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Space, place and masculinity in the work of Jane Austen

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PhD Thesis
Trinity College Dublin

October 2010
Declaration

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Summary

This thesis examines masculinity in the work of Jane Austen through the lens of space and place. Austen’s work, in academia as well as the public mind, is associated with one space in particular: England. This association has a strong textual basis; all of Austen’s “on-stage” action is set there. However, it fails to capture the complexities of Austen’s use of space and place, in particular the way they are used to define her male characters. This thesis considers Austen’s settings in a wider sense: considering “off-stage” settings, implied settings, even imaginary constructions of space within Austen’s novels. It suggests that English masculinity in Austen’s works must be considered in the context of changing national and global spaces. At a micro level, the thesis considers English masculinity within the context of local places (specifically the landed estate).

A foundation of this thesis is the idea that certain types of masculinity operate within certain types of space. Examining masculinity in the context of the spaces of the novels facilitates a full, multi-layered understanding of how English masculinity is portrayed in Austin’s work. This ranges from landed masculinity and masculinity constructed in opposition to a French or continental “other”, to masculinity within the colonial space and military masculinity in the context of the Napoleonic Wars.

The thesis is divided into five chapters and covers Austen’s six major novels. Chapter one considers *Northanger Abbey* and examines General Tilney’s characterisation as a Burkean landowner in the context of the abbey. The novel also explores constructions of English masculinity in opposition to continental Europe, based on Austen’s symbolic use of the gothic. Chapter two considers *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Both novels explore landed masculinity in depth, but contrast this with masculinity constructed in relation to other spaces. Chapter three examines *Mansfield Park*, specifically the novel’s dramatisation of a crisis in English masculinity, demonstrated in the colonial space and within the landed estate. Chapter four considers Mr Knightley in *Emma* as a positive representation of landed masculinity, constructed in relation to several spaces, chiefly the estate, France and the United Kingdom. Finally, chapter five analyses *Persuasion*’s celebration of naval/colonial masculinity following victory in the Napoleonic Wars, comparing this version of English masculinity favourably with landed masculinity.
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References to Jane Austen’s works are to these editions:


The following abbreviations are used within the text:

NA Northanger Abbey

S&S Sense and Sensibility

P&P Pride and Prejudice

MP Mansfield Park

E Emma

P Persuasion
Introduction

Space and place

This thesis approaches masculinity in the work of Austen through the under-explored theoretical perspective of space and place. In terms of Austen scholarship, the prominence of feminist readings has eclipsed other critical methodologies. As Roger Sales suggests in his 1994 work *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England* neglect of masculinity within Austen criticism is hardly surprising: “Austen’s explorations of different masculine identities have not received enough critical attention. It could be argued that this is as it should be since the novels are primarily concerned with the education of heroines”.¹ This thesis is an attempt to give Austen’s masculine identities more attention than they have hitherto received.

This thesis will examine Austen’s masculine identities through the lens of space and place. In Edward Said’s seminal work *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), he notes that geography and location are aspects of literary criticism that receive relatively little attention:

> After Lukacs and Proust, we have become so accustomed to thinking of the novel’s plot and structure as constituted mainly by temporality that we have overlooked the function of space, geography, and location.²

Space, geography and location have not been entirely ignored by literary critics. Authors such as Franco Moretti have examined the role of space within the novel form in some detail. Moretti in his 1998 work *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* attempts to map the European novel, locating both the settings of entire genres and plots of individual novels on the world map to show that setting drives plot. Austen’s novels are heavily featured in Moretti’s analysis. He analyses the scope of Austen’s settings in comparison to the settings used by the English writers of the gothic novel during the 1790s, an analysis considered in chapter one of this thesis. For the purposes of this introduction Moretti’s general point is germane: geography drives action rather than action driving geography:

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An atlas of the novel. Behind these words, lies a very simple idea: that geography is not an inert container, it is not a box where cultural history ‘happens’, but an active force, that pervades the literary field and shapes it in depth.\(^3\)

Setting is crucial; indeed certain genres and plots can only operate in specific places:

[T]he nature of a given place (Lesage’s road, Pushkin’s border, or Conrad’s river) is indeed ‘a component of the event’: in the sense that each space determines, or at least encourages, its own kind of story [...] Space is not the ‘outside’ of narrative, then, but an internal force that shapes it from within. Or in other words: in modern European novels, what happens depends a lot on where it happens.\(^4\)

This thesis will develop and apply Moretti’s thinking about setting to the kinds of masculinity explored within Austen’s novels. A foundation stone for this thesis is the idea that certain types of masculinity operate within certain settings and spaces. The spaces in which Austen’s plots operate enable the exploration of different versions of masculinity. I will elaborate on this point further in the course of this introduction, but it is important to emphasise that this work considers not just physical settings, but also “off-stage” settings, implied settings, even imaginary constructions of space within Austen’s novels.

**Austen’s associations with the space of England**

The association between Austen’s work and one particular space is well known. A simplistic connection between Austen and England is fundamental to how the writer is perceived outside of academia. G.E. Mitton’s suggestion in 1905 that Austen is the “most thoroughly English”\(^5\) of writers has gained momentum throughout the last century as Austen took her place at the centre of what Roger Sales terms the “heritage industry”.\(^6\) In fact, Mitton’s designation suggests the extent to which Austen is not merely associated with England, but is seen to be quintessentially representative of it.

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Austen’s associations with England as a space are particularly important to my exploration of English masculinity in relation to space and place.

Yet Austen’s connection with England is not as straightforward as it seems; it is a topic that needs to be approached with some caution. It is a connection that owes a great deal to promotional and marketing activity that occurred long after her death. Although it is not the purpose of this thesis to explore posthumous constructions of Austen in any great depth, it is worth pausing briefly here to consider the issue before moving on to the settings and geographical spaces of her work, since, at the very least, it is relevant to examine the way in which the geography of Austen’s novels was used to establish Austen as a particularly English writer. Kathryn Sutherland has explored this issue in depth in her 2005 work *Jane Austen’s Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood*. The careful construction of Austen’s image for public consumption began with the *Biographical Notice of the Author* written by her brother Henry which was published with her remaining unpublished novels in 1818. However as Sutherland points out it was her nephew J.E. Austen-Leigh’s publication *A Memoir of Jane Austen* which depicted her as an apolitical country spinster and altered her fortunes as a novelist, transforming her “from a relatively select coterie writer; a critic’s and a novelist’s novelist, to a widely esteemed cultural asset, everybody’s quintessential English novelist”.

As Sutherland argues at length, the establishment of Austen as the apotheosis of “Englishness” took place in the period between 1870 and the First World War, the heyday of British hegemony. Beginning with Austen-Leigh’s *Memoir*, it was facilitated by a number of other ventures. Publishers made a large contribution: Bentley’s re-issuing of the novels in the 1870s, the deluxe Steventon edition which was published in 1882, the publication in 1884 of two volumes of Austen’s letters edited by her great-nephew Lord Brabourne, the Macmillan complete edition of 1895-1897 which was illustrated by Hugh Thomson (the leading illustrator of the day), and the six volume Hampshire edition of 1902 all helped build Austen’s reputation as a specifically English writer.

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According to Sutherland’s analysis, these editions and biographies showed a number of features which helped to establish Austen as the quintessential “English” writer. The first is visual representation; most of these printed editions included illustrations. These visuals tended to evoke the same space and place: an idyllic, rural, pre-industrial England. The Macmillan edition of 1895-1897 was illustrated by Hugh Thomson whose style is described by Sutherland as “whimsical” and “chocolate-box”, “reflecting a nostalgia for a lost pre-industrialised society, a style which came to be known in the trade as the Cranford school of illustration, after Thomson and Macmillan’s success with Cranford in 1891”. Sutherland suggests that a representation of an England removed in time was common to all of Austen’s major 1890s illustrators: “A notable feature of the major 1890’s illustrators (Thomson, the Brock brothers, and Chris [Christiana] Hammond) was their representation of the Regency-period details of the novels as part of an idealised historical time just out of reach”. Readers of Austen were presented with a detailed visual representation of an England which was rapidly disappearing.

A second feature of these editions was the entrenchment of Austen and her work in a particular geography. James Austen-Leigh presented his aunt as the lady novelist of the Hampshire countryside. Sutherland argues that the Steventon edition of her novels attested to her “rootedness in a specific and known local territory – a particular segment of England”. In fact, the six volume Hampshire edition of Austen’s opus published in 1902 included as an appendix for each novel a “map of the actual area in which the plot was set plus a plan of the imaginary neighbourhood. The topography of the region, county or town stretches across the front pastedown and end-paper of each volume, that of the particular environment of the characters fills the back pastedown and end-paper, and the novel traverses the space between”. These editions make the edges of the map and the edges of the book the same, literally. Such a careful reconstruction of imaginary locations within real English geography, neatly bound, attests to a certain investment in imagining Austen’s literary scope as at once English and confined. This point is dramatised by what is excluded from the

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9 Sutherland, Textual Lives, 6.
10 Sutherland, Textual Lives, 6.
11 Sutherland, Textual Lives, 4.
12 Sutherland, Textual Lives, 11.
map; namely all the un-English locations in which so many important, albeit "off-stage" events occur.

For the purposes of this discussion I have completed a similar exercise, mapping the locations used in Austen’s finished novels as Appendix I. It is clear from these maps that Austen’s association with England does indeed have a foundation in the limited geographical settings which she uses in her novels: not a single scene of her mature work is set outside that country, and few are set even beyond the counties of southern England.

*Northanger Abbey* is Austen’s most westerly novel. The first half of the novel is set in Bath, although it begins in Wiltshire, the location of the Morlands’ estate. The Abbey itself is located in Gloucestershire. *Sense and Sensibility*, like Austen’s later work, takes place primarily in the vicinity of the south coast, beginning in Sussex in Norland Park and then moving westwards to the new family home, Barton in Devonshire. Barton is four miles north of Exeter. The story encompasses a sojourn in London and pauses in the Palmers’ home, Cleveland in Somersetshire (next door to Willoughby’s estate, Combe Magna). Once the action moves from Sussex in chapter five the story remains in the south-west, in Devonshire and Somersetshire. *Pride and Prejudice* operates in a different locality, the majority of the action being set in the central land-locked county of Hertfordshire, where we find Longbourn and Netherfield. The narrative moves from this location twice, firstly to Kent, where Rosings, the estate of Lady Catherine De Bourgh, is situated and then to Derbyshire, which Elizabeth visits with the Gardiners. This is the location of Darcy’s estate, Pemberley, and where Elizabeth will eventually settle. *Mansfield Park* restricts itself to two principal settings. The majority of the action is situated at Mansfield Park, in Northamptonshire, a county positioned in the geographical centre of England. The novel’s only movement away from this setting is Fanny’s extended stay in Portsmouth, on the south coast. *Emma* narrows the setting even further, never deviating from its centre in Highbury, Surrey, sixteen miles from London. The final works, *Persuasion* and *Sanditon*, move away from the central locations of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* and embrace the south coast. *Persuasion* begins in Somerset, where Kellynch Hall is situated, and moves to Lyme Regis on the
Dorset Coast. The action of the novel concludes in Bath, a location Austen had employed before.

As this summary demonstrates, not only does Austen not set a single scene outside England, but even the England she presents is geographically limited. As Franco Moretti notes:

[A] pattern does indeed emerge here: of exclusion, first of all. No Ireland; no Scotland; no Wales; no Cornwall. No ‘Celtic fringe’ as Michael Hecter has called it; only England: a much smaller space than the United Kingdom as a whole. And not even all of England: Lancashire, the North, the industrial revolution – all missing.\(^{13}\)

Derbyshire marks the most northerly point to which Austen’s narrative ever ventures. Moretti notes that Austen’s England leaves out the industrialised north and focuses instead on the Home Counties. The geographical space occupied by Austen’s novels is remarkably similar to that mapped by William Cobbett in his 1830 work *Rural Rides*, a factual, descriptive account (as he listed in the subtitle) of the counties of “Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Somersetshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Hertfordshire”. As Ian Dyck suggests, in his introduction to the book, Cobbett identified particularly with this part of the country:

Cobbett proudly described himself as a ‘South-of-England’ person whose first loyalty was to the ‘chopsticks’ of that region. No other part or people of England elicited his sympathy to the same extent, and he delighted in telling northerners and Scots that a Sussex labourer would not adopt a diet of ‘oatcakes, pea-bunnochs, and burgoo’ unless ‘every limb in his body’ be broken.\(^{14}\)

Cobbett was accused by Thomas Atwood of ignoring the plight of the modern town worker, an accusation which he answered in the following terms: “Born amongst husbandmen, bred to husbandry […] it is natural that I should have a strong partiality for country life, and that I should enter more in detail into the feelings of labourers of

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husbandry than into those of other labourers”.” 15 Austen could have answered in a similar vein and there is an element of partiality or at least familiarity in the limitations of Austen’s settings. I will consider the geographical limits of Austen’s English settings in more depth in chapter two and chapter four.

Global spaces in Austen’s novels

Yet to consider only Austen’s tangible, physical settings does not fully appreciate space and place in her novels. No nation exists in isolation and Austen’s writing career, beginning in the 1790s and concluding in 1817, coincided with a historical period in which England’s relationship with the world beyond its borders was undergoing great change. This change had significant impact upon English perceptions of their own identity and English understanding of their role in the world.

This historical period encompassed the 1801 Act of Union with Ireland, which in conjunction with the 1707 Union with Scotland created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, thus subsuming English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish identities into a new combined entity. The period was also shaped by the long, multilayered struggle with France, the struggle to defend the nation and establish supremacy over Napoleonic France which ended with the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England was also profoundly influenced by colonial expansion and the development of the British empire. These shifts were seismic and thorough-going and I will consider the central concerns of this thesis through the lens of these spaces. Although Austen’s “on-stage” settings are exclusively English, the Celtic fringe, France, the continent and the wider space of empire are all explored within the context of her novels. These spaces take particular forms and are alluded to in three principal ways. Some are explicitly acknowledged, real and tangible, some are simply implied, and others are imaginary constructs of space. Some feature within the time-frame of the narrative, and some are the settings of past adventure. A map of Austen’s global spaces is included at appendix II.

Austen’s first kind of “off-stage” settings are concrete locations to which characters travel in the course of the plot, leaving the narrative voice behind them. The most famous example is Sir Thomas Bertram’s expedition to Antigua. Sir Thomas departs

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15 Cobbett, Rural Rides, xiii.
in chapter three of the novel: “Sir Thomas found it expedient to go to Antigua himself, for the better arrangement of his affairs” (MP 28) and does not return home until chapter eighteen. These spaces can also be destinations which characters have travelled to in the past, as we see in Sense and Sensibility, in which Colonel Brandon refers to his sojourn in the colonies as a soldier with the East India Company: “I was with my regiment in the East Indies” (S&S 178). In Persuasion, the naval officers, returning to shore after the Battle of Trafalgar, talk about a variety of far-flung colonial destinations in which they have seen action during the Napoleonic Wars, including the East Indies, the West Indies, St. Domingo, Lisbon and the Cape of Good Hope.

The second kind of “off-stage” settings are places which are mentioned but never actually visited by Austen’s characters, or real spaces indicated through symbolic suggestion. In some instances, these settings are places which characters mean to travel to, or where friends or relatives are resident. For instance in Emma, Ireland is the home of Jane Fairfax’s friends, the Dixons. Jane is supposed to visit them there, but does not make the journey during the text, though we are told she “was quite longing to go to Ireland” (E 125). Often, these external spaces are not referred to explicitly, but indicated through symbolic suggestion or signified by other means. France features implicitly across the novels. In Pride and Prejudice, the militia regiment which is stationed at Meryton and which causes such excitement in the lives of the younger Bennet sisters alerts the reader to the unspoken threat of enemy France. In Mansfield Park, Sir Thomas relates an anecdote in which his journey home from Antigua is threatened by a naval attack from a French privateer (MP 162), reminding the reader again of the huge danger France posed to England in the period of writing. Emma engages symbolically with France via the character of Frank Churchill, whose manners, address and name all mark him out as symbolically French rather than English.

Lastly, some of the spaces with which Austen engages are not real geographical locations at all, but fictional or even imaginary constructions of space. For example, the Catholic countries of southern Europe feature in Northanger Abbey as the settings for Ann Radcliffe’s gothic novels which are referred to and parodied within the novel. This is a particularly complex kind of “off-stage” setting. Within the realms of
literature, it is probably fair to say that we never truly engage with space, only cultural constructions of it, and to some extent all of the spaces Austen deals with in her novels are cultural constructs. However, this is a particularly dramatic example of a fictional rather than a real space in Austen’s novels. In the course of this thesis, I will demonstrate how these spaces, both real and imaginary, are used by Austen to construct her version of English masculinity.

**English Masculinity and the estate**

We have seen that Austen’s novels operate within national and global spaces, but they also operate on a more localised level. Her work is connected with a different kind of setting – the country estate. Although this does not represent an ethnically, politically or culturally united space, it is, like all other kinds of space used by Austen, ideologically loaded. Perhaps because the estate is seen to stand for traditional values, some critics, most notably mid-twentieth-century critic Lionel Trilling, are almost eulogising in their discussion of its role in Austen’s work:

> Nothing in the novels questions the ideal of the archaic ‘noble’ life which is appropriate to the great and beautiful houses with the ever-remembered names – Northanger Abbey, Donwell Abbey, Pemberley, Hartfield, Kellynch Hall, Norland Park, Mansfield Park. In them ‘existence is sweet and dear’, at least if one is rightly disposed; they hold nothing less than the meaning of life for those who are fitted to seek it and to cherish it when it is found.¹⁶

I disagree with Trilling’s assumption that Austen endorses the landed estate without qualification and I will investigate this in much more detail throughout the course of this thesis. But interestingly, Trilling’s comment highlights another limitation on the kind of Englishness expressed in the novels. It is not merely that Austen’s novels are associated with England, they are associated with the landed country estate. While cities such as Bath, London, and Portsmouth do feature as key settings for Austen’s novels, the landed estate (or a landed estate within a wider village in *Emma*) occupies a place of central importance in the novels.

It is here that the two critical perspectives adopted in this thesis, masculinity and place, intersect. I intend to use this framework of space and place as a lens to examine Austen’s presentation of English masculinity. England’s changing relationship with the rest of the world had an impact on the construction of masculinity and I will consider how English masculinity changes and develops across Austen’s novels. At a micro level I will examine English masculinity within the context of the estate, looking specifically at the roles men undertake within this space. These roles encompass a myriad of duties from landowner and guardian of ancestral history and property, to master of servants, to provider for family, to husband. Readjusting the lens, I will consider how Austen’s males function within the wider locality or region and examine role of the English gentleman within the community, as an administrator of justice and business. I will then move from the regional to the national. What constitutes English masculinity on a national level? What distinguishes an Englishman from the enemy French or neighbouring Celts? I will consider English masculinity on a national level in the context of England’s protracted struggle with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, which provided an “other” against which the English identified themselves. Finally, moving from the national to the global, I will consider masculinity on the world stage during this period, both in terms of England’s conflict with France, which was fought on the world stage, on both land and sea, but also in the context of the development of empire. The focus of this thesis is an examination of English masculinity through the lens of space and place, but where appropriate, it will look at kinds of masculinity that are characterised by other means. Professional masculinity will be examined in contrast to landed masculinity in a discussion of Mansfield Park. Domestic masculinity will be considered in the context of landed masculinity in Northanger Abbey, but also in conjunction with a colonial and military masculinity in Persuasion.

This thesis builds on work that has already been done on the construction of English masculinity within the spaces discussed above. In considering Austen’s construction of English masculinity within the context of the estate, a major influence on this thesis is Alistair M. Duckworth’s 1971 monograph, The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen’s Novels. Duckworth examines Austen’s use of the estate and argues that the estate and the technical vocabulary of “improvement” can be read symbolically in Austen’s novels. Duckworth’s study reads Austen in conjunction
with Edmund Burke, who utilised the landed estate as a signifier of English culture and identity in his 1790 work *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. For Burke, the essence of English civilisation is captured in the systems of primogeniture and the succession of landed property from generation to generation:

> You will observe, that from Magna Charta to the Declaration of Right, it has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties, as an *entailed inheritance* derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity; as an estate specially belonging to the people of this kingdom without any reference whatever to any other more general or prior right.\(^{17}\)

In Burke’s work, the estate functions as signifier of the state itself:

> In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars.\(^{18}\)

According to Burke, the ownership of landed property is a privilege afforded to the few who then become custodians of English civilisation. Any failure to transmit the property whole and intact to the next generation is a betrayal of English values and culture. The custodian of the estate plays a fundamental role in the community, acting as landlord to his tenants, master to his servants, and head of his family. But in order to do his duty a true Englishman must also show honour to his antecedents and consideration for his future heirs by appropriate maintenance of the estate.

Duckworth reads Austen as a conservative anti-Jacobin in the context of Burkean conservatism, placing the estate at the heart of Austen’s social values. Duckworth argues that the estate, and more specifically, the language and imagery of

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\(^{18}\) Burke, *Reflections*, 34.
“improvements”, provides a symbolic means of understanding how individuals relate to their society and respond to social changes:

For Jane Austen, in *Mansfield Park*, the estate as an ordered physical structure is a metonym for other inherited structures – society as a whole, a code of morality, a body of manners, a system of language – and ‘improvements’, or the manner in which individuals relate to their cultural inheritance, are a means of distinguishing responsible from irresponsible action and of defining a proper attitude toward social change.¹⁹

I do not interpret Austen’s work as unambiguously conservative and anti-Jacobin as Duckworth does. Austen is more socially progressive than Duckworth credits. I suggest that the political position Austen expresses is not straightforward. There are points where Austen holds up conservative anti-Jacobin values, but also moments where they are seriously questioned. Furthermore, I suggest that Austen uses the estate to explore issues that move beyond the Jacobin/anti-Jacobin debates of the 1790s. In the course of this argument I will consider how Austen uses the estate to explore English self-definition (in *Northanger Abbey*) or English dependency on empire (in *Mansfield Park*). However, in this thesis I will develop the essence of Duckworth’s argument that Austen uses the physical attributes of the estate symbolically to explore issues facing the nation.

Most pertinently for my argument, Duckworth suggests that Austen uses the actual physical attributes of the estate as a symbolic indicator of the character of its owner:

Throughout Jane Austen’s fiction, estates function not only as the settings of action but as indexes to the character and social responsibility of their owners. Thus in *Pride and Prejudice* the aesthetic good sense that is evident in the landscape of Pemberley [...] permits the reader (and Elizabeth) to infer the fundamental worth of Darcy’s social and ethical character, while in *Emma* Donwell Abbey [...] is the appropriate expression of Knightley’s firm sense of stewardship.²⁰

I will explore Duckworth’s idea that the physical characteristics of the estate act as a signifier for the character of the owner in depth in the course of this thesis. For Duckworth, the exemplary estate owner is Austen’s most perfect depiction of English masculinity. While I do not wholly agree with this conclusion, there is no question that Austen presents two very positive examples of English estate proprietors in the characters of Fitzwilliam Darcy and George Knightley. This thesis will examine the elements of their characters that make them models of English masculinity. I will argue that what constitutes an excellent estate proprietor changes in the course of Austen’s writing career. As a character, Darcy is closer to the traditional Burkean model which encompasses serving as an exemplary landlord, master and head of a family, in addition to maintaining the estate, honouring his antecedents and cultivating learning and culture in the development of his library. In Knightley, Austen creates a much more practical version of landowning masculinity, incorporating a professional and hands-on approach to business and farming, along with a strong work ethic.

Through her evolving portrayal of masculine ideals Austen can be seen to engage with ideas that were debated across the eighteenth century about the role and position of the landed gentry in English society. John Barrell has considered this debate in depth in his 1983 work *English Literature in History, 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey*. Barrell examines the role and language of the eighteenth-century English gentleman across a number of texts, including the poems of James Thompson and John Dyer and Smollett’s *Roderick Random* (1748). He draws attention to the fact that originally, the right to vote was based on the premise that the individual held property, because “by his possession of ‘permanent’, heritable property, a man was or could be assumed to have a concern for the permanence of the polity, and to be above the temptation to sacrifice that concern to the consideration of immediate, local, or private interests”.

As these gentlemen made decisions about the future and development of the country as a whole, it was considered advantageous that they had no other employment to distract them. As Barrell elucidates:

> In theory, if not in practice, the property qualification was pitched high enough to ensure that the owner of property in land who was also

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enfranchised, would not need to cultivate his lands himself, but would have
the leisure to devote himself to a consideration and comprehension of the
public interest as well as his own.22

In order to maintain a comprehensive view of society, it was thought to be better if
the landed gentleman had an understanding of all professions rather than a detailed
knowledge of one. The landed gentleman was in a more objective position to make
decisions for the public good if he had no profession of his own:

Thus the gentleman of landed property had a two-fold qualification to be
regarded as disinterested: his permanent stake in the stability of the nation,
and his freedom from engaging in any specific profession, trade or
occupation which might occlude his view of society as a whole.23

This is not to say that the proprietor of landed property was intended to pursue a life
of pure leisure. Sir Richard Steele, in an essay published in *The Guardian* in 1713
suggested that a fine gentleman should be “qualif’d as well for the Service and Good,
as for the Ornament and Delight, of Society”. In the body of the essay he argues that
the landed gentleman should have been “run through a long Series of Education”,
must be “principled in Religion” as well as “instructed in all the moral Virtues” and
“led through the whole Course of the polite Arts and Sciences”. He should be “No
Stranger to Courts and to Camps” and must “learn the Policies and Interests of foreign
States, as well as to fashion and polish himself”.24 The problem with such a definition
is that it asks a great deal of the gentleman. As Barrell argues, such a creature “is
more easily described than discovered”.25 At the same time the definition is vague
about how the gentleman should actually spend his time. In the course of this work I
will examine Austen’s attitude to employment and occupation in the role of estate
proprietor. I will suggest that from *Mansfield Park* onwards, idleness in the estate
holder is a matter of great concern and I will further argue that this concern is
heightened by the threat of the Napoleonic Wars. While the military classes fight for
English values, a proportion of the landed gentry seem unproductive members of
society in comparison. I will also consider Austen’s attitude to professional men in

24 *The Guardian* 34 (April 1713).
comparison to the landed gentry, arguing that from *Mansfield Park* onwards, professional masculinity is valued more highly than previously. I will suggest that in the character of Mr Knightley Austen makes an effort to combine professional values with the best attributes of the proprietor of the estate.

Beginning with the space of the estate, or potentially the parsonage or rectory attached to the estate, I will also examine a domestic version of masculinity in Austen’s works. This strand of argument expands upon Nancy Armstrong’s 1987 work *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, which argues that during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries power became increasingly centred in the female sphere of home and family, rather than the official institutions of the state. I will consider Austen’s male characters within the space of the home and the family, as husbands and as fathers.

**A national English masculinity**

This thesis builds on work done on nationalist literature of the period, particularly in the context of the development of the United Kingdom. Katie Trumpener’s 1997 work *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* examines the cultural nationalism which the Union awakened in Scotland and Ireland. Trumpener’s argument is based around works such James Macpherson’s Ossian saga, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Fingal and Temora*, which began a vogue for nationalist myth making encompassing works by writers such as Sydney Owenson, Walter Scott and Maria Edgeworth. For Trumpener, such works were designed to celebrate the culture of nations whose individual identity was threatened by the formation of the United Kingdom. Trumpener considers Austen’s work in terms of her use of the bardic symbol of the harp, associated with Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*. However Trumpener does not consider Austen in the same terms as Macpherson, Owenson, Scott and Edgeworth as it is her conclusion that nationalist myth-making was of less importance to the English than to the Irish and the Scots.

Miranda Burgess, in her 2000 work *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order, 1740-1830*, suggests that Austen’s novels should be read within the context of this clutch of novels, and could be considered as English national romances:
Austen’s national romances reveal an often overlooked English thread among the early-nineteenth-century fictions of national character produced by such Scottish and Anglo-Irish writers such as Scott, Susan Ferrier, Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson.\(^{26}\)

Burgess suggests that Austen’s position as a “nationalistic” rather than a “domestic” novelist has been overlooked by Trumpener and others writing in the area:

In highlighting the nationalist implications of romance, Trumpener removes Austen’s novels from the genealogy she shares with Radcliffe, Owenson, Edgeworth and Scott. In contrast to her politically invested contemporaries, whose ideological engagements Nicola Watson, Ferris, and Trumpener delineate, Austen remains among the shrinking group of ‘lady novelists’ traditionally juxtaposed to Scott’s historical fiction and characterised by extreme domesticity of focus.\(^{27}\)

Burgess considers Austen’s use of “symbolic marriage”, a key device used by writers of the national romance to unite “competing cultures and classes and to celebrate what it defined as Britain’s national character”.\(^{28}\) While Burgess focuses attention on *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* and Trumpener concentrates on *Mansfield Park*, I suggest their arguments can be usefully applied to *Emma*. I argue Austen experiments with turning *Emma* into a British marriage plot novel, a genre explored by Trumpener which was popular in the two decades following the creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801. *Emma* considers the possibility of marrying the emphatically English Mr Knightley to Jane Fairfax, whose spatial associations are with the Celtic fringe. Whereas Trumpener’s study focuses on novels such as Scott’s *Waverley* (1814) or Lady Morgan’s *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) in which the essence of the nation is embodied in the female, I suggest that Austen’s most conscious representation of English character in this novel is emphatically male: Mr Knightley, whose name and background connect him with an older English tradition. Although the novel considers enacting the British marriage plot, it reneges on this possibility and unites the English Mr Knightley with Emma. I argue that this marriage can be


\(^{27}\) Burgess, *British Fiction*, 155.

understood in Burgess’s terms as symbolically English, uniting competing English “cultures and classes”.

**Masculinity on the European and world stage**

Widening the lens to consider English masculinity in terms of national, European and global spaces, this work is indebted to Linda Colley’s 1992 work *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*. Colley focuses on the creation of British identity, but she has a great deal to say about specifically English identity also. Colley argues that the development of a British national identity over the course of the long eighteenth century was contingent upon conflict with another nation: France. For almost the entire eighteenth century France existed as a danger, threatening to eliminate England’s projected power on the world stage and possibly even invade the country itself:

Prime powers on sea and on land respectively, the whale and the elephant as Paul Kennedy styles them, they were at war between 1689 and 1697, and on a larger scale and for higher stakes between 1702 and 1713, 1743 and 1748, 1756 and 1763, 1778 and 1783, 1793 and 1802, and, finally, between 1803 and the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. And these were only the most violent expressions of a much longer and many-layered rivalry.²⁹

The conception and writing of Austen’s novels (1790s-1817) coincides with the latter end of this timeline, particularly the era of the Napoleonic Wars, 1803-1815. As I have already outlined, indications of the conflict with France are visible in a number of Austen’s texts, from the militia regiment stationed in Meryton in *Pride and Prejudice* to the French privateer that threatens Sir Thomas’s safety on his return from Antigua in *Mansfield Park*, or indeed the naval careers of William Price and the sailors of *Persuasion*.

Colley argues that the war with France was fundamental in creating a collective identity and cultural identification which was central to British unity. As well as providing the catalysing threat, the French also provided the crucial “other” against which the English and the British could define themselves:

Time and time again, war with France brought Britons, whether they hailed from Wales or Scotland or England, into confrontation with an obviously hostile Other and encouraged them to define themselves collectively against it. They defined themselves as Protestants struggling for survival against the world’s foremost Catholic power. They defined themselves against the French as they imagined them to be, superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree.  

In the course of this work I will consider Colley’s arguments in the context of Austen’s depiction of English masculinity. I will examine the role which France played as an “other” against which the English could define themselves. In the context of Colley’s work and considering the role of France in particular, I will examine Austen’s depiction of military masculinity in her novels. Colley shows that the British forces grew at a phenomenal rate during the years marked by conflict with France. The British army constituted 40,000 men in 1789, growing to a quarter of a million by 1814. The navy grew from 16,000 in 1789 to 140,000 by 1812. These forces were supplemented a volunteer militia force which had grown to half a million men by 1804.  

Colley’s text paints an ambiguous picture of military of the period. Colley suggests that the glorious uniforms were a key attraction for the initial volunteer corps and that the association between the army and flamboyant dress undermined the image of the army as a bastion of a strong and steadfast English masculine institution. Tim Fulford, in his 2002 article ‘Sighing for a Soldier: Jane Austen and Military Pride and Prejudice’ and his 1999 book Romanticism and Masculinity examines a scandal that occurred within high ranks during the period of the Napoleonic Wars involving the Duke of York, son of George III. The Duke of York’s mistress Mrs Clarke was found to be accepting bribes from army officers seeking promotion. This incident scandalised society because it underlined the extent to which the forces entrusted with the safety of the nation and keeping Napoleon at bay were riddled with sexual immorality and financial corruption. However, as both Colley and Fulford elucidate, by the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the navy, whose performances in the Battles of  

30 Colley, Britons, 5.  
31 Colley, Britons, 287.  
32 Colley, Britons, 186.
Trafalgar and Waterloo finally freed the nation from the threat of Napoleonic France, were lauded as national heroes and Nelson was considered the saviour of the nation. In the course of this work I will consider military masculinity in the national and global space in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. I will argue that Austen’s attitude to military masculinity undergoes change in her work. The militia is portrayed as emasculated and ineffective in *Pride and Prejudice*. However, *Persuasion*, in the light of victory in the Napoleonic Wars, presents a much more positive portrait of military masculinity. I will pay particular attention to the military as a meritocratic means of gaining status in Austen’s society, which is contrasted with the more static systems of landed economy.

**England and English masculinity in a state of change**

Austen’s writing career (1790s-1817) corresponds to a period during which the structure of English society and England’s relationship with wider global spaces changed dramatically. English identity and culture cannot be considered as a single, unchanging concept during this period. Instead, it must be seen as a reactive force, adjusting to the changes that were taking place both inside and outside the borders of the nation. As Nigel Leask argues in his 1992 work *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire*, colonial expansion was not only a process by which England exported its culture to the colonies, thus spreading “Englishness” further across the globe. The complex relationship with the expanding colonial space shaped English identity just as much as the English exported their culture:

[...] one cannot simply speak of imperialism in this period as a moment of historical crisis for the civil ideology of a pre-constituted nation state. It is not as if an ‘originary’ civil discourse, developed within a cohesive metropolitan community, was *subsequently* brought into crisis by its misprision within a colonial or imperial context. The argument of this book is rather that national culture was as much a product of imperial expansion, as imperialism was the ‘expression’ or exportation of that culture.\(^{33}\)

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A very similar point could be made with regard to English culture within the context of the United Kingdom. Instead of imposing English culture across the entire United Kingdom, the Union encouraged individual nations to consider the essence of their own national identities. The Union had a huge impact on English identity by forcing the English to consider their character more carefully. Similarly, while the spectre of defeat by Revolutionary and Napoleonic France existed as a threat to England throughout this period, this hazard changed the nature of English identity while simultaneously threatening to destroy it. There were periods during the ongoing conflict with France when fear of an invasion of England was palpable, and this had huge implications for England’s understanding of itself as a dominant world power. However, when England defeated the French at the Battle of Waterloo, the national mood changed considerably. Fear and anxiety were replaced with a newfound confidence.

In this thesis, I will argue that Austen’s presentation of English masculinity varies considerably throughout the novels, reflecting these wider changes in social attitudes and in self-perception. The changing nature of Austen’s heroes, I will show, can be best understood in the context of the changing nature of England’s relationship with these national, British, European and global spaces. Thus, in Sense and Sensibility, the colonial space is viewed positively and uncomplicatedly as a space which has the capacity to empower and enrich the male. However in Mansfield Park, the dependence upon the colonial has the potential to place English systems of governance at risk and put the English estate owner in a weak position. Pride and Prejudice presents quite a negative image of a military masculinity, championing a domestic, land-based masculine role model instead. But following triumph in the Napoleonic Wars, Persuasion lauds its naval characters and considers success on the battlefield and the commercial success that accompanies it as indicators of a more aggressive idealised masculinity that the time and place demands.

**The compositional history of the novels**

In order to map such a change and to demonstrate how the novels correspond to historical events we need to consider the chronology of Austen’s novels in some detail. Austen’s novels were published between 1811 and 1818. However, as many scholars have demonstrated, the periods of composition (of the early works in
particular) are more complex than the years of publication might suggest. Anthony Mandal in his 2007 work *Jane Austen and the Popular Novel: The Determined Author* dates the early juvenilia pieces between 1787 and 1790, the more ambitious novelettes (Love and Friendship/Lesley Castle) between 1790 and 1793. *Lady Susan* was first drafted between 1794 and 1795. He suggests that work began on initial versions of *Sense and Sensibility* (Elinor and Marianne) circa 1795, *Pride and Prejudice* (First Impressions) between October 1796 and August 1797, and *Northanger Abbey* (Susan) around 1798/1799. Kathryn Sutherland posits similar dates for *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, drawing attention to the two-stage nature of the composition:

*A Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* must each have taken shape, wholly or partly, in more than one draft, between 1795-8 and 1810-12, by which time the former had been recast from a novel-in-letters and the latter, in Jane Austen’s own words, ‘lop’t and crop’t’ and according to Cassandra’s later memory altered and contracted.

Although these novels were not published until the 1810s, and were significantly revised in the meantime, they were initially products of the 1790s. The influence of literary fashions of the 1790s is clearly identifiable in their final versions; for example, *Northanger Abbey*’s engagement with the Radcliffean gothic novel and *Sense and Sensibility*’s use of dual heroines. The final three novels on the other hand are much more clearly products of the 1810s. *Mansfield Park* was begun around February 1811 and completed shortly after June 1813. As Kathryn Sutherland points out, Austen’s sister Cassandra was later to give dates for the compositional period of *Emma*, begun in January 1814 and finished by March 1815. *Persuasion* was begun on 8 August 1815 and the first draft completed by July 1816.

