبقة والأخلاق بشكل معقد، خاصة في سياق الزواج. من خلال وضع رواية "مانسفيلد بارك" في سياقها التاريخي والثقافي، تساهم هذه الدراسة في فهم أعمق لاستكشاف أوستن لأدوار الجنسين والقيود المفروضة على النساء في زمنها، مقدمة رؤية قيمة حول صلة هذه المواضيع المستمرة في الخطاب التاريخي والمعاصر حول دور النوع الاجتماعي والسلطة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** النساء، جين أوستن، مانسفيلد بارك، دور النوع الاجتماعي.

## Role of Women in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century English Society as Depicted in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*

**Dr. Abdulrahman Ahmed Mohammed No'man**

Assistant Professor of English Literature, Ibb University  
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Associate Professor of English Literature  
College of Humanities and Administrative Sciences  
Al Janad University, Taiz

**Maria Mohammed Al-Hoboker**

University of Science and Technology, Taiz

### Abstract

This study has investigated the role of women in 19th-century English society as depicted in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, focusing on how the novel portrays female characters within the social and cultural constraints of the era. This study has used a qualitative literary analysis approach with feminist and socio-historical frameworks. This study explores how Austen critiques and reflects on the roles of women, particularly through the character of Fanny Price. The study examines the societal expectations placed on women, emphasizing the tension between personal desires and social obligations, and how these forces shape the experiences and choices of the female characters. The study has concluded that Austen has a subtle critique of these limitations and her portrayal of the complex intersection of gender, class, and morality can be traced especially in the context of marriage. By situating *Mansfield Park* within its historical and cultural context of nineteenth century, this study has concluded that Austen's exploration of gender roles and the restrictions placed on women in her time, offers valuable insights into the ongoing relevance of these themes in both historical and contemporary discourse on gender and power studies of nineteenth century and the current gender studies.

**Keywords:** Women, Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, Gender Roles.

## Introduction:

Nineteenth century was an age of oppression against women in spite of the fact that a woman, Queen Victoria, was ruling England. It was a time of rapid transformation characterized by urban expansion and industrial prosperity, which revolutionized life in Britain. These changes were not limited to industrial and economic spheres but extended to influence social norms and societal roles, especially concerning women. This transformation was significantly reflected in literature, which witnessed notable developments, particularly in the field of the novel. The Victorian age was an era dominated by novels, with many authors contributing to the growth of this literary genre. Remarkably, women writers played a vital role during this period, portraying societal realities and addressing pressing issues, despite facing significant challenges due to both the topics they tackled and societal resistance to the idea of women authors. (Taher, A. 2016). Woman's oppression was reflected in literature especially in novel which was the prevailing literary genre during that period. Jane Austen was one of the literati who fought for women's right through presenting new roles for them in her novels such as the ones in *Mansfield Park*.

The English literature of the nineteenth century is a fascinating period that inspired much of the literary work that exists today. This century was marked by various developments and significant events that brought about changes shaping individuals and societies. Literature during this time focused on prominent issues and recurring themes tied to the realities of the period. Among the most prevalent topics were social life and class differences, often highlighting inequality in society. Themes of love and the challenges surrounding relationships were also common in English literature. One of the most distinctive characteristics of the literature of this century was its resistance to change and a persistent effort to revive old perceptions and practices lost through modernization. Despite the changes that followed this era, many literary styles, themes, and concerns carried over into the next century and remain evident in contemporary literature today. (Mukherjee, J. 2019)

The gender roles of women in the early nineteenth century were largely confined to the domestic sphere. Women were often referred to as "Angels in the House", emphasizing their expected role as devoted, self-sacrificing

figures in the home. Women's rights during this period were severely limited, particularly in terms of marriage, education, and work. At that time a woman could be no more than a housewife, with little education and a governess. Marriage was viewed by many women as a means of securing financial stability. In contrast to men, women received limited education, which was primarily focused on domestic skills. They were often educated at home by private tutors, who taught them the skills deemed necessary for their roles in society, such as dancing, singing, playing the piano, and other indoor activities. The work life for women was also subject to strict limitations. They were generally not free to pursue independent careers, and even when they worked, their roles were typically restricted to domestic labor, with little opportunity for personal agency in choosing their professions. (Korkmasoglu, A. 2015)

One of the most prominent writers who criticized social norms and depicted the concept of femininity as it was practiced during that time was Jane Austen. Known for her sharp social critique, Austen used her works to challenge the rigid social structures of her era. In *Mansfield Park*, Austen strongly opposed traditional views of women's roles through the character of Fanny Price. By highlighting Fanny's journey, Austen explored themes such as the importance of women's education and their participation in society. Through her nuanced portrayal, Austen demonstrated how women could succeed and make a difference, even within restrictive societal frameworks. (Korkmasoglu, A. 2015)

This study stems from a strong desire to study the social roles and constraints imposed on women in the early nineteenth century as reflected in literature. *Mansfield Park* is apt due to its profound depiction of gender dynamics and social hierarchies. Among Austen's novels, *Mansfield Park* stands out for its deeper exploration of morality, class, and the challenges faced by women like Fanny Price, who must assert women's individuality within a restrictive society like England.

### Statement of the Problem:

The role of women in 19th-century English society has been extensively studied especially through literature. *Mansfield Park*, compared to Austen's other novels, has received less attention in investigating how class, gender, and moral expectations shape lives of women. This makes a gap in

understanding how *Mansfield Park* critiques the limited agency of women in the society. This research aims to address this gap by analyzing the novel's female characters. Also, it provides a deeper understanding of how women's role and constraints are portrayed in the novel. Moreover, this study will benefit literary scholars, student of English literature, and general readers by offering new insights into *Mansfield Park's* portrayal of women. The problem of this study can be pinpointed into these questions:

- 1- How does Austen critique societal norms through the portrayal of female characters in *Mansfield Park*?
- 2- What strategies do female characters employ to navigate or resist societal constraints?

### Objectives of the study:

This study focuses on how Austen portrayed female characters in *Mansfield Park*, and examine how Austen critiques the societal constructs of her time and the implications for women's role in literature and society as well. Also, it will explain in what ways do *Mansfield Park* reflect the tension between women's personal desires and the societal duty and propriety.

To put it simply, this study aims at:

- 1- Investigating how Austen critiques societal norms through the portrayal of female characters in *Mansfield Park*.
- 2- Exploring the strategies employed by female characters to navigate or resist societal constraints.

### Significance of the Study:

This study is significant for its contribution to understanding how nineteenth-century literature reflects and critiques the societal norms that defined gender roles and expectations in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. The study emphasizes the importance of examining literary works as historical documents that capture the lived experiences of women in 19<sup>th</sup> century patriarchal society. This study is particularly valuable in exploring the intersection of literature and feminism, highlighting how Austen's portrays the limitations imposed on women by a male dominated society. Additionally, this research offers a deeper appreciation of Austen's influence as a female author who used her work to subtly advocate for social change, making it a meaningful reference for contemporary studies on gender, literature, and cultural history.

**Methodology:**

This study employs a qualitative and analytical approach to analyze Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* through the lens of feminist literary theory, with the aim of examining how Austen critiques 19th-century English societal norms regarding women's roles and social constraints. The analysis is supported by a feminist and social approach to contextualize the societal influences that inspired Austen's writing. The data for this research comprises textual evidence from *Mansfield Park* and relevant academic literature, including critical essays and historical accounts.

**Theoretical Background:**

The nineteenth century brought new literary movements and was a crucial era in many countries, especially in England's literary history. The literature of this time was characterized by its focus on class distinctions, industry, democracy, art, and culture. In addition, much of the literature of this period addressed societal inequality, with social class and financial status becoming important dividing lines. The literature of the nineteenth century also focused on social life, often highlighting the shortcomings and struggles of people in that era. Many authors wrote about relationships, admiration, and the often-disappointing endings of these relationships. Moreover, gender and sexuality were important themes that helped shape the growth of literature in this period, with many scholars focusing on feminism. (Mukherjee, J. 2019)

Feminism is a diverse and evolving socio-political movement that advocates for the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes. It seeks to address gender-based inequalities and promote the empowerment of women in various domains, including class, race, culture, and religion. Feminism opposes sexism, male domination, and social oppression, aiming to achieve equality, dignity, and freedom for women. The term "feminism" originated from the French word "féminisme" and gained prominence in the 19th century. It encompasses a range of ideologies and movements, including liberal, Marxist, radical, socialist, ecofeminism, cultural, black, and postmodern feminism. These perspectives focus on identifying and addressing women's oppression, exploring its causes and consequences, and proposing strategies for liberation. Feminists emphasize equal rights, financial independence, freedom of choice, and the elimination of gender-

based discrimination. They advocate for institutional reforms and societal changes to dismantle patriarchal structures and ensure women's access to opportunities, knowledge, and basic human rights. Despite differing views and approaches, all feminist movements aim to achieve gender equality and eliminate oppression. (Mohajan, H. 2022)

The gender role of women in the early nineteenth century was generally seen at private sphere, homes. They were called "The Angels in the House". Women's rights were bounded in this century, such as their rights in marriage, education, and work. Women in this century saw marriage as an opportunity to be secure financially. Moreover, compared with men, women got little education, and their education focused on home. They were studying at home by special teachers and their teachers taught them the necessary things that they needed in their lives, such as dancing, singing, playing piano, and other indoor activities were taught. The work life was also bringing different restrictions for women. They were not free to have their own work and they were not even free to choose their jobs if they worked. The role of women in work life was only the works that done at homes. (Korkmazoglu, A. 2015)

Although the societal restrictions on women during this period were pervasive, the nineteenth century saw the rise of female authors who were more than male authors who thought that women had no adequate intellectual talent to present a quality literary work worth competing with. However, the changes that happened at that century in politics, economics, and social hierarchy provided better education for women and chance to delete the limits of domestic fiction. These changes also raised women's awareness of gender inequality, and their oppressed role and position in the nineteenth century society. When female authors provide their works, they had to use male pseudonyms or write anonymously to avoid the condescending judgment of the critics. When the century progressed, women tried to break the social, political, and legal constraints that the society forced them. Different social reform movements led by women who seek for equal rights between men and women served as an inspiration for their literary outputs. They wanted to encourage the important changes through literature, and make an effect on the society in order to accept them as being with equal rights as men to freedom, independence, and self-



expression. This century was the beginning of the gender awareness and feminist attitude. At the end of the century, women's literature attracted all readers regardless of their gender, because the themes which they explored through the feminist context which are love and sexuality. (Mazul, M. 2015)

Jane Austen was one of these female authors who was born in 1775. She was the youngest of seven children and one of the only two daughters. Reverend George Austen was her father. He was a clergyman of the Anglican Parish, and he provoked Jane to read the novels in their family study. Even though they were simple family, he brought for Jane paper and ink to allow her to begin her writing at a young age. In the 1790s, Austen finished the first three drafts of her first novels, *sense and sensibility*, *pride and prejudice*, and *Northanger Abby*, but it was not published until 1811, because of personal problems and failures in publishing. When Austen tried to publish *pride and prejudice* in 1797, which was titled *First Impression*, the publisher returned it, unread, with a stamp saying "Decline by Return of Post". After the death of her father, she moved with her mother and sister, Cassandra, to their family home where her brother, Edward, lived. After all these rejections and failures, Austen finally published *Sense and Sensibility* anonymously, then published *Pride and Prejudice* two years later. *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* were published within the next two years. (Rojas C. E. 2019)

When she reached 41 years of age, she had a disease that many think was Addison's disease. Even though she was sick, she continued writing until her health made her unable to write any longer. In 1817, she died in Winchester, Hampshire, England. Throughout her lifetime, she never married. Her final two works, *Northanger Abby* and *Persuasion*, were published after her death by her brother Henry. Henry released, with her novels, a special biographical note in which he revealed her name to the public. In 1920s, literary scholars began to distinguish and accredit Austen's works as a masterpiece, and that makes her popularity increasing in the eyes of public. (Rojas C. E. 2019)

In English society of the nineteenth century, certain roles were typically for women. Austen pointedly addresses these expectations in the circumstances in her novels. Each novel has a female protagonist who has a certain circumstance that she was born with, typically including the family structure and their economic status, along with the ways that her social

circle, her family, and her culture has added pressure to the expectations that have been put on her. (Rojas C. E. 4) Austen's famous novels are *Northanger Abby*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*, and *Mansfield Park*. (Korkmazoglu, A. 2015:1)

All in all, it is seen that Jane Austen objects to the social situation in the early nineteenth century in terms of the roles of women. It is seen that Jane Austen tries to set up a society similar to today's world. Through her writing, Jane Austen gives importance to Fanny Price in her novel. When the reader looks at Fanny Price from Jane Austen's perspective, one can think that Fanny Price has a special place in Jane Austen's heart, as evidenced by Austen's reference to her as "my Fanny" at the novel's conclusion.