Plainly the novels encompass a much wider compositional period than their publication dates suggest, and so Austen necessarily engages with England across a wider time-frame than merely the 1810s. This understanding of the compositional history of the novels clarifies many seeming anomalies and incongruities. For

36 Sutherland, *Textual Lives*, 125.
instance, many contemporary readers were puzzled by the appearance of *Mansfield Park* in the light of its immediate predecessor *Pride and Prejudice*. *Mansfield Park*'s dark moral tone came as a shock for those who were expecting something similar to the light, bright, sparkling *Pride and Prejudice*. However, this grave difference in mood can be partly explained by the time gap between the genuses of these novels. *Pride and Prejudice* was conceived in the 1790s, but by the time Austen formulated *Mansfield Park* in the early 1810s, England and its position in the world had changed considerably, destabilising the sunny optimism which marks *Pride and Prejudice*.

Anthony Mandal rightly suggests that the wave of Austen criticism which situates her work within the Jacobin/anti-Jacobin debates of the 1790s has had the effect of downplaying the importance of the 1810s as an historical period in which to read and understand Austen’s novels. This thesis builds on works such as Roger Sales’s 1996 monograph *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England*, which attempts to situate Austen’s work more firmly within the cultural and social history of the Regency period. Sales’s work is of particular interest to my research not only in considering the novels within a detailed understanding of their historical period but also in focusing on Austen’s depiction of the male subject. His work is a major influence on this thesis and I will return to it in more depth when examining *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*.

**Considering the project within current research**

Examining Austen’s works in the context of empire, the formation of Britain and the threat of Revolutionary and Napoleonic France challenges the myth of the apolitical Austen. This myth was another aspect of the Austen constructed by her relatives and marketed to the reading public after her death. The biographical works by Henry Austen and J.E Austen-Leigh are keen to emphasise Austen’s piety, respectability, modesty, but above all, her lack of political engagement. J.E. Austen-Leigh famously described Austen as follows:

> She was always very careful not to meddle with matter which she did not thoroughly understand. She never touched upon politics, law or medicine, subjects which some novel writers have ventured on rather too boldly.
[...T]he politics of her day occupied very little of her attention.\textsuperscript{37}

Similarly, Caroline Austen could remember "absolutely nothing"\textsuperscript{38} of Austen's political views. The Austen who occupies the popular imagination, whose existence was "not by any means a life of event",\textsuperscript{39} but was "singularly barren: few changes and no great crises ever broke the smooth current of its course",\textsuperscript{40} was born here. The myth of Austen's apolitical status has persisted into the twenty-first century. The accusation that Austen displays no awareness of the significance of historical events unfolding around her is levied time and again. Raymond Williams claims that "it is a truth universally acknowledged that Jane Austen chose to ignore the decisive historical events of her time. Where, it is still asked, are the Napoleonic Wars: the real current of history?"\textsuperscript{41} D. A. Miller cites the Napoleonic Wars as one of the three subjects which Austen's novels do not treat.\textsuperscript{42}

Within academic criticism, rather than popular perceptions of Austen, this myth has been comprehensively dismantled since Marilyn Butler's groundbreaking work, \textit{Jane Austen and the War of Ideas} (1975), which argued for Austen's engagement with the Revolution debates of the 1790s and beyond. Butler's work was the catalyst for a long line of critical assessments which take a historicist approach to Austen. This thesis builds on work which established Austen as politically, economically and socially aware. Given its explicit concentration on masculinity in Austen, this thesis is not principally a feminist reading of the novels, although chapter three does situate Austen's work in the context of the anti-Jacobin versus Revolutionary feminist debates of the 1790s. However, it owes a great deal to the historicist approach and insight of feminist studies of Austen such as Deborah Kaplan's \textit{Austen Among Women} (1992), Mary Poovey's \textit{The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen} (1984), Margaret Kirkham's \textit{Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction} (1983) and perhaps most of all Claudia L. Johnson's \textit{Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel} (1988), whose reading of

\textsuperscript{38} Austen-Leigh, \textit{Memoir}, 173.
\textsuperscript{39} Austen-Leigh, \textit{Memoir}, 137.
\textsuperscript{40} Austen-Leigh, \textit{Memoir}, 9.
\textsuperscript{41} Raymond Williams, \textit{The Country and the City} (London: Hogarth Press, 1985), 113.
\textsuperscript{42} See D. A. Miller, \textit{Narrative and its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel} (Princeton & Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1981), 4. The other subjects are "the sex life of the characters and the farm labour of the tenants who farm their estates".
Austen’s politics matches mine most closely. As this thesis is interested in exploring masculinity in Austen through place and space, it owes a great deal to those works of history and politics which have examined England’s relationship with its empire, its dealings with France and its engagement with the “Celtic fringe” countries of Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In addition, it takes inspiration from those works of literary criticism which examine English literature in the context of these events.

England’s relationship with its empire has received a great deal of recent critical attention in several academic disciplines including history, politics and literary studies. This thesis benefits from work done by historians such as Linda Colley in her 2002 work *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850* in establishing the impact which the rapid expansion of empire during this period had on the identity of the domestic English public. England and its empire have proved a fruitful area for literary studies too. This thesis is influenced by works such as Edward Said’s seminal *Culture and Imperialism* (mentioned above) which famously examines the “off-stage” role of Sir Thomas’s sugar plantation in Antigua in the plot of *Mansfield Park*, suggesting that the faint presence of this colonial plantation demonstrates the way in which the imperial was consciously or unconsciously suppressed by the English. My work also engages with more recent examinations of English literature and empire, for example Nigel Leask’s work *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (1992), mentioned earlier in this introduction, which suggests that anxieties about the colonial dimension are a facet of Romantic writing. Saree Makdisi’s *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (1998) which examines colonial development as an aspect of modernity and explores the ways in which Romantic writers responded to this phenomenon, has also been helpful.

This work also draws on historical studies of the development of the United Kingdom. Norman Davies’s 1999 work, *The Isles: A History* charts the long and complicated process by which the United Kingdom came into being, and in particular shows the role of the Napoleonic Wars in uniting four distinct countries into one ideological whole. My work is particularly indebted to studies which examine the role literature had to play in asserting individual national identity. Katie Trumpener’s *Bardic*
Nationalism: the Romantic Novel and the British Empire, mentioned earlier, has been especially influential in this regard.

An understanding of England’s relationship with France, its ancestral enemy and closest European neighbour, is fundamental to an understanding of England itself, particularly in the period of Austen’s writing. This thesis builds on work such as Linda Colley’s Britons, mentioned above. It also takes inspiration from works that read Austen in the context of England’s struggles with France during the period, from studies which deal with France as a Revolutionary/Jacobin entity, such as those by Marilyn Butler and Claudia L. Johnson mentioned above, to more specific studies such as Warren Roberts’s Jane Austen and the French Revolution (1979) and Brian Southam’s Jane Austen and the Navy (2000).

My work also owes a debt to those studies which examine masculinity in Austen’s novels, either from an historical angle, such as Roger Sales’s Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England (1996), or through symbolic discourse, for example Alistair Duckworth’s Jane Austen and the Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen’s Novels (1971), which reads Austen’s estates as metaphors for the nation. A symbolic reading of Austen is in evidence in a more recent study, Jill Heydt-Stevenson’s Austen’s Unbecoming Conjunctions: Subversive Laughter, Embodied History (2005), which examines images and embodied language as signifiers for issues that Austen could not address directly in the text. In particular, when this work looks at implied, suggested and imaginary spaces in Austen’s work, it builds on these attempts to read Austen’s work symbolically.

The argument

The point of this project is not to undertake an exhaustive analysis of all of Austen’s male characters. Some characters feature very heavily in the content of this thesis, some not at all. Rather, the purpose is to address each novel in turn and give a reading which focuses on depictions of English masculinity, based on the spaces and places with which certain influential male characters are associated. Each chapter begins by identifying the key spaces with which the novel engages and considers how these spaces are used to explore masculine constructs within the novel. This sheds
light on the way in which different kinds of English masculinity are exemplified, considered and contrasted in each of Austen’s novels.

Chapter one is concerned with *Northanger Abbey*, concentrating primarily on the space of the abbey and the character of General Tilney. I will argue that the abbey as a place and consequently the architecture Catherine expects to find there, raise her expectations that the General is an example of depraved, gothic masculinity. I will then examine Henry’s famous rebuke to Catherine following the revelation of her gothic suspicions. Henry’s speech takes the debate about English masculinity into the realms of national identity. What does it mean to be an Englishman in the 1790s? Henry argues that England is too civilised and rational to be an appropriate space for the kind of behaviour of which Catherine imagines the General capable. Catherine, by appropriating gothic scenarios taken from the work of Ann Radcliffe, confuses two very different spaces: Radcliffe’s Catholic, southern Europe settings and Catherine’s own Gloucestershire. *Northanger Abbey*, I will show, engages with a variety of English travelogues that assert England’s superiority by comparing it to Catholic, superstitious Europe. Finally I will return to the abbey. How must an abbey be understood in an English setting? I will suggest that Catherine completely misinterprets the abbey and fails to appreciate that the building is no gothic vehicle, but a landed estate. Rather than a depraved gothic villain, the General must be understood as a Burkean landowner. However, I will argue that Catherine is correct to suspect the General of behaviour unbecoming an Englishman, suggesting that his worst action in the novel (evicting Catherine from his home without ceremony) is motivated by his avarice. I show how his behaviour as an estate owner further demonstrates this acquisitive trait in the General.

Chapter two examines *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Both these novels explore landed masculinity in some detail. I will argue that *Sense and Sensibility* demonstrates that the space of the landed estate can encourage acquisitiveness and greed in its male owners, and that the portion-less female can be the victim of this avarice. Comparing the position of Marianne Dashwood’s two suitors, I will suggest that the systems of inheritance and primogeniture can feminise the male subject, leaving a character like John Willoughby, ostensibly a perfect romantic hero, so heavily dependent on wealthy female relatives and heiresses that his
ability to play the role of male suitor is compromised. Expanding the space under scrutiny, I will examine empire within the novel as it is evoked by Colonel Brandon who has spent time in the East Indies. I will argue that empire is presented as a space for the accumulation of wealth and provides a welcome alternative source of income to the domestic land-based economy. I will argue further that association with the space of empire has the potential to enhance the masculinity of the male subject. It does so by providing him with an opportunity to amass capital, which leaves him less dependent on the land-based systems of inheritance. The Colonel’s wealth means that he is in a position to provide for Marianne Dashwood as her husband, something which Willoughby was unable to do.

_Pride and Prejudice_ posits a very positive representative of English landed masculinity in the character of Fitzwilliam Darcy. Austen contrasts Darcy with Lieutenant Wickham, who is associated with a military masculinity, having joined the standing militia which expanded during the period in the face of the threat from Napoleonic France. In this novel, Austen paints military masculinity in a poor light, evoking a debauched, emasculated militia who have joined in search of high jinks and shiny uniforms, rather than out of a sense of duty. The novel demonstrates how Darcy’s worth and importance as a man is rooted in the particular locality and region around the estate. The Darcys have established their eminence over a number of generations, whereas the rootlessness of a military existence allows Wickham to leave past transgressions behind and to reinvent himself in different spaces.

Chapter three is concerned with _Mansfield Park_. Here English masculinity is depicted in the shadow of the threat from Napoleonic France, a threat with which, I argue, Austen was particularly concerned at the time of writing. I begin by considering the character of Sir Thomas within the colonial space. I suggest his sojourn in Antigua indicates that England is not completely in control of the colonies and that the English way of life has become dependent on the produce and money generated here. I then consider Sir Thomas within the domestic space, arguing that he has not fully embraced his duties as a father, at least partly because he has been distracted by colonial concerns. I will demonstrate how Sir Thomas’s failure to supervise his daughters’ education has symbolically put the nation at risk from the forces of enemy France. I will then turn my attention to the younger generation of
men in *Mansfield Park*. Looking at Mr Rushworth as an example of landed masculinity, I will argue that he is feminised and rendered ridiculous in the text. Examining Tom Bertram as a “regent” estate proprietor when his father is occupied by Antigua, I will demonstrate how his idleness and disposition towards leisure and play threatens to ruin the estate and leave it vulnerable to a symbolic attack from the continent. I will demonstrate how in her depiction of these young men, Austen engages with fears that the leisured gentry were becoming both infected by French influence and ineffective as defenders of England against attack. I will consider *Mansfield Park*’s professional men, Edmund Bertram and William Price, and argue that Austen places faith in their professionalism (within the church and the navy) to save England.

Chapter four focuses on *Emma* and the characters of Mr Knightley and Frank Churchill. I will argue that Knightley is Austen’s most quintessentially English hero and demonstrate how she establishes his English credentials by contrasting him with Frank Churchill, whose symbolic associations are all with France. Considering the character of Knightley in the context of the space of his estate, I will argue that like Darcy, Knightley is an exemplary landed gentleman. However there are clear differences between the two characters. Knightley’s version of landed English masculinity is more strongly driven by his work ethic and characterised by a much greater affiliation with the land and produce of England. I will suggest that considering Knightley as the exemplification of Englishness we can interpret his potential marriage partners in a symbolic way. As noted above, Jane Fairfax is associated with the Celtic fringe in this novel. I will argue that by positing the possibility of a marriage between Jane Fairfax and Mr Knightley, Austen considers turning *Emma* into a version of the British marriage plot novel which was popular in the years following the creation of the United Kingdom. However, by reneging on this possibility and marrying Mr Knightley to Emma instead, Austen stages an English marriage plot rather than a British one.

Chapter five considers *Persuasion*, the opening chapters of which contrast two very different spaces and consequently, two very different versions of English masculinity. The action opens in the aftermath of the Treaty of Paris (June 1814) and in the knowledge that England’s naval heroes, who have been fighting for their country on a
world stage, are returning home. The novel begins with the fate of Sir Walter Elliot, a landed gentleman, who, having lived beyond his means for years, is forced to rent his estate to an admiral to bring his finances into order. The novel contrasts landed masculinity in the form of Sir Walter Elliot, a man who has reneged on his duties completely, with military masculinity in the form of naval heroes who have succeeded spectacularly in their job of securing the freedom of the nation.

The novel also contrasts the vastly different spaces in which these duties have been undertaken – one small estate, and the entire catchment of the colonial world – and the consequences of the task in hand – maintaining the solvency of an estate, and securing England’s position as the foremost power within the world. Obviously the novel portrays military masculinity in an infinitely better light than the landed gentry, and I will consider to what extent Austen sees the privileged systems of inheritance and primogeniture as redundant in the aftermath of victory against Napoleon. I will then consider Captain Wentworth as an example of new, meritocratic masculinity. Concluding my analysis, I will argue that the association between the colonial space and money-making, explored previously within the texts of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park*, is still strongly present. I will show that Wentworth’s status as a romantic hero is as much dependent on his wealth as Darcy’s was.

Space and place provide a useful lens through which to examine Austen’s depiction of English masculinity as it enables us to build up a multi-dimensional view of the English masculine subject. Austen depicts English masculinity within the context of the estate, within regions and the community, in terms of the nation and within a European, colonial and finally a global sphere. These spaces shape and influence Austen’s male characters and by analysing them, we can achieve a fuller understanding of what English masculinity means in Austen’s work.
Chapter one

Northanger Abbey: English identity and the landed estate

Northanger Abbey, published in 1818 after Austen’s death, is one of two novels named after an estate (the other, Mansfield Park, is examined in chapter three of this thesis). The novel operates within a contained geographical framework. Its bipartite structure is primarily defined by setting. In the first half of the novel, set in Bath, Catherine is launched upon the marriage market. In the second half, set in Northanger Abbey in Gloucestershire, she visits the familial home of her prospective husband, Henry Tilney.

My examination of space and place within this novel focuses primarily on the significance of the Northanger estate. Edward Neill identifies this in his 1999 work The Politics of Jane Austen as the key to understanding the novel: “[i]t should be remembered that the meaning of Northanger Abbey hangs largely on the ‘meaning’ assigned to Northanger Abbey itself and what it is seen to ‘encode’”. I will also examine how the space of Northanger Abbey operates within the wider space of the English nation. How should a Catholic abbey be understood in the context of a Protestant (specifically Anglican) nation? How should it be read in the context of its owner and proprietor, General Tilney? And how should General Tilney be read in relation to it? This last is the question which occupies Catherine Morland for much of the novel and I will examine how Catherine Morland’s reading material creates certain expectations about the kind of incidents she expects to occur within the space of the abbey, expectations which she projects onto General Tilney. Catherine’s obsession with gothic novels leads her to associate the General with a depraved, gothic masculinity: she considers him capable of murdering or imprisoning his wife. Henry urges Catherine to consider her suspicions with regard to the fact that they are in England, arguing that such behaviour is inconsistent with modern English masculinity.

1 These are the principal spaces occupied by the novel, although Catherine’s parents’ estate in Wiltshire is used fleetingly in the opening chapters and before the novel’s conclusion, and a scene is set in Henry Tilney’s parsonage, Woodston, which is twenty miles from Northanger Abbey.
Northanger Abbey explores constructions of English national identity through its use of the gothic. This is a topic which has been addressed by writers such as Miranda Burgess in British Fiction and the Production of Social Order, 1740-1850. Burgess considers the eighteenth-century English gothic novel as a “national romance” in the tradition of Edgeworth and Owenson, and reads Northanger Abbey in this context. For Burgess, the gothic mode facilitated the symbolic blending of two aspects of English identity, one a conservative respect for the nation’s lengthy heritage, and the other a self-confident and commercial view of the modern nation. The modernised abbey (as depicted in Northanger Abbey and, for example, Horace Walpole’s 1764 work The Castle of Otranto) fuses these two aspects in a symbolic representation of English character. In this chapter, I suggest that the gothic mode facilitates an exploration of the concept of national identity from a geographic perspective. The novel establishes an inter-textual dialogue with the gothic novels of Ann Radcliffe. This chapter compares the continental settings of Radcliffe’s gothic novels with Austen’s English spaces and explores the implications for English national identity.

The abbey itself must be understood within an English setting. I suggest that despite its pre-Reformation significance, the abbey should be read as a de facto landed estate. Such a reading implies that General Tilney himself ought to be considered in the context of the Burkean landowner, albeit a flawed one. Focusing on the architecture of the estate, I will trace how Austen describes the modernity and technological advancement of the place as a way of exploring the character of the General, presenting him in the first analysis as rational and advanced. However, the General’s commitment to modernity has a negative impact on the wider community. Finally, while the General is no murderer, he is capable of uncivil behaviour in the text, evicting Catherine from his property without ceremony. He behaves badly, not because he is a depraved gothic aristocrat, but because of his avarice. The General is an English landowner, motivated by the accumulation of cash and the enlargement of his estate. However, the text presents Henry Tilney in contrast to his father: the embodiment of an alternative kind of English masculinity, associated not with a landed estate, but with the domestic setting of an English parsonage. This version of English masculinity is a much more sympathetic prospect for Catherine who finds herself exploited and lacking in agency within the structures of landed masculinity.
The abbey as a gothic space

The gothic novel is a constant intertextual presence in *Northanger Abbey*, a connection Austen establishes in two ways. Firstly, references to the titles of gothic novels abound, as Catherine and Isabella spend the first half of *Northanger Abbey* reading gothic fiction. However, the primary connection to the gothic tradition is the abbey itself. An abbey features in the book’s title and is the setting for the second half of the action. Because of its potential to combine grandiose, awe-inspiring gothic architecture with scenes of religious life, the abbey had become something of a stalwart in gothic fiction. Regina Maria Roche’s 1796 novel, *The Children of the Abbey* has one in its title, and in Sophia Lee’s *The Recess; or, A Tale of Other Times*, (1783-1785) the twin heroines are incarcerated in a recess hidden under an abbey. The majority of the action in Radcliffe’s *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), a major source text for *Northanger Abbey*, takes place in a spectacular ruined abbey.

Gothic architecture complemented gothic fiction in reality as well as on the page. One of the most prolific English writers of the genre, William Beckford, began to build Fonthill “Abbey”, a decadent and awesome example of gothic architecture (also known as Beckford’s folly) near Bath, around the time *Northanger Abbey* was conceived. Beckford devoted great amounts of time, energy and money to the abbey in the years from 1798, coinciding with the final drafts of Austen’s novel, which was prepared for publication in 1803. Beckford’s enthusiasm was not unique. Horace Walpole, the author of *The Castle of Otranto* had already created a gothic mansion at Strawberry Hill near Twickenham, “improving” upon his ancestral home between 1742 and 1792. By the time Austen was writing *Northanger Abbey*, such buildings had become associated with rich, extravagant, outré gothic novelists.

When Catherine is invited to be the guest of her new friend Eleanor Tilney in Northanger Abbey, her excitement at the possibility of being under the “roof of an abbey!” (NA 110) is palpable: “With all the chances against her of house, hall, place, park, court, and cottage, Northanger turned up an abbey, and she was to be its inhabitant” (NA 110). It becomes clear that Catherine has expectations of the abbey as a space. She has a picture of the kinds of adventure she expects to encounter within the location of the abbey. Almost immediately after she has been invited to spend time in the abbey, she makes these expectations very plain:
Its long, damp passages, its narrow cells and ruined chapel, were to be within her daily reach, and she could not entirely subdue the hope of some traditional legends, some awful memorials of an injured and ill-fated nun.

(Catherine’s expectations, then, range from Northanger’s architecture (she anticipates long passages and “narrow cells”) and atmosphere (the damp environment and ecclesiastical elements) to evidence of horrific deeds that have taken place within the abbey walls (commemorated in “traditional legends” and corroborated in the form of the memorials of the “ill-fated nun”). Catherine’s expectations that a gothic space such as an abbey will entail gothic architecture and atmosphere, and provide a fitting setting for a gothic adventure, come entirely from her reading. She voices her expectation that the abbey will be “a fine old place, just like what one reads about” (NA 124). As they journey to Northanger Henry makes fun of Catherine’s expectations. He weaves a gothic tale about her possible experience there, focusing on the physical attributes of the abbey, the “sliding pannels [sic] and tapestry”, the “dimly lighted” halls, the “many gloomy passages” and “gloomy chambers” (NA 124). Henry’s story centres on Catherine’s visit to a deserted wing of the building. She is brought there by the monosyllabic housekeeper Dorothy, where she discovers a door, hidden in a “division in the tapestry” (NA 125). This reveals a small vaulted room, which Dorothy implies leads to “a secret subterraneous communication between your apartment and the chapel of St. Anthony, scarcely two miles off” (NA 126). On investigation of the passage, Henry completes the gothic parody by imagining that Catherine locates an “old-fashioned cabinet of ebony and gold” in which she finds a manuscript which is found to be the “memoirs of the wretched Matilda” (NA 126).

Plainly, before Catherine has even seen Northanger Abbey, she has a very clear understanding of the kind of action she foresees in a space of this kind. She expects to witness gothic adventures. Henry, who is subsequently scathing of Catherine’s suspicions of the General, has himself encouraged expectations of this sort on the journey to Northanger. It is also significant that architecture plays a vital role in facilitating these gothic scenarios. A key component of the gothic adventure which Catherine imagines is the architecture of an ancient abbey which makes these
narratives possible; long passages, deserted cells, hidden chambers, isolated wings, subterranean passages, all described as gloomy, damp and dark.

The influence of Radcliffian gothic

Catherine’s reading, then, has taught her to consider the abbey to be an appropriate architectural space in which to expect the staging of a gothic adventure. However an examination of the gothic novels Austen refers to indicates that *Northanger Abbey* is also engaging with space and place in a geographical sense, specifically, different national spaces. This complicates the conclusions Catherine has drawn about the abbey as an architectural space.

As Marvin Mudrick (among others) points out in his work *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery*, Austen is engaging with a specific kind of gothic novel, the Radcliffian model:

> It is important to note, at this point, the particular quality and direction of the gothic world that Jane Austen has under scrutiny in *Northanger Abbey*. Her ‘Gothicism’ derives, not from the stage sensuality and diabolism of M.G Lewis’s *The Monk*, but from that obvious offshoot of the lachrymose novel – the hybrid form which Mrs Radcliffe developed to its height of effectiveness and popularity, and which had been earlier cultivated in such works as Sophia Lee’s *The Recess* (1783-1785) and Charlotte Smith’s *Celestine* (1791).³

Just as Elizabeth Inchbald’s 1798 translation of Kotzebue’s *Lovers’ Vows* is woven into the fabric of *Mansfield Park* (an issue explored in chapter three), *Northanger Abbey* can be read as an intertextual debate with Radcliffe’s gothic adventures. Radcliffe wrote five gothic novels: *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and *The Italian* (1797). Except for *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, Austen either refers to or borrows from all of these novels in *Northanger Abbey*’s exploration of gothic tropes. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is the most

immediately visible of Radcliffe’s texts in *Northanger Abbey*. However, we shall see that two of her earlier works inform the text more profoundly and subtly.

In Bath, Catherine and Isabella read *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Discussions about the novel intersperse the first half of *Northanger Abbey*. Catherine and Isabella consider the incident of the “black veil”, perhaps Radcliffe’s most effective suspense-building plot device. Isabella promises Catherine that when she has finished *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, they will read *The Italian* together. *The Italian* was Radcliffe’s 1797 response to Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*. Henry Tilney also identifies himself as a fan of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (and we shall see later in the chapter that this identifies him with a female discourse of novel reading). In the second half of the novel the action moves to Northanger Abbey itself, and draws from two of Radcliffe’s other texts. In Catherine’s imagining of her gothic adventure, she takes inspiration from Radcliffe, borrowing aspects of the plots of *The Romance of the Forest* and *A Sicilian Romance*.

The first plot-borrowing occurs when Catherine investigates the Japan chest in her bedroom. This is an obvious parody of a similar scene in *The Romance of the Forest* in which the heroine explores a chest and uncovers a manuscript charting the last, horrific weeks of an unknown prisoner kept in the abbey. The prisoner is later discovered to be her father. Catherine on the other hand, finds a washing bill:

She now plainly saw that she must not expect a manuscript of equal length with the generality of what she had shuddered over in books, for the roll, seeming to consist entirely of small disjoined sheets, was altogether but of trifling size, and much less than she had supposed it to be at first. Her greedy eye glanced rapidly over a page. She started at its import. Could it be possible, or did not her senses play her false? – An inventory of linen, in coarse and modern characters seemed all that was before her! If the evidence of sight might be trusted, she held a washing-bill in her hand. (NA 136-137)

The second incident concerns Catherine’s suspicions of General Tilney. Learning that the General’s wife is dead and that her illness occurred when her daughter was absent from home, Catherine’s suspicions rise. Watching the General pace across the
drawing room, she observes "the air and attitude of a Montoni" (the villain of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; NA 150) and on this evidence decides that he must be implicated in his wife's death or imprisonment:

[T]he probability that Mrs Tilney yet lived, shut up for causes unknown, and receiving from the pitiless hands of her husband a nightly supply of coarse food, was the conclusion which necessarily followed. [...] The suddenness of her reputed illness; the absence of her daughter, and probably of her other children, at the time – all favoured the supposition of her imprisonment. – Its origin – jealousy perhaps, or wanton cruelty – was yet to be unravelled. (NA 150-151)

This scenario is blatantly copied from Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance*. In this novel, the Marquis de Mazzini, having married Louisa Bernini, falls in love with the artful Maria de Vellorno. In order to indulge in his passion for her, he abducts his wife and incarcerates her in a recess under the castle, after staging a mock funeral. He provides her with food and water and she is kept alive for many years until she is discovered and liberated by her daughter Julia. Such depraved and disturbed masculinity is attributed to the General by Catherine. She comes to believe that General Tilney is a despotic, controlling autocrat, capable of persecuting his wife while presenting a respectable face to the world.

**Gothic geographies in Radcliffe's works**

I will return to the significance of the second of these episodes in more detail in the course of this chapter, but at this point I want to consider the significance of space and place in Radcliffe's work and the implications this has for Austen's treatment of these concepts in *Northanger Abbey*. By incorporating references to Radcliffe's gothic adventures within the framework of *Northanger Abbey*, Austen is juxtaposing two very different imaginative geographies: Austen's England and Radcliffe's continental Europe. As we have seen in the introduction, Austen sets all of her finished novels within her limited definition of England. Radcliffe on the other hand operates in entirely different spaces. The Radcliffe novels featured in *Northanger Abbey* are set predominantly in either France or Italy. *A Sicilian Romance* is set, predictably, in Sicily. *The Romance of the Forest* is situated in the south of France (near Lyon) and
Switzerland. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* spans the south of France and Italy. *The Italian* is set in Naples. (The exception in Radcliffe’s oeuvre is *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, which does not feature in *Northanger Abbey* and it is interesting to note that this novel is set in Scotland, still an outlandish place from the English point of view). In this respect Radcliffe follows in the tradition of the English gothic novel, many of the most famous of which are set predominantly in southern Europe. Charlotte Dacre’s 1806 work, *Zofloya*, is set in Venice, as is Lewis’s *The Bravo of Venice* (1804). Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* is set in Italy and as the title suggests, masquerades as a translation:

The Castle of Otranto, A Story, Translated by William Marshall, Gent.
From the Original Italian of ONUPHRIO MURALTO, Canon of the Church of St NICHOLAS at OTRANTO.

In the case of *Northanger Abbey*, while Catherine’s reading has taught her that an abbey is an appropriate architectural space for the gothic, she has not considered whether England as a nation is an appropriate geographical place. This theme is explored in some depth within the text of the novel. The novel’s dramatic climax occurs when Catherine decides that she must test her theory that the General has incarcerated his wife in the abbey. Catherine takes the opportunity to explore Mrs Tilney’s chamber for herself, hoping to uncover evidence to support her speculation. Instead she discovers a neatly ordered bedroom and no evidence to suggest criminal behaviour on the part of the General. Henry, in perhaps the best known section of the novel, admonishes her roundly for harbouring such suspicions.

Left alone to reflect upon English values as Henry describes them, Catherine learns her lesson: she comes to reconsider gothic scenarios in geographic terms. She concludes that Henry is right, that the kind of gothic masculinity she has associated with the General can only be imagined within the “space” of the European continent. The murder or forced imprisonment of one’s wife is only conceivable within Radcliffe’s southern European settings, in Italy and the south of France, not in the civilised and lawful society of England. The passage is worth quoting in full:

4 Although not used by Radcliffe, Spain is also a popular location for gothic novelists of the period, with Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796) and parts of Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) situated there. Such texts demonstrate that Radcliffe’s work did not exist in geographical isolation.
Charming as were all Mrs Radcliffe’s works, and charming even as were the works of all her imitators, it was not in them perhaps that human nature, at least in the midland counties of England, was to be looked for. *Of the Alps and Pyrenees, with their pine forests and their vices, they might give a faithful delineation; and Italy, Switzerland, and the South of France, might be as fruitful in horrors as they were there represented.* Catherine dared not doubt beyond her own country, and even of that, if hard pressed, would have yielded the northern and western extremities. But in the central part of England there was surely some security for the existence even of a wife not beloved, in the laws of the land, and the manners of the age. Murder was not tolerated, servants were not slaves, and neither poison nor sleeping potions to be procured, like rhubarb, from every druggist. *Among the Alps and Pyrenees, perhaps, there were no mixed characters.* There, such as were not as spotless as an angel, might have the dispositions of a fiend. But in England it was not so; among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad. (NA 160-161; my italics)

In this passage Catherine draws demarcations between the European gothic space (Italy, Switzerland, south of France) and the non-gothic English space. Catherine demonstrates some confusion in this passage about where exactly the borders should be drawn. What exactly Catherine means by “her own country” is ambiguous. Superficially, England rather than the United Kingdom is the subject of her musings. Catherine appears to be making the claim for civilisation on a national level – *England*, the limited space in which Austen’s novels are set, offers security and protection. But taken in the context of her historical period, “her own country” could be taken to mean England, England and Wales, or the United Kingdom. Whatever the case, Catherine is plainly unwilling to vouch that the northern and western extremities, meaning Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and possibly outlying parts of England, are civilised.

Franco Moretti has considered this issue of geography and literary genre in some depth. He argues that the gothic novel of the period *did* only function within particular geographic settings. Moretti’s work, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-*
1900 attempts to “map” genre in terms of their geographical settings. He notices the clearly demarcated border between the geographical spaces Austen inhabits in her novels and the territory marked out by the gothic novel:

In general, Gothic stories were initially set in Italy and France; moved north, to Germany, around 1800; and then north again, to Scotland, after 1820. Except for one tale located in Renaissance London, no other story takes place inside Austen’s English space.5

Radcliffian gothic, just like the original drafts of Northanger Abbey, is a product of the 1790s, so these works belong to stage one of the trajectory Moretti outlines above. Moretti’s map is included at appendix III and demonstrates the way in which Austen’s England and the 1790s gothic novel exist in two different spaces. Moretti’s study, which encompasses a range of genres, from the historical to the sentimental, concludes that the borders between genres often correspond to geographical borders:

[...W]hat happens in the Highlands could not ‘just as well happen’ in the Home Counties or viceversa [...] There is no picaresque of the border, or Bildungsroman of the European in Africa: this specific form needs that specific space – the road, the metropolis.6

According to Moretti’s analysis, the gothic novel of the 1790s functions within the southern European settings of France and Italy – England is the “wrong space” for a gothic novel. The occasional gothic novel is set in Britain, even in England, though notably not in modern, Protestant England. Clara Reeve’s The Old English Baron (1777) has a pre-Reformation setting. Sophia Lee’s The Recess (1783-1785) is set in the reign of Elizabeth I. Eliza Fenwick’s Secresy, Or, The Ruin on the Rock (1795) is set in England but crucially, lies beyond Austen’s world, being set in Cornwall, on the “Celtic fringe” rather than “Austen’s England”. As Moretti’s map demonstrates, the geographical settings occupied by the gothic novel and what he designates “Austen’s English space” are almost mutually exclusive. Certainly, Radcliffie’s gothic novels exist within a different space to Austen’s England. The conclusions which Catherine eventually draws are geographical in nature; depraved, gothic masculinity can only

6 Moretti, Atlas, 70.
exist within a particular European space: amongst the Alps and Pyrenees, in Italy, Switzerland and the south of France. As Moretti implicitly suggests, Catherine’s fundamental problem is geographical confusion. At one point in *Northanger Abbey*, the extent to which Catherine’s reading material encourages her to misread the geographical signifiers of her own country is made very explicit. On viewing Beechen cliff, she remarks blithely, “I never look at it [...] without thinking of the south of France” (NA 82). This attempt to impose a non-English landscape on an English one can be seen to be analogous to her attempts to apply the gothic plots of southern European settings to an English setting. The message Henry conveys in reproving Catherine is that the events of a gothic novel and the versions of male behaviour it describes could never occur in an English setting. By the end of the novel, Catherine has absorbed his point.

**English self-perceptions and national pride**

The text goes to some lengths to answer questions about why gothic, depraved masculinity is incompatible with an English setting. Like the gothic novel and the European travelogue (a genre which often acted as an important source for the gothic novel), *Northanger Abbey* engages with ideas about English identity on a national level. All make some attempt to define English national identity by comparing the English to the European “other”. In *Northanger Abbey*, this is most clearly demonstrated in the passage following Catherine’s investigation of Mrs Tilney’s chamber. She is met by Henry on the staircase and rebuked for harbouring such suspicions about his father:

> Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you – Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing; where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and
newspapers lay every thing open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting? (NA 159)

Julia Prewitt Brown in her 1979 work *Jane Austen’s Novels: Social Change and Literary Form* makes the shrewd observation that, “[i]t is Henry’s national pride, not his family pride that is offended by Catherine’s suspicions”. While Catherine has specifically accused Henry’s father of criminal activity, Henry interprets her comments as an affront to the nation, and to him as an Englishman, rather than as a Tilney.

Thus, the text very obviously engages with ideas about what it means to be an Englishman. Henry assumes the responsibility of defining English masculinity for Catherine. Henry begins by establishing that Catherine’s suspicions are incompatible with an English setting. He urges Catherine to remember the country (England) and age (end of the eighteenth century) in which she lives. The story Catherine constructs might be credible if set in Spain, Italy or the wilds of Scotland, or even England’s medieval past. But to situate this story in contemporary England is an insult to its laws and society. When Henry, a clergyman himself, reminds Catherine “that we are Christians” he means it in the same sense as Squire Thwackum in Fielding’s *Tom Jones*:

> When I mention religion, I mean the Christian religion; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion; and not only the Protestant religion but the Church of England.  

Henry connects England’s Protestantism with its status as a rational, modern and scientific nation, a suggestion that I will explore in more depth in the course of this chapter. English education is rational, scientific and enlightened, bearing no resemblance to the fairytale in that may be taught in the convents of the continent. Henry suggests that the system of English law is too robust and effective for atrocities such as murder or unlawful imprisonment to go undetected. He argues that society is too advanced, too policed by the actions of its citizens to allow criminal behaviour to flourish. England’s modern infrastructure and media mean that scenarios Catherine

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has appropriated from the work of Radcliffe are simply impossible to imagine in England.

Henry presents England as the most advanced society in the world, the pinnacle of modernity, technology, intellectual life, information and civilisation. This view is corroborated by Catherine in the passage quoted at length above, in which she agrees with Henry that England constitutes the height of civilisation, referencing the "laws of the land" and the "manners of the age" as the defining features of this civilisation. As Julia Prewitt Brown suggests, Henry’s speech embodies the essence of the national myth:

The impact of popular fiction on the young people of Jane Austen’s day was as profound as the impact of film in the first half of this century; the mind’s impressionability to national myths is proven in both. In Northanger Abbey [...] the myth has to do with the sanity of English life as contrasted to the depravity of the continent.⁹

The dialectic drawn here, between sane England and the irrational continent, is of particular note as it demonstrates Northanger Abbey’s engagement with both the gothic novel and another genre of writing – the European travelogue. Returning to Radcliffe’s geographical spaces, one significant consideration in approaching her work is that unlike her contemporaries Matthew Lewis and Horace Walpole, Radcliffe did not visit the continent she was writing about until the royalties from the publication of The Mysteries of Udolpho made the journey possible in 1794. This means that A Sicilian Romance, The Romance of the Forest and The Mysteries of Udolpho were written without any first-hand knowledge of the European continent.