### Previous Studies:

Feminism in the nineteenth century English literature has been a significant subject for scholars. Many studies have done about feminism in English novels of feminist authors especially Jane Austen. Although Jane Austen's works have received extensive scholarly analysis, *Mansfield Park* has not garnered the same level of attention as some of her novels, such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. This is due to its unique complexities and more reserved themes, making it the subject of fewer literary discussions. Through this literature review, this research aims to highlight academic studies that have addressed feminism in English society as well as Jane Austen's novels

Chang H. (2014) examined Elizabeth Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as a feminist heroine who challenges the patriarchal norms of Regency England. Through a comparative analysis with female foils such as Caroline, Jane, and Charlotte, the study underscores Elizabeth's unique resistance to societal pressures that compel women to prioritize marriage and social conformity. Unlike her counterparts, Elizabeth asserts her independence and moral integrity, rejecting traditional gender roles and inspiring Mr. Darcy to overcome his pride and elitism to form a partnership based on equality. This analysis reveals how Elizabeth's feminist identity emerges in contrast to the compliance of other women in the novel, highlighting her role as a transformative figure within a rigidly patriarchal society.

Taher, A. (2016) investigated the concept of masculinity in literature, with a specific focus on Victorian literature. The study delved into the nature of Victorian gentlemen's perceptions of masculinity, highlighting the hegemonic attitudes prevalent in Victorian society. Keeping this context in mind, the researchers critically analyzes literary texts by two prominent female Victorian novelists, Charlotte Bronte and Jane Austen. The study investigated how these authors construct masculinity in their novels: *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Emma*. The findings reveal that both Austen and Bronte employ similar techniques to create a reimagined form of masculinity, referred to as "gentleman masculinity." These techniques include the first encounter between the hero and heroine, the representation of various types of masculinity—such as hegemonic, religious, effeminate, and gentleman masculinity—the role of the gaze, the influence of the heroine in shaping masculinity, and the resolution of the novels. These elements are central to the study, as they encapsulate the philosophy of the two novelists in challenging Victorian norms and redefining masculinity. By using these techniques, Austen and Brontë aim to transform the Victorian man from a figure embodying patriarchal and hegemonic masculinity into one representing gentlemanly values. The researcher emphasizes that the initial encounter between the hero and heroine in these novels is far from ordinary. Austen and Brontë maximize its significance to convey their perspectives on masculinity. At this point, the hero remains firmly entrenched in the dominant hegemonic masculinity of Victorian society. However, this encounter marks a turning point, serving as a boundary between hegemonic masculinity and gentleman masculinity. It alters the power dynamics between men and women, disrupting traditional notions of superiority and inferiority. This shift empowers the woman and diminishes the man's patriarchal dominance, a novel concept in Victorian literature. The study concludes that Brontë and Austen present a spectrum of masculinities, including hegemonic, religious, effeminate, and gentleman masculinity. This diverse representation is deliberate, encouraging readers to evaluate these types of masculinity and discern the ideal. Ultimately, the study finds that gentleman masculinity emerges as the ideal form, as it acknowledges and respects the equal identity of both men and women.

Zhou's W. (2016) offered an in-depth exploration of the societal constraints faced by women in patriarchal 18th and 19th-century England in

*Sense and Sensibility* novel. Zhou depicted the lives of Austen's female characters as a symbolic journey, with marriage serving as the ultimate destination dictated by societal expectations. The analysis highlights how young, unmarried women are primarily valued for their ability to secure financial stability through advantageous matches, often at the expense of personal happiness and autonomy. Zhou critiques the limited education provided to women during this era, which emphasized emotional sensitivity and practical skills over intellectual growth, perpetuating a dependence on marriage for social standing and security. Austen's portrayal of these dynamics reveals her advocacy for a more balanced approach, where women cultivate self-awareness and rationality to navigate the dual demands of love and economic security. By emphasizing the need for intellectual and emotional equilibrium, Austen critiques the societal norms that confine women to rigid roles, framing her work as a commentary on the broader patriarchal structures of her time.

Halířová, M. (2016) explored the development of feminism in Great Britain. She focused on the history of the phenomenon and also mentioned the perception of feminism today, nonetheless, the main focus was given on the differences of writing of writers each from a different time period. The novels she had chosen to examine were Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*, (1874) Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) by a contemporary writer Jeanette Winterson. The first chapter focused on the development of feminism in Great Britain since the first half of the 19th century up to the present. The aim was to explain feminism from its start, from the meaning of the term to the gradual development throughout the 19th and 20th centuries with mentioning the major figures of the movement. The most important figures mentioned were Mary Wollstonecraft, who is considered to be a founding mother of the movement, Florence Nightingale and the Pankhurst family. The chapter depicted the first and second wave of feminism, where women fought for their suffrage, education, and above all equal opportunities and independence. The first wave of the movement, lasting from the 19th century up to early 20th century, was primarily about fighting for the suffrage and for recognition in society. The Pankhurst family was very important in the suffragette movement towards the end of the 19th century, the leader of British suffragettes Emmeline Pankhurst was

very politically radical and she is considered to be one of the most influential women in British history. Virginia Woolf also addressed the issue of equality in her influential essay *A Room of One's Own* during this period. The second wave of feminism was understood as a continuation of the first wave; however, it was then focused more on women's liberation movement and on social equality for women. There were attempts to communicate better social position in society and the feminists of this period defined its demands for equal education opportunity, equal pay and contraception and abortion.

Kusumawardhani M. et al (2020) explored the theme of women's independence as portrayed through the main characters, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. The research employed a feminist critical approach, drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's theory as presented in *The Second Sex* (1949). A qualitative research methodology is utilized, with primary data sourced directly from the novel and secondary data derived from supporting books and online resources. The study examines three key aspects: the forms of independence exhibited by the Dashwood sisters, the causes of their independence, and the effects of this independence on their lives. It argues that the independence displayed by Elinor and Marianne reflects a broader depiction of women's autonomy in 19th-century society. The findings suggest that the primary cause of their independence stems from their upbringing and the influence of their parents. Elinor and Marianne's independence manifests in their strong moral character, intellectual abilities, and artistic talents, despite their middle-class social status. The analysis also highlights both the positive and negative consequences of their independence, as the sisters face various challenges and obstacles. Ultimately, their journey toward self-awareness and autonomy leads to personal fulfillment and happiness. This study underscores how Austen's portrayal of the Dashwood sisters reveals the nuanced struggles and triumphs of women navigating societal expectations in the 19th century.

Wang Y. (2020) explored the development of feminism in English language literature from 19th to 20th century by investigating the developing explanation of feminism in English literary works. He used the explanatory qualitative approach. The main findings of this review are: 1)

the emphasis of feminism has been shifting from women's rights in political areas to individual's daily life and the scope of feminism has been continually enlarging. 2) In the 19th century feminism is expressed in the context of the relationship between men and women. In the 20th century, feminism is delineated from the perspective of women's domestic life and familial value. However, later in the 21st century, feminism is becoming a theory isolating women from any kind of social relationships and portraying women's own feeling, experience and life goal. 3) Female feminism writers tend to write female characters who holds feminism thoughts bearing various kinds of temperament while male feminism writers' female characters in feminism literature used to be radical women; Female writers' characters are more realistic, always choosing to seek feminism within the social norms and compromising to reality while the female characters portrayed by male writers tend to be more idealized, breaking the rules and adhering to their own personality, often with a tragic ending; some female feminism writers express feminism idea through lesbian relationship or through women's own experience while male writers often discuss feminism in a heterosexual relationship. To conclude, feminism has becoming more specialized on individual's own life and experience from 19th to 21st century, which has covered more groups of people and social issues. The waves of feminism and the feminism literature are interacted and interrelated.

Nagar, P. (2021) provided a critical analysis of *Mansfield Park*, emphasizing the novel's exploration of women's place in society, the power dynamics within familial relationships, and the socio-economic limitations imposed on women during Austen's time. Nagar's study situated Fanny Price's character within the broader literary tradition of orphaned heroines in Victorian fiction, highlighting the ways in which her status as a dependent relative mirror the vulnerabilities faced by women of the period. A key argument in Nagar's work is that *Mansfield Park* exposed the exploitation of weaker individuals, particularly women, by those in positions of power. Fanny, though raised in the affluent *Mansfield Park*, is constantly reminded of her inferior status and dependency on her wealthy relatives. As Nagar observes, Mrs. Norris, who acts as the overseer of the household, actively reinforces this hierarchy by excluding Fanny from

social activities and ensuring that she remains subordinate to the Bertram children. This depiction aligns with broader feminist readings of Austen's work, which argue that her novels subtly critique the patriarchal structures that dictate women's lives. Moreover, Nagar's analysis underscored the novel's engagement with marriage as a means of social mobility. As women in the 19th century were excluded from professional careers, marriage remained their primary means of securing economic stability and social advancement. In *Mansfield Park*, Fanny's eventual marriage to Edmund is presented as a moral victory, contrasting with the fate of Mary Crawford, whose ambition and worldliness ultimately lead to her downfall. Nagar suggested that this contrast serves as Austen's commentary on the moral consequences of succumbing to the corrupting influences of society. Beyond its historical context, Nagar's study also drew connections between Austen's themes and contemporary gender and economic struggles. She argued that while women today have greater access to education and professional opportunities, the structural inequalities present in Austen's time persist in modern society. Citing studies on workplace discrimination, she highlights how women continue to face barriers in achieving high-status, well-paying jobs despite their qualifications. This perspective reinforces the enduring relevance of Austen's critique of gender and class dynamics. By closely examining *Mansfield Park* and its characters, Nagar's work contributed to the broader discourse on Austen's role as a proto-feminist writer. While Austen's novels may outwardly conform to the conventions of her time, scholars such as Nagar reveal the deeper subversions within her work, positioning *Mansfield Park* as a novel that challenges, rather than simply reflects, the societal norms of early 19th-century England. This review of Nagar's scholarship situates *Mansfield Park* within existing feminist and socio-historical discussions, reinforcing its significance as a text that not only critiques the limitations placed on women in Austen's era but also resonates with contemporary debates on gender, class, and power.

### Analysis and Discussion:

In this section the researchers analyze Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* through the lens of feminist literary theory. This chapter also includes six points to be analyzed:



**Women's moral values:**

Fanny Price, the heroine of the novel was a very shy, timid, sensitive girl with moral values. She lived as inferior among the house of wealthy and superior relatives, but never made a complaint. She never compromised with her moral values and at the end, she became the point of admiration at *Mansfield Park* (Nagar, P. 189). Potter admits that " Fanny's character is a study of the English Protestant good-girl ideal: sweet-tempered and duty driven, morally and socially obedient; also shy, stammering, self-effacing; also doubtful, tender, awkward, and embarrassed" (Potter, 611).

"The first use she made of her solitude was to take up the volume which had been left on the table, and begin to acquaint herself with the play of which she had heard so much. Her curiosity was all awake, and she ran through it with an eagerness which was suspended only by intervals of astonishment, that it could be chosen in the present instance—that it could be proposed and accepted in a private Theatre! Agatha and Amelia appeared to her in their different ways so totally improper for home representation—the situation of one, and the language of the other, so unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty, that she could hardly suppose her cousins could be aware of what they were engaging in; and longed to have them roused as soon as possible by the remonstrance which Edmund would certainly make." (*Mansfield Park*, 161).