Instead, Radcliffe acquired information about her European settings through travel narratives, a genre which exploded in popularity during the eighteenth century. The European travelogue was the by-product of the grand tour, an eighteenth-century rite of passage for the upper-class Englishman. Most grand tours consisted of a trip to Paris, followed by a tour of a handful of Italian cities, chiefly Rome, Venice, Florence and Naples. More ambitious tours encompassed northern Europe, but the majority focused on the Catholic countries of southern Europe, exactly those which provided

⁹ Prewitt Brown, Jane Austen’s Novels, 54.
the settings for the gothic novels. For writers such as Radcliffe, travel writing provided factual information on geography and landscape which was important source material for her novels. However, the travel writers also created an imaginary landscape for the English reader in which continental Europe was a superstitious, unlawful and irrational space, in great contrast to their native England. In this imaginary space the gothic novel was able to flourish.

Some of the more famous texts include Richard Lassells’s *The Voyage of Italy*, published in 1670 (and credited for the first use of the term “grand tour”), Joseph Addison’s *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy in the years 1701, 1702, 1703*, John Northall’s *Travels through Italy* (1766) and Samuel Sharp’s *Letters from Italy* (1767). Joseph Baretti produced a second edition of his original *An Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy* in 1769 as an answer to Sharp. Some of the best known and most “literary” of the genre (if only because they were written by novelists who are now part of the established canon of eighteenth-century writing) include Tobias Smollett’s *Travels through France and Italy* (1766) and Laurence Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768). Hester Piozzi wrote *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany* in 1789. Dr John Moore produced two tomes, *A View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland and Germany* (1779) and later *A View of Society and Manners in Italy* (1781).

Austen was familiar with most of these texts. She alludes to Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey* in *Mansfield Park*. Perhaps most interestingly, references to both Sharp and Baretti can be found in Austen’s letters. Samuel Sharp’s accounts are coloured by a raging xenophobia which provides a great contrast to the Italian Baretti, who wrote two travelogues, the second in angry answer to Sharp’s narrative. Austen had read both of Baretti’s volumes and Sharp’s single work and interestingly, she takes the side of Sharp. As she writes to Cassandra: “We are reading Barretti’s other book, & find him dreadfully abusive of poor Mr Sharpe [sic]. I can no longer take his part against you, as I did nine years ago”. This is interesting as it suggests Austen’s sympathy for the very pro-English, even bigoted position taken by Sharp. This is not necessarily consistent with the views expressed in *Northanger Abbey*. As discussed

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below, *Northanger Abbey* presents a vision of English superiority which is then undermined within the text.

**Rational, Protestant England versus superstitious Catholic Europe**

As today, the growth of tourism and the travel writing in this period was an exercise in many things: the appreciation of landscape, the investigation of ancient monuments and ruins, and the enjoyment of art. It also became part of a process of cultural definition and national self-definition. Exposure to other nationalities and cultures affected the way in which the English defined themselves. The travelogues published at this time – and the gothic novels for which they proved an important source – formed part of this process of national self-identification.

As Jeremy Black in his essay ‘Confessional State or Elect nation? Religion and Identity in Eighteenth-Century England’ argues, the dominant discourse of eighteenth-century England could be described as a “Protestant-centred patriotism” and consisted of (among other things) “an intense anti-French and anti-popish xenophobia; an easy pride in English Protestantism, prosperity and personal liberty”.¹¹ This anti-Catholicism and pride in a superior English Protestantism and rationality is clearly in evidence in the eighteenth-century travelogue. Protestantism in its local form, Anglicanism, was an important component of English self-perception and an essential aspect of national identity. Linda Colley’s work *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* considers the importance of Protestantism in establishing a collective British (rather than English) sense of national identity in the context of the Napoleonic Wars. I will return to Colley’s arguments in later chapters, but it is worth highlighting the importance of religion in helping the English/British differentiate themselves from the European “other”.

The English travel writers spend a great deal of time describing their reactions to the Catholic practices which they witnessed on the continent. There is a strong sense in which the English used the Catholic practices of their neighbours to emphasise their own superior rationality and civilisation. They are not particularly interested in the difference between Catholic and Protestant doctrine, but in the ways in which

Protestantism shaped their national character, believing it to be central to their own rationality and enlightenment. They dwell on famous Catholic miracles, such as the liquefaction of St Januarius, to which they would have been introduced in Naples,\textsuperscript{12} or the legend of St. Anthony, which would have been related in the church of St Anthony in Padua,\textsuperscript{13} in order to emphasise the superstitious, irrational nature of the southern European. Some travel writers recounted tales of young girls sacrificed to the church by their parents,\textsuperscript{14} or stories about greedy, avaricious monks\textsuperscript{15} in an attempt to illustrate the power and corruption within the church. Others criticised the laws of the continent and the allegedly barbaric practice of church sanctuary for criminals,\textsuperscript{16} regarding their own legal processes as superior. In highlighting these areas, they present the European "other" as superstitious, irrational and lawless, and by contrast, enforce the image of the Englishman as rational, modern and civilised. This process is one which can be identified in both the travelogues of the period and the gothic novels which they influenced. As Darryl Jones suggests, this process of identification and definition is dialectical. The English writers of gothic fiction, prompted by the travel narratives they used as source information, defined English national identity in opposition to a European identity constructed for the purpose:

\begin{quote}
[B]y imagining forth the European other as Catholic, superstitious, barbarous, irrational, chaotic, rooted in the past, [they] allowed a British audience conversely to identify itself as Protestant, rational, ordered, stable, and modern.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

In contrast, English travellers abroad professed strong feelings of amity and solidarity with countries that shared their religion. As Lady Mary Wortley Montagu comments, while visiting Leipzig:

\begin{quote}
See for example Dr John Moore, \textit{A View of Society and Manners in Italy, with Anecdotes Relating to Some Eminent Characters}, (London: W. Watson, 1781), I: 184.
See Moore, \textit{A View of Society and Manners in Italy}, III: 72.
See Samuel Sharp, \textit{Letters from Italy, Describing the Customs and Manners of that Country, in the Years 1765 & 1766, To Which is Annexed, An Admonition to Gentlemen who pass the Alps in their Tour through Italy} (London: R. Cave, 1767), I: 70.
\end{quote}
Perhaps I am partial to a town where they profess the Protestant religion; but everything seemed to me with quite another air of politeness than I have found in other places.18

Austen, who never visited the continent and was familiar with Europe only through second-hand accounts from her family and her reading material, expresses admiration for Sweden, a country that she professed to like precisely because it is Protestant and is similar to England. As she wrote with characteristically idiosyncratic punctuation to her brother Frank while he was stationed there:

It must be real enjoyment to you, since you are obliged to leave England, to be where you are, seeing something of a new Country, & one that has been so distinguished as Sweden. – You must have great pleasure in it. – I hope you may have gone to Carlsroon. – Your Profession has its’ douceurs to recommend for some of its’ Privations; – to an enquiring & observing Mind like yours, such douceurs must be considerable. – Gustavus-Vasa, & Charles 12th, and Christiana, & Linneus – do their Ghosts rise up before You? – I have a great respect for former Sweden. So zealous it was for Protestantism [sic] – And I have always fancied it more like England than many Countries; – & according to the Map, many of the names have a strong resemblance to the English.19

The clear message conveyed by the travel writers is how fortunate they are to have been born English. Comparing their fate with the natives of other countries, they are lyrical about the joys of being an Englishman. Samuel Sharp is outspoken on the subject, declaring that he shall “love England the better for having quitted it”, believing that “there are in England more blessings, more sweets of life and more virtues in my opinion than are generally met with in other countries”.20 Dr John Moore gives us a considered essay on the subject:

[B]y visiting other countries, a subject of Great-Britain will acquire a greater esteem than ever for the constitution of his own. Freed from vulgar prejudices, he will perceive, that the blessings and advantages which his own

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18 Wortley Montagu, Travel Letters, 78.
19 Austen, Letters, 124.
20 Sharp, Letters from Italy, 3.
countrymen enjoy, do not flow from their superiority in wisdom, courage or virtue over the other nations of the world, but in some degree from the peace of their situation on an island; and, above all from those just and equitable laws which secure property, that mild free government which abhors tyranny, protects the meanest subject, and leaves the mind of man to his own exertions, unrestrained by those arbitrary, capricious and impolitic shackles which confine and weaken its noblest endeavours in almost every country in the world. This animates industry, creates fertility, and scatters plenty over the boisterous island of Great-Britain, with a profusion unknown in the neighbouring nations.  

The message conveyed by the travel writers and the dialectic between rational scientific England and the backward continent is reflected in a short essay published in *The Loiterer*, a periodical edited by James Austen (assisted by his brother Henry) whilst at Oxford University. The writer expresses his confidence in England as the world’s centre of civilisation and rationality. The reader of history, the essay notes, will observe the solid march of progress, reaching its zenith in eighteenth-century England:

> But chiefly he will be pleased to observe the various and progressive steps, by which science has gained her present exalted height, and mark the rapidity with which she is hourly extending the influence of her reign, and the happiness of mankind, over enlightening savages and regions first emerged from barbarity. He will view her with pleasure, rising after a long night of Gothic darkness, and dispersing by degrees the clouds of ignorance, and the mists of superstition; and he will boast, with a pardonable partiality that if she has chosen Europe for her temple, she has also selected England for her shrine.

Plainly, these texts convey the Englishman’s sense of his own national superiority and authority.

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22 *The Loiterer, a Periodical Work, first Published at Oxford in the years 1789 and 1790*, ed. James Austen (Dublin: P. Byrne & W. Jones, 1792), 43.
National spaces and the estate: Austen’s English abbey

Returning to Northanger Abbey, it is possible to discern similarities in tone and subject between Henry’s outraged speech on modern England and both the confident pronouncements of the travel writers and the Loiterer essay which suggests that scientific rationality reigns supreme in England. Edward Neill suggests that “what [Henry’s speech] boils down to is the idea [...] that ‘nothing serious can happen here’, that both social turbulence and violent criminality are essentially alien”.23

Henry argues that England is far too civilised and the justice system too advanced to harbour the kind of depraved gothic behaviour which Catherine suspects of General Tilney. Radcliffe’s villains, by contrast, operating in settings such as the south of France and Italy, live within spaces that facilitate unlawful, depraved behaviour much more readily. Montoni (in The Mysteries of Udolpho) or the Marquis de Montalt (in The Romance of the Forest) can ignore the standards of civilisation and male behaviour that are expected in modern England; General Tilney cannot. Schedoni (in The Italian) is able to harness the awesome corruption and power of the church for his own ends, but no such outlet is open to the General. Henry suggests that English masculinity, on a national level, has been shaped by superior legal systems, advanced infrastructure, sophisticated media, and the systems of etiquette. The conclusion is that English gentlemen are more rational, enlightened and advanced than their European counterparts. Henry’s speech pompously declares English masculinity to be civilised, lawful, and enlightened. However, the novel uncovers a version of English masculinity that is not entirely in keeping with Henry’s confident assertions as it explores the character of the General in the second half of the novel. Austen explores the General’s character via the symbolism of the abbey, his residence. I intend firstly to examine the presentation of the abbey within the text and then demonstrate how the abbey is used to uncover the character of General Tilney.

Catherine’s expectation, as we have seen, is that an abbey is a suitable space for the gothic. However, her expectation is complicated, even confounded, by the fact that the conventions of the genre dictate that on a national level England is not a suitable space. The question that the text then raises is, how exactly should an English abbey

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be understood? Austen emphasises that the abbey is an English abbey. The building symbolises the key event in English history and identity which distinguishes the nation from the Catholic nations of southern Europe: the Reformation has been a defining moment in the history of the abbey as well as the history of the nation.

As Catherine views Northanger Abbey for the first time, our immediate impression is that it bears no relation to the image she has constructed in her imagination. As Prewitt Brown argues: “From its outset Northanger Abbey is preoccupied with what its reader expects and what its reader will learn”. This observation applies equally to its heroine. Catherine enters the abbey with clear expectations about how a “gothic” abbey should look and feel, such as gloomy passages, narrow cells and a ghostly ambiance. However Catherine’s expectations are disappointed: Northanger Abbey is quite different. From first sight, it is clear that the abbey that Catherine expects is completely foreign to the English abbey that Austen presents in the text. Catherine approaches in a carriage:

 [...] every bend in the road was expected with solemn awe to afford a glimpse of its massy walls of grey stone, rising amidst a grove of ancient oaks, with the last beams of the sun playing in beautiful splendour on its high Gothic windows. But so low did the building stand, that she found herself passing through the great gates of the lodge into the very grounds of Northanger, without having discerned even an antique chimney. (NA 127)

Catherine’s feelings of disappointment intensify as she enters into the abbey itself. “An abbey! – yes, it was delightful to be really in an abbey! – but she doubted, as she looked round the room, whether any thing within her observation, would have given her the consciousness” (NA 128).

Austen clearly signifies that this abbey is different to the gothic settings of Catherine’s reading. It cannot be understood in the same way. In fact, Austen has already established exactly how and why the abbey differs from the abbeys of the gothic novels. Austen’s abbey is neither a continental, Catholic institution which houses a religious order, nor a gothic folly: it is a landed estate. The history of the building is explicitly recounted to Catherine, making it clear that the abbey did once

24 Prewitt Brown, Jane Austen’s Novels, 50.
function as a Catholic institution, but has long been in the private ownership of the Tilney family:

[...] when these inquiries were answered, she was hardly more assured than before, of Northanger Abbey having been a richly-endowed convent at the time of the Reformation, of its having fallen into the hands of an ancestor of the Tilneys on its dissolution, of a large portion of the ancient building still making a part of the present dwelling although the rest was decayed. (NA 111)

There are further indications in the text of the house's Catholic past. As Catherine embarks upon her tour of the estate the original features of the building are indicated to her. "She was further soothed in her progress, by being told, that she was treading what had once been a cloister, having traces of cells pointed out" (NA 146). At another point, when passing the kitchens and sculleries we read that the General's "endowments of this spot alone" would have placed him "high among the benefactors of the convent" (NA 147). However, the Reformation was a crucial turning point in the history of the abbey as well as in that of the nation. The abbey changed ownership and function, and is now a private estate.

Austen’s abbey thus embodies and symbolises a decisive moment in English history. Edwin Jones, in his 2003 work *The English Nation: The Great Myth* examines the ways in which the English landscape, particularly buildings and architecture, can be seen to embody the history of the nation. Ruins, as a visual reminder of a national past, can often draw attention to periods which have been repressed by the dominant historiography, Jones argues. He refers to the work of William Cobbett, the journalist, farmer and radical politician whose 1830 *Rural Rides* was a domestic travelogue. In the introduction it was noted that Cobbett’s geographical limitations correspond very closely to Austen’s. Here, Cobbett’s observations of local landmarks convey a sense of layered English history and that Austen uses the symbol of the abbey in a very similar way. Cobbett describes a church in Ocksey:

There remains more of the Abbey than, I believe, of any of our monastic buildings, except that of Westminster [...] The church-service is performed

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in the part of the Abbey that is left standing. The parish church has fallen down and is gone; but the tower remains, which is made use of for the bells; but the Abbey is used as the church, though the church-tower is at a considerable distance from it. It was once a most magnificent building; and there is now a door-way, which is the most beautiful thing I ever saw, and which was nevertheless, built in SAXON times.26

Austen’s abbey functions in a similar way. It embodies English history in terms of its architecture. It reminds us of England’s Catholic past through its former function and in its name. Most importantly for the purposes of the novel, it recalls the events in English history which turned a Catholic abbey into a private residence. In Austen’s juvenilia piece, The History of England, she cites the abolition of abbeys or “Religious Houses” and the resultant benefit to the English landscape as the only redeeming action of the Reformation:

The Crimes and Cruelties of this Prince [Henry VIII], were too numerous to be mentioned, (as this history I trust has fully shown;) and nothing can be said in his vindication, but that his abolishing Religious Houses and leaving them to the ruinous depredations of time has been of infinite use to the landscape of England in general, which probably was a principal motive for his doing it, since otherwise why should a Man who was of no Religion himself be at so much trouble to abolish one which had for Ages been established in the Kingdom.27

There is a further allusion to the Reformation in Northanger Abbey. Discussing reading material, Catherine professes not to like history: “I can read poetry and plays, and things of that sort, and do not dislike travels. But history, real solemn history, I cannot be interested in” (NA 84). In the context of the symbolic manifestations of the abbey, Catherine’s description of the subject is very telling:

I read it a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in

every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all.

(NA 84)

This passage has attracted great critical attention as a result of its possible protofeminism; I will return to the implications of Catherine’s protests about the subjugation of women in history below. However the relevance of other details of the passage to the themes of *Northanger Abbey* has been overlooked. Catherine defines history as “the quarrels of popes and kings”: a telling definition since the most significant papal-regal quarrel in English history, and the greatest turning point for the nation since the introduction of Christianity, is Henry VIII’s quarrel with Pope Clement VII and the subsequent founding of the Church of England.

In this novel, an abbey which was a “richly-endowed convent at the time of the Reformation” has fallen “into the hands of an ancestor of the Tilneys on its dissolution” (NA 111). As Edwin Jones suggests, the Reformation was a “central turning point in the history of England”. In terms of the eighteenth-century construction of English identity, many of the key elements that made England different from the continent are a direct result of the Reformation. The most obvious of these changes is England’s transformation from a Catholic country to a Protestant one. In examining the English travelogues of the period in connection with the English gothic novel, I have considered the importance of Protestantism to an English sense of identity. However, the Reformation, and in particular the establishment of the Church of England, had other consequences. It separated England culturally and politically from the continent and it strengthened the power of the English monarchy by establishing it as head of the national church as well as political head of the state. The dissolution of the monasteries also increased the amount of English land owned by private individuals. General Tilney’s ancestors benefited from these events and in the context of the novel, General Tilney could be seen as an example of Burke’s argument: “The characteristic essence of property, formed out of the combined principles of its acquisition and conservation, is to be unequal”. We are not given any indication in the text why the Tilney family were rewarded with the abbey following its dissolution, but as a result, the General occupies a privileged and

consequential position within English society. The abbey makes the General an established, English landowner, in Burkean terms, a custodian of English civilisation.

In a more general sense, *Northanger Abbey* comments on the elements around which English civilisation is built. One of the more cryptic passages of *Northanger Abbey*, the Beechen Head episode, presents a version of "Englishness" based around monarchy and private landownership, elements of English culture which the Reformation strengthened and consolidated. Henry holds forth on the picturesque in landscape, from "fore-grounds, distances, and second distances" and then delivers a lecture on the landscape of the English nation:

> [...] and by an easy transition from a piece of rocky fragment and the withered oak which he had placed near its summit, to oaks in general, to forests, the inclosure of them, waste lands, crown lands and government, he shortly found himself arrived at politics; and from politics, it was an easy step to silence. (NA 87)

The oak is the national tree of England; its ruggedness and durability were attributes that the English liked to consider characteristic of themselves. The oak had particular associations with English and British kingship. It was known colloquially as the king or the sovereign of the forest and it is associated with kingship mythologically as well: the legendary King Arthur’s round table was made of oak. In later history, the oak became associated with the refuge and protection of English kings. Henry VI was supposed to have hidden in an oak tree near Ireton Hall, in Cumbria, after the Battle of Muncaster. Following the Battle of Worcester in September 1651 Charles II escaped capture by Cromwell’s army by hiding in a hollow oak tree at Boscobel House, east of Shrewsbury. Oak leaves became the symbol of the Royalist cause.

Henry’s comments move from forests, to their enclosure, to waste lands: Austen is alluding to the ownership of land. Enclosure, of course, had been a controversial topic for centuries, particularly in the guise of privatising common or “waste” land and adding to one’s estate. The authorities had long condemned enclosure, but by the latter half of the eighteenth century the tide of opinion was turning in favour of it, culminating in an Act of Parliament in 1801. It was therefore a topical subject at the time of writing of *Northanger Abbey*. In the course of the novel we find that General
Tilney has in fact been enclosing land, a topic discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Henry’s seemingly out-of-place interlude links monarchy, landownership and government together as key elements constituting English society and English identity.

Austen’s abbey symbolises a number of key aspects of English history and identity. The abbey’s Catholic past, in conjunction with the references to the Reformation, remind the reader that England is a Protestant nation. Within the symbolic subtext of the novel, Protestantism is equated with rationalism and progress. References to the Reformation and the accession of the Tilney family to the estate highlight the land-based nature of the English gentry. Given this subtext, I argue that we must see Catherine’s apparent failure to understand that the abbey is a landed estate belonging to the Tilney family, rather than the setting for a gothic novel, as a misunderstanding of English history and the structures of modern English society.

The estate as a space for the modern English General

In *Northanger Abbey*, the physical characteristics of the estate, the architecture, furniture, interior design, gardens and landscape are all imbued with symbolic meaning. The reader is presented with a huge amount of information about them. In the second half of the novel, which encompasses Catherine’s visit to the estate, three and a half chapters are spent on an extended tour of the house and gardens – considerable exposure in such a short novel. We have seen that the architecture which Catherine expects to find in the abbey plays a key role in facilitating the gothic scenarios she imagines, that the features of an ancient abbey, the long corridors, subterranean passages and hidden rooms might make gothic scenarios possible. Austen’s description of the architectural features of Northanger counters Catherine’s expectations by emphasising its modernity, highlighting the fact that the house is an eighteenth-century private residence rather than a ruined medieval abbey. Moreover, Austen uses the symbolism of the furniture and architecture of the estate to explore the character of the General.

In exploring the General’s character, Austen uses the estate on two levels. Superficially, the image of General Tilney that is conveyed via the symbolic representation of his estate seems to corroborate the image of English masculinity set
forth by his son Henry. The General is shown to be modern, rational and scientific and a champion of technological advancement, which is in keeping with Henry’s image of England as a rational, enlightened and advanced society. On the other hand, the estate is used by Austen to demonstrate the less attractive aspects of Burkean masculinity: the General’s championing of technology and scientific advancement can also be interpreted as a selfish drive to own the latest and the best of everything for the purpose of outdoing one’s peers. The General is motivated by greed and one-upmanship and his zest for modernity and progress harms the community whose interests he should be promoting. The abbey certainly signifies an owner who is modern and a devotee of the latest technology. His pursuit of new labour-saving devices is beneficial to his servants, whose burden is relieved as a result. He is clearly a patriotic consumer, preferring to buy English goods, thus supporting the industry of his country, all of which suggests a positive representation of English masculinity and in a superficial sense this emphasis on modernity and technology seems to confirm Henry’s vision of English masculinity as a beacon of advanced civilisation.

In fact the overwhelming feature of the abbey, which distresses Catherine so greatly, is its modernity. Catherine refuses to acknowledge the clues which indicate that this is not a gothic abbey, but a modern family home. In matters of furniture, interior design and household appliances, the General is fully committed to the cutting edge. The first thing we learn as we enter the abbey is that the “furniture was in all the profusion and elegance of modern taste” (NA 128). This is a recurring theme. As the General shows Catherine into the main drawing room, she is so appalled by the modernity and fashion she can hardly summon up enough interest for observation: “[T]he costliness or elegance of any room’s fitting-up could be nothing to her; she cared for no furniture of a more modern date than the fifteenth century” (NA 146).

The seemingly arbitrary date that Catherine chooses (fifteenth century) is highly significant, for it places the abbey in its pre-Reformation period. Catherine can only conceive of the abbey pre-dissolution. The General, on the other hand, lives entirely in the present. Not merely committed to modernity, he is also a devotee of technology. He is knowledgeable about the manufacture of china, and, though he pretends otherwise, is anxious to have the latest and best models:
The manufacture was much improved since that time; he had seen some beautiful specimens when last in town, and had he not been perfectly without vanity of that kind, might have been tempted to order a new set. (NA 139)

In this novel modernity and technology go hand in hand. The kitchen is impressively high-tech. Here Austen implies that the General’s zeal for modernity and technology goes beyond the mere following of fashion and we see the real impact technology can have on the lives of servants:

The General’s improving hand had not loitered here: every modern invention to facilitate the labour of the cooks, had been adopted within this, their spacious theatre; and, when the genius of others had failed, his own had often produced the perfection wanted. (NA 147)

There is also an element of English patriotism to the abbey’s modernity. The recently purchased tea-set is an English model “for his part, to his uncritical palate, the tea was as well flavoured from the clay of Staffordshire, as from that of Dresden or Sève” (NA 139).

The General’s tea-set is almost certainly Wedgwood, the English brand manufactured by Josiah Wedgwood. Jennifer Uglow, in her work *The Lunar Men: The Friends Who Made the Future, 1730-1810*, tells Wedgwood’s story. Having inherited the family business, he used his interest in science to revolutionise the design of its products (not unlike the General’s improvement of his estate).30 His product also appealed to an English market. He decorated his china with emblems designed for an English audience, like cauliflowers, pineapples, artichokes and melons. In 1765 he made a tea-set for Queen Charlotte and immediately, this creamware design became extraordinarily sought-after. It is clear why such a product appeals to the General so strongly – its essential Englishness, its associations with royalty and high fashion, but most importantly its modernity and technological supremacy. Similarly, the mantelpiece in the drawing room is bedecked with ornaments of “the prettiest English china” (NA 128).

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Another example of the technologically advanced and English modernity of the abbey is its Rumford fireplace. As Catherine enters the drawing room, she observes that “The fire-place, where she had expected the ample width and ponderous carving of former times, was contracted to a Rumford” (NA 128). A Rumford is a kind of range, invented by Sir Benjamin Thompson, later known as Count Von Rumford, an American by birth who combined a successful career as an inventor with several other occupations, including military adviser, landscape gardener and royalist supporter in the American Revolution. Rumford, for all that he was born an American and made a papal Count, was something of an Anglophile. He was driven out of America during the War of Independence for his loyalist beliefs and even when living in Germany landscaped the famous Englischer Garten in Munich. Rumford’s scientific principles were definitely progressive. He became “the world’s foremost authority on thermodynamics” and “the first to elucidate the principles of the convection of fluids and the circulation of ocean currents”.31 A Rumford, therefore, was the very acme of technology in the late eighteenth century and, in fact, the range would have gone a long way in satisfying all of the General’s principles, for as well as being ultramodern, it also had associations with English patriotism.

In the light of the significance of Englishness and modernity to the abbey, it is worth considering Robert Southey’s burlesque work Letters from England. Posing as Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella, a Spaniard visiting England, Southey wrote this parody of the English travelogue in 1808. Praising the English for their dedication to the promotion of comfort and convenience in their homes, he goes on to label the English a gadget-obsessed race, forever hankering after instruments to ease the difficulty of everyday living:

One sort of knife is used for fish, another for butter, a third for cheese. Penknives and scissors [sic] are not sufficient here; they have an instrument to make pens, and an instrument to clip the nails. They have a machine for slicing cucumbers; one instrument to pull on the shoe, another to pull on the boot, another to button the knees of the breeches. Pocket-toasting-forks have been invented, as if it were possible to want a toasting-fork in the

pocket; and even this has been exceeded by the fertile genius who ordered a pocket-fender for his own use.\textsuperscript{32}

In the context of \textit{Northanger Abbey}, it is significant that both the zest for technology and the devotion to one’s home are seen as particularly “English” fixations.

The General takes ferocious pride in his technological advancement, proudly displaying the hothouses, the pinery, and the succession-house of the park to his guest. In a superficial sense, therefore, this emphasis on modernity and technology adds further credibility to Henry’s picture of modern civilised England. This is particularly apparent in the General’s pride in the new wing he has constructed. Being in an advanced state of decay, the fourth side of the quadrangle was removed by the General’s father and an avowedly new wing erected in its place:

> The new building was not only new, but declared itself to be so; intended only for offices, and enclosed behind by stable-yards, no uniformity of architecture had been thought necessary. (NA 147)

The General considers these offices as his crowning achievement “if he had a vanity, it was in the arrangement of his offices” (NA 147). The offices suggest the General’s commitment to utility, convenience and efficiency. They indicate his aptitude for organisation, his professionalism and business acumen, just as his commitment to modern technology suggests that he is an enlightened, rational and scientific being. Jennifer Uglow’s \textit{The Lunar Men} (mentioned above) is concerned with the life and work of five late eighteenth-century men of science. These men embody a zeitgeist that the General represents too:

> Together they nudge their whole society and culture over the threshold of the modern, tilting it irrevocably away from old patterns of life towards the world we know today.\textsuperscript{33}

However, Austen does not encourage us to interpret the General’s zest for modernity as straightforwardly and positively as this. Firstly, from a Burkean perspective, the

\textsuperscript{33}Uglow, \textit{Lunar Men}, xvii. The five men are the doctor and inventor Erasmus Darwin, the industrialist Matthew Boulton, the inventor James Watt, the potter Josiah Wedgwood and the chemist Joseph Priestly.
General’s construction of the new wing can be interpreted as a radical and destructive “improvement”, breaking completely with the past. Duckworth reads the language of improvements as “the manner in which individuals relate to their cultural inheritance” and “a means of distinguishing responsible from irresponsible action”. Duckworth does not consider *Northanger Abbey*’s vocabulary of improvement in his work, but there is no doubt that on this reading the General’s actions are indicative of an improper attitude to social change, lacking in respect for the past.

The General’s commitment to modernity and technology is also a celebration of consumer capitalism. Uglow discusses the late eighteenth-century merchants whose businesses appealed to the “affluent middling classes who were rushing to buy new domestic goods: clocks, prints, earthenware, curtains and cutlery and carpets”. The General embodies this culture very effectively. However the General’s enthusiasm for consumption takes on a more sinister edge when it tilts towards capitalist greed. The General’s relationship with Mr Allen, Catherine’s guardian in Bath, evokes his fierce competitive streak. He seems to regard Mr Allen as a competitor against whom to measure his financial success. Ownership, opulence and extent of space and place are the indicators of this success. This is evident in Catherine’s reaction to the General’s dining parlour, described as a “noble room, suitable in its dimensions to a much larger drawing-room than the one in common use, and fitted up in a style of luxury and expense which was almost lost on the unpractised eye of Catherine, who saw little more than its spaciousness and the number of their attendants” (NA 131). Catherine comments on the size of the room, which pleases the General greatly. He acknowledges that “it was by no means an ill-sized room”, but suggest that she “must have been used to much better sized apartments at Mr. Allen’s?” (NA 132). Catherine is able to give the General exactly the answer he is looking for, owning that she had “never seen so large a room as this in her life”. We are told “[t]he General’s good-humour increased” (NA 132). We witness his desire to trump Mr Allen again when the General takes Catherine on a tour of his gardens. The General’s property is “more than double the extent” of Mr Allen’s and Catherine’s father’s land and the General has a pathetic need to hear Catherine’s praise and awe, being “flattered by her looks of surprize [sic], which told him almost as plainly, as he soon forced her to

tell him in words, that she had never seen any gardens at all equal to them before” (NA 142). As Edward Neill argues, this shows him “anxiously competitive and complacent by turns about his own property, status and style of life”.36

Instead of a Burkean model of a responsible landowner and governor, the General is motivated by greed and competitiveness. He is keen to accumulate as much land and wealth as possible; the size of his grounds is conveyed with reference to the practice of enclosure: “The walls seemed countless in number, endless in length; a village of hot-houses seemed to arise among them, and a whole parish to be at work within the inclosure” (NA 142). Enclosure had been an issue for English land governance for centuries. The process began in the fifteenth century, but boomed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (particularly 1793-1815, which corresponds almost exactly with the period of Austen’s writing). As Saree Makdisi in her 1998 work *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* highlights, in this period Parliament passed 5,286 private enclosure acts, which in England alone redistributed seven million acres, twenty-one per cent of the country’s surface area.37 The appropriation of common land by private landlords transformed the English landscape and was a crucial element in the process of modernisation. The enclosure of public land created a landless working class that would provide labour for the Industrial Revolution which was beginning in the north of England:

As space was redistributed and re-organised during the process of enclosure, its social significance was dramatically altered. In fact, that vast process, of which enclosure was but the culmination, transformed people’s lives beyond recognition. This was particularly true for the countryside once its people had been dispossessed (after all, some of the land being enclosed had been common land) and uprooted – that is, once they had been turned into a ‘surplus’ population and gradually forced away into the growing cities of industrialising Britain.38

The Marxist critic Raymond Williams writes about the process of enclosure in his 1973 work *The Country and the City*. He suggests that enclosures “localised to just

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that period in which the Industrial Revolution was beginning" (i.e. that which corresponds with Austen’s novels) became a very important element of England’s “transition from a rural to an industrial society”. Enclosure is linked to modernisation, but these developments benefited the very rich at the expense of the very poor. Williams suggests that enclosure, along with more general changes in property relationships were all “flowing in the same direction”. Enclosure led to the extension of cultivated land but also to “a concentration of ownership into the hands of a minority”. The situation of the poor on the other hand was made materially worse. As Williams puts it “by most acts of enclosure the poor had been injured, often grossly”.

Although we do not see the entire process of relocation and the redistribution of labour in *Northanger Abbey*, we do see elements of the modernisation and industrialisation of agriculture. All evidence from the text suggests that we can assume that the General is as technologically advanced in this area as he is elsewhere. In *Northanger Abbey*, the General’s commitment to agricultural development and efficiency might be construed on the one hand as modernity and progress. However, his methods of achieving such progress demonstrate that modernity can have a negative aspect. The disenfranchised parishioners who labour to increase the wealth of the General have not unambiguously benefited from the General’s superficially modern, rational and enlightened approach, or the approach of a responsible Burkean landowner. The presence of the labourers in the “inclosure” seems to contradict the spirit of Henry’s earlier speech (as well as that of the essay in *The Loiterer*), which suggests that modernity and rational progress are uncomplicatedly positive. *Northanger Abbey* hints that the General’s zest for scientific progress comes at the expense of his tenants, whose independence and traditional way of life are cast aside in his quest for progress and financial gain. As Miranda Burgess argues, the presentation of General Tilney in the text undermines the vision of a civilised Burkean masculinity in which land is entrusted to the few in order to better serve the

40 Williams, *Country and the City*, 97.
41 Williams, *Country and the City*, 99.
many: "The portrait of General Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*, in which Austen uses indirect quotation to ironic advantage, skewers [...] Burke's faith in inheritance".\(^{42}\)

**Catherine’s not so gothic adventure**

One of the ironies of *Northanger Abbey* is that Catherine Morland’s suspicions about the General’s capacity to behave in a way that flouts the rules of civilised society are realised. Originally, it is the space of the abbey that raises Catherine’s expectations that the General will behave in a shocking fashion and on one level, Catherine is correct. The General’s worst behaviour in the novel is indeed motivated by the abbey – not because it is a gothic space that encourages gothic depravity, but because it is a landed estate. Just as the General seems prepared to disrupt public space in order to expand his estate by enclosure, his transgression of manners towards Catherine is also motivated by avarice. The General sees Catherine as a potential wife for Henry, his second son, rather than Frederick, the heir to the estate. However he is motivated by the desire to increase the family wealth in general, which by implication will enrich the estate. The acquisitive character of the General is demonstrated in the opulence of his estate and his competitive attitude towards the Allens. By the end of the novel, Catherine is a victim of the General’s avarice.

Recalling Henry’s speech about the legitimacy of Catherine’s suspicions and his characterisation of English behaviour, he is justified in quelling Catherine’s suspicions that his father is in some way implicated in the death or disappearance of Mrs Tilney. However Henry’s affronted indignation in the face of Catherine’s “misrecognition” of English behaviour is undermined by the fact that the General is about to behave very badly indeed. Catherine is perfectly correct to suspect that Northanger Abbey is an appropriate setting for a serious setback in the adventures of a young heroine embarking upon the marriage market, but not for the reasons she initially imagined.

Shortly after the incident in Mrs Tilney’s bedchamber, Catherine is ejected summarily from the abbey by its proprietor, without even a semblance of basic civility. The General forces his daughter to break the news:

Ah, Catherine! [...] how can I tell you? To-morrow morning is fixed for your leaving us, and not even the hour is left to your choice; the very carriage is ordered, and will be here at seven o’clock, and no servant will be offered you. (NA 181)

Catherine's parents interpret such behaviour as a serious "breach of hospitality", concluding that General Tilney has "acted neither honourably nor feelingly" as either "a gentleman or parent" (NA 190). Despite Henry's protestations that English behaviour is controlled by "the laws of the land" and the "manners of the age", the General has flagrantly breached the latter, if not the former. The explanation for his behaviour comes in the novel's conclusion. John Thorpe has misled the General as to the extent of Catherine's fortune, leading him to believe that she will inherit Mr Allen's estate in addition to "the ten or fifteen thousand pounds which her father could give her" (NA 199). As long as the General understands Catherine to be the heiress to a significant fortune, he woos her assiduously as a match for his son, but when he finds out that he has been deceived as to the extent of her fortune, he casts her out in a fit of temper.

*Northanger Abbey* can be understood as a gothic novel "translated" so that it is appropriate to an English setting and relevant to English society. Catherine, a young innocent female, suffers abuse at the hands of a patriarch, in keeping with the best traditions of the Radcliffean gothic novel. Indeed, the situation bears some resemblance to that played out in *The Italian*. In this novel, Ellena's sufferings stem from the fact that the Marchesa di Vivaldi objects to her as a daughter-in-law because she is not of sufficiently noble birth. The General offers a modernised, anglicised variation on this theme, objecting to Catherine because she is not in line to inherit sufficient funds. The General casts aside aristocratic notions of birth for an appreciation of hard cash: an older notion of what constitutes worth and value, lineage, gives way to a more modern one – capital.