This text highlights Fanny's shyness in performing Lovers' Vow, recognizing its inappropriate content and the impropriety of acting in Sir Thomas's absence. She remains true to her principles despite pressure from her cousins and Henry Crawford, and this shows her honesty and adherence to principles, even when her views are unpopular. This duty driven girl who remains true to her values is made by the society. Beauvoir (2010) argues that "One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman". Similarly, one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman. Hence, society plays a greater role in the construction of femininity. Such gender roles given to Fanny Price are given by the male-dominated society. Wollstonecraft in her book, *Vindications of the Rights of Woman* argues that the roles given to woman are the product of the patriarchal society

Fanny rejects Henry Crawford's marriage proposal five times despite his wealth and charm, because she can perceive Henry motives while other



characters were unable (Bowens B. 2019). In Wollstonecraft's words, Fanny says: "I cannot think well of a man who sports with any woman's feelings; and there may often be a great deal more suffered than a stander-by can judge of," (Mansfield Park, 419). This rejection of marriage proposal is similar to Elizabeth Bennet's rejection of Darcy's proposal several times in which she would rather be a spinster than please someone [Darcy] and his family. Fanny and Elizabeth are autobiographical heroines of Jane Austen. In her own words, Fanny smartly says, "I had not, Miss Crawford, been an inattentive observer of what was passing between him and some part of this family in the summer and autumn. ... I could not but see that Mr. Crawford allowed in himself gallantries which did mean nothing" (*Mansfield Park*, 419).

This also shows how Fanny couldn't accept a partner with low moral value. She stands firm even when Sir Thomas pressures her. Fanny shows her humility and moral strength as she prioritizes her principles over familial expectations. "Once Fanny asserts her desire and tells Sir Thomas she does not want to marry Henry" (Bowens, 27)

When Maria runs away with Henry Crawford, Fanny is deeply distressed, not only by the scandal itself but by the moral failings it represents. Her sorrows stem from her deep-seated values and disappointment in their choice. Fanny's reaction underscores her role as the moral conscience, mourning the consequences of their lack of integrity.

"The horror of a mind like Fanny's, as it received the conviction of such guilt, and began to take in some part of the misery that must ensue, can hardly be described. At first, it was a sort of stupefaction; but every moment was quickening her perception of the horrible evil. She could not doubt; she dared not indulge a hope of the paragraph being false. Miss Crawford's letter, which she had read so often as to make every line her own, was in frightful conformity with it.... Fanny seemed to herself never to have been shocked before. There was no possibility of rest. The evening passed, without a pause of misery, the night was totally sleepless. She passed only from feelings of sickness to shuddering's of horror; and from hot fits of fever to cold. The event was so shocking, that there were moments even when her heart revolted from it as impossible—when she thought it could not be. A woman married only six months ago, a

man professing himself devoted, even engaged, to another—that other her near relation—the whole family, both families connected as they were by tie upon tie, all friends, all intimate together! —it was too horrible a confusion of guilt, too gross a complication of evil, for human nature, not in a state of utter barbarism, to be capable of! —yet her judgment told her it was so. His unsettled affections, wavering with his vanity, Maria's decided attachment, and no sufficient principle on either side, gave it possibility—Miss Crawford's letter stamps it a fact.” (Mansfield Park, 510-511)

Fanny Price refuses these marriage proposals because she prefers moral values and genuine affection above social advantage. These moral values are central to Jane Austen's vision of an ideal woman during 19<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, she thought about the consequence while Maria did not:

"What would be the consequence? Whom would it not injure? Whose views might it not effect? Whose peace would it not cut up forever? Miss Crawford herself—Edmund; but it was dangerous, perhaps, to tread such ground. She confined herself, or tried to confine herself to the simple, indubitable family-misery which must envelope all, if it were indeed a matter of certified guilt and public exposure. The mother's sufferings, the father's—there, she paused. Julia's, Tom's, Edmund's—there, a yet longer pause. They were the two on whom it would fall most horribly. Sir Thomas's parental solicitude, and high sense of honor and decorum, Edmund's upright principles, unsuspicious temper, and genuine strength of feeling, made her think it scarcely possible for them to support life and reason under such disgrace; and it appeared to her, that as far as this world alone was concerned, the greatest blessing to every one of kindred with Mrs. Rushworth would be instant annihilation." (Mansfield Park, 511)

Mary Crawford is charming and intelligent but often demonstrates a lack of deep moral conviction foundation. She prioritizes social advantage and personal enjoyment over principles, as seen in her reaction to Edmund's decision to join the clergy:

“Do you think the church itself never chosen then?” “Never is a black word. But yes, in the never of conversation which means not very often, I do think it. For what is to be done in the church? Men

love to distinguish themselves, and in either of the other lines, distinction may be gained, but not in the church. A clergyman is nothing." (Mansfield Park, 107)

This remark reflects Mary's superficial values, contrasting with Edmund's commitment to integrity and Fanny's support for moral seriousness. Maria Bertram also another character that reflects her lack of moral values. Maria pursues the wealth and status over love and integrity leads to her downfall. Her decision to marry Mr. Rushworth, despite not loving him, reflects her prioritization of societal expectations:

"Being now in her twenty-first year, Maria Bertram was beginning to think matrimony a duty; and as a marriage with Mr. Rushworth would give her the enjoyment of a larger income than her fathers, as well as ensure her the house in town, which was now a prime object, it became by the same rule of moral obligation her evident duty to marry Mr. Rushworth if she could." (Mansfield Park, 44)

In addition, her lack of moral grounding becomes fully apparent when she elopes with Henry Crawford, abandoning her marriage vows and social reputation. This is foreshadowed in her flirtation with Henry during the rehearsals for Lovers' Vows, showing her disregard for propriety and loyalty.

Mrs. Norris is other character who frequently presents herself as morally superior, but her actions reveal selfishness. For example, she takes credit for Fanny's Placement at Mansfield Park but does little to support her afterward.

Me! never. I never spoke a syllable about it to Sir Thomas, nor her to me. Fanny live with me! the last thing in the world for me to think of, or for anybody to wish that really knows us both. Good heaven! What could I do with Fanny? Me! a poor, helpless, forlorn widow, unfit for anything, my spirits quite broke down; What could I do with a girl at her time of life? A girl of fifteen! the very age of all others to need most attention and care, and put the cheerfullest spirits to the test! Sure sir Thomas could not seriously expect such a thing! Sir Thomas is too much my friend. Nobody that wishes me well, I am sure, would propose it. How came Sir Thomas to speak to you about it?" (Mansfield Park, 32).

Fanny Price is struggling against the patriarchal values that Edmund and the rest of the Bertram family impose upon Fanny make her 'little' more than an "interesting object" intended for their use as a subliminal reference to slavery. Through her adoption of the moral values, Fanny revolts against their hegemonic patriarchy.

### Women and Marriage:

Marriage in Austen's time had been primarily seen as economic and social agreements between families made by the parents of the pair to be wed, and the preference of either member of the pair was not taken into account, especially the woman (Rojas, C. 32-33). Furthermore, Marriage is one of the most significant roles for women in *Mansfield Park*, seen as both means of social mobility and a way to secure their future. The pressure on women to marry well and secure a place in society is a theme that resonates throughout the novel, especially when considering how marriage is viewed as the ultimate security for women's financial and social stability. This can be seen in this text:

Mrs. Norris dismisses Mr. Rushworth's intellectual shortcomings, emphasizing his wealth and status as the crucial aspects that make him a good match for Maria. Austen said "Maria Bertram was beginning to think matrimony a duty; and as a marriage with Mr. Rushworth would give her the enjoyment of a larger income than her father's, as well as ensure her house in town, which was now a prime object, it became, by the same rule of moral obligation, in her evident duty to marry Mr. Rushworth if she could. (*Mansfield Park*, 44)

This text shows that Maria marries Mr. Rushworth not out of love but to secure her position in society. While Maria seeks marriage for ambition, Fanny Price refuses to marry Henry Crawford, despite his wealth, charm, and societal approval. Maria is the Charlotte Locus of Fanny Price. She is important to understand that women who had no choice but to surrender to the patriarchal society ruled by men. Fanny's conception of a romantic relationship is similar to that of Wollstonecraft, "where women by being brought up with men, are prepared to be [men's] companions, rather than their mistresses", Wollstonecraft (2018). Fanny may voice Wollstonecraft's thoughts while she believes that Maria loses her dignity due to her marriage.

### Women's Work and Education:

The gender role of woman as worker was to be wives and take care of children and men worked outside and earned money, also the perfect place for the ideal women of the nineteenth century was the home (Clemons, 2016). Generally speaking, the private sphere is given to women and the public sphere is given to men. In *Mansfield Park* there is not much to talk about work life, because all the female characters were housewives. Even if there were housemaids at home doing regular works of house, but that also portrayed that woman work as housemaids and make money. (Korkmazoglu, A. 2015)

Nanny shall fetch her; however, it may put me to inconvenience to have my chief counsellor away for three days. I suppose, sister, you will put the child in the little white attic, near the old nurseries. It will be much the best place for her, so near Miss Lee, and not far from girls, and close by the housemaids, who could either of them help to dress her, you know, and take care of her clothes for I suppose you would not think it fair to expect Ellis to wait on her as well as the others. Indeed, I do not see that you could possibly place her anywhere else. (*Mansfield Park*, 10-11).

Most women were constantly multitasking; they stayed at home with the children and had to cook, clean and prepare for their husbands return. Mrs. Norris opines that Fanny will take care of the child in the little white attic isolated from the family. This white attic similar to the red room of mad girl Jane Eyre and Bertha, the mad woman in the attic who stands for the reflection of the difficulties of Everywoman in a patriarchal society.

Women's education during Austen's day consisted of "drawing, dancing, piano playing, penmanship, grammar, spelling, elementary arithmetic, sometimes. In most cases, young women were taught these limited skills by their mothers at first, then, as they grew older, they would either attend a boarding school or were taught by a governess in their family home. Jane Austen portrayed that through her novel *Mansfield Park*, female characters in *Mansfield Park* got their education at home by a governess, Miss Lee:

It had been their school-room; So, called till the Miss Bertram would not allow it to be called so any longer, and inhabited as such to a later period. There Miss Lee had lived, and there they had read and written,

and talked and laughed, till within the last three years, when she had quitted them. The room had then become useless, and for some time was quite deserted, except by Fanny...." (*Mansfield Park*, 177)

Miss Lee in *Mansfield Park* has the job of a governess which is similar to the job of Jane Eyre given to her by Rochester. Miss Lee also has the same job of Lucy Snowe, the heroine of *Villette* by Charlotte Bronte and many characters of 19<sup>th</sup> century novels. Moreover, Jane Austen portrays how education is different between the social classes. Austen said that "They were a remarkably fine family, the sons very well looking, the daughters decidedly handsome, and all of them well-grown and forward of their age, which produced as striking a difference between the cousins in person, as education had given to their address; and no one would have supposed the girls so nearly of an age as they really were." (*Mansfield Park*, 14). She shows here how Fanny's cousins have a good education compared to Fanny's education because they are from upper class while she is from low class. Formal education was given to men whereas women were given little education. Fanny is the epitome of Jane Austen who had no formal education. Jane Austen was writing when Wordsworth and Coleridge were writing too. Wordsworth and Coleridge were educated at Cambridge, Taher, A (2016). Most male writers of her age got education whereas she could not get the same chance. That is why she claimed in her novel *Persuasion* that "Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands I will not allow books to prove anything". Austen had no formal education. She portrayed this patriarchy in her novels including *Mansfield Park* in the relationship between the female and male characters.

### Passivity versus Agency:

Through the characters of *Mansfield Park*, some characters act passively and others act actively. Passivity refers to the character who conform to societal expectations, avoid confrontation, and allow circumstances to dictate their lives (Hamdan, R. 2014). However, agency refers to character who actively make choices, assert their independence, and influence the course of events (Jasperson, 2017).

Each of the novel's female characters, aside from Fanny, exemplifies a different version of flawed femininity; Lady Bertram is too passive, Mrs. Norris too controlling, Maria Bertram too much coquette, Mary Crawford

too flippant (Bowens, B. 2019: 2). Fanny is not the protagonist most readers expect to face in a Jane Austen novel, because, unlike other Austen's heroines, she makes no mistakes and that makes her consistent and passive during the actions of the novel (Bowens, B. 2019). Moreover, Tony Tanner asserts that heroines are expected to be "active, riding to opposition, resisting coercion, asserting their own energy; but Fanny is almost totally passive"(Bowens, B. 2019: 10).