This episode draws our attention to the way in which *Northanger Abbey* is a subtle critique of the male-centred discourses which shape the interpretation of English history and the structures of English society. Earlier, I mentioned Catherine's perception of the teaching of history which she perceives as "the quarrels of popes and kings", dominated by the male discourses of "wars or pestilences" and featuring
“hardly any women at all”. If women are written out of the official interpretation of English history, they are also seen to be irrelevant in Henry’s depiction of English civilisation. The areas around which he positions English civilisation – the law, the church, and the press – are all male-dominated, just as the male reader in *The Loitner* essay referred to above is asked to admire England’s achievements in the masculine sphere of science. Catherine’s situation highlights the vulnerability of young women on the marriage market. Treatment of young women with reference to their wealth or lack of it in the interests of providing for the landed estate was a key feature of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century marriage market. It is explored in greater detail in *Sense and Sensibility*, through Eliza Williams, whose health and happiness are sacrificed when she is married to Colonel Brandon’s elder brother in order to enrich the Cleveland estate, as discussed in chapter two.

Having considered the space of the abbey in depth in the course of this chapter, it is worth returning briefly to the other primary space occupied by the novel in the light of Catherine’s fate at Northanger Abbey. Bath was the centre of the eighteenth-century marriage market. Austen has already indicated to the reader that the economic systems of inheritance give women such as Catherine no choice but to attempt to attract men in the showcase of the assembly rooms at Bath. Women’s power even within this space is very limited, not having “the advantage of choice” but only the “power of refusal” (NA 57).

**Alternative masculinities in *Northanger Abbey*: Henry Tilney as domestic hero**

The acquisitive, land-based masculinity of the General is not, however, the only version of English masculinity explored within *Northanger Abbey*. One of the novel’s ironies is that the version of masculinity outlined in Henry Tilney’s speech is not represented by either his father (whose modernity and quest for progress is not particularly civilised), or Henry himself. Although capable of giving a speech which is characterised by national pride and bombast, Henry’s behaviour in the text reveals him to be quite a different character. I suggest that Henry, a second son and therefore removed from the concerns of estate proprietorship, embodies a rather different kind of masculinity in *Northanger Abbey*, one which is presented in a more positive light than that of his father.
Nancy Armstrong’s influential 1987 study, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, argues that the rise of the novel corresponds with rise of a middle class and particularly female ideology, and that a new emphasis on domesticity is apparent in the nineteenth-century novel. She suggests that the characterisation of the male in this period underwent significant change as a result. As she states: “In nineteenth century fiction [...] men were no longer political creatures so much as they were products of desire and producers of domestic life”.

She suggests that this reflects the increasing importance of domestic influence in the nation, that the balance of power in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century moves from the male and male structures of power to middle class, female-dominated domesticity.

In *Northanger Abbey* there is a hint of this shift in emphasis. The novel redirects attention from the older generation, embodied by a politically engaged General Tilney, to domestically focused Henry. The General’s involvement in the public space is in evidence when he speaks to Catherine: “I have many pamphlets to finish [...] before I can close my eyes; and perhaps may be poring over the affairs of the nation for hours after you are asleep” (NA 150). Henry, by contrast, is presented as rather more feminised and domesticated, in line with Armstrong’s theory. As a hero and potential husband, Henry’s domesticity is emphasised in the text by contrasting him with John Thorpe, Catherine’s other potential suitor. Austen indicates the difference between these two men by a process of association. Thorpe’s virile masculinity is conveyed via his connection with horses and horse riding. Henry’s softened, female-influenced masculinity is suggested through his interest in appearances and fashion. Austen describes Thorpe’s “plain face and ungraceful form” and the fact that he “seemed fearful of being too handsome unless he wore the dress of a groom, and too much like a gentleman unless he were easy where he ought to be civil, and impudent where he might be allowed to be easy” (NA 28). His social habits are stereotypically masculine and yobbish. He boasts that at a party at Oxford he and his friends “cleared about five pints a head” (NA 45).

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44 Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 10.
Austen associates Thorpe with sexually charged recreational activities. This is particularly conveyed in his association with horses and horse riding, a phenomenon that Jill Heydt-Stevenson calls “John Thorpe’s libidinal fascination with four legged beasts of the hunt”. Thorpe’s admiration for the equine physique praises his own by proxy: “Hot! He had not turned a hair till we came to Walcot Church: but look at his forehead; look at his loins; only see how he moves” (NA 29). He is also obsessed with the horse’s speed: “I defy any man in England to make my horse go less than ten miles an hour in harness [...] that horse cannot go less than ten miles an hour: tie his legs and he will get on” (NA 29). Again, this is an attempt to project his own virility onto the horse, but it also suggests his ability as a rider to manage an unruly beast.

On the other hand, Henry displays an interest in a range of issues in the text which are very typical concerns of the middle class, domesticated female that Armstrong describes. He reads novels, which Catherine, if not Austen herself, believes to be a female sphere of knowledge. Catherine assumes that Henry “never read[s] novels” because “they are not clever enough for you” as “gentlemen read better books” (NA 82). Henry however indicates his willingness to engage with this female discourse:

I have read all Mrs Radcliffe’s works, and most of them with great pleasure. The Mysteries of Udolpho, when I had once begun it, I could not lay down again; - I remember finishing it in two days - my hair standing on end of the whole time. (NA 82)

Henry also engages with the process of journal-writing, which he concedes is a particularly female pursuit. He lectures Catherine on the necessity of journal-writing and tells her what she ought to write: “how are your various dresses to be remembered, and the particular state of your complexion, and curl of your hair to be described?” (NA 13). Early in the novel Henry demonstrates his interest in fashion, dressing and material:

‘Do you understand Muslins, Sir?’
‘Particularly well; I always buy my own cravats, and am allowed to be an excellent judge; and my sister has often trusted me in the choice of a gown’

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[...] Mrs Allen was quite struck by his genius. ‘Men commonly take so little notice of those things’. (NA 14)

As Darryl Jones points out, this interest in women’s clothing “marks him out as willing to cross over into an overtly female sphere of knowledge”. An interest in clothes and dress permeates the entire novel. Mrs Allen’s obsession with garments, her “most harmless delight in being fine” is her only identifying feature (NA 7). For Jill Heydt-Stevenson, Mrs Allen’s interest in dress and particularly Henry’s entry and contribution to this conversation, quoted above, illustrates “how gender roles are performances”. Henry highlights this performance role, she argues, “when he takes on, through a kind of verbal cross-dressing, the female affect and partakes in ‘feminine’ topics of conversation”. This reading suggests that expertise in female fashion is not effeminacy on Henry’s part, but rather an awareness of the artificiality of the gendered nature of appropriate subject matter. As a man operating within the domestic space, Henry feels free to cross into the sphere of what is considered to be a “female” topic. In General Tilney, Northanger Abbey explores a landed version of masculinity which exploits the female and grants her no agency. Henry’s more domesticated version of masculinity puts the sexes on a more equal footing by allowing the male to explore female territory and locating power within the home.

The General’s version of masculinity is best understood in the space of the landed estate. Similarly, Henry’s masculinity is best demonstrated by reference to a particular place: the geographical setting of his own home. At one point in the novel, attention shifts from the abbey as an example of an English landed estate and the General as an example of land-based masculinity, and refocuses on Henry’s home and a masculinity more rooted in the domestic. One of the most consequential events in Northanger Abbey is Catherine’s shift in interest from the abbey to the parsonage. Catherine’s excitement in the possibility of gothic adventure within the setting of the abbey gives way to her desire for domestic comfort within a cosy parsonage:

What a revolution in her ideas! She, who had so longed to be in an abbey!

Now, there was nothing so charming to her imagination as the unpretending

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47 Heydt-Stevenson, Austen’s Unbecoming Conjunctions, 113.
comfort of a well-connected Parsonage, something like Fullerton, but better:
Fullerton had its faults, but Woodston probably had none. (NA 171)

A parsonage, like an abbey, is a dwelling place associated with religion. But while an abbey provides a communal living space for monks and friars and a location for imagined gothic adventures, a parsonage is the simple home of a Protestant clergyman. Catherine’s willingness to take on the position of the clergyman’s wife is conveyed in her reaction to Woodston. She recognises it as her home and loves it: “In her heart she preferred it to any place she had ever been at” (NA 171).

Following the complex descriptions of the architecture of the abbey, from its technologically advanced state to its impressive size and modern décor, the parsonage is depicted as a modest, unassuming vision of domestic sweetness and comfort. Even its name, Woodston, indicates basic naturalness. When Catherine is taken to see it, she admires the view from the drawing room windows as “pleasant, though only over green meadows” and is particularly taken with the “sweet little cottage” among the trees, “apple trees too!” (NA 173). The regard that the principal characters feel for Woodston is expressed in suitably understated terms: “I think it would be acknowledged by the most impartial eye to have many recommendations” (NA 139).

The scene in Woodston demonstrates exactly why Catherine is a suitable match for Henry. From the point of view of the General’s financial ambitions, Catherine is not an appropriate wife for his son and this is acknowledged by her own parents:

Of a very considerable fortune, his son was, by marriage settlements, eventually secure; his present income was an income of independence and comfort, and under every pecuniary view, it was a match beyond the claims of their daughter. (NA 203)

In the context of a landed economic system, Catherine has very little (capital) to bring to a marriage or estate. However, the novel suggests that from a domestic point of view, Catherine’s clerical background makes her eminently suitable to be Henry’s wife. As Michael Giffin points out in his study of Austen and religion, “it is
significant to notice that, in this novel, the effective marriage is a clerical one".48 Henry Tilney of course, is a clergyman and Catherine hails from a family of clergymen (both her father and brother belong to the profession). Catherine’s upbringing at Fullerton parsonage means that Woodston is a natural progression for her. Catherine and Henry have more than simply religion in common; they share the domestic background of an English Protestant clerical way of life.

In conclusion, then, Austen uses the space of the abbey to consider landed English masculinity in some depth. Catherine’s reading materials lead her to expect a certain type of male behaviour within the abbey, a behaviour that is both depraved and unlawful. The novel explores ideas about English self-perception on a national level, arguing that the English perceived themselves to be a highly advanced and civilised society, in contrast to their European neighbours, whom they saw as a backward, irrational “other”. The gothic novel and the European travelogues that inspired the gothic novel depend upon this dialectic. Returning to the space of the abbey we saw that the General must be understood as a (flawed) Burkean English landowner. On the one hand, the General’s commitment to science and modernity can be seen as an exemplification of the English as advanced and civilised. But digging deeper, Austen does not encourage us to interpret the General’s behaviour so positively. Instead, the General is a selfish landlord, motivated only by aggrandising his estate at others’ expense. The General’s worst behaviour in the novel, his expulsion of Catherine without ceremony, is motivated by his desire to enrich his estate. Henry can be seen as the embodiment of a very different kind of English masculinity, reflected by his association with different spaces and places, chiefly the domestic and the clerical.

Chapter two

*Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*: the landed estate and alternative spaces in Austen’s fiction

This chapter focuses on *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, novels which share a comparable history in terms of their writing and publication, as the similar construction of their titles might suggest. The narratives explore landed English life and culture more overtly and in greater detail than in *Northanger Abbey*. The economics of landed existence and most particularly the effects of inheritance are at the centre of both novels, and both begin with female subjects (the Dashwood and Bennet sisters) whose sex and financial situation make them very vulnerable within such a system.

Both novels consider English masculinity within this economic system. Austen demonstrates the ways in which the structures of inheritance and the landed estate can either diminish or enhance the masculinity of the male subject. Like *Northanger Abbey*, both novels engage with geographical locations beyond England, but whereas *Northanger Abbey* engages with an imagined/imaginary space (English constructions of continental Europe), *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* consider real places, locations which we might even call historical, given that they are defined by the political events which take place in them: colonial India and Napoleonic France. Both these geographies create alternative economic, cultural and class structures to landed English gentry life. In *Sense and Sensibility*, empire provides an alternative means of generating wealth. Income from the colonies supplements land-based economies and is a source of exotic new goods and as such is perceived as a broadly positive development. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the militia, newly established in response to the fear of invasion from Napoleonic France, has a capacity to promote social mobility but in contrast to *Sense and Sensibility*, this is viewed as problematic.

The economic framework of *Sense and Sensibility*

*Sense and Sensibility* is based around a number of landed estates but looked at globally there is a division between two spaces, England and the colonies. Here, I intend to analyse the impact of the introduction of the colonial space on the landed
estate. I argue that there is certainly little interest in colonial geography and culture, but when considered as an alternative space for economic activity, and hence alternative possibilities to prove masculinity, the colonial space is a significant presence in the novel. Attention is paid to two (connected) strands of economic activity: colonial entrepreneurism and colonial consumer exports. The profits of colonial enterprise can enable their beneficiaries to escape the land-based economics of the domestic space. The text suggests that Colonel Brandon has accumulated wealth in the colonies and within this posited scenario, Brandon’s money has been reinvested in his family estate. Secondly, the colonial products which formed the basis of much colonial money-making also feature in *Sense and Sensibility*, though their origins are of little interest. I will examine their financial effect too: in essence, it is a transfer of wealth from participants in the landed economic system to colonial enterprises.

*Sense and Sensibility* explores the effect of these spaces on English masculinity. Landed masculinity is presented in quite a negative light within the novel. Through the space of the Norland estate, we see how the actions of the proprietor Mr John Dashwood are motivated by self-interest. I consider the sense in which Marianne Dashwood is a victim of the land-based economies of the novel. Marriage is her only means of achieving financial security and the novel contrasts her two suitors Colonel Brandon and Willoughby. The spaces and places with which these characters are associated have an impact on their standing as men. Willoughby’s situation shows how landed economic systems have the potential to undermine the masculinity of those who operate within them. Willoughby is dependent on the goodwill of his elderly female relative or marriage to a wealthy heiress to maintain his standard of living. Brandon’s association with empire on the other hand provides financial freedom from landed systems. Brandon is able to provide for Marianne financially, a fact which enhances his masculine standing within the novel.

*Sense and Sensibility* (1811) is Austen’s earliest published novel. However, despite its publication date the novel is situated in an earlier historical framework, the general consensus being that its original, epistolary form, “Elinor and Marianne” was begun circa 1795. This title and date connect *Sense and Sensibility* to the eighteenth-century tradition of the twinned heroine novels of letters, such as Edgeworth’s *The Letters of*
Julia and Caroline (1795), Elizabeth Helme’s Clara and Emmeline (1788), or Elizabeth Hervey’s Melissa and Marcia (1788), or Sophia Lee’s The Recess (1783-1785). Its literary references to Thomson and Cowper further mark it as an eighteenth-century novel, and its eponymous subject, sensibility, situates the novel within an even earlier eighteenth-century context spanning the 1740s to the 1790s. Janet Todd, in her 1986 work Sensibility: An Introduction, suggests that the cult of sensibility began in the 1740s, culminating in the publication of its most famous representative text, Mackenzie’s The Man of Feeling, in 1771. The 1780s and 1790s saw continued growth in the popularity of sentimental fiction, as evidenced by the enthusiasm for writers such as Mary Robinson and Charlotte Smith.

In addition to its literary context, the economics of this novel stands alone in the Austen canon in belonging to a pre-industrial era, during which the gentry were entirely dependent on inheritance and patronage. As Harold Perkins explains:

The old society was firmly based on the twin principles of property and patronage. One’s place in that society was wholly determined by the amount and kind of one’s own property, ‘the great source’ as John Millar observed, ‘of distinction between individuals’.

The economic framework in which the novel is situated is one facet of its historical setting. Oliver MacDonagh entitles his study of the novel “Receiving and Spending” not “Getting and Spending”, he says, because “not a single developed character in Sense and Sensibility works for his or her income; all live on rents, mortgages, dividends or interest”. This novel reflects a world based around inheritance, primogeniture, entail and jointure, with no sane, industrious middle class characters, no Crofts or Gardiners, to offer an alternative to the land-based economy of this novel. However, as this chapter considers, the colonies provide an alternative space within Sense and Sensibility, one which is associated with modernity and facilitates money-making.

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3 Oliver MacDonagh, Jane Austen: Real and Imagined Worlds (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1991), 43. The obvious exception to this rule is Edward Ferrars, an important prototype for Austen’s later representations of men of profession. However, as MacDonagh points out, he only begins his career as a clergyman in the novel’s closing chapters.
Inheritance, Burkean masculinity and the family estate

*Sense and Sensibility* opens in Norland Park in Sussex, where the Dashwood family have been “long settled” (S&S 1). By chapter six, the setting moves with Mrs Dashwood and her three daughters to Barton Cottage in Devonshire, the new family home. This shift in settings, occurring at the beginning of the action, highlights an important theme in this novel: the insecurity which threatens the poor, female subject under the economic system of patriarchal inheritance.

In the opening two chapters, Austen frames *Sense and Sensibility* with a narrative of the economic history of the Dashwood family and the events which lead to Mrs Dashwood and her daughters’ departure from the Norland estate. Austen’s decision to begin the novel with the will of the elderly Mr Dashwood, uncle to Mr Henry Dashwood and grand uncle to John, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood seems intended to make a point about the arbitrary, illogical effects of the conventions of patriarchal inheritance. John Dashwood is well provided for by his mother’s fortune and his marriage into wealth; Henry’s wife and three daughters have very little provision and are in far greater need of financial benevolence. When the will is read, it is revealed that Henry Dashwood has left the estate to his nephew, as anticipated, “but he left it to him on such terms as destroyed half the value of the bequest”. Mr Dashwood is interested in providing for his wife and daughters, but “to his son, and his son’s son, a child of four years old, it was secured, in such a way, as to leave to himself no power of providing for those who were most dear to him, and who most needed a provision, by any charge on the estate, or by any sale of its valuable woods”. On a whim Henry Dashwood has the power to plunge his niece and her daughters into financial insecurity, and “the value of all the attention which, for years, he had received from [them]” is forgotten (S&S 2).

Thus the novel opens with a critique of the Burkean conservative position, which argues that concentrating power and the family estate in the hands of eldest sons is the best basis for English society. Burke argues that such a system encourages behaviour motivated by munificence rather than self-interest:

> The power of perpetuating our property in our families is one of the most valuable and interesting circumstances belonging to it, and that which tends
the most to the perpetuation of society itself. It makes our weakness subservient to our virtue, it grafts benevolence even upon avarice.4

By opening with a history of the ownership of Norland Park, a key space within the novel, Austen focuses attention on Burkean conservatism and English inheritance systems, and introduces us to an example of Burkean masculinity in the form of Mr John Dashwood. Mr Dashwood is head of the Norland estate following the death of his father and is now responsible for the welfare of his family and tenants. Via this character, Austen shows how avarice and selfishness can motivate those in positions of power within the estate, suggesting that Burkean conservatism can be far from benevolent.

This episode also illustrates how estate owners, supposed bastions of male power and authority, can be controlled and dominated by their powerful wives. On his deathbed, Henry Dashwood urges his son John to take care of the interest of his mother and sisters. Despite being “cold hearted, and rather selfish”, Mr Dashwood appears amenable to such a request and promises “to do everything in his power to make them comfortable” (S&S 3). Mr Dashwood begins with good intentions, resolving to give his sisters “a thousand pounds a-piece” (S&S 3), but this pledge is dismantled by his wife over the course of the first two chapters. Placing the interests of her son, baby Harry, above all else, she talks her husband out of his financial commitment to his stepmother and half sisters entirely, suggesting that his father “had no idea of your giving them any money at all”, and that occasionally sending “presents of fish and game, and so forth” is sufficient (S&S 9). Her final, offensive contention is that they will find it difficult to spend their small income. “[A]s to your giving them more, it is quite absurd to think of it. They will be much more able to give you something” (S&S 10).

As Claudia L. Johnson argues in her 1988 work *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*, Austen’s deliberate positioning of the narrative against this economic background dismantles myths about Burkean conservatism: “the knot of relatives vying for property calls our attention to the disorderliness of family life, in marked contrast to the stabilising clarity and tender esprit de corps conservative apologists

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associate with ‘our little platoon’. John and Fanny Dashwood’s insistence on prioritising provision for Harry at the expense of everyone else puts the reader strongly in mind of Burke’s most vocal and renowned opponent Thomas Paine’s argument against the law of primogeniture as outlined in Rights of Man (1791):

The nature and character of aristocracy shows itself to us in this law. It is the law against every law of nature, and Nature herself calls for its destruction. Establish family justice, and aristocracy falls. By the aristocratical law of primogenitureship, in a family of six children, five are exposed. Aristocracy has never more than one child. The rest are begotten to be devoured. They are thrown to the cannibal for prey, and the natural parent prepares the unnatural repast [...] All the children which the aristocracy disowns (which are all, except the eldest) are, in general, cast like orphans on a parish, to be provided for by the public, but at a greater charge.

Outside the immediate Dashwood family, Sense and Sensibility presents further evidence that primogeniture is far from the embodiment of a natural and proper order that Burke posits as the ideal basis of civilised society. Instead, it is depicted as arbitrary, unfair and open to outrageous abuse. Central to Burkean ideology is the position of the eldest son, into whose hands the estate, family name and reputation will pass. Mrs Ferrars, a powerful, dictatorial widow and mother to Fanny, Edward and Robert, demonstrates that paradoxically the position of eldest son is not even determined by birth, but one which she can command at whim, depending on which of her sons are in favour. As her sons displease her by their choice of wives, she casts them out of the family bosom:

Her family had of late been exceedingly fluctuating. For many years of her life she had had two sons; but the crime and annihilation of Edward a few weeks ago, had robbed her of one; the similar annihilation of Robert had left her for a fortnight without any; and now, by the resuscitation of Edward, she had one again. (S&S 328)

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As Edward Neill argues, the air of ridicule with which this passage is imbued indicates Austen’s criticism of the practices of landed economies: “it seems, much of the time, to be against rather than for the gentry, in a mode of rampant disrespect which might be felt to bring it closer to Paine than to Burke”.

**Marianne, marriage and the economics of Sense and Sensibility**

*Sense and Sensibility* can be read as an example of the failure of the patriarchal systems of inheritance and primogeniture to provide fairly for its subjects. The economics of patrilineal inheritance conspire against numerous characters in this novel. The Dashwood sisters, poor female subjects, embody the most vulnerable individuals within this system. However, the figure of Eliza Williams, Colonel Brandon’s first love, suggests that the victims of patriarchy are not exclusively poor females, but also wealthy ones. Eliza is forced into an unhappy marriage to Colonel Brandon’s brother, the heir to Delaford, as her capital is needed to pay off estate debts. In Eliza’s case, the demands of land-based economies prevent marital felicity, and lead to premature death. Marianne Dashwood’s story is similar in some ways to Eliza’s, if less tragic. In one sense the land-based economies of the novel conspire against the romantic, passionate pairing of Marianne and Willoughby.

Marianne is unique among Austen’s heroines: she is the only one to be truly crossed in love. To say that she chooses between Colonel Brandon and Willoughby would be inaccurate; choice is denied to her. Other heroines have one option for a husband removed when they marry another: Wickham, for instance, eliminates himself as a partner for Elizabeth when he marries Lydia, as does Frank Churchill for Emma when he announces his engagement to Jane. But in both cases, the heroine has already eliminated him from her mental list of prospective suitors. Emma in particular may be irked by such a development, but her reaction bears no resemblance whatsoever to Marianne’s howling, inconsolable grief and consequent life-threatening illness which dominates the latter half of *Sense and Sensibility*. Marianne’s plight can be seen as a reflection upon the economic systems of the novel. The decisions made by her grand-uncle and half-brother John regarding the Norland estate plunge Marianne into financial insecurity. This affects her relationship with her two prospective suitors, Colonel Brandon and Willoughby, whose role will be to provide for her financially.

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Colonel Brandon and Willoughby represent two very different manifestations of English masculinity. On the face of it, Willoughby is Austen’s most dashing hero to date: he combines sexual attractiveness with the manners and accomplishments of the genteel young man. Much of the first third of the novel is devoted to Marianne’s enthusiastic reaction to this model of perfect masculinity. Brandon on the other hand is depicted as decrepit and past his prime. With closer scrutiny however, the places and spaces with which these characters are associated in the novel have an interesting effect on Brandon and Willoughby’s masculinity (positive and negative respectively). Willoughby is inseparable from the systems of inheritance which are such a pervasive theme in this novel. His livelihood is entirely dependent on the estates he will inherit. As such, he becomes totally dependent on the actions and decisions of others, particularly his elderly relation Mrs Smith. I will suggest that this has the effect of emasculating Willoughby. Austen shows how the systems of inheritance feminise and weaken this superficially impressive specimen of masculinity. Brandon on the other hand becomes associated with another space within the novel, the British empire, in the form of the East India Company. Brandon’s experience in the colonies hints at the empire’s capacity for wealth creation. The novel suggests that the colonial space offers an opportunity for men to free themselves from the systems of inheritance, establish their financial independence, and hence secure a beautiful young wife.

**Willoughby versus Brandon: the youthful hero and the older man**

Willoughby’s first appearance is in the role of a gleaming knight rescuing the injured Marianne, demonstrating the twin masculine attributes of strength and tenderness. As Marilyn Butler in her 1975 work, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, notes, “his entrance, like that of the ‘preserver’ of the heroine in a romantic novel, at once gives him a superficial glamour”. Willoughby is set up as Marianne’s “rescuer”. However, as the story unfolds we see that he is unable to rescue Marianne from her financial situation because of his dependency on his elderly relative Mrs Smith. In fact, Brandon is Marianne’s ultimate “rescuer” as his economic independence enables him to provide for her.

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Signifying his libidinal prowess, Austen associates Willoughby with masculine game-playing and animals. We are first introduced to “a gentleman carrying a gun, with two pointers playing round him” (S&S 35). The phallic symbolism of the gun suggests sexual potency and the addition of the dogs indicates energy and virility. Throughout the text, Willoughby becomes associated with hunting and is linked with masculine competitiveness and the outdoors. Hunting becomes so integral to Marianne’s image of masculinity that she cannot imagine marriage without it:

‘I am sure I am not extravagant in my demands. A proper establishment of servants, a carriage, perhaps two, and hunters, cannot be supported on less [than two thousand a year]’.

Elinor smiled again, to hear her sister describing so accurately their future expenses at Combe Magna.

‘Hunters!’ repeated Edward – ‘But why must you have hunters? Everybody does not hunt.’

Marianne coloured as she replied, ‘But most people do’. (S&S 78-79)

Riding and vigorous exercise combine to convey Willoughby’s stamina and virility, which, Austen suggests archly, are indicative of his abilities in the bedroom. In the following passage, the act of dancing stands for the sexual act, the implication being that Willoughby is capable of performing all through the night. Marianne can barely contain her sexual excitement:

‘I remember last Christmas, at a little hop at the park, he danced from eight o’clock till four, without once sitting down.’

‘Did he indeed?’ cried Marianne, with sparkling eyes, ‘and with elegance, with spirit?’

‘Yes; and was up again at eight to ride to covert’. (S&S 38)

Willoughby combines this virility with beauty and the accomplishments, tastes and fashionable manners of aristocratic society. He is “passionately fond” (S&S 39) of singing and dancing, and charms Marianne with his reading of poetry. His beauty is often commented on, not just by Marianne, but also by her mother, and it is always prefixed by the adjective “manly”, lest there be any danger that his good looks should be interpreted as a feminising trait. Austen displays Willoughby to his greatest
advantage by dressing him in masculine attire: "She soon found out that of all manly
dresses a shooting-jacket was the most becoming" (S&S 37).

Brandon on the other hand is portrayed through the eyes of Marianne as a man long
since past the point of desire and desirability. She speaks of his infirmity,
characterising him as "invariably connected with aches, cramps, rheumatisms, and
every species of ailment that can afflict the old and the feeble" (S&S 32-33). While
Marianne's depiction of this thirty-five-year-old man is obviously hyperbolic, in the
context of her own youth it has a relative truth. As Marianne herself points out,
Colonel Brandon is "old enough to be my father" (S&S 31). Even Elinor, the voice of
reason in the novel, while ridiculing Marianne's declaration that "thirty-five has
nothing to do with matrimony" suggests that "Perhaps [...] thirty-five and seventeen
had better not have anything to do with matrimony together" (S&S 32). Elinor
counters Marianne by suggesting that a thirty-five-year-old may find marital
conjugality with a twenty-seven-year-old partner. For Marianne, such a match would
be purely one of financial convenience:

[I]f her home be uncomfortable, or her fortune small, I suppose that she
might bring herself to submit to the offices of a nurse, for the sake of the
provision and security of a wife. In his marrying such a woman therefore
there would be nothing unsuitable. It would be a compact of convenience
and the world would be satisfied. In my eyes it would be no marriage at all,
but that would be nothing. To me it would seem only a commercial
exchange, in which each wished to be benefited at the expense of the other.
(S&S 32)

What this passage demonstrates very clearly is that the union Marianne envisages is a
sexless one. Marianne cannot conceive of the Colonel as a sexual being, not even
when viewing him through the eyes of a desperate, twenty-seven-year-old "old maid".
The novel does not suggest that Colonel Brandon ever fulfils the role of romantic
lover for Marianne. In the course of three hundred and thirty pages, Marianne and
Brandon have precisely no direct conversation. Marianne's acceptance of the
Colonel's proposal is portrayed by Austen as the action of someone with no power to
choose: "With such a confederacy against her – with a knowledge so intimate of his
goodness – with a conviction of his fond attachment to herself [...] what could she
do?” (S&S 333) However he can fulfil the position of financial provider and Brandon’s masculine standing in the novel is enhanced by this role.

**Willoughby: the thwarted romantic hero**

Economic circumstances, specifically the systems of inheritance, prevent a union between Marianne and Willoughby. Estate inheritance is a lottery decided by a range of volatile one-to-one relationships and might-have-beens. If Marianne herself had been more fortunate in this lottery of settlements and bequests, or indeed if her father had lived long enough to save for her dowry, Willoughby would not have been dependent on the goodwill of Mrs Smith. Had Mrs Smith not wielded such tremendous power over Willoughby’s fortune, her objections to his moral and sexual conduct would not have had any bearing. And if Edward Ferrars had been able to maintain his position as the elder son, with all the trappings of wealth this entailed, he might have been in a position to assist his sister-in-law and her husband.

Willoughby’s ability to perform the role of masculine hero and become Marianne’s husband is hindered by his financial dependency. Jill Heydt-Stevenson’s reading of the scene in which Margaret reveals to Elinor her suspicions about Marianne’s imminent engagement corroborates this view. According to Margaret, Willoughby has a lock of Marianne’s hair. As Heydt-Stevenson suggests, this was a symbolic indicator of engagement, being associated with the act of sex (taking its cue from Pope’s 1717 poem *The Rape of the Lock*), and contains a pun on the future generations that the marriage will spawn (hair/heir). But, as Elinor points out, Margaret has previously been mistaken: “you were certain that Marianne wore his (Willoughby’s) picture round her neck; but it turned out to be only the miniature of our great-uncle” (S&S 51). Heydt-Stevenson suggests that the fact that the miniature is of Marianne’s great-uncle is significant as this is the same relation who bequeathed Marianne only a thousand pounds “as a mark of affection”. For Heydt-Stevenson, this signifies the way in which Marianne is bound or “strangled” by being “cut off” from a fortune that morally belongs to her and her mother and sisters. I would argue, further, that the fact that Marianne wears this miniature around her neck is precisely why she is not wearing Willoughby’s. Just as Marianne cannot really wear two

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miniatures, her marriage to Willoughby is incompatible with her connection to this uncle, whose meagre gift has made it financially impossible for the two to unite. Austen’s symbolic use of the cross and chain in *Mansfield Park* has similar connotations (considered in chapter three).

This is not to say that Willoughby is a blameless figure, or that his failure to become Marianne’s husband is in no way attributable to his actions or behaviour. However Austen goes to some lengths to demonstrate how his actions must be understood in the context of the economic systems of the novel. Willoughby is a young man entirely dependent on the bequests and settlements of relatives for his provision. His future financial prospects become closely associated with one “space” within the novel – the estate of his elderly relative, Mrs Smith. He admits that his fortune has never been “large” and that he has “always been expensive”. Because of his capacity for running up debts, he becomes increasingly beholden to Mrs Smith as her approval will determine his financial future: “the death of my old cousin […] was to set me free” (S&S 280).

However, because Mrs Smith’s death may be distant, he explores other money-making options, deciding to “re-establish my circumstances by marrying a woman of fortune” (S&S 280). Willoughby’s situation demonstrates the way in which male gentry of limited means were forced to abandon romantic ideals in favour of financial prudence in marriage. It is not Willoughby’s intention to fall in love with Marianne, but he does so in spite of himself: “To have resisted such attractions, to have withstood such tenderness! – is there a man on earth who could have done it!” (S&S 281). Willoughby takes the decision to propose to Marianne, but before he acts upon it his benefactor, Mrs Smith, is informed of his liaison with Eliza Williams. Although this indiscretion is certainly a blot on Willoughby’s character, the novel does not present it as irreparably damaging. As Willoughby accounts for his actions to Elinor Dashwood, he suggests that Eliza was a fellow conspirator rather than a victim: “I do not mean to justify myself, but at the same time cannot leave you to suppose that I have nothing to urge – that because she was injured she was irreproachable, and because I was a libertine, she must be a saint” (S&S 282).

Mrs Smith offers him one chance to redeem himself. She will forgive him if he marries Eliza, thus offering a solution in which Willoughby sacrifices marital
happiness for provision within the inheritance/land-based economy. He declines and “it ended in a total breach [...] I was formally dismissed from her favour and her house” (S&S 283). He then makes the sacrifice anyway for the sake of financial provision by marrying the heiress Miss Sophia Grey. Specifically, it is Willoughby’s fear of poverty that prevents union between him and Marianne, and the narrative suggests he regrets this decision for the rest of his life: “To avoid a comparative poverty, which her affection and her society would have deprived of all its horrors, I have, by raising myself to affluence, lost everything that could make it a blessing” (S&S 281). However, the novel’s conclusion raises the possibility that misinterpretation of Mrs Smith’s intentions is what prevents the union between Willoughby and Marianne. After his marriage to Miss Grey, Mrs Smith forgives him, giving “his marriage with a woman of character” (S&S 334) as a reason for her change of heart, suggesting that she would have taken a similar action if he had married Marianne and he might have been “at once happy and rich” (S&S 334).

Thus Willoughby’s choice of marital partner is dictated by the degree of control Mrs Smith and her estate hold over his life. Mrs Smith’s moral values and objections to his behaviour restrict whom Willoughby can marry. However, we see at the end of the novel that a breach in communication between Willoughby and Mrs Smith might have made the difference between Willoughby marrying Miss Grey rather than Marianne. Clearly, the landed system consists of many one-to-one relationships, often operating on very high stakes, which are characterised by their fragility and instability. Willoughby’s plight also demonstrates how the trappings of landed life, the expense of keeping up with one’s acquaintances, the expectations of wealth, and the belief that one cannot function without it hinders his own happiness.

Austen’s representations of inheritance-based economies tend to be dominated by powerful females who exercise great control over younger male relations. In *Emma*, Mrs Churchill feminises Frank by making him subservient to her commands and desires. In *Pride and Prejudice* Lady Catherine De Bourgh attempts to control and weaken Darcy in the same fashion, but because Darcy is not dependent upon her for his wealth, her power is limited. *Sense and Sensibility* has two powerful widows, Mrs Ferrars, who in caprice and temper wields power over her two sons by threatening
their inheritance, and Mrs Smith, who reacts to Willoughby’s misconduct with Eliza by cutting off his inheritance.

Willoughby ultimately marries Miss Sophia Grey for her fortune and Austen demonstrates how this marriage emasculates him further. The new Mrs Willoughby finds a letter from Marianne to Willoughby, and knowing something of her existence, is incensed by jealousy. She responds by appropriating her husband’s pen to respond to Marianne, thus destroying their relationship. This incident demonstrates the extent to which Willoughby’s masculinity is undermined by his dependence on her capital. She takes his “manhood” in hand and dictates the terms of his social existence. As Willoughby explains it to Marianne:

‘[W]hat do you think of my wife’s style of letter-writing? - delicate - tender - truly feminine - was it not?’
‘Your wife! - The letter was in your own hand-writing’.
‘Yes, but I had only the credit of servilely copying such sentences as I was ashamed to put my name to. The original was all her own – her own happy thoughts and genteel diction’. (S&S 288)

There is great irony in the fact that Willoughby, in one sense Austen’s most perfect rendition of masculinity, is comprehensively feminised by the economics of the novel. As he admits himself, “her money was necessary to me” (S&S 288).

Burkean conservatism argues that the economic system within which the Dashwoods operate is secure, fair and provides for all. Yet all are failed by it in this novel. The Dashwoods’s financial distress is at the very heart of this story and it is compounded by Edward Ferrars’s disputes with his mother and his relinquishing of his position as the eldest son. Colonel Brandon then fulfils the role once claimed by Willoughby when he happens upon the injured Marianne in the Devonshire Downs. He rescues the Dashwood family, but from a financial point of view rather than a physical one, not just by providing Marianne with a financially bounteous marriage, but by offering Edward Ferrars a church living, thus taking care of Elinor, Mrs Dashwood and Margaret by proxy. In the face of dire financial circumstance, Marianne is married off to a rich gentleman. Her sexuality is the sacrifice offered up at the altar of financial security, something Marianne begins to grasp when she states: “Dearest
Elinor, I have been cruelly used; but not by Willoughby [...] By all the world, rather than by his own heart” (S&S 164).

**The colonial space and wealth creation**

Colonel Brandon exists slightly outside *Sense and Sensibility*’s economic framework of inheritance, jointures and entails, having spent time in the East Indies. Brandon is stationed there as a soldier, but his presence is connected to the British East India Company, an institution which epitomised the connection between colonial expansion and capitalist enterprise. Founded by charter from Elizabeth I in 1600, it was granted a monopoly on English trade with Asia. Unlike earlier attempts at colonial expansion in North America, the English were not interested in planting the East Indies, as Linda Colley notes: “Neither at this (1769) nor at any other time was the subcontinent viewed by the Company or London’s politicians as a potential settlement colony”.10 Their concern in the East Indies was purely capitalist, the aim being to appropriate foreign treasure and produce for profit. As Colley states, the East India Company gradually became “Britain’s single biggest commercial enterprise”.11 At the same time, the Company provided the circumstances for many individuals to make personal fortunes through colonial entrepreneurism.

Through Colonel Brandon’s military service with the East India Company, Austen can be seen to be engaging with a discourse of modernity which saw Britain move away from the feudal land-based economics into modernity, imperialism and capitalist enterprise. As Saree Makdisi argues, engagement with such processes was an important component of Romanticism:

[...] the varied engagements with the culture of modernisation in Britain that we may identify as romanticism primarily took the form of an engagement not with modernisation *tout court* or as such, but rather with its social, economic, and political manifestations. These in turn were grasped through their effects rather than systemically: in urbanisation, for example; or the advent of machine-production; or imperial conquest; or the transformation of countryside; or the degradation of the natural environment; or the anomic

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and alienation of the monad – the individual human subject cut adrift in the modern world – which inspired Keats’ most passionate and disturbing Odes.\textsuperscript{12}

In Austen’s work and beyond, empire, because of its connection with money-making, becomes associated primarily with those individuals who are “failed” by traditional economies of land inheritance and primogeniture, chiefly the disinherited and younger siblings. One essay in James Austen’s publication \textit{The Loiterer} relates the story of a young man inspired by a neighbour’s son who returns from the East Indies with “one of those sudden fortunes”. As a second son, with no inclination for the professions, he views the opportunities of empire as a means of redressing the economic imbalance between himself and his brother: “Besides it seemed to me extremely unjust, that I should be observed to exert my talents for the good of society, while my elder brother enjoyed the luxury of doing nothing at all”.\textsuperscript{13}

The perception of the colonies as a source of wealth was by no means restricted to the east. In the prologue to Richard Cumberland’s 1771 play, \textit{The West Indian}, the audience is introduced to Jamaica, that country “which swells your commerce and supports your fame”.\textsuperscript{14} In Austen’s unfinished piece, \textit{Catharine, or the Bower}, recourse to colonial wealth becomes the only option for the eldest Miss Wynne, whose parents die, leaving her and her sister dependent upon relations, “who though very opulent and very nearly connected with them, had with difficulty been prevailed on to contribute anything towards their Support”.\textsuperscript{15} This situation is only marginally more desperate than that in which the Dashwoods find themselves. Cecilia is forced to throw herself at the mercy of the colonial marriage market and is “equipped” for the East Indies by a cousin, where she succeeds in securing her future financially, though at great personal cost to her sentiments:

\begin{quote}
Her personal Attractions had gained her a husband as soon as she had arrived at Bengal, and she had now been married nearly a twelve month. Splendidly, yet unhappily married. United to a Man of double her own age,
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{13} \textit{The Loiterer, a Periodical Work, first Published at Oxford in the years 1789 and 1790}, ed. James Austen (Dublin: P. Byrne & W. Jones, 1792), 132.

\textsuperscript{14} Richard Cumberland, \textit{The West Indian, A Comedy} (London: C. Dilly, 1792), Prologue.

whose disposition was not amiable, and whose Manners were unpleasing, though his Character was respectable.\textsuperscript{16}

Cecilia’s fate, then, is a more extreme version of Marianne Dashwood’s. For all his faults, Colonel Brandon has reasonable manners and is amiable. However, in the face of economic hardship, both women make marriages to older wealthy men, marriages that do not match their romantic ideals.

**Hancock and Hastings**

In considering the role of the colonial space in facilitating wealth creation, Austen was reflecting social realities, but also her own experiences of the world. Both the colonial marriage market and the East India Company performed important roles in the fortunes of Austen’s extended family, through the figure of her father’s sister, Philadelphia Austen. After spending five years as an apprentice milliner, Philadelphia, like Cecilia Wynne, opted to try her luck in the colonies. She boarded the *Bombay Castle* ship to India in January 1752. As David Nokes suggests in his biography of Jane Austen, the alternative for Philadelphia was bleak: “the choice had been stark and clear: either to live, like her sister Leonora, as a penniless dependent relative; or to find herself a husband as soon as possible”.\textsuperscript{17} By the following February, she was married to Tysoe Saul Hancock, a surgeon employed by the East India Company. Through Hancock, Philadelphia became closely associated with one of the most famous names connected with the Company, Warren Hastings, whom the couple met in Fort William, Calcutta in 1759.\textsuperscript{18}

Warren Hastings, one of the most famous figures in the history of the East India Company and indeed, the history of the British empire, left school at seventeen and found a lowly position as a writer in a company of merchants trading in the East Indies. Keen intelligence, a capacity for hard work and a profound interest in and knowledge of the people, language and culture of India saw him promoted repeatedly until, in 1770, he was made Governor General. However animosity between Hastings and his colleagues Edmund Burke and Philip Francis led to a very public downfall.

\textsuperscript{16}Jane Austen, *Catharine*, 188.
Accusing him of applying torture to the Begums of Oudh and extorting vast sums of money from the Raja Cheyte Sing, Francis, in conjunction with Edmund Burke, had Hastings impeached in 1787. The trial, probably the most famous and certainly the longest in British history opened in February 1788 with a scramble to buy tickets for the opening. Despite Burke’s best rhetoric and dedication, seven years later, Hastings was pronounced innocent, although the costs of his defence had brought him financial ruin.

Through Philadelphia, the Austens became connected with Warren Hastings (and in a peripheral sense with Burke too) and housed his frail young son George, who died of a putrid sore throat while in the care of Jane Austen’s parents. As Nokes points out, Hancock “always treated the Steventon family with great kindness. He sent Mr Austen gifts of neck-cloths woven from Indian muslin, and gave Cassandra a handkerchief of Pullicat silk”.¹⁹

Rumour and speculation from the period suggest that the association between the Austens and Warren Hastings may have been more intimate still. As Nokes notes, Philadelphia’s romantic sentiments must have been sadly disappointed by the significantly older fiancé who met her in Fort St David in 1752.²⁰ Hastings on the other hand was by most accounts a far more charming and desirable figure than her husband and many suspected that he rather than Hancock was the father of Philadelphia’s child. As Deirdre Le Faye relates, Jenny Streachey, whose husband was secretary to Governor General Robert Clive, and perhaps jealous of the favour he had shown to Hancock, slandered the trio to her husband’s employer with tales of adultery. Her tales were successful inasmuch as Clive wrote to his wife in England in the summer of 1765: “In no circumstances whatever keep company with Mrs Hancock for it is beyond a doubt that she abandoned herself to Mr. Hastings”.²¹

For Hancock, Hastings and Philadelphia Austen, all born into obscurity and relative poverty, empire provided their best opportunity to progress in the world, in terms of capital and social status. The capacity that the colonies had to promote social advancement was resented by many. As Nigel Leask points out in his work *Curiosity*

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¹⁹ Nokes, Jane Austen, 43-44.
²⁰ Nokes, Jane Austen, 28.
²¹ Le Faye, Jane Austen’s ‘Outlandish Cousin’, 19.
and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: ‘From an Antique Land’, Hastings’s name became associated with the term “nabob”. Already associated with “vulgarity and ostentatious new wealth”, in the wake of Hastings’ impeachment it came to “encompass corruption and peculation”.

Colonel Brandon, wealth and the East Indies

Like Warren Hastings, Colonel Brandon’s sojourn in the East India Company provides him with the opportunity to raise capital. The second son of a landed gentleman, he joins the East India Company’s army in the knowledge that the estate will pass to his elder brother. Brandon is initially as much of a victim of the entailed inheritance system as Marianne or Willoughby. His story of a first attachment thwarted by the demands of land-based economies is not dissimilar to theirs.

Like Marianne and Willoughby, Eliza and Brandon are denied marriage for economic reasons; in this case because Eliza’s wealth is required for the upkeep of the estate. She is married to Brandon’s elder brother, in whose hands the estate will eventually lie: “She was married – married against her inclination to my brother. Her fortune was large, and our family estate much encumbered. And this, I fear, is all that can be said for the conduct of one, who was at once her uncle and guardian” (S&S 178). The result is a thoroughly unhappy marriage: “My brother did not deserve her; he did not even love her […] my brother had no regard for her; his pleasures were not what they ought to have been, and from the first he treated her unkindly” (S&S 178-179). These events motivate Brandon to distance himself from England and the estate altogether by travelling to the East Indies with his regiment. After three years abroad he returns to England, and unexpectedly finds himself heir to the family estate “after the death of my brother, (which happened about five years ago, and which left to me the possession of the family property)” (S&S 181).

By the time of the action of Sense and Sensibility, the fortunes of the Brandon estate have been renewed, but one question the text never answers is: who is responsible? Was Eliza’s inheritance sufficient, or did it take the fortune which Brandon amassed in the East Indies? At the very least, Brandon’s colonial experience offers the

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possibility of renewing landed estates without recourse to forced, loveless marriages. It also suggests alternatives for a young man such as Willoughby. Rather than remain in England, dependent upon elderly relatives and eligible heiresses for provision, Willoughby might have considered embarking upon a colonial endeavour of his own in order to establish his fortune. Such an enterprise would certainly have enabled him to be more independent in his choice of a wife.

There is strong suggestion in the text that Brandon did amass considerable wealth in the colonies, for example when Willoughby and Marianne mock his reticence:

‘That is to say’, cried Marianne contemptuously, ‘he has told you that in the East Indies the climate is hot, and the mosquitoes are troublesome’ [...] ‘Perhaps’, said Willoughby, ‘his observations may have extended to the existence of nabobs, gold mohrs, and palanquins’. (S&S 43-44)

The “observations” that Willoughby refers to illustrate the empire’s capacity for wealth creation. A gold mohr is a coin from British India which Austen may have been familiar with as a result of her correspondence with the Hancock family. The following letter from Hancock to his daughter mentions the denomination in the context of an arithmetic lesson:

My Dear Betsy, To convince you how pleased I am with Your Letter of the 25 May 1770 I now send you four Gold Mohars [sic], quite new from the Mint.  

A palanquin was a carriage for one passenger, consisting of a box attached to two poles and carried by four or six bearers, owned by nabobs and likely paid for with mohrs.

Empire in the popular imagination equated to the accrual of wealth and luxury. The second son in The Loiterer article mentioned above has a vision of himself surrounded by colonial splendour:

Sometimes I found myself carried in an elegant palanquin, attended by a long train of blacks; and at others reclined at my ease on a rich Sopha,  

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23 Le Faye, Jane Austen’s ‘Outlandish Cousin’, 28. 

while my careful slaves drove away the mosquitoes with their fans. I now settled the accounts with my circars, now counted imaginary lacks, and admired the lustre of my ideal diamonds.\(^{24}\)

These examples signify wealth creation of a kind that bore little relation to the traditional land-based economies of the gentry. This new wealth was typified by its basis on cash (the mohrs) rather than inherited land. As the words nabob and palanquin indicate, this new wealth had an ostentatious, gaudy character which was utterly at odds with sober native regard for acres and interest. And as Willoughby’s language in mocking Brandon demonstrates, the discussion of it required a new vocabulary.

Brandon can be seen in the context of a host of colonial characters in eighteenth-century fiction whose function is to inject funds into cash-strapped English economies. Such characters range from Austen’s own Miss Lambe and the Creole Mr Vincent in Edgeworth’s *Belinda* (1801), to Cumberland’s Belacour, of whom it is said “he has rum and sugar enough belonging to him, to make all the water in the Thames to punch”.\(^{25}\) Raymond Williams suggests Austen has very little difficulty in integrating these new forms of wealth into her literary world:

> Into the long and complicated interaction of landed and trading capital, the process that Cobbett observed – the arrival of the ‘the nabobs, negro-drivers, admirals, generals’, and so on – is directly inserted, and is even taken for granted.\(^{26}\)

Austen incorporates these new forms of wealth into her novels, from the casual references to nabobs, mohrs and palanquins made by Willoughby and Marianne, to the mentions of colonial products which I will examine in more detail in the course of the chapter.

There is great irony in the fact that the novel allows Willoughby and Marianne to make the observations which connect Brandon to colonial wealth creation, given that they are the characters who are most adversely affected by the closed economic

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\(^{24}\) *The Loiterer*, 133.


systems of the novel. Ultimately, it is Marianne who benefits from Brandon’s colonial enterprises; she gains from the financial provision which marrying him brings. If we consider Brandon in terms of his past, we see how his economic standing seems to have changed significantly, from the second son with limited provision, to the estate owner who appears to have raised considerable capital from his imperial activities. This change in economic station makes a significant impact on Brandon’s standing as a man. Brandon moves from the position of a financially limited second son, helpless to prevent the unhappy marriage of his brother and Eliza, to a landowner with a colonial fortune, who is able to marry Marianne and rescue the Dashwood family from poverty. The text makes the contrast between these two “versions” of Brandon very clear by accentuating similarities between Marianne and Eliza in the text, similarities which Brandon seems to recognise more clearly than anyone: “there is a very strong resemblance between them, as well in mind as person. The same warmth of heart, the same eagerness of fancy and spirits” (S&S 178).

Colonial conspicuous consumption

Sense and Sensibility does not engage with the moral and ideological implications of the colonial dimension for English identity. But we shall see that through the incorporation of colonial products such as ebony or pearls it does reflect the way in which empire was changing the fabric of everyday English life. Sense and Sensibility’s characters are colonial consumers, and their conspicuous consumption of colonial goods is a way of conveying the wealth of the colonial space. Moreover, the consumption of these goods represents a transfer of wealth from the land-based English at home to the exporting colonial entrepreneur.

Colonel Brandon’s reticence about his colonial adventures, ridiculed by Marianne and Willoughby in the quotation above, and the lack of interest in those adventures displayed by the other characters, is an accurate reflection of how the English viewed the role of the eastern colonies at the time. Nigel Leask examines Indian travelogues published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He argues that for a country so consequential to the English economy, the lack of interest shown by English writers and readers in the history, culture and society of India was notable. He cites Robert Southey’s review of Lord Valentia’s 1809 work Voyages and Travels to India as evidence for this position. Valentia, Southey suggests, was the only
traveller to take a deep interest in the country for something other than financial gain since seventeenth-century travellers such as Thomas Coryat, Francois Bernier, and Sir Thomas Roe: “the only English traveller who for more than a hundred years has visited India for the purpose of gratifying his own curiosity and imparting his observations to the public”. 27

Leask attributes this lack of interest in part to an underlying anxiety concerning Anglo-Indian identity. “Unlike British settler colonists in the Caribbean, South Africa, or Australasia, Anglo-Indians were not allowed to settle permanently or to buy land in Company territory, and were expected to retire from service back to Britain”. 28 Indian land did not become British colonial land in the way that Caribbean land did, and English employees of the East India Company occupied an uncomfortable role in that they lived in and exploited the natural resources of a land that they would never fully settle in. However, I maintain that in Sense and Sensibility at least, colonial reticence can be attributed to lack of interest in the colonies as entities with a culture and identity of their own. They are of interest instead as a wealth-creating space. In chapter three I will suggest that Austen’s sense of anxiety about empire is much more acute in Mansfield Park, which depicts an England far more dependent upon colonial products to maintain its style of living than that in Sense and Sensibility. Mansfield Park also begins to acknowledge the human costs of the production of colonial products in a way that Sense and Sensibility does not.

The second way in which empire is represented in Sense and Sensibility, then, is through the incorporation of exotic produce into everyday English existence. The origins of such goods are not explored. Edward Said in his work on Mansfield Park incorporates a quotation from John Stuart Mill’s Principles of Political Economy:

> These are hardly to be looked upon as countries, carrying on an exchange of commodities with other countries, but more properly as outlying agricultural or manufacturing estates belonging to a larger community. Our West Indian colonies, for example, cannot be regarded as countries with a productive capital of their own [...] but are rather the place where England finds it

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27 Quarterly Review 2 (Aug 1809), 89. For more information see Leask, Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 157.

28 Leask, Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 159.
convenient to carry on the production of sugar, coffee and a few other tropical commodities.  

Mill’s final point is the now famous phrase “The trade with the West Indies is hardly to be considered an external trade, but more resembles the traffic between town and country”. This quotation is a much more accurate reflection of Austen’s treatment of empire in Sense and Sensibility than in Mansfield Park, as we shall see in chapter three.

Although Sense and Sensibility does not engage with the moral and ideological implications of the colonial dimension for English identity, it does exhibit the way in which empire changed everyday English life by featuring colonial products in an English space. This reflects reality. Empire was the source, not just of cash, but of goods (which, themselves, were often the source of cash). Linda Colley cites consumer goods as “perhaps most far-reaching consequence” of colonial expansion:

Exotic goods which had previously been imported only in small quantities for a cosseted elite – silk, rice, dyestuffs, coffee, tobacco and, above all, tea and sugar – now became more abundantly and broadly available.  

In addition to the very popular colonial produce such as tea, sugar, cocoa and coffee, with which all families of Austen’s class were familiar, Austen may have witnessed more specialised and more personal colonial imports through the figure of her aunt Philadelphia. Nokes points out that while Philadelphia was in England (often as a guest of the Austens), Hancock, despite his own financial difficulties, kept her supplied with the colonial produce she loved:

With every shipment home he sends her exotic gifts. He sends her the spicy Indian foods she had grown to love in their early married years together at Fort St David’s: pickled limes, pickled chillies, balychong spice and cassondy sauce. He sends her favourite rare perfume, the precious attar of roses from Echarabad. He sends her rich Indian fabrics: soosy quilts and palampores for bed-linen, Malda silks, flowered muslin, seersuckers, atlas,

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30 Stuart Mill, Principles, 693.
doreas and sannow to be made up into gown and shawls and underwear. He sends rich silks from Cossimbazar and muslin neck-cloths from Pullicat. Although living a life of monastic frugality himself, he cannot bring himself to reprove his wife’s fondness for luxury.\(^{32}\)

Returning to the novel, *Sense and Sensibility* incorporates colonial produce in a number of guises. Marianne is offered a glass of Constantia wine by Mrs Jennings, one of the earliest references to this South African winery in English (S&S 171).

In another scene, the foppish and dandified Robert Ferrars requests the fruits of empire to be set in his tooth-pick case: “at last the affair was decided. The ivory, the gold and the pearls, all received their appointment” (S&S 193). This scene, set in Gray’s jewellers in Sackville Street in London, is interesting for a number of reasons. Elinor goes there to carry out “a negociation [sic] for the exchange of a few old-fashioned jewels of her mother” (S&S 192), a transaction based on a traditional economic framework of inheritance. Wealth passed from generation to generation in the form of jewels is juxtaposed with the new capitalist consumption that Robert Ferrars enjoys, which the bounty of empire has just taken to new heights. This scene also demonstrates the way in which London can be symbolically seen to contain the empire in miniature.\(^{33}\) By contrast, Colonel Brandon’s economic relationship with empire is the opposite of Robert Ferrars’s. Instead of using English wealth garnered from a landed estate to purchase colonial products, he utilises wealth gained from colonial endeavours to fund landed English life.

I have considered at length the symbolic aspects of the Northanger estate in the previous chapter and this is a topic to which I will return in the course of the thesis, examining the symbolic implications of the architecture of Pemberley, Mansfield Park, Sotherton and Donwell Abbey. Although this is a very fruitful technique for Austen, it is not employed in any great depth in *Sense and Sensibility*. However, it is worth noting that Austen’s descriptions of Delaford focus on its ability to provide

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\(^{33}\) Makdisi makes this point in relation to the crowd scenes of book seven of Wordsworth’s *Prelude*: “This staggering spectacle inverts the space of London, turning it inside out (like the mirror in Plato’s cave), so that the entire external world and the imperial connections that have made it into a world all but ruled by Britain, can be seen all at once. The space of London itself turns into the space of empire; so that one need go no further than London to see much of the entire planet”. Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism*, 31.
life’s comforts, boasting “the best fruit-trees”, “such a mulberry tree”, “delightful stewponds”, and “a butcher hard by in the village” (S&S 170-171). Brandon and his estate bring bounty to the Dashwood family, providing for their material wants with the fruits of life.

Delaford is not the only estate in the novel which benefits from the manifestations of modernity discussed by Makdisi above, which saw Britain move away from the feudal land-based economics into modernity, imperialism and capitalist enterprise. John Dashwood opts for another means of modernising and investing in his estate. Instead of acting as the patriarchal moral head of the community, a role we will see fulfilled by Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, he is concerned only with pursuing his own selfish interests. In keeping with his earlier desire to keep land and money within his own immediate family, he has followed General Tilney’s example and enclosed local land. As he explains to Elinor “[t]he inclosure of Norland Common, now carrying on, is a most serious drain” (S&S 196). We get a very clear sense of the changing nature of the English landscape, small private residences being eaten up by aggressive larger landowners as John Dashwood tells Elinor about “a little purchase” he has made recently; East Kingham Farm “you must remember the place, where old Gibson used to live” (S&S 196). It is interesting that this novel, which explores the role of colonial wealth in refinancing distressed landed estates, also considers the practice of enclosure. John Dashwood’s act is portrayed in a negative light in the novel; the allusion to “old Gibson” suggests the human cost of this means of modernising the economics of landed existence. By contrast the human cost of colonial expansion barely registers in *Sense and Sensibility*.

A variety of landed estates constitute the primary, tangible spaces of *Sense and Sensibility*. However alongside the feudal land-based economies of the novel exists the space of empire. The colonies exist as a space for wealth creation or as the origin for exotic products within the novel. *Sense and Sensibility* demonstrates how imperial wealth and consumer goods, manifestations of modernity, are assimilated into English existence. Imperial and landed spaces have an impact on English masculinity in the novel. Despite our earlier impression of Brandon, filtered through the gaze of Marianne, as a borderline infirm example of masculinity past its prime, his colonial experience, which allows him to occupy the role of provider for the Dashwood
family, helps to establish his masculinity more strongly. As an estate-owning “eldest son” and with the wealth of empire behind him, he can rescue Marianne from her financial distress where before he was unable to save Eliza from an unhappy marriage. Willoughby, styled as Marianne’s “rescuer” at the beginning of the narrative is unable to provide for her financially, because of his dependency on Mrs Smith coupled with his great fear of poverty. As such, his masculinity is undermined by the end of the text.

The spaces of *Pride and Prejudice*

Like *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* is fundamentally concerned with the exploration of a Burkean, land-based masculinity. The opening chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, which charts Mr Bingley’s entrance and Mrs Bennet’s hysterical intention to snare him for one of her daughters introduces us to the space of Longbourn, the Bennets’ home and a world in which the structures of entailed inheritance have the potential to fail just as catastrophically as in *Sense and Sensibility*. It is easy to be misled by the great wit and charm with which Austen imbues Mr Bennet and overlook the fact that the actions and decisions he undertakes in the novel place the future of his wife and children in financial and social jeopardy. Longbourn is “entailed in default of heirs male on a distant relation” (P&P 20) and Mr Bennet has made no attempt to save any of his income for his wife and daughters after his death. In addition, it is Mr Bennet who fails to forbid Lydia’s excursion to Brighton despite Elizabeth’s perceptive advice and thus is responsible for exposing her and her family to the censure of society. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Colonel Brandon rescues the female Dashwoods from the comparative poverty to which they have been reduced by their male relations. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Darcy marries Elizabeth Bennet, rescuing her and her sisters from potential penury and salvaging what is left of Lydia’s honour, thus making amends for both of Mr Bennet’s mistakes. In Mr Darcy, Austen creates a very positive model of landed English masculinity. Darcy’s masculine virtue is explored within what is probably the most famous space in the novel, Pemberley, Darcy’s Derbyshire estate.

While *Sense and Sensibility* contrasts landed estates with colonial spaces, *Pride and Prejudice* makes reference to Napoleonic France in the form of the standing militia stationed at Meryton. Through these spaces the text explores two very different
versions of English masculinity in Fitzwilliam Darcy and Lieutenant Wickham. The version represented by Darcy is domestic, community-based and associated with the estate. Wickham, as soldier, embodies a military masculinity, something which *Pride and Prejudice* does not present in a positive light. There is no sense of heroism attached to the military in *Pride and Prejudice*; the novel champions the Burkean masculinity represented by Darcy.

**Sir Charles Grandison: Christian domestic heroism versus military heroism**

As a positive exemplification of landed masculinity, it is useful to consider Darcy in the context of his literary heritage. Darcy, then, can be seen as part of a debate about masculinity which was being conducted between novelists of the time. Aspects of Darcy’s conduct and character take on a greater symbolic significance in the context of this intertextual dialogue. Thus, in order to understand Darcy’s significance, we need to pause here to examine Richardson’s Sir Charles Grandison. Darcy is Austen’s response to Samuel Richardson’s great exemplar of landed English masculinity, who in turn was conceived in answer to Fielding’s Tom Jones. As Margaret Anne Doody suggests in her 1974 work *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson*, Richardson was keen to prove that the traits and aspects of character which he felt constituted desirable masculinity could form the basis of a novel just as entertaining and more instructive than *Tom Jones*.34

In *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-1754) Richardson specifically set out to redefine heroic masculinity for the age. His middle-class origins and lack of classical education meant that he was unlikely to champion the models of Homer and Virgil; Christianity was at the centre of the project. Just as Virgil’s Aeneas was conceived to embody the values of the Roman empire, Sir Charles Grandison was intended to exemplify the kind of heroism required in eighteenth-century Protestant England. *Sir Charles Grandison* stages a debate on the merits of landed, domesticated heroism in comparison to traditional military models, a debate which is considered within the text of *Pride and Prejudice*.

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The desire to create a specifically Christian hero leads Richardson to examine those classical heroic virtues which are at variance with Christian teaching, such as "honour". Early in the novel, Sir Charles faces the dilemma of maintaining his honour while upholding his duties as a Christian, when challenged to a duel by the wicked Sir Hargrave Pollexfen over the rescue of the heroine, Harriet Byron. That this episode is concerned with the redefinition of valiant masculinity is clearly signalled:

_Sir Har:_ If you are a man, Sir Charles Grandison, take your choice of one of those pistols, G_d_n you. I insist upon it [...] 

_Sir Ch._ As I AM a man, Sir Hargrave, I will not.\(^{35}\)

Sir Charles attempts to uphold his honour by writing, rather than fighting. In swapping the sword for the pen, Sir Charles demonstrates the changing nature of desirable masculine accomplishments in the mid-eighteenth century. In *Sir Charles Grandison* physical supremacy and courage is valued less highly than the genteel accomplishments of education and address:

I write a long letter, because I propose only to write [...] Let any man insult me upon my refusal, and put me upon my defence, and he shall find that numbers to my single arm shall not intimidate me. Yet, even in that case, I would much rather choose to clear myself of them as a man of honour should wish to do, than either to kill or maim any man. My life is not my own: much less is another man’s mine [...] My sword is a sword of defence, not of offence. A pistol I only carry on the road, to terrify robbers; and I have found a less dangerous weapon sometimes sufficient to repel a sudden insult.\(^{36}\)

Richardson’s point is that Sir Charles’s heroism is not dependent on any kind of military pedigree. His lack of militarism is made clear:

I was [once] in the midst of marching armies, and could not tell how to abate the ardour those martial movements had risen in my breast. But, unless my


\(^{36}\) Richardson, *Sir Charles Grandison*, I: 208.
country were to be unjustly invaded by a foreign enemy, I think I would not, on any consideration, be drawn into the field again".37

The denunciation of a military male heroism is also apparent in *Pride and Prejudice*. Mr Darcy has his own narrow escape from duelling. When Lydia elopes with Mr Wickham, her father ventures to London to search for them, prompting a hysterical reaction from Mrs Bennet: “And now here’s Mr. Bennet gone away, and I know he will fight Wickham, wherever he meets him, and then he will be killed, and what is to become of us all?” (P&P 218). By the time of *Pride and Prejudice*’s 1813 publication, the fighting of duels was rare. Though Colonel Brandon and Willoughby fight on the occasion of Willoughby’s abduction of Eliza, both retire uninjured. As Darcy essentially steps into Mr Bennet’s role on this occasion, rescuing Lydia from her abandonment and salvaging what he can of her honour, the text implies that any duelling required will be undertaken by him. Darcy is a far more appropriate duelling partner for Wickham than the middle-aged Mr Bennet – and he also has his own scores to settle. In the end a duel is not necessary, as Darcy’s means of persuading Wickham to behave honourably is by supplying him with generous bribes. Darcy is not required to prove his abilities as a swordsman as Austen is also attempting to move away from the traditional concept of the warrior hero and towards a model more pertinent to modern, Protestant England.

Austen’s family was anxious to emphasise her regard for Richardson’s work, a fact established by J.E. Austen-Leigh and incorporated into the “official” version of the author ever since:

> Her knowledge of Richardson’s work was such as no one is likely again to acquire, now that the multitude and merits of our light literature have called off the attention of readers from that great master. Every circumstance narrated in *Sir Charles Grandison*, all that was ever said or done in the cedar parlour was familiar to her; and the wedding days of Lady L. and Lady G. were as well remembered as if they had been living friends.38

37 Richardson, *Sir Charles Grandison*, I: 263.
However, her appreciation of Richardson was not so reverent that it prevented her from having fun at his expense. Her juvenilia piece *Jack and Alice* demonstrates the delight she took in Richardson’s absurdities, particularly in the portrayal of Sir Charles as perfection itself. *Jack and Alice* boasts a character clearly modelled on his namesake: “Charles Adams was an amiable, accomplished and bewitching young Man; of so dazzling a Beauty that none but Eagles could look him in the Face”.  

R.T. Jones’s reading of Sir Charles Grandison demonstrates that Austen’s use of Richardson’s work is exactly what Richardson would have intended. Jones points to Richardson’s declaration in his preface that the collection of letters “is not published ultimately, nor even principally [...] for the Sake of Entertainment only”. The hope is instead that it will “enliven as well as instruct”. Jones suggests that our understanding of the novel would be greatly enhanced if we took Richardson’s advice and used the work as a vehicle for discussion. Catherine Morland’s mother, for example, who “very often reads *Sir Charles Grandison*” (NA 25) – almost as a manual for etiquette – is approaching the novel the way Richardson intended readers should.

Jones argues that, having set up Sir Charles as his model of masculinity, Richardson intends the reader to respond with their own questioning, criticism or corroboration: “If, for example, we protest that he is too complacent, or that his virtues depend rather too much on his being rich, or on his manual dexterity and physical strength, or that a man with his wealth and power has a moral obligation to take an active part in public life – we are taking up Richardson’s challenge and demonstrating that the novel works”. This is exactly the way in which Austen approaches *Sir Charles Grandison*. In ridiculing Richardson’s excesses but simultaneously using his model of English masculinity as an archetype to be honed in the construction of her own, she is handling the novel as Richardson intended. With this in mind, Margaret Anne Doody’s observation on Sir Charles is at least equally applicable to Darcy:

> The rejection of the old ideal of the noble warrior-hero in favour of the ideal of the benevolent gentleman may be regarded as part of a concerted effort of

a whole society to make an adjustment to a kind of communal life other than
that of the small self-contained unit, sustained and protected by the leader
who can wield the sword. The new developing society is broader-based,
with more visible social and economic control and interdependence. Each
for the good of all must assist in the achievement of peace, order and
prosperity.\textsuperscript{42}

This is particularly reminiscent of Austen’s depiction of Darcy through the eyes of his
housekeeper in Pemberley, who brands him “the best landlord, and the best master”
(P&P 188), a clear echo of Harriet’s description of Sir Charles as “the best of
brothers, friends, landlords, masters and the bravest and best of men”.\textsuperscript{43} The
construction of the role of masculine heroism in the community is very clearly
expressed by Elizabeth:

As a brother, a landlord, a master, she considered how many people’s
happiness were in his guardianship! – How much of pleasure or pain it was
in his power to bestow! – How much of good or evil must be done by him!
(P&P 189)

\textit{Pride and Prejudice} clearly privileges a Richardsonian, Christian, community-based
heroism above classical warrior heroism. By the time Austen writes \textit{Persuasion}, her
opinion has changed dramatically, but in \textit{Pride and Prejudice} military heroism is
undermined.

\textbf{Wickham the soldier}

It is no coincidence that Darcy’s main rival for Elizabeth’s affections, Wickham, is a
soldier. More significant still, Wickham has rejected a career in the church, an
occupation which would have been much more in accordance with the community
ideal that the novel champions. Tim Fulford in his essay ‘Sighing for a Soldier: Jane
Austen and Military Pride and Prejudice’ suggests that the role of the army in
Austen’s work has been underexplored by critics, who since the 1970s have
extensively discussed issues such as slavery, radicalism and Jacobinism:

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{42} Doody, \textit{A Natural Passion}, 242.
\textsuperscript{43} Richardson \textit{Sir Charles Grandison}, II: 303.
\end{footnotesize}
Yet it is only in the last few years that they have begun a detailed scrutiny of her part in some of the most urgent debates of the period. These debates, which figure more explicitly in her books than does the abolitionist campaign, concerned the proper role and conduct of the armed forces and of the men who served in them.\footnote{\textit{Tim Fulford} ‘Sighing for a Soldier: Jane Austen and Military Pride and Prejudice’, \textit{Nineteenth-Century Literature} 57.2 (2002), 153.}

As Fulford points out, the backdrop of war with France was present in English life from 1793 when the conflict resumed until the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, and that at several key points (1798, 1803, 1809) the threat of French invasion was very real indeed. As a response to the threat of French invasion, Britain established a standing militia across the country as an appendage to the regular army. As Fulford argues, debates about the behaviour, utility and social implications of the militia grew in stridency over thirty-five years, but climaxed in the late 1790s (corresponding to Austen’s initial drafting of \textit{First Impressions} and the Supplementary Militia Act of 1796) and 1811-1812 (the point at which Austen was revising \textit{Pride and Prejudice} for publication). By May 1804 176,000 Britons were serving within the militia, both in the army and in the various volunteer corps,\footnote{Colley, \textit{Britons}, 293.} with a particularly strong presence in the south-east. This phenomenon is woven into the fabric of \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, in which a militia regiment is stationed in Meryton, the nearest town to Longbourn: “At present, indeed, they were well supplied both with news and happiness by the recent arrival of a militia regiment in the neighbourhood; it was to remain the whole winter, and Meryton was the head quarters” (P&P 20).

Linda Colley suggests that far from embodying a militaristic, masculine ideal, those who volunteered for the militia were motivated by the flamboyant costumes of the regiments: “As artists and cartoonists delighted in pointing out, it was their uniforms that gave many of these initial volunteer corps away. Very often, they were gorgeous, impractical and extremely expensive”.\footnote{Colley, \textit{Britons}, 288.} As Fulford demonstrates, uniforms were supplied by the wealthy aristocrats who headed up and trained individual regiments and the brightly coloured coats became a national spectacle which the public flocked
to see. The Duke of Devonshire’s regiment, stationed in Kent, became a domestic tourist attraction, with coaches arriving from London to view the spectacle.47

The flamboyant dress of the militia is referenced in Pride and Prejudice in the guise of Wickham’s “blue coat” which features heavily in Lydia’s reminiscences of her wedding day (P&P 242). This accentuates the vanity of the military, suggesting that these men are as interested in frills and finery as their womenfolk. Moreover Austen also uses clothing and costume to feminise and discredit the military. This is demonstrated by an incident Lydia relates in which she and her friends dress Chamberlayne up “in woman’s clothes, on purpose to pass for a lady” (P&P 169). Lydia suggests that Chamberlayne makes a very convincing woman – “you cannot imagine how well he looked!” – and as Lydia relates it, Chamberlayne is unrecognisable as a man to his fellow officers: “When Denny, and Wickham, and Pratt, and two or three more of the men came in, they did not know him in the least” (P&P 169). This incident anticipates Austen’s more sustained use of materials and clothing to undermine masculinity in the theatricals episode in Mansfield Park, in which Tom Bertram cross-dresses to portray a woman on-stage and Mr Rushworth is emasculated by a sheath of pink satin. I will examine these issues in greater depth in chapter three. In Pride and Prejudice, the antics Lydia describes suggest that the military, responsible for the safety of the nation, are at times indistinguishable from women.

This incident also symbolises a militia occupied by frivolities and game-playing when their energies should be concentrated on the nation’s security. Fulford relates the way in which that the militia became linked with sex scandals, citing an incident in 1808 in which Anna Clarke, the mistress of the Duke of York, who was now Commander-in-Chief of the army, accepted sexual favours and bribes from army officers seeking promotion. Certainly Lydia perceives the militia’s role as facilitating sexual intrigue, balls and parties rather than securing the future of the nation. As Fulford argues:

Many feared that their governors’ ‘libidinous desire’ [...] would leave the strength of the army sapped by female wiles, thus leaving the nation vulnerable to French invasion. Redcoats, it seemed, were too busy indulging their mistresses to be an effective fighting force, and York’s

conduct suggested that the officers were more concerned with enjoying the women impressed by their splendid uniforms than they were with beating Napoleon.\textsuperscript{48}

Shrieking after dashingly clad soldiers is the mark of shallow, immature sexuality in this novel, being the preserve of Lydia, Kitty and occasionally Mrs Bennet who declares that she remembers a time when she “liked a red coat […] very well” (P&P 21). Lydia and Kitty’s preference for soldiers over landed gentlemen demonstrates their inability to appreciate the alternative version of masculinity that the novel holds up as ideal, choosing a one-dimensional, sexually charged military model rather than a more complex version of masculinity which Austen constructs for the gentry: “They could talk of nothing but officers; and Mr Bingley’s large fortune, the mention of which gave animation to their mother, was worthless in their eyes when opposed to the regimentals of an ensign” (P&P 20).