Funny is shy, self-effacing nature often makes her appear as a submissive character. She rarely takes direct action or voices strong opinions, particularly in her interactions with Sir Thomas Bertram or her cousins. Austen described that "Fanny obeyed, with eyes cast down and colour rising. After a moment's pause, Sir Thomas, trying to suppress a smile, went on." (*Mansfield Park*, 362). More over her role as an outsider in the Bertram family reinforces her passivity; she is conditioned to accept her lower status and limited power. Though she gets her autonomy later, Fanny is not as active as Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* or Emma Woodhouse in *Emma* who are active from the very beginning of the novels. Fanny is told by Mrs. Norris "Remember, wherever you are, you must be the lowest and last; and though Miss Crawford is in a manner at home, at the Parsonage, you are not to be taking place of her. And as to coming away at night, you are to stay just as long as Edmund chuses. Leave him to settle that". "Yes, ma'am, I should not think of anything else." (*Mansfield Park*, 258)

Nonetheless, as the quiet and often unnoticed heroine, the idea that Fanny's passivity actually allows for appropriate and acceptable active decisions (Bowens, B. 2019: 33). So, her passivity allows her to be a representative of rationally informed activity.

Reading the ways Fanny, in her 'passive' contemplation, does have agency, such as her rejection of Henry despite the overwhelming consensus around her pressuring her to do the opposite (Soriano, A. 10). Furthermore, her resistance is quite but for Powerful, highlighting how personal agency can manifest in moral fortitude rather than overt action, she said in her own words "I was quiet, but I was not blind." (*Mansfield Park*, 419)

Furthermore, when Fanny's cousins and friends plan to perform an inappropriate play, she quietly but firmly refuses to participate, "Me!" cried



Fanny, sitting down again with a most frightened look. "Indeed you must excuse me. I could not act anything if you were to give me the world. No, indeed, I cannot act." (Mansfield Park, 171)

Another character portrays passivity, Mrs. Bertram who represents a striking example of extreme passivity in *Mansfield Park*, embodying a character who relinquishes agency almost entirely. While she holds a high social status as the wife of Sir Thomas Bertram and the mistress of *Mansfield Park*, her role in the narrative is marked by inactivity, disengagement, and dependence. Austen said "To the education of her daughters, Lady Bertram paid not the smallest attention. She had not time for such cares. She was a woman who spent her days in sitting nicely dressed on a sofa, doing some long piece of needle-work, of little use and no beauty, thinking more of her pug than her children, but very indulgent to the latter, when it did not put herself to inconvenience, guided in everything important by Sir Thomas, and in smaller concerns by her sister. Mrs. Bertram relies entirely on her husband for decisions, illustrating her lack of agency or involvement in managing the house hold or her children's future.

Mary Crawford embodies agency, as she actively seeks to manipulate social situations to her advantage. She uses her charm, wit, and social skills to influence others, particularly Edmund Bertram, whom she hopes to marry. She said:

But why are you to be a clergyman? I thought that was always the lot of the youngest, where there were many to choose before him". "Do you think the church itself never chosen then?" "Never is a black word. But yes, in the never of conversation which means not very often, I do think it. For what is to be done in the church? Men love to distinguish themselves, and in either of the other lines, distinction may be gained, but not in the church. A clergyman is nothing. (Mansfield Park, 107)

This shows how Mary tries to steer Edmund toward a profession she finds more prestigious and also shows her ability to challenge Edmund's values. Moreover, Mary's active agency often aligns with selfish or morally ambiguous goals, such as her acceptance of Henry's flirtation with married women, she said "He is the most horrible flirt that can be imagined. If your Miss Bertram do not like to have their hearts broke, let them avoid Henry," (Mansfield Park, 49). Mary acknowledges Henry's tendencies but does not



condemn him. Instead, she frames it humorously, implying a degree of acceptance or even admiration for his ability to captivate others.

Another character of agency in *Mansfield Park* is Mrs. Norris. She frequently manipulates Lady Bertram; whose passive nature makes her an easy target. This allows Mrs. Norris to dominate decision-making within the family. Austen described Lady Bertram “Lady Bertram, who was a woman of very tranquil feelings, and a temper remarkably easy and indolent, would have contented herself with merely giving up her sister, and thinking no more of the matter: but Mrs. Norris had a spirit of activity,” (*Mansfield Park*, 4). Her agency confines her assertiveness and willingness to manipulate people and situations to achieve her goals. However, her agency is often used for selfish short-sighted purposes, leading to tension and conflict within the Bertram family. While she is not a traditional figure of power, her influence is pervasive, especially over characters like Lady Bertram and Fanny.

### **Conflict between Societal Norms and Individual Desires:**

Female characters in *Mansfield Park* are restricted by the expectations of the society, and these expectations make the characters live a conflict between their individual desires and societal norms. In the case of Fanny, as a poor relative taken in by the wealthy Bertram family, Fanny is expected to remain submissive, grateful, and invisible. Her role is to serve as a quiet presence in the background, never challenging the status quo or aspiring to more than her assigned place. Sir Thomas and even some members of the family see her as a burden rather than an equal. Mrs. Norris continued: “I hope she will prove a well-disposed girl and be sensible of her uncommon good fortune in having such friends”. “Should her disposition be really bad,” said Sir Thomas, “we must not, for our own children’s sake, continue her in the family; but there is no reason to expect so great an evil. We shall probably see much to wish altered in her, and must prepare ourselves for gross ignorance, some meanness of opinions, and very distressing vulgarity of manner; but these are not incurable faults—nor, I trust, can they be dangerous for her associates.” (*Mansfield Park*, 11)

Sir Thomas pressed Fanny to accept Henry Crawford's marriage proposal disregarding her feelings. He said “This is very strange!” said Sir Thomas, in a voice of calm displeasure. His statement reflects the societal expectation

that she must obey and prioritize financial and social security over personal preference. When Fanny refuses Henry's marriage proposal, Sir Thomas and Edmund see Fanny's failure to meet their expectations (Bowens, B. 2019). Fanny said "I—I cannot like him, Sir, well enough to marry him," (*Mansfield Park*, 364). This decision reflects the gap between the external expectation of obedience and her internal commitment integrity.