**Pemberley: the man and the estate**

The alternative, superior masculinity embodied by Darcy is explored in the text in a number of guises, but particularly via the space of his estate. This is a device Austen appropriated from Richardson. In *Sir Charles Grandison*, we are unambiguously invited to interpret the description of landscape symbolically, as is evidenced by the Harriet’s comment: “The gardens and lawn seem from the windows of this spacious house to be as boundless as the mind of the owner, and as free and open as his countenance”.\textsuperscript{49} The moral superiority of the owner, as well as his taste, imagination, worthy lineage and respect for his ancestors are all signified by the landscape of the estate:

The park itself is remarkable for its prospects, lawns, and rich appearing clumps of trees of large growth; which must therefore have been planted by the ancestors of the excellent owner; who, contenting himself to open and enlarge many fine prospects, delights to preserve, as much as possible, the

\textsuperscript{48} Fulford, ‘Sighing for a Soldier’, 160.

\textsuperscript{49} Richardson, *Sir Charles Grandison*, III: 272.
plantations of his ancestors; and particularly thinks it a kind of impiety to fell a tree, that was planted by his father.50

By these means Richardson is able to convey aspects of Sir Charles’s masculinity that he is unable to address in a more realistic fashion in the text, particularly his fertility and fecundity, if not quite his sexuality: “The gardens, vineyards, etc are beautifully laid out. The orangery is flourishing; every-thing indeed is, that belongs to Sir Charles Grandison”.51

Austen’s depiction of Pemberley, seen through the eyes of Elizabeth, seems to owe a great deal to Harriet’s reflections on Grandison Hall. Darcy’s attributes as a gentleman and indeed as a husband are signified by the attributes of his estate. Just like Darcy, Pemberley has a commanding prospect and an excellent situation, being:

[A] large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; – and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. (P&P 185)

The interior of the building conveys a similar message: “The rooms were lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor; but Elizabeth saw with admiration of his taste, that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine”. (P&P 185). As Edward Neill argues “[t]he properties of the landscape begin to bespeak Darcy in an incipiently erotic way, and combine quasi-ontologically with the housekeeper’s account and the unshowy elegance of the pictures and furnishings”.52

Richard Allestree’s The Gentleman’s Calling (1660), a conduct manual for the Gentleman which remained influential throughout the eighteenth century, outlines a variety of virtues which the gentleman enjoyed over those of inferior birth. Naturally, according to Allestree, such virtues are not just blessings of providence, but command

50 Richardson, Sir Charles Grandison, III: 273.
51 Richardson, Sir Charles Grandison, III: 273.
52 Neill, Politics of Jane Austen, 66.
particular responsibilities. His description of “reputation” resonates with this depiction of Darcy’s estate:

   INDEED, there is nothing by which they have so universal an influence, as their Example. Things that are set in some high and eminent place do naturally attract Men’s eyes to them; so that eminency of condition wherein Gentlemen are placed, renders their actions more observable. They are like the City our Saviour speaks of set on a hill, and have, by that advantageous situation the means of making their light shine farther than other men’s.  

The clear associations between Darcy and his estate, his obvious honour for his ancestors (signified by the gallery of portraits in Pemberley), his suitability to assume his birthright as master of Pemberley, his clear understanding of his role as a Burkean landlord, which encompasses the correct management of his estates as well as guardianship of his family, servants, neighbours, and the poor all coalesce to create a model of English Burkean masculinity. Darcy is the estate owner who uses his power and wealth to positive effect within the community, offering alms to the poor, employing the locals, looking after the physical and moral well-being of his family.

It is notable how easily Austen’s description of the Pemberley estate can be adapted to describe their owner, and how seamlessly the symbolism of architecture and furnishings translates to the character of Darcy. This points to the fact that Darcy’s wealth and estate are essential to his position as a model of masculine perfection. As we have seen, Doody argues that a new model of masculinity is created to accommodate a community. Within this model, we can see that heroism necessarily encompasses wealth. The “benevolent gentleman” must have something to give. Doody, in relation to Sir Charles, points out this benevolence does not always take the form of money or goods, but can also incorporate moral instruction and advice, both of which Sir Charles offers in great abundance. Darcy experiments with this role in the course of Pride and Prejudice, but it is worth noting that in assuming the role of moral compass for his friends and advising accordingly, he fails badly, dissuading Charles Bingley from a loving partner, failing to alert the Bennets to the dangerous nature of Wickham and even falling short as the protector of his sister. All Darcy’s best qualities and most heroic moments, as a patron of the poor, as an excellent

employer and as the saviour of Lydia are dependent upon his status as a wealthy gentleman. There is a sense in which the kind of heroic masculinity explored in *Pride and Prejudice* does come down almost entirely to money. *Pride and Prejudice*’s opening superbly conveys the frisson of sexual excitement which accompanies the news that Mr Bingley, a gentleman of large fortune – four or five thousand a year – is to settle in the neighbourhood. Sexual interest is piqued by his money. No-one could argue that a man worth two hundred a year would excite such excitement among the female population. On hearing that Bingley’s friend, Mr Darcy, is worth ten thousand a year, the ladies declare him “much handsomer” (P&P 6) than his friend.

Is it possible to separate Darcy the heroic masculine model, from Darcy the owner of Pemberley? Austen’s description of the estate, laden with symbolic overtones that conflate the man and the house so completely, suggests not. Elizabeth’s reaction to the Pemberley estate, and in particular, the insinuation that its riches motivate her to reconsider the desirability of Darcy as a husband, has led critics to brand her as something of a fortune hunter. “[A]t that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something” (P&P 185). However, in reacting in this fashion, Elizabeth is only reflecting the values of the novel as a whole. Austen makes it clear that like Sir Charles Grandison, Darcy’s worth as a male cannot be fully appreciated outside of the Pemberley estate.

**Regions and local community in *Pride and Prejudice***

One theme explored in *Pride and Prejudice* is the extent to which family and personal reputations are specific to particular regions. The kind of Burkean masculinity which Darcy embodies is more effective in a contained, localised space, than the larger national arena. The establishment of oneself as an upstanding, morally worthy member of the community doesn’t necessarily travel well. Correspondingly a bad reputation gained in one area of the country can be escaped by moving to another region.

Darcy’s stature as a man is much more obvious in Derbyshire than elsewhere in the country. What is rightful pride in one’s family and position in Derbyshire is seen as arrogance and conceit in Hertfordshire. Dignified reserve in Darcy’s home county is aloofness elsewhere. Elizabeth makes Darcy’s acquaintance in Hertfordshire, but as
Edward Neill argues, she does not become truly conscious of his merits as a man until the scene in Pemberley estate in Derbyshire, which is played out in Darcy’s absence: “Elizabeth’s melting moment is that of her fateful visit to Pemberley on Darcy’s imagined absence. Almost too Kantian by half, it seems, Darcy’s presence was a kind of absence. Subject to congenial forms of representation, his absence becomes a kind of presence”.

Local communities and neighbourhoods have a stronger presence in this novel than any of Austen’s others. England functions less as a nation state than an interconnected series of counties, villages and estates. It can be no coincidence that this is also the novel which has the most positive representation of a landowner. Darcy’s relations have similar problems in establishing their power and credentials outside of their immediate environs. Lady Catherine de Bourgh’s surname literally means “of the borough” and highlights the fact that she functions effectively only within her immediate community in Kent. Lady Catherine De Bourgh’s power is influential within her own parish; for example, she can dictate the terms of Charlotte Collins’s domestic habits:

She enquired into Charlotte’s domestic concerns familiarly and minutely, and gave her a great deal of advice, as to the management of them all; told her how every thing ought to be regulated in so small a family as her’s, and instructed her as to the care of her cows and her poultry. Elizabeth found that nothing was beneath this great Lady’s attention, which could furnish her with an occasion of dictating to others. (P&P 126)

However, when she makes the journey to Hertfordshire, she finds her powers curtailed. Hoping to extract a promise from Elizabeth that she will not marry her nephew Darcy, she finds her influence totally ineffective in the face of Elizabeth’s resolution and firm will: “You refuse, then, to oblige me. You refuse to obey the claims of duty, honour and gratitude” (P&P 274).

Tim Fulford argues that the novel’s critique of the militia is also connected to the concept of local community. The standing army offered opportunities for social

55 This is in contrast to *Emma*, which is set in a village that symbolically represents the nation state.
advancement that were enjoyed by very few in eighteenth-century England and the "shiny uniforms" masked "a variety of characters and origins". He suggests that social problems arose from the militia's capacity to confer gentility and obfuscate origins and past behaviour. Wickham, for instance, is allowed to appropriate an air of respectability as he is able to conceal his elopement and attempted ruination of Georgiana Darcy. Fulford sees the lack of local connection as key to this dangerous behaviour: "Men got commissions in the local militias without needing ever to have owned a residence in the area – thus they could acquire social status regardless of merit or their reputation among those who knew their worth". This suggests Pride and Prejudice's commitment to local networks and family history as the means of ensuring the smooth operation of society. This point is made very strongly when we compare Wickham's presence in Hertfordshire to Darcy's in Derbyshire. In Hertfordshire, Wickham has nothing more than a uniform and an easily obtainable commission to recommend him, whereas in Derbyshire, Darcy has the might of generations behind him, visually represented by "many family portraits" (P&P 189) in the gallery at Pemberley.

When Wickham has been persuaded to marry Lydia, he quits the militia to join the regulars. The military facilitates another change of address and again allows Wickham to maintain a semblance of respectability. He is transferred to a regiment stationed in the north, leaving behind the scandals that will forever taint his reputation in Meryton and Derbyshire. The more morally upstanding members of the Bennet family are pleased that Wickham and Lydia will be removed from the immediate locality of Hertfordshire and that distance will be created between the young couple and their debts and damaged reputations. As Mr Gardiner writes to the Bennets:

The principal purport of his letter was to inform them, that Mr Wickham had resolved on quitting the Militia. 'It was greatly my wish that he should do so [...] He has the promise of an ensigncy in General ____'s regiment, now quartered in the North. It is an advantage to have it so far from this part of the Kingdom." (P&P 237)

Fulford, 'Sighing for a Soldier', 156.
Fulford, 'Sighing for a Soldier', 157.
Fulford, 'Sighing for a Soldier', 171.
Lydia later informs her family, “we shall be at Newcastle all the winter” (P&P 241). In reality, Newcastle is very far removed from Hertfordshire and whether or not Mrs Bennet (or indeed Lydia) could have located it on a map is anyone’s guess. Austen’s sardonic comment on the matter suggests perhaps Mrs Bennet could not:

And their mother had the satisfaction of knowing, that she should be able to show her married daughter in the neighbourhood, before she was banished to the North. (P&P 238)

Austen’s use of the word “banish”, with all its associations of exile and outcast is telling here – Lydia and Wickham are cast out of their native land. It is not, however, a permanent banishment (as Maria Bertram’s will be in Mansfield Park); the couple are later described as spending time in London and Bath, visiting Mrs Darcy in Pemberley and the Bingleys close by. Wickham’s experience demonstrates how the rootlessness of military life contrasts with the established nature of landed life, in which families have been settled in one space for generations. Wickham is able to reinvent himself within different geographies, thus leaving past transgressions behind him.

**Marrying into the estate: Elizabeth in Derbyshire**

In marrying Darcy, Elizabeth is also removed from her native Hertfordshire to Derbyshire, but in her case this is presented as a reward rather than a punishment. In Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (1987), Nancy Armstrong argues that Austen’s decision to close the novel at Pemberley is part of a need to readdress the gender balance between its protagonists.

She argues that Elizabeth is lacking in traditionally feminine qualities while excelling in terms of traditional male traits such as “rational intelligence, honesty, self-possession, and especially a command of the language”. These qualities are what win Darcy’s heart, but cannot be countenanced in a wife. Armstrong argues that Elizabeth’s key attributes demonstrated in the early part of the novel – her “pertness”

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59 In Joe Wright’s 2005 film adaptation of this novel, Mrs Bennet reacts to this intelligence by exclaiming “wherever that is”: a statement utterly in keeping with the geographical imagination of the novel.
and "liveliness of mind" – are lost as soon as she is engaged to Darcy; henceforth she exerts "a softening influence" in the novel:

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Austen felt obliged to close Pride and Prejudice by relocating political authority at Pemberley, Darcy’s ancestral home, and at considerable distance from the town where the Bennets’ embarrassing relatives live. With such a geographical shift, the novel maintains the continuity of traditional political authority while appearing to broaden its social base by granting Elizabeth authority of a strictly female kind.61

There is certainly a danger that Elizabeth’s identity could be suppressed as she moves into the role of Mrs Darcy. Moving to Derbyshire, where the surrounding neighbourhood is under the political influence which the Darcy family has exerted for generations, and into Pemberley, whose galleries depict Darcy ancestors, there is a danger that Elizabeth’s background and heritage may be rendered invisible. However, Armstrong does not take account of the role which one set of Elizabeth’s relatives, the Gardiners, will play in her future life as Mrs Darcy.

The Gardiners are instrumental in bringing Elizabeth to Derbyshire in the first place, for although Elizabeth actually ends up living in the Pemberley estate in Derbyshire, her first encounter with the county is (at least nominally) as a tourist. Initially, the Gardiners aspire to visiting the Lake District, the most famous of the new English tourist destinations. The Lake District was brought to public attention by William Gilpin, who published his Observations on the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmorland (or as it was more popularly known, the Lakes Tour) in 1786, following the popular success of the Wye Tour of 1782. This proposed trip is actually quite a bit further north than Derbyshire’s Peak District. However, because of Mr Gardiner’s business interests, what Austen refers to as “their Northern Tour” must be restricted to the Peak District (P&P 182).

When Austen tackles the actual journey in the narrative, it becomes apparent that, in spite of the renown the Peak District enjoyed as a tourist destination, Elizabeth’s

61 Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction, 53.
sojourn there cannot really be described as tourism. Elizabeth does not get the opportunity to revel in her vision of “rocks and mountains” or “lakes and rivers” and ironically, her stay in Derbyshire turns out to have everything to do with “men” (P&P 119). The effect of this trip is to bring Derbyshire, an unknown region to Elizabeth, inside the geographical limits of her daily existence. Instead of celebrating the county as a tourist attraction, she begins to consider it as a future home. (Incidentally, Elizabeth’s aunt, Mrs Gardiner has a local connection with Derbyshire herself, having been brought up in the village of Lambton, in close proximity to the Derbyshire estate).

The Gardiners are thus present in the set piece at Pemberley and the novel actually closes by charting their future relationship with the young couple:

With the Gardiners, they were always on the most intimate terms. Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved them; and they were both ever sensible of the warmest gratitude towards the persons who, by bringing her into Derbyshire, had been the means of uniting them. (P&P 297-298)

This relationship with the Gardiners demonstrates that Elizabeth’s middle-class background (from her mother’s rather than her father’s side of family) is not wholly suppressed by the Pemberley estate.

The presence of the Gardiners demonstrates that despite holding up Darcy as a model of idealised Burkean masculinity, the novel engages with alternative economic and social systems to that of landed families of centuries’ standing. Mr Bingley, for instance, whose family has made money in industry in the north of England, spends the novel “estate shopping” in the south, thus presenting the prospect of landowners funded by alternative means than landed inheritance and who do not possess history and heritage in the region of their estate. The Gardiners, representatives of commerce and trade in the novel, are the subject of Miss Bingley’s snide comments regarding their warehouses in Cheapside.

62 Austen is deliberately echoing Gilpin’s journey: “In the following tour we meant to travel the western road, through Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, and Lancashire, into Westmoreland, and Cumberland; where we proposed to make the lakes, and mountains the chief objects of our attention”. William Gilpin, Observations on the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland (Richmond: Richmond Publishing Co., 1973), 19.
In the face of Darcy’s overwhelming presence in Derbyshire and the patrilineal systems of inheritance and succession that are entirely male-oriented, Elizabeth’s identity appears to be rather vulnerable. *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility* consider the way in which females are excluded from and silenced within landed systems. However, Elizabeth’s situation in *Pride and Prejudice* is a more positive representation of the role which women can play within these systems. Being both a woman and a great deal less wealthy than Darcy, the danger is that her individuality and background become subsumed into the Darcy/Pemberley nexus. However, the presence of the Gardiners in the final lines of the novel demonstrates that this is not the case. Elizabeth, a female who is disenfranchised by entail and inheritance, introduces alternative economic systems into the landed world of Pemberley, suggesting opportunities for cooperation and development between the landed gentry and the urban London classes.

*Pride and Prejudice* uses the spaces of the Pemberley estate and Napoleonic France as a means of exploring two very different versions of English masculinity. Burkean masculinity, based within the space of the landed estate, is portrayed in a much more positive light than we have seen in either *Northanger Abbey* or *Sense and Sensibility*. However, this masculine model, which depends on a regional family reputation built up over generations, is at its most effective within the immediate locality. Darcy’s power and stature as a man is conveyed via his estate and is palpable within his native region. He is a less impressive figure in Hertfordshire than in Derbyshire. While *Pride and Prejudice* celebrates a Burkean model in which families have been established in landed estates for generations, the text envisages changing relationships between the landed estate and the depths of their proprietors’ roots in the area. By the end of the novel, Charles Bingley, whose family are from the north of England, has settled in an estate in Derbyshire, a county with which he has no geographical links. The landed estate becomes connected through marriage and friendship with other geographical spaces and economic systems, for example through the commercial, London-based Gardiner family. The question of England’s security is raised by the presence of the militia. However the men who join are not presented as gallant defenders of the nation, but idle, thrill-seeking young men. The militia provides a means of social advancement for men who have no or little provision within the landed economy. However the novel chooses to focus not on the opportunities for
social advancement which the militia offers, but its capacity for reinvention. As soldiers are moved across different regions of the country, local reputation becomes meaningless. Evidence of past misdemeanours and indiscretions are erased which encourages dishonesty and unlawful behaviour.

The landed estate and its alternatives

There are clear similarities in the treatment of space and place in Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice. Both novels compare the fates of portionless young women within the landed system. Both narratives end with their heroines being “rescued” from comparative poverty by wealthy, landed gentlemen. In both novels, the landed estate is the primary space through which Austen examines English masculinity. Sense and Sensibility foregrounds the systems and structures of landed inheritance through a number of different estates: Norland Park, Allenham Court, Barton Park. In Pride and Prejudice we are introduced to the structures of landed systems via Longbourn, Mr Bennet’s estate, but the text focuses on Darcy’s great estate Pemberley as a space in which to examine English masculinity.

Examining Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice alongside each other demonstrates that the landed economic system has the capacity to either weaken or strengthen the English male. On the one hand, the structures of inheritance can reduce the male to a state of helpless dependency on the wealthy relations in whose hands his future lies. On the other, when in a position of control of a landed estate, the male can use his wealth and influence for good. Austen’s set piece at Pemberley establishes Darcy as an exemplary landed gentleman, assuming responsibility for his tenants, his servants and his family while maintaining the estate and honouring his ancestors. However, the example of Pride and Prejudice suggests that this influence has more potency within the immediate locality of the estate.

Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice also explore alternatives to Burkean landed masculinity and these alternatives are connected to two different geographies, colonial India and Napoleonic France. In Sense and Sensibility, empire provides an alternative means of generating wealth and this is viewed as a positive force in Sense and Sensibility, suggesting a modern alternative to a stagnant landed system. The military masculinity explored in Pride and Prejudice is not positively represented.
While the militia/army might provide opportunities for social advancement for those not provided for within the landed system, this is not valued in the text. The militia are portrayed as being without role or purpose, occupied by frivolities and game-playing when their energies should be concentrated on the nation’s security.
Chapter three

*Mansfield Park: English masculinity in crisis*

*Mansfield Park* was published in 1814, one year after *Pride and Prejudice*. Readers have often commented on the dark moral tone of *Mansfield Park*, a facet of the novel that becomes all the more surprising when we consider the work it follows. If *Pride and Prejudice* shows Austen at her most light, bright and sparkling, *Mansfield Park*, as Lionel Trilling states "seem[s] to controvert everything that its predecessor tells us about life".1 As argued in the introduction, the publication dates of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park* do not reflect the differences in the periods of composition of the two novels. Anthony Mandal suggests that work began on an initial draft of *Pride and Prejudice* (entitled *First Impressions*) between October 1796 and August 1797. *Mansfield Park* on the other hand was begun in February 1811.2 The fourteen or fifteen years between the initial composition dates of the novels was marked by the wars with Napoleonic France which seriously threatened English security and changed England’s position within Europe.

Following *Pride and Prejudice*’s very positive presentation of landed masculinity in the form of Fitzwilliam Darcy, *Mansfield Park* presents English masculinity in a state of crisis. The spaces of the novel explore English masculinity on a micro level in the context of the landed estate, and within the wider world (specifically the colonial sphere). The atmosphere and subject matter of *Mansfield Park* is deeply affected by another space, Napoleonic France. Darryl Jones groups *Mansfield Park* with novels published in the same year, Walter Scott’s *Waverley* and Frances Burney’s *The Wanderer*, arguing that these works constitute the “great trilogy of novels of 1814 […] analysing the State of the Nation in what was to be the last full year of the Napoleonic Wars".3 I argue that the threat from Napoleonic France (albeit a retreating one by the date of the book’s publication) is deeply felt in *Mansfield Park*. The novel questions England’s position of power within the world, along with her ability to defend her own territory. It grapples with English fears regarding their

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ability to control the world stage and more pertinently, their fear of the spectre of the invasion of England by enemy French forces. My reading of Mansfield Park focuses on the English male's inability to protect, defend and control the spaces over which he holds dominion.

The Mansfield estate is the principal geographical setting of the novel, situated in the cartographic centre of the England, Northamptonshire. The narrative moves from the centre of the country to the coast, to Portsmouth, the home town of Fanny Price, from which the shores of enemy France can be viewed from the ramparts of the town. The narrative sets one brief but consequential scene in the Sotherton estate, which is also located in Northamptonshire. Perhaps more significantly, the characters of Mansfield Park venture to non-English spaces within the narrative. This alone suggests a greater awareness of England existing within a complex and hazardous global space than in any of Austen's previous works. Most notably, Sir Thomas journeys to his sugar plantation in Antigua. In volume II chapter I of Mansfield Park, a textual detail encapsulates England's position on the world stage very effectively. Sir Thomas, having just returned from Antigua, relates the adventures he has encountered in his colonial expedition:

[H]e came directly from Liverpool, having had an opportunity of making his passage thither in a private vessel, instead of waiting for the packet; and all the little particulars of his proceedings and events, his arrivals and departures, were most promptly delivered. (MP 160)

The interfering Mrs Norris interrupts with an offer of soup at "the most interesting moment of his passage to England, when the alarm of a French privateer was at the height" (MP 162). Sir Thomas on his way home from Antigua faces the threat of French forces at sea. This incident, which has not received a great deal of critical attention, is an analogue for the threat to England's position in the world. England's colonial dimension extends across the globe, but this space requires maintenance by English landowners, which demands treacherous trans-Atlantic journeys. Sir Thomas's close encounter with an enemy French vessel reminds the reader that England is also at war with France, a war fought across the colonial and global space as well as the national and European space. As Nigel Leask points out in his work British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire, the Napoleonic Wars
were as much concerned with the “external question” of the future of European colonies as with determining the fate of the French Revolution.  

Napoleonic Wars and the Fear of French Invasion

I begin by considering the threat which Napoleonic France poses to England in this novel. I argue that an awareness of this threat permeates the entire novel and has a huge impact on Austen’s depiction of English masculinity within *Mansfield Park*. I have already noted Tim Fulford’s work on the role of the militia in *Pride and Prejudice* which emphasises that England faced the threat of invasion in 1798, 1803, and 1809. This fear of invasion, implicit in *Pride and Prejudice* in the form of the militia stationed along the coast, has an even stronger presence in *Mansfield Park*. I will suggest that this anxiety is present in Austen’s consciousness throughout the conflict, but, influenced by her reading material, culminates in 1813-1814, the period in which she wrote *Mansfield Park*.

It is difficult for a modern-day observer to appreciate the ambience of fear which this conflict occasioned. Linda Colley warns against the assumption that because Britain did not have to resort to the implementation of mass conscription, the war took place “largely outside the thought-world of its civilian population”. Her work suggests the fear of French invasion harboured by the ordinary British subject:

As it turned out, war did not cross the Channel into Great Britain itself, but those living between 1793 and 1815 could not know that. Napoleon’s Army of England was by far the most formidable invasion force assembled against Great Britain up to that time, the threat it represented was a protracted one, and it came very close to succeeding. There was a major but abortive invasion attempt against Ireland in 1796, and a more successful French landing there two years later. In 1797, a small expeditionary force landed in Wales. From 1798 to 1805, the conquest of Britain was Napoleon’s primary strategic objective.

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As Colley’s work demonstrates, the fear of French invasion was not limited to the last phase of the war, but existed as a constant threat for the duration of the conflict, with several points when the menace from France was particularly acute.

There is evidence that the possibility of invasion was discussed within the Austen family. This is best expressed in a letter dated February 1798, written by Jane’s cousin Eliza, who was now married to Jane’s brother Henry. Eliza was the daughter of Philadelphia Austen, whose colonial background was discussed in chapter two. Eliza, the widow of a French aristocrat, the Count de Feuillide, had experienced at first hand the excesses of the Reign of Terror. This, in conjunction with her new role as the wife of a regimental soldier, may help explain why she was so acutely conscious of the perils of the invading French army:

I have become excessively stingy and am scraping up all I can against the arrival of the French [...] I suppose you have seen a print of the Rafts on which they mean to reach us [...] I do believe that they will make an attempt on this Country, and Government appears to be convinced of it, for we have received orders to add one hundred & fifty Men to our Regiments, and hold ourselves in readiness to march at the shortest notice.\(^7\)

Warren Roberts argues that Jane and Cassandra both came within close proximity to a location which Napoleon had targeted as the point at which he would invade England. In 1805, the Austen sisters went to stay with their brother Edward in his estate in Godmersham in Kent. Cassandra was boarding with his widowed mother-in-law, Lady Bridges, at Goodnestone, some fourteen miles away, and travelling there to meet her, “by chance, [Jane] Austen happened to be in the direct path of soldiers who were changing their position under a well-grounded fear that a French invasion of England seemed imminent".\(^8\) Goodnestone farm was seven miles from the coast and almost exactly where the planned invasion would have taken place. Austen had additional personal experience of the preparations to repel any invasion through her brother Francis. Warren notes that Francis, who was posted in Kent in 1803, was employed to organise a corps of fishermen on the coast as a defensive measure.\(^9\) It is

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\(^7\) Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen’s Outlandish Cousin*: The Life and Letters of Eliza de Feuillide. (London: The British Library, 2002), 155. A picture of such a raft is included in appendix IV.


my hypothesis that this fear existed in Austen’s consciousness for the entirety of the conflict with France, but became explicit during the final years of the war, the period 1811 to 1814, which corresponds with the writing of *Mansfield Park*. Austen’s fears came to the fore at this point in her writing career largely because of her reaction to contemporary political writings.

**Captain Charles Pasley: An Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire**

A great deal has been made in Austen studies of the following remark in a letter to Cassandra:

> I am as much in love with the Author as I ever was with Clarkson or Buchanan, or even the two Mr Smiths of the city. The first soldier I ever sighed for; but he does write with extraordinary force & spirit.\(^{10}\)

This, Austen’s only reference to Clarkson, is usually taken to denote Austen’s sympathy with abolitionism; Margaret Kirkham for instance, reads it as such: “[I]n a letter of 1813, [Austen] speaks of having been in love with Thomas Clarkson’s writings”.\(^{11}\) However, the subject of Austen’s letter is not Clarkson, but Captain Charles Pasley, a writer who – despite some recent interest – has received too little attention from Austen critics.

In 1813, Austen had just discovered his *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire*, “a book which I protested against at first, but which upon trial I find delightfully written & highly entertaining”.\(^{12}\) Pasley, unlike Clarkson, is mentioned again, with great enthusiasm: “I detest a Quarto – Capt. Pasley’s Books are too good for their Society. They will not understand a Man who condenses his Thoughts into an Octavo”.\(^{13}\) The overwhelming message conveyed in Pasley’s work, first published in 1810, is the danger which threatens the country, a point that he emphasises in the introduction:

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In times when the British nation is placed in a situation of danger to which its past history affords no parallel, menaced with destruction by a much superior force which is directed by the energy of one of the greatest warriors that has appeared; every man in this country must think with anxiety upon the result.\textsuperscript{14}

In keeping with the political climate of the time, Pasley fears for England’s capacity to repel an invasion: “it appears to me that this country is by no means in a state capable of resisting a powerful invasion; and that nothing but our naval superiority has saved us from being at this moment a province of France”.\textsuperscript{15} England’s global empire is an issue of great concern for Pasley. The English have spread themselves too thinly across the globe and this rapid expansion has destabilised the empire. He likens the English empire to “an oak planted in a flowerpot”\textsuperscript{16} suggesting that the structure is far too big and unwieldy to hold together.

In the context of France, Pasley worries that while English defensive forces are distracted with the wider empire, France could take advantage of their absence to attack Britain itself. Instead of pursuing far-flung colonial treasures such as the West Indies, he advocates a policy of empire-building closer to home, concentrating particularly on strategic spots in the Mediterranean, such as Malta, Gibraltar and Sicily, as well as strategic defensive points on the British mainland, most particularly Portsmouth. He suggests that Britain ought to concentrate on building up the strength of its army and working on the defensive structures and fortifications of the British Isles. Pasley’s work is a rallying cry to the people of England, calling them to take the threat of France seriously and to be prepared to take up arms to fight for the security of their nation.

A symbolic representation of this exact situation is played out in \textit{Mansfield Park}. England is attacked while the authorities are distracted in the colonies. In this chapter, I will begin by considering Sir Thomas Bertram and English masculinity within the colonial space. Rather than empowering the English male, as it is seen to do in \textit{Sense and Sensibility}, the colonial space weakens Sir Thomas, as dependency on

\textsuperscript{15} Pasley, \textit{Essay}, 2.
\textsuperscript{16} Pasley, \textit{Essay}, 54.
the colonies for the maintenance of English lifestyles leaves the English vulnerable on the world stage.

Sir Thomas’s absence leaves the Mansfield estate under the dominion of his son Tom. Sir Thomas is portrayed as an authority figure in the text, although I will argue that his authority is extremely flawed. I suggest that Sir Thomas exposes the estate to danger in a number of ways, but in his absence, the estate is even more vulnerable. Tom represents a kind of idle, purposeless, leisured existence which Austen portrays as being particularly pernicious. The theatricals episode of Mansfield Park can be read as a narrative of infiltration and invasion. Tom’s ‘Regency’ exposes the estate, and by symbolic implication, the nation, to dangerous influences which are signified in the harm done to the house. The novel also engages with anti-Jacobin narratives that connect female chastity with the safety of the nation and I will argue that Tom’s actions (and Sir Thomas’s absence from the estate) leave the female members of the family exposed to dangerous influences that attack their virtue. Mansfield Park constructs a narrative that contrasts the inner circle of the Bertram family with “outsiders” who embody the foreign and the alien. I will consider the way in which Henry Crawford, though obviously English, is symbolically associated with France in the text and how his sexual attacks on Maria Bertram and Fanny Price are portrayed as French attacks on English virtue. The professional classes in Mansfield Park offer the only sense of salvation for the English male within the novel. William Price and Edmund Bertram, associated with the navy and the church respectively, are portrayed as defenders of the nation. The novel’s connection with Evangelicalism, a movement associated with the professions and business rather than the gentry, suggests that in Mansfield Park, Austen is moving down the social strata to locate an appropriate model for English masculinity.

**Sir Thomas, the West Indian**

Edward Said, whose 1989 work Culture and Imperialism provides the best known reading of Mansfield Park in its colonial context, suggests that Sir Thomas’s colonial possessions are used to enhance his power and position as a man:

In Mansfield Park, which within Jane Austen’s work carefully defines the moral and social values informing her other novels, references to Sir
Thomas Bertram's overseas possessions are threaded through; they give him wealth, occasion his absences, fix his social status at home and abroad, and make possible his values, to which Fanny Price (and Austen herself) finally subscribes.¹⁷

I disagree with this assessment, at least insofar as it refers to *Mansfield Park*. Chapter two examined how the colonial space empowered Colonel Brandon and enhanced his masculinity. Chapter five will argue that the power, wealth and sexual desirability of the English naval heroes who have fought in the Napoleonic Wars are enhanced by their colonial adventures. However, in this novel, I suggest that the colonial space does not empower the English male, but weakens him. In arguing this point, I am taking a similar position to Pasley. Economic dependency on empire places the English male in a vulnerable position, and in the context of the wars being fought with Napoleonic France, jeopardises his safety. There is protection in self-sufficiency. There are suggestions within the text of *Mansfield Park* that the English are not entirely in control of the colonial space. Rather than being rulers of the world, they are struggling to maintain dominion over their colonies.

In understanding the character of Sir Thomas Bertram and the ways in which the colonial space can be seen to undermine his masculine standing, it is crucial to comprehend his economic relationship with the island of Antigua. Whereas *Sense and Sensibility* presents colonial wealth creation as a novel and broadly positive alternative to the traditional economy, it is really only an adjunct to land-based systems. Colonel Brandon, whose connections to the East India Company exemplify this new wealth, is also firmly ensconced in the world of inheritance and entail. The death of his older brother allows him simultaneously to inhabit two worlds, that of heir to the estate and fortune-seeking younger brother without property. His return to England and Delaford enables him to inject colonial capital into the native estate.

A question that has engaged critics for some time is whether or not the same situation occurs in *Mansfield Park*. Who exactly are the Bertrams, and how are we to place them in the social and economic systems of Austen's world? Are the Bertrams a landed family who just happen to have a colonial connection, like the Brandons, or is Sir Thomas actually a West Indian? Edward Said certainly reads him as such:

The Bertrams could not have been possible without the slave trade, sugar, and the colonial planter class; as a social type Sir Thomas would have been familiar to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century readers who knew the powerful influence of the class through politics, plays (like Cumberland’s *The West Indian*), and many other public activities (large houses, famous parties and social rituals, well-known commercial enterprises, celebrated marriages).¹⁸

There is much in the text to suggest that this reading is correct – and very little to refute it. The genealogy of most of Austen’s grand families is clear. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth and the Gardiners are given a tour of Pemberley by the housekeeper in which their attention is drawn to a host of family portraits, a line of ancient and aristocratic gentlemen of the Darcy lineage. In the Sotherton episode of *Mansfield Park*, Mrs Rushworth takes on the housekeeper’s role and chronicles the history of the house and the Rushworth family’s time there. As outlined in chapter one of this thesis, in *Northanger Abbey* the history of the Tilney family’s connection with the abbey is relayed to Catherine. *Sense and Sensibility* opens with Norland Park and the history of the family’s residence there.

This makes it all the more remarkable that in terms of the Bertrams and Mansfield Park, there are absolutely no indications of Sir Thomas’s ancestors, or suggestions that he hails from an ancient and aristocratic line of landed gentlemen. Mansfield Park is a “spacious modern-built house” (MP 42) and crucially, we are never given any idea of how long the Bertram family has been settled here. Sir Thomas’s title, the only possible suggestion of aristocratic connections, is also an unreliable signifier. A baronetcy was, in fact, the most “unstable” rank (to use Lawrence Stone’s description), created only two centuries earlier. As Stone notes, there is a possibility that Sir Thomas’s family bought their title, as baronetcies were put on the market by James I in an attempt to raise some capital.¹⁹ Although we do not know the extent to which Sir Thomas is dependent on colonial wealth, it is clear that the losses on the Antigua estates have a significant impact on Sir Thomas’s income. When chastising his eldest son Tom for his extravagant habits, he laments that “his own circumstances

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¹⁸ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 112.
¹⁹ Stone states that the demand for these titles were greatest in the counties of Salisbury and Northamptonshire (Sir Thomas’ county).
were rendered less fair than heretofore, by some recent losses on his West India Estate” (MP 20). A few pages later we are told that “Sir Thomas found it expedient to go to Antigua himself, for the better arrangement of his affairs” and that “the necessity of the measure in a pecuniary light” reconciles him to leaving Mansfield (MP 28).

The difference between the colonial dimension in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park* is the degree to which the English male is dependent on colonial income. The economy of *Sense and Sensibility* is fundamentally land-based. *Mansfield Park* raises the possibility that English estates, and in a wider sense the English economy, is excessively dependent on colonial produce and income. Edward Said discusses what he calls the “geographical problematic” of the novel; the fact that it is “based in England relying for the maintenance of its style on a Caribbean island”. The economics of the novel do present considerable geographic difficulties, and are compounded by war with France. Sir Thomas is forced to make the journey to Antigua, as his income depends on the sugar plantation. *Mansfield Park* demonstrates the fact that such journeys leave the Englishman open to a French naval attack. I suggest that this sense of reliance on the colonial, demonstrated by Sir Thomas’s need to journey to Antigua, creates an anxious environment throughout *Mansfield Park*.

**Lord Macartney: Tea and sugar in *Mansfield Park***

The anxiety surrounding English dependency on colonial wealth is not restricted to the Bertram family’s individual situation, but is explored in a more general sense in the novel. This is conveyed via Fanny’s reading material. Edmund catches Fanny acquainting herself with the life and work of one of the empire’s most eminent diplomats: “You in the meanwhile will be taking a trip into China, I suppose. How does Lord Macartney go on?” (MP 140). Lord Macartney was a diplomat whose

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21 Precisely what Fanny is reading is open to debate. The diaries of Earl Macartney and accounts of his embassy to China were published in a variety of forms. James Kinsley suggests his *Plates to his Embassy to China* (1796), but his diary was also published in John Barrow’s 1807 *Some Account of the Public Life and a Selection from the Unpublished Writings, of The Earl of Macartney, the Latter consisting of Extracts from an Account of the Russian Empire: a Sketch of the Political History of Ireland: and a Journal of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*. Another possibility is that Fanny is reading the account of George Leonard Staunton, Macartney’s second-in-command whose work draws heavily on Macartney’s diaries: *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China, including cursory observations*
career encompassed prestigious appointments in all corners of the globe, from envoy extraordinary to the court of St Petersburg, to Secretary for Ireland and from Governorships in Grenada, Madras and the Cape of Good Hope to Governor-General of Bengal.

Fanny is acquainting herself with Macartney’s diplomatic embassy to China which he undertook in 1793 with the express purpose of setting up a permanent British ambassadorial presence in Beijing. The interests of the British government in China were entirely motivated by trade. As John Barrow relates, the East India Company, which then had a monopoly on tea importation was facing problems due to a trade deficit with China. As Philip Lawson points out in his work on the East India Company, tea was fast becoming a central component of British existence. The sheer volume being imported was overwhelming, increasing from about two hundred thousand pounds worth a year before 1717 to three million by 1757.

*Mansfield Park* then, through Fanny’s reading of Macartney, raises the question of increasing English dependency on its empire for its subsistence and standard of living. In *Sense and Sensibility*, money earned in the colonies is a welcome injection into the land-based economy of the novel. By the time of *Mansfield Park*, the English country estate is dependent on imperial profit. The ivory and pearls that adorn Robert Ferrars’s toothpick case in *Sense and Sensibility* are clearly superfluous baubles of the very rich, but the tea and sugar of *Mansfield Park* are products which have become integrated into the very fabric of ordinary English life, across the social classes. Macartney referred to tea as that “indispensable luxury or rather an absolute necessary of life”. Saree Makdisi considers the symbolic and practical implications of dependency upon products from different parts of the globe:

> By the late eighteenth century, even the mundane requirements of daily life and existence in the city (not to mention the rest of Britain) required the symbolic as well as the material interaction of the different regions and districts of the British empire. One writer of the time, struck by the

*made, and information obtained, in travelling through that Ancient Empire and a small part of Chinese Tartary ... taken chiefly from the papers of ... The Earl of Macartney (1797).*


23 John Barrow, *Some Account of the Public Life and a Selection from the Unpublished Writings, of The Earl of Macartney* (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1807), II: 397.
significance of what was already by then the quotidian British custom of drinking tea sweetened with sugar, comments that ‘it appears a very strange thing, that the common people of any European nation should be obliged to use, as part of their daily diet, two articles imported from opposite sides of the earth’.  

The problem with dependency on colonial produce and capital is that it made the English more vulnerable in situations of war, such as the global conflict with France that was taking place at the time of the writing of *Mansfield Park*. Sir Thomas has a near escape with a French privateer, just as Lord Macartney encountered a similar danger on his journey back to England. George Staunton, who chronicled Macartney’s journey home, details the party’s encounter with an unidentified military fleet which they fear might be French:

> On the twenty-first of July, a fleet of ships was descried to the north-east and soon eleven sail were counted; five of which appeared to be of considerable magnitude. These were observed to have formed a line of battle abreast, and to bear down towards the convoy, while the others lay to, to windward. The Lion, Samson and Argo, formed a line ahead, and the merchantmen were directed to keep to leeward. The private signals were not answered, and the strangers were concluded to be enemies.  

The fleet turns out to be an unresponsive English unit rather than an enemy ship, but Staunton goes on to say that later in the journey, they encounter a Danish ship that had passed by the same point only a few days previous to them and was examined by a French fleet. Both Sir Thomas’s experience and Macartney’s mission demonstrate the danger of traversing the colonial space during the Napoleonic Wars. This corroborates Pasley’s argument that the maintenance of empire threatens English security rather than increasing English power and prestige.

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25 George Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China: Taken Chiefly from the Papers of His Excellency the Earl of Macartney* (London: G. Nicol, 1797), II: 611.
Controlling the colonial space

Rather than presenting the English colonial male as master of the imperial world, *Mansfield Park* shows him struggling for control of the space beyond English borders—whether sovereign territory or a colony. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen does not dwell upon the complications of how money is made in the colonies. In this novel the implication is that the English abroad are struggling to maintain control of the spaces which they depend upon for goods and capital wealth. Macartney’s narrative outlines the inherent problems in depending upon foreign governments for goods that were essential to English existence. The Chinese were not receptive to English overtures and the embassy never materialised. Despite its promising beginnings the mission was essentially a failure.

Colonies present their own problems. Sugar plantations such as Sir Thomas’s were entirely dependent upon slavery. The growth of the English slave industry was closely connected to England’s expansion in the West Indies, as the English gradually realised that the climate of these islands was perfect for the cultivation of crops such as sugar and tobacco, products in heavy demand in the west. Cultivating sugar cane was a physically demanding task and required an abundance of labour. Capturing slaves was infinitely easier than persuading (and paying) poor Britons to relocate to the West Indies to undertake the job. There have been a number of different suggestions from commentators that Sir Thomas’s voyage to Antigua in the first volume of the novel is motivated by problems associated with the production of sugar cane, or difficulties that have arisen with his slave population.

The unpredictable nature of colonial wealth then, is one of the many unsettling facets of *Mansfield Park*’s dependency on empire. Avrom Fleishman’s 1967 work *A Reading of Mansfield Park: An Essay in Critical Synthesis* highlights the unpredictability of the revenue from a plantation like Sir Thomas’s. Fleishman argues that the timing of the novel corresponds with a depression in the British West Indies, brought on by the lack of access to European markets during the Napoleonic Wars. Fleishman states that by 1807, many plantations were bankrupt. Fleishman suggests that Sir Thomas’s visit to Antigua may be to diversify his crop and diminish his
dependence on the sugar markets. It has also been suggested that Sir Thomas travels to his plantation to quell a slave rebellion, such as the one instigated by Toussaint L’Ouverture in San Domingo in 1791. Inspired by the concept of the rights of man and the rallying cry of the French Revolution, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”, L’Ouverture and his fellow slaves overthrew the local white planters, before defeating, in time, the soldiers of the French monarchy, a Spanish invasion, a British expedition and the Napoleonic army. The only successful slave rebellion in the history of the West Indies, it resulted in the establishment of the Republic of Haiti in 1804.

We can only speculate on the reasons which bring Sir Thomas to Antigua. However, the text clearly signals that the journey has been a stressful and tiring one for him and has taken its toll on him physically. On his return to England, Fanny notices that her uncle has “grown thinner” and has the “burnt, fagged, worn look of fatigue and a hot climate” (MP 160). The colonial space is problematic territory for the English male in *Mansfield Park*. The sense of unease which the colonial occasions has its basis in the acknowledgement that English society has become increasingly dependent upon it, coupled with the fear that it is fundamentally unmanageable. Nigel Leask argues that British Romantic writers of the period consciously or unconsciously articulated their anxieties about the colonial space and particularly the colonial “other”. It has been suggested by many critics that *Mansfield Park* comments on the moral implications of colonial slavery, particularly given that the issue was topical at the time of the writing of the novel. In 1807 an act was passed making the slave trade illegal in the British empire.

There is insufficient evidence to be certain about Austen’s attitude to the slave trade as it appears in *Mansfield Park*. There is no doubt that Sir Thomas is a slave master.

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26 Avrom Fleishman, *A Reading of Mansfield Park: An Essay in Critical Synthesis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967), 37. James Walvin, who has produced a large body of work on empire and the slave trade, suggests that uncertainty was fundamental to the colonial sugar industry. The markets were removed from the point of production by many months and planters could have no idea what market price their product would fetch by the time it reached Europe. The slave trade was erratic, planters could not predict when new slaves would arrive and what the going rate would be. In addition, they faced the uncertainties of weather, the ever-present dangers of the sea and the more or less permanent state of warfare throughout much of the eighteenth century. See James Walvin, *The Trader, The Owner, The Slave: Parallel Lives in the Age of Slavery* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007), 124.


The question which has been raised in criticism is whether Fanny shares Sir Thomas’s values, or whether she is an abolitionist. In one of the most famous passages in the novel Fanny raises the issue of the slave trade with Sir Thomas on his return from Antigua:

‘Did not you hear me ask him about the slave trade last night?’
‘I did – and was in hopes the question would be followed up by others. It would have pleased your uncle to be inquired of farther’.
‘And I longed to do it – but there was such a dead silence! And while my cousins were sitting without speaking a word, or seeming at all interested in the subject, I did not like’. (MP 178)

This passage has occasioned much debate among critics. Central to Edward Said’s reading of the text is his belief that Fanny subscribes to the same moral priorities as Sir Thomas and that Fanny’s comments must be interpreted as approval of the practice. In reaction to Said’s reading there has been a desire to read Fanny in a much more positive and pro-abolition light, thus reading Fanny’s comments as censure. The salient thing about this passage when we examine it closely is how little it tells us. Fanny’s follow-on questions, from which one could presumably deduce something about her attitude to the trade, go unrecorded.

If Fanny and Austen herself are read as pro-abolition, as, for example Elaine Jordan does, protesting that Austen was a “principled opponent [of slavery] like her brother Francis, who became an Admiral, and like her favourite poet William Cowper”, then Sir Thomas’s position as a slave master raises moral dilemmas about English behaviour in the colonies. However, I believe that the colonial “anxiety” which Leask posits and which is palpable in the novel could just as easily be attributed to English dependency on empire and difficulties in managing such an uncontrollable space. These factors are compounded by the threatening presence of the French navy, placing the English male in real danger in the colonies.

This anxiety can also be detected in the gap, dramatised in the novel, between the importance of the colonial sphere to everyday English existence and the extent to

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which it permeates the consciousness of the ordinary English subject. When Fanny first comes to Mansfield she is totally ignorant of the world beyond England. She is unable to “put the map of Europe together” and has “never heard of Asia Minor” (MP 15). In the course of the novel Fanny attempts to educate herself about the colonial space, in the form of Macartney’s voyages, but even the way this is presented in *Mansfield Park* draws our attention to the gap between the domestic and the colonial.

The voyages of Macartney take their place on the bookshelf alongside Crabbe’s *Tales* (1812), incongruously juxtaposing colonial adventures among alien cultures with the simple traditional England of Crabbe’s villages. This gap is also expressed in Maria and Julia’s refusal to acknowledge the slave-dependent colonial wealth on which their lifestyle depends, demonstrated in the quotation above.

The colonial space in this novel is therefore a source of some anxiety. Furthermore, the colonies have the potential to endanger estates at home. This moves the discussion to the Mansfield estate itself. Sir Thomas, the proprietor of Mansfield Park, has to abandon his duties as head of the landed estate to attend to colonial problems. In his absence, the estate is managed by his son Tom, who allows the estate to be infiltrated by unknown strangers and infected with immoral, Jacobin sentiment in the form of Elizabeth Inchbald’s play, *Lovers’ Vows*. I will suggest that symbolically the estate stands for the nation. The infiltration of dangerous individuals such as Henry Crawford is symbolically portrayed as an invasion of England. In this way, *Mansfield Park* enacts Pasley’s fear that English national security is threatened by far-flung, off-shore colonies. While Sir Thomas is distracted abroad, his estate is infiltrated and corrupted.

**Tom Bertram, Mansfield’s Regent**

Sir Thomas’s absence in the first volume of the novel allows the reader to view the Mansfield estate under the governance of his son Tom. As discussed, owing to losses on the Antigua estates, Sir Thomas “found it expedient to go to Antigua himself, for the better arrangement of his affairs”, anticipating he will be “nearly a twelvemonth absent” (MP 28). Sir Thomas takes his eldest son with him on the trip, but Tom returns home several months earlier than his father and assumes the role of acting head of the Mansfield estate.
Under Tom’s patronage, the younger generation of Bertrams experiment with staging their own play, a production of Elizabeth Inchbald’s translation of Kotzebue’s *Lovers’ Vows*. This episode, the most complex and well-crafted piece of Austen’s writing, has become known as the theatricals episode. Austen uses Tom’s governorship of the estate and the theatricals episode in particular to stage a narrative about the infiltration and invasion of the estate by outside forces. The outside forces that threaten the estate consist of individuals (particularly Henry Crawford) but also ideas. Kotzebue’s play is a radical, Jacobin sentimental drama. Inchbald’s translation softened but did not remove the Jacobin sentiment. In reading the Mansfield estate as signifying more than a landed residence, I am taking my cue from critics such as Duckworth, but also Roger Sales, who implies that the estate can function as a metaphor for the state:

It was a commonplace of the period for accounts of the government of a house and estate to be seen as offering commentaries on the government of the state itself. I make no claims that Austen’s novel offers a precise, literal or indeed intentional representation of these historical events. I show instead that new meaning and message become available when it is read in the light of them.30

Sales is correct that a symbolic reading can shed light on the novel; whereas Sales reads the familial politics of *Mansfield Park* in the light of royal politics I will consider the theatricals episode as a symbolic representation of a feared invasion of England. Under Tom’s governorship, the estate and correspondingly the nation are seriously threatened by outside forces. It is significant that the theatricals episode takes place when Sir Thomas’s attention is occupied by the colonies. Symbolically, this can be seen to illustrate Pasley’s point that in maintaining their colonial outposts, the English ran the risk of being invaded at home. If Sir Thomas can be read as a colonial Englishman who abandons his domestic duties at home, Tom Bertram is representative of a different kind of English masculinity, which Austen presents in a negative light in *Mansfield Park*.

Leisured landed existence in *Mansfield Park*

Unlike the Darcys, the Tilneys, the Dashwoods and the Rushworths, we are given no indication that the modern Mansfield estate has been passed down through generations of Bertrams. As I have suggested, the Bertram family could be understood as English "West Indians", of relatively new wealth. Tom cannot therefore necessarily be understood as a Burkean heir to the estate. However, he is the eldest son of a landed gentleman and will inherit Mansfield Park on Sir Thomas’s death. The text explores Tom as an example of idle, dissipated gentry. With no profession or military career to occupy him, his time is spent in leisure and recreation, making no obvious contribution to society. In the context of the wars with France, such lifestyles were increasingly seen as a threat to English security and English values.

Roger Sales suggests that Sir Thomas’s sojourn in the colonies means that Mansfield Park has its own period of Regency, linking it to the English Regency of 1811-1820. As Sales points out, a particular masculine culture, characterised by its idleness, debauchery and effeminacy, came into vogue during the Regency period. Dandyism, as it became known, was epitomised by Beau Brummell, favoured friend of the Prince Regent. Dandyism was primarily the reserve of the aristocracy and gentry as they alone had the money and leisure to maintain the demands of the lifestyle.

Dandyism made a virtue of uselessness. Despising commerce, the dandy refused to engage with business and professional life. Like the recruits for the militia regiments explored by Tim Fulford, considered in chapter two, they enjoyed dressing as soldiers (Brummell was a member of the Prince’s favourite regiment, the tenth light dragoons during the 1790s, but quit when the regiment moved from Brighton to Manchester), however their participation was minimal. Instead, they led a life of leisure, devoting time to social engagements and spending huge amounts of time and effort on exquisite attention to dress:

Dandyism made a profession out of idleness. Brummell’s own regime, or routine, was almost military in its precision. He got up late when the day

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31 In fact, it has two Regencies as Edmund assumes headship of the estate prior to Tom’s return. However it is Tom’s Regency to which the text pays most attention.
was well aired, spent hours getting dressed and then went on parade in the clubs and parks. It was then time to dress again for evening social engagements such as dinner parties, dances and visits to the theatre. It was hard work being the idlest man in London.\footnote{Sales, \textit{Representations of Regency England}, 75.}

Roger Sales reads a number of Austen's characters in relation to dandy culture, particularly Frank Churchill, a character I consider in chapter four of this thesis. Here I suggest that Tom Bertram's preference for leisure connects him with dandy culture of the 1810s. Sales points out that coastal watering places such as Weymouth, which were frequented by Regency dandies and popular with idle young men such as Frank Churchill and Tom Bertram, were favoured refuges for French émigrés during the Napoleonic Wars. The leisured, idle lifestyles followed in such resorts gave rise to fears that French aristocratic culture was infecting and undermining English masculinity.\footnote{Sales, \textit{Representations of Regency England}, 145.} I suggest that in Mansfield Park an effeminate, idle culture amongst the aristocracy and gentry is troubling in the context of the threat posed by Napoleonic France articulated by the likes of Pasley. \textit{Mansfield Park} contrasts a character such as William Price, the midshipman fighting the French, with Tom Bertram, the leisured heir to the estate. It is specifically Tom's boredom and lack of employment that leads him to expose the estate to dangerous outside influences.

The introduction to this work considered John Barrell's examination of eighteenth-century constructions of the role of the landed gentleman in society. As Barrell points out, in the early eighteenth century it was deemed advantageous for the landed gentleman to be without employment so that he could maintain impartiality when making decisions about the future of the country. By contrast, in this early nineteenth-century novel, written at a time when the army and the navy were risking their lives for the security of the nation, the landed gentry's lack of employment is perceived as a dangerous and troubling prospect by Austen.

The invasion of the estate

Tom's dissipated lifestyle is directly responsible for the first significant invasion of the Mansfield estate. Following the death of Mr Norris, Sir Thomas had hoped to
hold the Mansfield living until Edmund was old enough for orders, keeping the living within the family. However Tom’s debts render this plan impossible. “Tom’s extravagance had [...] been so great, as to render a different disposal of the next presentation necessary” (MP 19). The result is the introduction of the Grants, who though not dangerous in themselves are the conduit for the introduction of the Crawfords. The Grants (and by association the Crawfords) enter the greater Mansfield estate legitimately, but it is important to remember that the admission of strangers into the estate was not part of Sir Thomas’s original plan. Tom’s expensive lifestyle forces Sir Thomas to consider alternative means of raising money. The inherent fractures and inconsistencies of gentry society allow the Grants and the Crawfords access to the greater Mansfield estate. The Crawfords play key roles in the theatricals episode and I will argue that Henry Crawford constitutes the most significant risk to the security of the Mansfield family, as a sexual threat to Maria Bertram and Fanny Price. Furthermore, the novel couches Henry’s attack on female virtue as a symbolic attack on the safety of the nation.

The Crawfords are representative of the global space, having associations with London, capital of England’s global empire. They are repeatedly described as “worldly”. They are specifically connected with France and their language betrays their association and sympathy with that country. In contrast to Mansfield’s “native” inhabitants, they pepper their conversations with French phrases. Mary tells Henry that he would “look rather blank [...] if your menus plaisirs were to be limited to seven hundred a year” (MP 204). Henry honours his sister’s “esprit du corps” (MP 41) and regards his uncle as “an indolent selfish bon vivant” (MP 41). It is significant that these foreign phrases are used only in conversation with each other. The French connection is not part of their intercourse with or description of the Bertram family and increases the sense that they are outsiders.

This has implications for my reading of English masculinity in Mansfield Park. The Mansfield estate is presented as a particularly enclosed and endogamous space. Considering the way in which the estate functions as a metaphor for the state, I suggest that Henry Crawford is more usefully seen as a challenge to rather than an exemplification of English masculinity. As an intruder or infiltrator Henry symbolically evokes the threat of France (though this symbolism is suggestive rather
than thorough-going and sustained, and not all of Henry's actions should be read as a French attack on English values). However I suggest that his interactions with the female characters of *Mansfield Park* in particular can be seen in this light.

The Crawfords do not enter the greater Mansfield environs until Sir Thomas has gone to Antigua. The text specifically connects their entrance to his absence:

He wrote in April, and had strong hopes of settling every thing to his entire satisfaction, and leaving Antigua before the end of the summer.

Such was the state of affairs in the month of July, and Fanny had just reached her eighteenth year, when the society of the village received an addition in the brother and sister of Mrs Grant, a Mr. and Miss Crawford, the children of her mother by a second marriage. (MP 35)

The text implies that the absence of the authority figure allows such dangerous individuals access to the estate in the first place. It is also true that Sir Thomas fails to appreciate the magnitude of the threat which Henry Crawford poses until the novel's conclusion.

**The Theatricals**

Aside from the presence of the newly arrived Crawfords, infiltration by outsiders is a central theme of the theatricals section of the novel. The staging of a play is impossible without inviting "foreigners" into the estate; without a wider circle than the immediate Bertram family, a suitable play would have been impossible to find. As with the infiltration of the Crawfords, the theatricals take place during Sir Thomas's absence and most definitely without his blessing. The impulse to stage a play at Mansfield comes from another intruder to the Mansfield estate, Mr John Yates. Mr Yates is the "new intimate friend" (MP 106) of Tom's and visits Mansfield at his behest. Yet again, the text indicates that Sir Thomas would not have approved of this gentleman: "Sir Thomas would probably have thought his introduction at Mansfield by no means desirable" (MP 109).

Hailing from the Ecclesford estate in Cornwall, Mr Yates arrives in Mansfield Park full of the glories of acting, having undertaken a theatrical performance there. The idea of the theatricals, then, is planted by an outsider, but it is Tom who actually
suggests staging a play at Mansfield “and to make you amends, Yates, I think we must raise a little theatre at Mansfield, and ask you to be our manager” (MP 110-111). The text specifically links Tom’s enthusiasm for the project with his ample leisure time: “the inclination to act was now awakened, and in no one more strongly than in him who was now master of the house; and who having so much leisure as to make almost any novelty a certain good, had likewise such a degree of lively talents and comic taste, as were exactly adapted to the novelty of acting” (MP 111). Tom, as the master of the house, has the means to encourage such a project. His ample leisure time means that he is eager for novelty and amusement. This leads him to welcome the infiltration of outsiders and dangerous influences in the estate. The theatricals episode becomes a vehicle for these outsiders generally and Henry Crawford in particular to demonstrate the magnitude of the threat which they pose to Mansfield family and estate.

The entire episode is concerned with the admission of outsiders into the estate. Having decided on a play to stage, the players find themselves with one male role remaining to be filled because Edmund is determined to stick to his principles and boycott the performance. The name of a stranger, Charles Maddox, is mentioned and the possibility of inviting him into the estate and the play is mooted. The fear of yet another invader is enough to convince Edmund to abandon his morals and take the part himself, believing that the “excessive intimacy” which must spring from the inclusion of Maddox is “an evil of such magnitude as must, if possible, be prevented” (MP 138).

The physical invasion of the estate by the Crawfords, Mr Yates and potentially Charles Maddox is coupled with the cultural invasion of the material to be staged, a translation of Kotzebue’s 1791 play Das Kind der Liebe or The Child of Love, a German Jacobin sentimental drama which was translated into English by Elizabeth Inchbald as Lovers’ Vows in 1798. As Marilyn Butler argues, Kotzebue’s work had acquired a reputation as an example of radical, dangerous European sentiment:

There could thus be no doubt in the minds of Jane Austen and most of her readers that the name of Kotzebue was synonymous with everything most sinister in German literature of the period. A sanguine believer in the fundamental goodness and innocence of human nature, the apostle of
intuition over convention, indeed of sexual liberty over every type of restraint, he is a one-sided propagandist for every position which the anti-Jacobin novelist abhors.\textsuperscript{34}

Kotzebue’s inclusion must, then, be considered invasive too. The point was made very clearly by Wordsworth in the preface to the 1800 version of \textit{Lyrical Ballads}, in which he suggests that the popularity of writing such as Kotzebue’s undermines English literature:

The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespear [sic] and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.\textsuperscript{35}

Inchbald’s introduction to her translation of the play characterises the German muse as a stranger entering Britain, and urges the audience to welcome it:

\begin{quote}
Our present then the German Muse supplies,  
But rather aims to soften than surprise.  
[...]  
Though less engaging in an English dress,  
\textit{Let her from British hearts no peril fear,}  
\textit{But, as a STRANGER find a welcome here.}\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

\textit{Lovers’ Vows} is certainly presented as a stranger in \textit{Mansfield Park}, but the novel’s moral consciousness does not welcome it. The use of words such as “peril” and “fear” in the extract above seem to convey the novel’s reaction to the German school very accurately.

The play that is performed at Mansfield Park is not \textit{Das Kind der Liebe} itself, but Elizabeth Inchbald’s English translation, \textit{Lovers’ Vows}, one of a number of English versions, but the only one to have been performed publicly. Inchbald made her name in the theatre, both as an actress and a playwright, and kept company with a politically

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{32} Marilyn Butler, \textit{Jane Austen and the War of Ideas} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 234.
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\end{footnotesize}
radical circle that included William Godwin and Thomas Holcroft. Inchbald softened, but did not eliminate, the radical Jacobin discourse of the original work. For the anti-Jacobins, one of the major objections to the play is founded on its positive depiction of free, unrestrained female sexuality. This is the point that strikes Fanny so forcibly and constitutes her major opposition to *Lovers' Vows*: “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” (MP 124). In light of this remark, I will consider how anti-Jacobin discourse connected female sexual continence to the safety of the nation. Tom’s ‘Regency’ allows two dangerous influences to infiltrate the estate. The first is the text of *Lovers' Vows*, which contains radical discourse about the permissibility of female sexual desire outside marriage. The second is the admission of outsiders, particularly Henry Crawford, who, as a symbolic representative of France attacks the virtue of Mansfield’s daughters. In the light of anti-Jacobin discourse, this is symbolically equated with a literal invasion of the nation as we shall see.

"His house shall not be hurt"

The damage which Tom has inflicted upon the estate, its inhabitants and by extrapolation the nation as a whole is symbolically expressed by the physical harm that comes to the house whilst in Tom’s hands. Edmund urges Tom not to attempt to recreate a theatre because it “would be taking liberties with my father’s house”. Tom responds, “His house shall not be hurt. I have quite as great an interest in being careful of his house as you can have” (MP 115), reminding Edmund of his superior position and interest in that house as the eldest son and heir. However, the house is most definitely “hurt” by the episode. The damage Tom does to the furniture symbolises the damage which his “reign” does to the reputation, name and future of the Bertram family and lineage.

The theatricals necessitate physical alteration to the space of the Mansfield estate. Christopher Jackson, an employee of the estate, undertakes the carpentry work. Mrs Norris orders in the green baize, and she and the housemaids construct a curtain. This becomes insidious when the designated purposes of particular rooms are overturned in the project of turning the house into a theatre. The billiard room is chosen as the space in which to perform the play. In one sense, this is fitting because the purpose of
the billiard room is the pursuit of leisure. But its proximity to Sir Thomas’s study makes this setting subversive. Indeed, Sir Thomas’s room is to be disturbed in order to create the space for the drama:

[1] It is the very room for a theatre, precisely the shape and length for it, and the doors at the farther end, communicating with each other as they may be made to do in five minutes, by merely moving the book-case in my father’s room, is the very thing we could have desired, if we had set down to wish for it. And my father’s room will be an excellent green-room. It seems to join the billiard-room on purpose. (MP 112-3)

The last sentence is of particular significance; if we read the purpose and location of the rooms symbolically, it seems to suggest that the pursuit of leisure should be tempered by the gravity and authority of study. The construction of the theatre then removes this tempering influence. By removing the bookcase, which houses the materials of study, authority and learning are overthrown in favour of the frivolity of the theatre.

This emphasis on the purpose of rooms and how they are disrupted by the progress of the theatricals is exhibited again when Mary Crawford commandeers Fanny’s white attic (which had a previous life as a school room) to practice what is certainly the most subversive scene in the whole play, Amelia’s forward and sexually explicit declaration of love for Anhalt. Mary herself has a keen appreciation of the incongruity of her surroundings and the difference between the original purpose of the room and what she intends to use it for now. She finds two chairs for use as props:

[...] very good school-room chairs, not made for a theatre, I dare say; much more fitted for little girls to sit and kick their feet against when they are learning a lesson. What would your governess and your uncle say to see them used for such a purpose? (MP 151-152)

This is an excellent demonstration of the sense of misrule that has taken over the estate in Sir Thomas’s absence. The space that was once used to educate little girls, both morally and intellectually, has been hijacked. It is now being utilised by young women to make bold sexual advances on their tutors. The setting of this scene has been carefully chosen by Austen with reference to Lovers’ Vows itself. The
relationship between Amelia and Anhalt is originally that between student and teacher, and the scene in which Amelia declares her passion is couched in terms of a lesson:

Amelia: What is the subject?
Anhalt: Love
Amelia: (going up to him) Come, then, teach it me – teach it me as you taught me geography, languages, and other important things.\(^{37}\)

As Duckworth comments, “the enterprise soon gathers momentum, invading more and more of the house’s space and altering the disposition of its furniture. As Mary Crawford gleefully exults at one point ‘we are rehearsing all over the house’”.\(^{38}\)

It is significant that the rooms that are particularly affected are associated with learned authority (Sir Thomas’s study) and education (the white attic which was once a schoolroom). These rooms remind the reader of Sir Thomas’s function within Mansfield, both as an estate and as a domestic home. He is responsible for the guidance and governance of the entire estate, but as a father he is also accountable for the education of his children. The theatricals section demonstrates how Tom allows these spaces to be invaded and corrupted, replacing study with frivolous play and education with lessons in sexual seduction. However, on another level, Sir Thomas’s absence reminds us that his colonial concerns have led him to neglect the roles that he should be playing as estate proprietor and father. The text suggests that the education of his daughters is a key area in which Sir Thomas has failed as a patriarch, and this failure has placed the estate in considerable danger.

On Sir Thomas’s return, his energies are focused entirely on the impact the theatricals have had on the house. Over the course of the next few days, Sir Thomas embarks upon a project of zealously destroying all physical evidence of the play, from dismantling curtains and the stage, to burning the copies of the play itself. His actions are redolent of a returning, overthrown monarch, bent on destroying all traces of occupation and restoring the country to his own status quo:

\(^{37}\) Inchbald, *Lovers' Vows*, 213.

He had also set the carpenter to work in pulling down what had been so lately put up in the billiard room, and given the scene painter his dismissal, long enough to justify the pleasing belief of his being then at least as far off as Northampton. The scene painter was gone, having spoilt only the floor of one room, ruined all the coachman’s sponges, and made five of the under-servants idle and dissatisfied; and Sir Thomas was in hopes that another day or two would suffice [sic] to wipe away every outward memento of what had been, even to the destruction of every unbound copy of ‘Lovers’ Vows’ in the house, for he was burning all that met his eye. (MP 172)

Symbolically, the theatricals episode envisages Mansfield in the hands of the leisured, emasculated heir. In Tom’s hands the state undergoes an invasion, infiltrated by outsiders such as Yates, the Crawfords and even the spectre of Charles Maddox, infected by European radicalism, in the form of Lovers’ Vows, or Das Kind der Liebe itself. Once within the house, these forces appropriate its rooms, altering their physical structure, overhauling native traditions, customs and values by disregarding the original purpose of specific rooms and using them for their own ends.

From Sir Thomas’s point of view, the fate of his house during his absence is a vision of invasion. This is clearly illustrated in his unexpectedly early return to Mansfield. Sir Thomas goes to his study, so almost the first sight that greets him is the vision of the theatre. The only moment in the entire novel that is told through the perspective of Tom Bertram, the reaction of Sir Thomas to Mr Yates is of great significance:

To the Theatre he went, and reached it just in time to witness the first meeting of his father and his friend. Sir Thomas had been a good deal surprised to find candles burning in his room; and on casting his eye round it, to see other symptoms of recent habitation, and a general air of confusion in the furniture. The removal of the book-case from before the billiard room door stuck him especially […] Sir Thomas] found himself on the stage of a theatre, and opposed to a ranting young man, who appeared likely to knock him down backwards. At the very moment of Yates perceiving Sir Thomas, and giving perhaps the very best start he had ever given in the whole course of his rehearsals, Tom Bertram entered at the other end to the room; and
never had he found greater difficulty in keeping his countenance. (MP 163-164)

Sir Thomas finds himself confronted with Mr Yates, in the guise of Baron Wildenheim. This moment constitutes the realisation of Sir Thomas’s most paranoid invasion nightmare. He is face to face with an enemy, European version of himself (both are barons) who has infiltrated his house and managed to invade the seat of his authority, his study. As Marilyn Butler puts it: “The head of the house, upholder in the novel of family, of rank and of the existing order, is confronted at the heart of his own terrain by a mouthing puppet who represents a grotesque inversion of himself.” Symbolically, at least, this alien, European force has been successful in taking control of the space. As Tom observes, Mr Yates’s “easy indifference and volubility in the course of the first five minutes seemed to mark him the most at home of the two” (MP 165, my emphasis).

**Male guardians, female sexuality and the safety of the nation**

The text explores the consequences of Tom’s actions. Part of the role of estate proprietor encompasses the care and provision of the family members living in the estate. Tom’s actions bring Henry Crawford into the family circle, introducing him to Maria and Fanny, and also bring incendiary material about the permissibility of female sexual desire in the form of *Lovers’ Vows*. The danger posed by France, embodied in Henry Crawford, affects the novel’s female characters, Maria and Fanny. A common critical observation is that Austen’s appropriation of *Lovers’ Vows* typecasts the characters of *Mansfield Park*. The parts played by the characters reflect their personalities and situations while the plot of the play mirrors the plot of novel. In the case of Maria, the extra-marital sexual misconduct of her character, Agatha, is mirrored by Maria’s eventual elopement with Henry Crawford.

In the action following *Lovers’ Vows*, the sexual morality of both Maria and Fanny is tried, even attacked. In both cases, the testing is done by Henry Crawford, whose position as foreign “invader” of the estate and association with France makes the symbolism of these encounters clear. The virtue of these women, we shall see, comes to represent the essence of the English nation, whose safety depends on their ability to

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resist. They must resist him for different reasons, Maria because she is engaged and later married to Mr Rushworth, and Fanny because she is conscious of his moral inadequacies. Maria, as the eldest daughter of the estate, is an obvious choice for Henry, but as far back as the Sotherton episode, the text hints that she will fall for his charms. Once the novel has moved through Sotherton, the theatricals, and Maria’s wedding, it focuses attention on Fanny, who appears to function as a substitute for Maria. As Butler suggests “the tempting of Fanny is now the central issue”.

*Mansfield Park* is often understood as a novel about female propriety, and that it certainly is. However I wish to consider the further implications of the action of Tom Bertram and Sir Thomas Bertram in exposing the females of *Mansfield Park* to these external temptations in the first place. In her juvenilia, Austen engages with the connection, much emphasised in the works of conservative thinkers, between female morality and the safety of the nation. In the short story *Catharine, or the Bower*, Catharine’s rather hysterical aunt Mrs Percival alludes to these arguments which gained ground in the context of the Revolutionary and Jacobin threat emanating from France in the aftermath of the Revolution:

‘You are Mistaken, Child’, replied she; ‘the welfare of every Nation depends upon the virtue of it’s [sic] individuals and any one who offends in so gross a manner against decorum and propriety is certainly hastening it’s [sic] ruin’.

Claudia L. Johnson highlights the sense in which this passage engages with anti-Jacobin discourse, and the spirit of comic exaggeration with which it is imbued:

The significance Mrs Percival ascribes to female modesty may appear caricatured beyond credible proportions [...] But for professedly conservative novelists, Mrs. Percival’s association of female ‘profligacy’ with political calamity would appear prophetic and not in the least

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40 Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, 236.
exaggerated, and if we look closely at their productions, Austen’s differences with conservative apologetics will stand out in bold relief.⁴²

*Mansfield Park* is certainly a novel of the Regency period (which we see particularly clearly in Austen’s presentation of Tom’s ‘Regency’), but it seems that when writing it, Austen, imbued with the anti-Jacobin discourse of the 1790s, revisited this passage from *Catharine* in a rather different frame of mind. What constitutes comic material in *Catharine* is treated with much greater seriousness in *Mansfield Park*, written as it was against a backdrop of fears about the safety of the nation and the threat of Napoleonic France.

Among other works Catharine’s aunt refers to the writings of John Bowles, whose *Reflections at the Conclusion of the War* (1800) included a section on ‘Remarks on Modern Female Manners’. This section of Bowles’s treatise has huge resonance for *Mansfield Park*. Bowles reflects from the vantage point of a hiatus in England’s struggle with Jacobinism and France. While paying tribute to the efforts of the military in securing England’s safety, he argues that “other means are necessary to enable us to overcome, and, indeed, to cope with Jacobinism”.⁴³ He suggests that the danger feeds upon moral corruption, particularly vice and infidelity, and the way to “expel” the intruder is through the “purifying and reinvigorating influence of religion and virtue”. He places particular emphasis on female virtue:

> But of all the symptoms which are discoverable, in regard to our morals, the most inauspicious, perhaps, is the decay of those feelings, which have been hitherto the ornament and prize of the female sex. It is not meant here to insist on the alarming progress of adultery, upon the growing numbers and increasing shamelessness of those women who abandon the paths of virtue. A still more unwelcome reflection forces itself upon the mind of everyone, who contemplates the present manners of the fashionable world, and in relation to *those women* whose character is without a spot. No longer do such women, at least in the higher circles, pride themselves, as they have

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ever been wont to, on the distinction which separates them from the most abandoned of their sex.\textsuperscript{44}

Two points are of note, adultery and the tolerance of immoral women. Women offend in terms of their adulterous actions and their permissive manners. These correspond exactly to Fanny’s objections to the female characters of \textit{Lovers’ Vows} who encompass both these faults. The “situation” of one and the “language” of the other are deemed to be dangerously immoral. Bowles also makes reference to another “foreign influence” which has great significance for \textit{Mansfield Park}, the sentimental German school from which comes \textit{Das Kind der Liebe}. Bowles emphasises the dangerous and apparently foreign influence of compassion on the toleration of vice:

Do these astonishing condescensions proceed from that tender and compassionate sympathy with guilt, which has been caught from the German school, and which impels us to consider vice as an object of compassion and indulgence, rather than of horror and detestation?\textsuperscript{45}

His suggestion is to restore the rule which had “hitherto been considered sacred” that “the infamy of vice is the last bulwark of virtue”. This kind of military and defensive vocabulary resonates particularly in \textit{Mansfield Park}, which focuses on boundaries, edges and borders. There are further similarities with the symbolic vocabulary of the novel when Bowles asserts “no approaches must be allowed; the boundary must be considered as impassable; the line is the rubicon of female virtue”.\textsuperscript{46} Ostensibly, Bowles is talking about the non-acceptance of female immodesty, but his words are a symbolic allusion to the penetration of the female, where the “rubicon of female virtue” conveys the irreversible nature of the loss of virginity. Bowles uses military vocabulary to discuss female virtue, which, we shall see, is also used by Austen. The “impassable boundary” which the enemy “approaches” and the line which should not be crossed could also refer to the border of a nation, and as I will argue in the course of this chapter, the attack on feminine virtue and attack on the country are symbolically connected in the novel.