Maria Bertram was also a character who was constrained by the societal expectations, as she was raised to value wealth, rank, and appearances above all else. Maria's marriage to Mr. Rushworth is purely transactional, he offers her financial security and social status, despite her lack of affection for him. Maria's Father, Sir Thomas, supports the engagement because of the material advantages it brings, reinforcing societal expectations. "Sir Thomas, however, was truly happy in the prospect of an alliance so unquestionably advantageous, and of which he heard nothing but the perfectly good and agreeable. It was a connection exactly of the right sort; in the same county, and the same interest; and his most hearty concurrence was conveyed as soon as possible." (*Mansfield Park*, 46)

However, Maria's dissatisfaction with her marriage leads her to engage in an affair with Henry Crawford, exposing her internal rebellion against the societal role imposed on her. Her eventual disgrace reveals the fragility of a life built on shallow societal values. This can be traced here: "Maria's notions on the subject were more confused and indistinct. She did not want to see or understand. "There could be no harm in her liking an agreeable man—everybody knew her situation—Mr. Crawford must take care of himself." (*Mansfield Park*, 52)

Maria's personal reality becomes clear; She longs for recognition, passion, and freedom, which she feels are absent in her life with Mr. Rushworth. This reveals Maria's internal conflict, as she recognizes Mr. Rushworth's inadequacies but feels compelled to marry him for the financial and social benefits.

### Similarity between Jane Austen and Fanny Price:

Jane Austen as an author living in the eighteenth and nineteenth century society which was patriarchal society, she believed that women must fight to get their rights. There is no difference between Jane Austen and the heroines in her novels. As a writer, she was so powerless to write her name

in her novels. Moreover, Jane Austen portrayed through her novels the real and miserable situations faced women in her time, (Taher, 2016). Austen and Fanny both prioritize emotional authenticity over outward appearances or societal pressures. Both characters face internal conflict between following their hearts and adhering to the expectations of those around them. This struggle reveals their belief in the importance of genuine emotional connections, even when it places them at odds with society.

Jane Austen was of the opinion that "Nothing can be compared to the misery of being bound without love." (Taher, 107). Claire Harman argues in her article, *Why Did Jane Austen Never Marry?*, there were plenty of young men for Jane Austen to choose from in her youth but for one reason or the other she could not snatch a "single man in Possession of a large fortunes". Many marriage proposals were made to her. She accepted the proposal of 'Harris Bigg-Wither', brother of Jane's friends Alethea and Catherine. However, she broke off her engagement from Harris for the lack of really powerful feeling. (Taher, P.114)

Both Austen and Fanny experience a tension between self-identity and societal expectations. Austen navigated her role as an unmarried woman writer in a world that largely dismissed women's literary achievements. Fanny, though not a writer, faces a similar struggle with her role in society as an orphaned niece and Potential marriageable woman whose actions are scrutinized by her family: "I—I cannot like him, Sir, well enough to marry him." (Mansfield Park, 364)

Furthermore, Fanny Price and Jane Austen are similar in their education. Jane Austen got her education at home, "Little education is given to them at home. Jane Austen had no formal education. She was educated at home. This was in direct contrast to the education of most males of Austen's class who would have been sent to formal education!" (Taher, P. 116), and she portrayed her education to her heroine Fanny Price.

## Conclusion:

This study concludes that Austen's *Mansfield Park* portrays a complex interplay between societal norms and individual desires and roles of women during 19<sup>th</sup> century. Fanny Price, as the protagonist, stands as a moral figure whose values remain steadfast despite the pressures from her wealthy relatives and society. Fanny's rejection of inappropriate proposals, such as

from Henry Crawford, underscores her resistance to the superficial expectations surrounding her. This stance is contrasted with characters like Maria Bertram, whose pursuit of wealth and status leads her to prioritize societal approval over personal happiness, resulting in her moral downfall. Similarly, Mary Crawford's flirtation with moral ambiguity highlights the tension between social advantage and personal integrity, further underscoring the theme of moral values that pervades the narrative.

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* through the lens of multi-feminist literary theory (Wollstonecraft, Beauvoir, Gilbert & Gubar), examining how the novel reflects and critiques the gender roles and societal expectations imposed on women in early nineteenth-century England. By focusing on the protagonist, Fanny Price, and other key female characters, this study has demonstrated the complexities of women's roles within a patriarchal society, exploring themes such as morality, marriage, education, and social agency.

Austen's portrayal of women, especially through Fanny's quiet yet firm resistance to societal pressures, challenges the prevailing norms of her time. The novel critiques the limited agency women had in choosing their paths, particularly in matters of marriage often to secure financial stability and social status rather than a union based on mutual affection. Fanny's refusal of Henry Crawford's proposal, grounded in her strong moral convictions, highlights her autonomy and agency, standing in stark contrast to other female characters who conform to societal expectations in exchange for wealth and status. This study has introduced Fanny Price as a proto-feminist figure who resists the hegemonic patriarchy of the society though smoother than Emma Woodhouse or Elizabeth Bennet. Fanny embodies Wollstonecraft's ideal woman, principled, thoughtful, and resistant to manipulation. Fanny Price, has become an epitome of clashes between personal desire and patriarchal societal norms, particularly those concerning class, marriage, and female agency. The most notable declaration of Fanny as well as Austen to win the tension between woman autonomy and the patriarchal society is this line in *Mansfield*: "We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be", which emphasizes the inner female identity over the external and patriarchal social order of *Mansfield Park*.

Ultimately, this study not only deepens our understanding of *Mansfield Park* as a social critique but also highlights Jane Austen's relevance as a pioneering writer who, through *Mansfield Park*, contributed to the broader conversation on gender equality and women's rights. Her ability to subtly question and defy the expectations of her time places her at the forefront of early feminist scholars, and *Mansfield Park* remains a valuable text in the ongoing dialogue about the role of women in 19<sup>th</sup> century literature and society.

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