\textsuperscript{44} Bowles, \textit{Reflections}, 71.
\textsuperscript{45} Bowles, \textit{Reflections}, 72.
\textsuperscript{46} Bowles, \textit{Reflections}, 74.
Mansfield Park explores male culpability in addition to female sexual impropriety. Sir Thomas’s absence from the estate, along with Tom Bertram’s financial irresponsibility, allows Henry Crawford to cross the boundary of Mansfield Park in the first place. Tom’s boredom leads to the staging of the theatricals and exposes Maria to incendiary, dangerously liberal material which encourages her to consider the possibility of becoming Henry’s lover. The novel also engages with anti-Jacobin texts that consider the role of parents in the development and instillation of sexual morality in their children. Through this dialogue with anti-Jacobin material, Mansfield Park suggests that Sir Thomas is as much to blame for Maria’s transgression as Maria herself, as an examination of some key anti-Jacobin texts demonstrates.

Hannah More’s Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (1799) is a tract that shares so many themes and concerns with Mansfield Park that one could consider Mansfield Park as a reworking of More’s text in fictional form. More agrees that the nation is under attack, suggesting that the historical period constitutes a “moment of alarm and peril” and she too suggests that female virtue is vital for the security of the nation. More is particularly vociferous against the “swarms of publications now daily issuing from the banks of the Danube”, and suggests that the stage represents the greatest challenge to female virtue. It is the weapon “of all others, that against which it is, at the present moment, the most important to warn the more inconsiderate of my countrywomen”. Above all, she advocates the quiet merit of women such as Fanny, rather than the more obvious attractions of a Mary Crawford. “Wit” according to More “of all the qualities of the female mind, [is] that which requires the severest castigation”, while she champions “the unobtrusive merit of some quiet person in the company, who, though of much worth is perhaps of little note”.

More’s major concern is the duty which parents owe their children to educate them appropriately. More’s censure seems particularly appropriate to Sir Thomas:

49 More, Strictures, I: 46.
50 More, Strictures, II: 72.
51 More, Strictures, II: 71-72.
It is a singular injustice which is often exercised towards women, first to give them a very defective Education, and then to expect from them the most undeviating purity of conduct; – to train them in such a manner as shall lay them open to the most dangerous faults, and then to censure them for not proving faultless.\(^52\)

She also warns against the dangers of parental “idleness”, “indolence” and “love of ease” which apply particularly to Lady Bertram. For John Bowles, as examined above, female virtue was the barrier which must prove impenetrable for the defence of the country. More uses the same vocabulary for parental duty: “[Y]et, in this sacred garrison, *impregnable but by neglect*, you too have an awful post, that of arming the minds of the rising generations with the shield of faith”.\(^53\)

The Bertram girls come to embody the kind of education that More warns is most dangerous: superficially accomplished, “the girl who is really receiving the worst instruction often makes the best figure,” but lacking the “deep and sure foundations to which the edifice will owe its strength and stability”.\(^54\) Their father perceives only the positive veneer:

> [T]he Miss Bertrams continued to exercise their memories, practise their duets, and grow tall and womanly; and their father saw them becoming in person, manners, and accomplishments, every thing that could satisfy his anxiety. (MP 17)

The novel demonstrates how Sir Thomas fails Maria by neglecting what is (according to the anti-Jacobins) his most important task within the domestic sphere – her moral education. This reading suggests that the most fundamental threat to English security is not the sexual morality of the daughters of Mansfield Park, but the owner himself, whose neglect leaves his daughter open to attack from the outside.

**Henry Crawford and the boundaries of female sexuality**

Analysis of Henry’s amorous attacks on Maria Bertram and Fanny Price, and particularly the spaces and places in which these attacks occur, shows how these

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\(^{52}\) More, *Strictures*, I: ix.


attacks can be understood as threatened invasions of the nation. To make the connection between the threat to the nation and the threat to female virtue, Austen engages with the work of anti-Jacobin thinkers such as John Bowles and Hannah More and interprets the language of defence which they use – bulwark, rubicon, garrison – in an almost literal fashion.

Maria's relationship with Henry Crawford is explored during the theatricals episode, but also in the course of another set piece in Mansfield Park, the scenes set in Sotherton. Sotherton is the home of Maria's fiancé Mr Rushworth and this section of the novel uses the estate to ask serious questions of Rushworth's masculinity. If Pemberley establishes Darcy as the apotheosis of landed English masculinity, Sotherton is its antithesis. As in Pride and Prejudice, the description of the house merges effortlessly with the description of the man and there is delicious irony in Rushworth's lament:

It wants improvement, ma'am, beyond anything. I never saw a place that wanted so much improvement in my life; and it is so forlorn, that I do not know what can be done with it. (MP 47)

The fundamental problem is "situation". Pemberley stands at the apex of the park, with a fine prospect across the grounds, but Sotherton is built in a hole, at the lowest point of the estate. "[T]he situation of the house is dreadful. We go down hill to it for half-a-mile, and it is a pity, for it would not be an ill-looking place if it had a better approach" (MP 74). Although Mr Rushworth is keen to engage Humphrey Repton's professional expertise, the truth is apparent to Henry and everyone else in the text. Its problems are insurmountable. Like Rushworth himself, the "heavy, large brick building" is beyond help.

The Sotherton section of the novel has an exaggerated interest in boundaries, borders and edges. Our first introduction to the grounds and gardens describes a lawn "bounded on each side by a high wall" and beyond that "a long terrace walk, backed by iron palissades [sic]" from which it is possible to view the "tops of the trees of the wilderness immediately adjoining" (MP 81). This variety of boundaries, both natural and man-made, provides the backdrop for all of the action set in Sotherton.
The most dramatic of Sotherton’s boundaries is the iron gate which Maria attempts to traverse with Henry Crawford. Maria expresses a desire to pass through the iron gate, which leads from the wilderness back into the park. The symbolism of this image has a long history and it is a familiar device from, among other places, medieval painting, where female sexuality was often expressed in terms of a garden and virginity as a gate, which will be opened. Mr Rushworth has not brought the key and he returns to the house to find it. The symbolism of the key, also well-worn, is clear. Mr Rushworth, Maria’s fiancé, represents the respectable means by which Maria’s virginity might be lost, in the context of marriage. But while Mr Rushworth is away, Maria grows impatient – “Mr Rushworth is so long fetching this key!” – and Henry suggests that the two of them traverse the gate together, without waiting for Mr Rushworth and the key: “I think you might with little difficulty pass round the edge of the gate, here, with my assistance” (MP 89).

Henry offers Maria an alternative means of exploring her sexuality, outside of the confines of morality and marriage. That this option is dangerous and beyond propriety is underlined by Fanny, who cries out to Maria not to risk it, “you will hurt yourself, Miss Bertram”. The sexual implications of the scene are made even clearer as Maria traverses the gate. Fanny urges Maria to be careful of the phallic “spikes” against which “you will certainly hurt yourself [...] you will tear your gown”. Again, damage to clothing is indicative of penetration. Finally, Fanny warns that Maria is “in danger of slipping into the ha-ha” (MP 90). The ha-ha features as the place of danger at the very edge of the estate, and Maria’s sexual misconduct puts her in danger of falling beyond its borders altogether. This anticipates her final position in the novel, cast out beyond the boundaries of Mansfield Park. As Jane Brown suggests in her work *The Pursuit of Paradise: A Social History of Gardens and Gardening*, the language of landscape gardening that Austen employs reflects the military background from which these terms were appropriated: “so many garden terms come from the arts of warfare – cordon, earthing-up, trench, bastion, the batter of a hedge, palisade, zig-zag, covered way”. Her specific reference to the ha-ha connects Maria’s excursion at the edges of the estate closely to the business of national defence: “the ha-ha, the enabling motif of the eighteenth-century landscape style which kept the
cows off the lawn, has a military pedigree". 55 Maria’s virtue, in its symbolic association with the boundaries of the Sotherton estate, is connected with the borders of the nation. Henry’s successful campaign against it is analogous to a foreign invasion of the estate.

If Henry’s and Maria’s eventual elopement is prefigured as they traverse the boundaries of the Sotherton estate, Henry’s attack on Fanny’s virtue takes place along an even more symbolically resonant border, the English coast. Henry’s courtship of Fanny is a sustained theme in the novel. Sales interprets Henry’s courtship of Fanny as a military conquest: “His conversation during his pursuit of Fanny is frequently alluded to as a military attack that she tries to repulse. He is particularly dangerous because he can adapt his conversational advances to suit the ebb and flow of battle. He is at his most lethal when the ‘general buzz’ of the conversation provides him with the necessary ‘shelter’ for making a quick and unexpected advance”. 56

Sales describes Henry as the “Napoleon of the drawing room” 57 who has estimated that he requires a fortnight to win Fanny. Sales’s reading outlines Henry’s use of military techniques in his courtship, such as his mastery of sudden movement, his capacity for catching Fanny off-guard by changing direction, swapping chairs and surprising her with early morning visits to Mansfield. Henry also has his sister Mary as a strategic ally; following his appeal to Sir Thomas, when Fanny is under enormous pressure to accept his offer of marriage, he sends Mary in to battle on his behalf, a visit which Fanny construes as “a formidable threat” (MP 324). Fanny adopts defensive techniques in order to protect herself from the Crawfords’ pincer movement, staying close to her own ally, Lady Bertram, and never venturing out on her own. “She absented herself as little as possible from Lady Bertram, kept away from the east room, and took no solitary walk in the shrubbery, in her caution to avoid any sudden attack” (MP 324).

The decisive battle occurs in a coastal space. Sales correctly asserts that suggests that “Fanny is even more vulnerable to Henry’s attacks in Portsmouth”. 58

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58 Sales, Representations of Regency England, 112.
signifies a great deal through its geography and Said’s evaluation of the novel as geographically problematic, an English estate dependent on a far-flung West Indian plantation, is only part of the novel’s geographical signification. Although we know little about the house, Mansfield’s geographical location is revealed in the very opening sentence of the novel. It is situated in Northamptonshire, which, as demonstrated in appendix 1, is in the landlocked centre of England.

In the context of the novel’s invasionary fears, scenes set in costal Portsmouth are particularly significant. Situated on the south coast of England, its proximity to France is palpable. The city occupied a strategic position in the war effort. The south coast was particularly vulnerable to French invasion, an issue discussed above in relation to Jane and Cassandra Austen’s experiences in Kent. Linda Colley has noted the larger numbers of militia volunteers in southern and western coastal counties as opposed to say, Yorkshire:

> Very different, was the experience of that broad swathe of counties on the western and southern coasts of England — Gloucestershire, Somerset, Devon, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Sussex and Kent — which had stronger military traditions and was geographically far more vulnerable to French attack. On average, 50 per cent of all men aged between seventeen and fifty-five in these counties volunteered to take up arms in 1803.\(^5^9\)

The importance of Portsmouth occupies Captain Charles Pasley, who suggests that should the “followers of Mahomet” be considering an invasion of France (having overrun Spain) and contemplating first conquering Britain, the occupation, even if regarded as prohibitively costly, would have been worth it for “the inestimable advantage of being able to keep quiet possession of Portsmouth harbour” alone.\(^6^0\) Pasley establishes Portsmouth, then, as a crucial location in the Anglo-French power struggle.

Moving the action of the novel to Portsmouth would have brought the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars more strongly into focus for the work’s early readers. As Sales points out, the garrison chapel to which Henry accompanies Fanny and her family had

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\(^5^9\) Colley, *Britons*, 292.
\(^6^0\) Pasley, *Essay*, 91.
a particular association with the war effort: “An early Victorian guide book notes that the walls of the chapel were covered with monuments erected to the memory of those who had died in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars”. Sales goes on to say that the immediate indicators of war would have been evident: “Regency readers familiar with Portsmouth itself, or with the extensive newspaper coverage about it, would have known that the ships that were used to hold French prisoners-of-war could also be seen from these ramparts”.

Pasley frequently returns to the need to build fortifications on the English coastline as a security measure against French attack:

Admitting the probability [...] that the day might come, and at no very distant period, when the fleets of Europe may block up those of Great Britain in its harbours, and may disembark the formidable armies of the continent on our shores, it becomes a question, if our present means of defence are not capable of saving the nation, what addition is necessary to be made to them in order to effect that purpose.

He suggests that following the French invasion of Spain, the lack of such security measures in England must be a worry, highlighting “the precarious situation of a nation [that] has neither an establishment of well-disciplined troops, nor of fortresses, to oppose veteran armies”. He criticises the government for failing to implement such security measures sooner, “can fortresses, any more than ships be built on the spur of occasion and necessity?”

When Henry and Fanny walk along the ramparts in Portsmouth they are teetering on the very edge of England, and enemy France is within view. It is here that Fanny’s resistance to Henry’s charms reaches its lowest point. For the moral safety of Fanny and the literal safety of the nation, this moment is the most dangerous in the novel. The beauty of the day masks the true danger of the seaside scene and charms Fanny into a dangerous sense of security:

63 Pasley, Essay, 7.
64 Pasley, Essay, 196.
65 Pasley, Essay, 40.
The day was uncommonly lovely. It was really March; but it was April in its mild air, brisk soft wind, and bright sun, occasionally clouded for a minute; and every thing looked so beautiful under the influence of such a sky, the effects of the shadows pursuing each other, on the ships at Spithead and the island beyond, with the ever-varying hues of the sea now at high water, dancing in its glee and dashing against the ramparts with so fine a sound, produced altogether such a combination of charms for Fanny, as made her gradually almost careless of the circumstances under which she felt them. (MP 372-373, my italics)

Later on that evening, she comes perilously close to acknowledging moral worth in Henry and accepting his hand in marriage:

She was very low. The wonderful improvement which she still fancied in Mr. Crawford was the nearest to administering comfort of anything within the current of her thoughts. Not considering in how different a circle she had been just seeing him, nor how much might be owing to contrast, she was quite persuaded of his being astonishingly more gentle, and regardful of others, than formerly. And if in little things, must it not be so in great? (MP 377)

*Mansfield Park* acknowledges (though only superficially) Sir Thomas’s role in placing Maria and Fanny in settings that leave them open to Henry’s attack. Sir Thomas encourages Maria’s marriage to Mr Rushworth, even though Rushworth’s inadequacy as a man and unsuitability as a husband are obvious. Because it suits his political and financial interests, Sir Thomas sacrifices his daughter to the marriage. Questioning Maria on her opinion of the match, the reader is told “Sir Thomas was satisfied; too glad to be satisfied perhaps to urge the matter quite so far as his judgment might have dictated to others. It was an alliance which he could not have relinquished without pain” (MP 180-181). Of course responsibility lies with Maria also, as she could have terminated the engagement when she realised the extent of her feelings for Henry Crawford. However Sir Thomas’s attitude to approving Mr Rushworth as a son-in-law is similar to his attitude in approving his daughters’ education. Sir Thomas chooses to concentrate only on an outward impression, which suggests that there are no problems with Rushworth and the education of his
daughters. While Sir Thomas strongly suspects that this will not stand up to much scrutiny, he makes a decision not to “urge the matter”.

Sir Thomas also wholeheartedly supports Henry Crawford’s designs on Fanny. He is directly responsible for sending Fanny to Portsmouth, a symbolically dangerous and exposed location in the text, and does so for his own purposes. “The scheme was that she should accompany her brother back to Portsmouth, and spend a little time with her own family […] His prime motive in sending her away, had very little to do with the propriety of her seeing her parents again, and nothing at all with any idea of making her happy”. Sir Thomas hopes that “a little abstinence from the elegancies and luxuries of Mansfield Park, would bring her mind into a sober state, and incline her to a juster estimate of that home of greater permanence, and equal comfort, of which she had the offer (MP 335). Thus Fanny is not merely incidentally exposed to the threat Henry poses: her spell in Portsmouth is designed to achieve this. Sir Thomas’s attitude to Henry Crawford is analogous to his attitude to Mr Rushworth: he is reluctant to test the impression he has of Henry’s character. “He wished him to be a model of constancy; and fancied the best means of effecting it would be by not trying him too long” (MP 313).

Sir Thomas never really acknowledges the danger to which he exposes Fanny, just as he never fully admits his culpability in Maria’s sexual transgressions. Rather than acknowledge his own role in endangering the nation, Sir Thomas scapegoats his daughter, condemning her for her lack of sexual restraint without recognising that the education he has guided has shaped her character and behaviour. Similarly, Sir Thomas never concedes that by engineering Fanny’s excursion to Portsmouth, he has placed her in a hazardous position by exposing her to Henry’s advances.

**Landed versus professional masculinity**

*Mansfield Park* does not present the estate-inheriting sons of the gentry in a positive light. Tom Bertram and Mr Rushworth are two of Austen’s most problematic male characters. In the case of Mr Rushworth, Austen uses his estate to illuminate his character, just as she did with Darcy and Pemberley. The Sotherton estate portrays Rushworth as physically unappealing, heavy and old fashioned. Furthermore, the scene set in Sotherton suggests that Mr Rushworth is sexually deficient, being
cuckolded by the more dashing Henry Crawford. I have considered Tom’s idle dissipated lifestyle in some depth and shown how his profligate ways and purposeless life results in him placing the estate in danger. Tom too is portrayed as sexually problematic. Roger Sales suggests that Tom may have homosexual tendencies, citing his large number of “intimate” male friendships, and his lack of interest in women as evidenced by his treatment of Mary Crawford. I would argue that Sales’s suspicions are correct, particularly in light of the “deafening silence on the crucial question of whether the heir to Mansfield will ever produce an heir himself”. I conclude as Sales does that “[q]uestions remain unanswered about his [Tom’s] sexuality”; there are certainly several indications that Tom has homosexual tendencies and nothing to suggest he is heterosexual. The theatricals episode provides us with the strongest evidence. As Kristina Straub suggests, the world of acting and the theatre was associated with homosexuality in a general sense:

From the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth century, the image of actors as represented in the British popular press is that of sexual suspects, men who are in some way outside the boundaries of culturally dominant definitions of masculinity. Straub suggests the ways in which men were “unmanned” on the stage, for example by cross-dressing or playing effeminate fops, and argues that this created difficulties for their full participation in heterosexual lives in society off the stage.

Tom’s clearly signalled enthusiasm for the theatricals is in itself suspiciously queer behaviour. He is willing to cross-dress (assuming the role of the Cottager’s wife) suggesting that his masculinity and sexual orientation are in doubt. The fact that the billiard room, which represents a particularly phallic kind of masculine game playing, is appropriated for the theatre is of great significance: Tom “puts a representative of an ale-house up in his father’s billiard-room and offers to perform a drag act in front of it”. This indicates the sense in which Tom’s actions emasculate the house. He overthrows manly games in favour of girlish mincing on a newly constructed stage,

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66 Sales, Representations of Regency England, 106.
68 Sales, Representations of Regency England, 102.
complete with men in blue dresses and satin cloaks. The novel shows no confidence that Tom Bertram and Mr Rushworth will succeed in their primary role as inheritors of the estate and produce heirs of their own to continue the family line. In addition, Tom’s negligence enables the entry to the estate of a sexual threat to his sisters and cousins, female relations whom he has a duty to protect.

*Mansfield Park*’s crisis in masculinity is most in evidence in the space of the landed estate, amongst the eldest sons of the gentry. In the light of the fears about the threat of Napoleonic France to English interests at home and abroad, an idle, emasculated gentry class is seen to weaken and potentially destabilise the nation. However *Mansfield Park* does not depict English masculinity in a wholly negative light. A more positive version of masculinity can be found amongst the professional, unpropertied classes: portionless eldest sons or the younger sons of the landed gentry who are required to earn their living. In *Mansfield Park*, this kind of masculinity is represented by Edmund Bertram and William Price, who are associated with the church and the navy respectively.

In *Mansfield Park*, the professions are directly associated with the protection and defence of the nation in both the colonial and the domestic spaces in the context of the Napoleonic Wars. William Price, Fanny’s brother is, in the course of the novel, entered into the navy with the assistance of his uncle, Sir Thomas. Unlike the landed Tom Bertram, William must make his way in the world by hard work and application. He is one of those born to “struggle and endure” who are celebrated at the end of novel when Sir Thomas comes to “acknowledge the advantages of early hardship and discipline” (MP 432). William Price’s naval career is necessarily related to the defence of England and he is connected with the global spaces of the Napoleonic Wars; in particular the Mediterranean and the West Indies. I do not explore William’s naval masculinity in depth here, but return to the topic of naval heroism in chapter five.

Edmund’s career in the church is less obviously associated with national defence, but as considered below, Austen links religion to national security. There is also a sense in which *Mansfield Park* connects professionalism, utility and employment in general to the defence of the nation, particularly when comparing it to idle, dissipated landed existence. William and Edmund, the professional soldier and clergyman, are active
presences within these spaces. William’s primary role is to defend England in the colonial space against Napoleonic France, fighting in both the Mediterranean and the West Indies, important battlegrounds in the conflict. This contrasts with Sir Thomas’s role in the West Indies, a space which he uses to finance his family estate and his idle son.

The role of the church is given a great deal more attention than the navy. The symbol of the church as a protective force is examined in the Sotherton episode. The church’s capacity as a protective force for the estate is suggested in this episode in terms of the avenue of English oaks which Mr Rushworth is keen to destroy. The prospect of their demise causes Fanny to quote from Book I of Cowper’s 1785 work, *The Task*: “Does not it make you think of Cowper? ‘Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn your fate unmerited’” (MP 50). In Cowper’s work, the avenue is symbolically associated with the roof of a church, which encompasses both the spiritual protection of religion, but also the more physical shelter which the actual building affords:

Ye fallen avenues! once more I mourn
Your fate unmerited, once more rejoice
That yet a remnant of your race survives.
How airy and how light the graceful arch,
Yet awful as the consecrated roof
Re-echoing pious anthems! while beneath
The chequer’d earth seems restless as a flood

The reference to Cowper and the imagery of oak trees as a consecrated roof protecting the estate recalls the idea of religion as a saving force for the nation, one which seemed to resonate particularly strongly with Austen during this period. In a letter dated 2 September 1813 Austen expresses her fears about a potential attack from America:

[Henry’s] view & the view of those he mixes with, of Politics, is not cheerfull – with regard to an American war I mean; – they consider it as certain, & as what is to ruin us. The [?Americans] cannot be conquered, &

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we shall only be teaching them the skill in war which they may now want. We are to make them good Sailors & Soldiers & [?gain] nothing ourselves.\textsuperscript{70}

In the context of these fears, Austen cites religion as the best protective force for the country:

I place my hope of better things on a claim to the protection of Heaven, as a Religious Nation, a Nation inspite of much Evil improving in Religion, which I cannot beleive the Americans to possess.\textsuperscript{71}

**Evangelicalism and the salvation of the nation**

The tonal differences between *Mansfield Park* and its predecessor *Pride and Prejudice*, suggesting that England’s greater insecurity on the world stage led to a darkening in Austen’s mood in *Mansfield Park*, were noted above. A similar shift in mood and opinion can be identified in Austen’s attitude towards Evangelicalism, an attitude which changed dramatically between 1809 and 1814. In January 1809 Austen asserted “I do not like the Evangelicals”\textsuperscript{72} but by November 1814, her position has reversed: “I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be Evangelicals”.\textsuperscript{73}

Evangelicalism emerged from Methodism and was characterised by a belief in the need for personal conversion and an emphasis on revealed religion. It became associated with the Clapham sect, particularly with people such as William Wilberforce and Hannah More. As Davidoff and Hall argue in *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, these individuals emerged from gentry and mercantile rather than aristocratic backgrounds, thus connecting Evangelicalism with middle-class culture and values. The Evangelicals were committed to stripping religious worship of many of its trappings and returning to scripture as a basis for faith. Evangelicalism became associated with anti-Jacobinism as its supporters campaigned against the moral degeneracy which they felt characterised English society, particularly in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

\textsuperscript{70} Austen, *Letters*, 274; the spelling is Austen’s own. Fears concerning a possible American attack are alluded to in the text of *Mansfield Park* in the form of an unelaborated, off-the-cuff comment from Tom: “A strange business this in America, Dr Grant! – What is your opinion? – I always come to you to know what I am to think of public matters” (MP 108).

\textsuperscript{71} Austen, *Letters*, 274; misspellings in original.

\textsuperscript{72} Austen, *Letters*, 170.

\textsuperscript{73} Austen, *Letters*, 280.
They were also strongly associated with the abolition movement. The Evangelicals also placed particular emphasis on the role of the parish, believing that it should be “an active arena within which the clergyman should regularly celebrate divine worship and instruct and care for his parishioners”.

Austen is initially unenthusiastic about the movement, but I suggest that in the context of war and the overwhelming sense of danger which she felt England was facing, Evangelicalism becomes her suggested means by which the country should seek salvation. She speaks of the country “improving” in religion, which seems likely to refer to Evangelicalism in view of her newfound support for the movement. In another letter which mentions Evangelicalism (dated only two months after the letter which voices her concerns about the American war quoted above), she goes on to say that “[I] am persuaded that they who are [Evangelicals] from Reason & Feeling, must be happiest & safest”. Clearly Austen is associating Evangelicalism with security, both of the nation and the individual.

In Mansfield Park, Edmund’s beliefs and practices correspond with a Methodist/Evangelical tradition, as Mary Crawford notes. Edmund’s emphasis on local community and his commitment to residency are Evangelical principles. Turning briefly to Fanny Price, she plainly fits the mode of the Evangelical heroine, having much in common with some of the best-known examples, such as Lucilla Stanley of Hannah More’s Coelebs in Search of a Wife (1809) and Laura Montreville of Mary Brunton’s Self-Control (1811). Fanny’s association with Evangelical heroines is particularly clear in terms of her education. As Anthony Mandal argues, “accomplishments carry markedly pejorative connotations in the Evangelical text, and such a reading is also invited in Mansfield Park”. Returning to Catharine, or The Bower, this kind of education is evidently what Austen has in mind when she lampoons the intentions of Catharine’s aunt. Coelebs is even given a special mention:

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75 Austen, Letters, 280 (my emphasis).
76 Mandal, Jane Austen and the Popular Novel, 105.
All I wished for, was to breed you up virtuously; I never wanted you to play upon the Harpsichord, or draw better than any one else [...] I bought you Blair's Sermons, and Coelebs in Search of a Wife.77

*Mansfield Park* contrasts the role played within the community of an Evangelical minister (such as Edmund hopes to become) and the idle, purposeless gentry (which Tom has demonstrated himself to be). The Evangelical minister brings the various sections of the community together and sees his role as a pastor, caring for his parishioners and encouraging society as a whole to strive for moral integrity. The gentry, as represented by Tom, care nothing for the parishioners on their estate. They concentrate only on their own pleasure and amusement and have no sense of their role as a moral figurehead or educator. The novel champions the Evangelical Edmund rather than the landed Tom as the more positive representation of English masculinity. As such, the novel advocates middle-class values rather than aristocratic/gentrified ones.

If Fanny is championed as the "saviour" of *Mansfield Park* by maintaining her virtue in the face of Henry Crawford's sustained attack, she does not save the estate without assistance. The novel posits the navy and the church as two protective forces which will save Fanny's virtue and symbolically save England from foreign attack. Interestingly, salvation of the nation is connected with professional, non-property owning males. In *Mansfield Park*, the carousing of the landed gentry exposes the nation to attack, and the novel's professional classes provide defence.

Edmund and William's association with defensive forces, and the interconnection between the defences which they offer are well illustrated at the occasion of Fanny's first ball. Fanny resolves on wearing "a very pretty amber cross" (MP 230) which William has brought her from Sicily. There are several layers to the symbolism of the cross in this episode. William is unable to complement his gift with a gold chain, so Fanny is initially forced to accept a gift from Mary Crawford (or as it turns out, Henry) and is devastated when Edmund supplies her with his own gift. Luckily for Fanny, the chain supplied by the Crawfords is too large for the cross and she can wear Edmund's without guilt. As Darryl Jones points out, the cross and chain unite these two important figures in Fanny's life, Edmund and William, who can be read, in some

77 Austen, *Catharine*, 222.
ways, as essentially the same person.\textsuperscript{78} As I have argued, these individuals also embody the two “defensive” elements in the text (the church and the navy) and therefore, the gift unites these two elements and synthesises them. This synthesis is further apparent in the gift itself. William, the naval lieutenant, presents Fanny with a symbol of Christian devotion. Not only that, but the cross derives from Sicily, which was a crucial ally of Britain in the Napoleonic Wars. Pasley comments on Sicily’s strategic consequence at length. So the cross itself synthesises religion and defence. This interconnection of the two defensive elements is given an added dimension when William’s cross is paired with Edmund’s gold chain. There is great symbolic importance in the fact that the Crawfords’ chain proves useless with William’s cross. What the Crawfords stand for cannot be assimilated into the values William represents.

The occasion at which Fanny will wear this ornament is also highly significant: the ball held in her honour at Mansfield. In the context of the novel’s symbolic interest in female modesty and sexuality, this is a highly significant occasion. Fanny is being launched on the marriage market by Sir Thomas and will be particularly vulnerable to Henry’s amorous “attack”. The cross and chain then act as a kind of talisman in this dangerous situation. Fanny’s honour is the essence of the country which must be protected. Henry is the invader who wishes to take it away and the cross and chain are the joint efforts of William and Edmund, the navy and the church, to protect her from attack. In the event, their joint efforts produce a protection so strong that Fanny is able to fend off Henry at the dance and, as we see in the following quotation, she feels safe enough to don the Crawfords’ necklace too. This extract shows the assimilation and synthesis that the cross and the chain – the navy and the church – undertake in this episode. It also conveys the protective force which William and Edmund provide for Fanny, as conveyed in their gifts:

\begin{quote}
[H]aving, with delightful feelings, joined the chain and the cross, those memorials of the two most beloved of her heart, those dearest tokens so formed for each other by every thing real and imaginary – and put them round her neck, and seen and felt how full of William and Edmund they
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\textsuperscript{78} Jones, \textit{Jane Austen}, 130.
were, she was able, without an effort, to resolve on wearing Miss Crawford's necklace too. (MP 245)

**Mansfield Park's conclusions**

*Mansfield Park* fails to provide firm answers to the issues it explores in the course of the narrative. While Fanny is presented as the saviour and spiritual inheritor of Mansfield Park, the questions that the novel raises, particularly concerning the masculine authority figures, are left unanswered. Those who are seen to have endangered the estate, notably Maria Bertram (along with Mrs Norris) are expelled from Mansfield. “Where she could be placed” is the question that concerns Sir Thomas (MP 423). Eventually an establishment is formed for them “in another country” (MP 424). Austen is deliberately ambiguous: does this refer to another nation, or another county? Symbolically they equate to the same thing.

Sir Thomas’s expulsion of Maria is especially harsh, particularly when it is compared to Mr Bennet’s management of his daughter Lydia, who also transgresses sexually by eloping with Wickham. When Mr Collins suggests that Mr Bennet should refuse to accept his daughter into his house and “never admit to them in your sight, or allow their names to be mentioned in your hearing”, Mr Bennet defends his daughter: “This is his notion of Christian forgiveness!” (P&P 278). In the difference between the treatment of Lydia and Maria, we see how much more charged female sexual continence is in *Mansfield Park*, given the connections which the novel draws between female virtue and the safety of the nation.

The Grants, whose presence opened up Mansfield to the noxious influence of the Crawfords, are also driven from the estate, retreating to London as Dr Grant is offered a stall in Westminster. As the outsiders are expelled, the Bertrams close ranks. *Mansfield Park*’s final scenes focus on the local and the familial, portraying the communication between Sir Thomas in Mansfield and Fanny and Edmund in Thornton Lacey, emphasising the “domestic felicity” of those “equally formed for domestic life” (MP 433). The passage is imbued with familial language, and here there is resolution: Fanny “was indeed the daughter that [Sir Thomas] wanted” (MP 432).
This picture of domestic harmony and the portrayal of Sir Thomas as a father figure to Fanny thinly masks hypocrisies within the novel; in reality Sir Thomas has failed in his duties to his own daughter Maria. While the final chapter speaks of Sir Thomas’s “anguish” concerning “his own errors in the education of his daughters” and the bitterness with which he “deplore[s] a deficiency which he now could scarcely comprehend to have been possible” (MP 423), there is no “punishment” for Sir Thomas as there is for Maria. Considering *Mansfield Park*’s engagement with anti-Jacobin discourse and particularly the work of Hannah More, it is surprising that Sir Thomas’s serious deficiencies as a parent are glossed over. Maria is a scapegoat; the sins of her father and brother are played down but she is severely punished. Her expulsion from the family home might symbolically purge Mansfield from evil, but less is made of the fact that the danger to Mansfield was motivated by its proprietor and his son.

Neither does the ending of *Mansfield Park* answer the crisis amongst the idle, purposeless landed gentry. In fact, the novel deliberately sidesteps this point. Austen stages an accident, an illness and a sickroom conversion for Tom. However, his low profile in the final chapters of the text means that concerns raised in the novel about the suitability of such men to lead the country are not reassured. As Roger Sales argues, the fact that there is no direct representation of the converted Tom in the text suggests that the narrative is complicating any straightforwardly conservative, anti-Jacobin tale which supports the rights of eldest sons. The long period in which he is tucked away in a sick room seems to deliberately marginalise him:

The silence about Tom’s return to the family circle may in the end be more significant than the clean bill of health that is eventually written out for him in the resolution [...] The prodigal son eventually returns and yet no fatted calves are killed for him. The text appears to take pleasure in locking him away in the sick-room for as long as possible.

The conclusion of the text marginalises Tom and focuses on Fanny, who is presented as the saviour and spiritual inheritor of *Mansfield Park*. However this emphasis on domesticity disguises contradictions in the final tableaux of Mansfield’s happy

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family. Mansfield’s colonial dimension, for example, has not disappeared; the novel is still geographically problematic. The conclusion focuses on the local and the domestic without acknowledging its dependence on the global and colonial. There is nothing in the novel to indicate that Sir Thomas relinquishes his Antigua estates, or that the colonial sphere ceases to be a problematic, fundamentally uncontrollable space. *Mansfield Park* enacts a crisis in English masculinity, one that is associated with the novel’s colonial spaces as well as the landed estate. This crisis is connected to the space of Napoleonic France, which is alluded to in the novel in a number of ways. Those entrusted with the guardianship of estates are proven to be totally unworthy in this novel, placing not only their families, but symbolically the nation at risk.
Chapter four

*Emma*: Mr Knightley and model English masculinity

*Emma* was published in 1815, just a year after *Mansfield Park*, and the concerns about the purpose and behaviour of the landed gentry which troubled Austen in that novel are present in *Emma* also. In the previous chapter, I argued that *Mansfield Park* dramatises a crisis in English masculinity, particularly concerning the firstborn, estate-inheriting sons of the landed gentry. *Emma* gives us the character of Frank Churchill, heir-in-waiting to a landed estate. Like Tom Bertram, Frank leads a leisured existence. However *Emma* presents us with a character type that is noticeably lacking in *Mansfield Park*, a positive exemplification of landed masculinity, in Mr George Knightley. In Mr Knightley Austen creates a hero who embodies values that are appropriate to England’s culture and heritage. This is undoubtedly Austen’s most patriotic novel and the English values personified by Mr Knightley are complemented by Austen’s description of his estate. *Emma*’s set piece in Donwell Abbey is a celebration of English landscape and culture, a hymn to “English verdure, English culture, English comfort” (E 176).

In this chapter I consider the sense in which *Emma* champions a particular kind of English masculinity. I focus on the character of Mr Knightley, arguing that his status as a particularly English hero is constructed in the context of a variety of spaces featured in the novel. Mr Knightley is established as an exemplary English gentleman in opposition to the aristocratic French culture which is associated with Frank Churchill. Taking my cue from arguments made by critics such as Ward Hellstrom, Roger Sales and Brian Southam, I suggest that Austen sets up dialectic between Frank and Mr Knightley, who become representative of continental France and native England respectively. By using Frank’s behaviour as a foil for Knightley, Austen can demonstrate what constitutes the behaviour and attitudes of an ideal English landed gentleman.

Austen illustrates Knightley’s character and role as a landed gentleman via his estate, just as with Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. I will examine the famous Donwell Abbey scene and demonstrate how both Knightley’s masculinity and his position within society are conveyed through his estate. Knightley’s relationship with his
estate marks a departure from the relationship established between Darcy and Pemberley. For Knightley, the estate functions as a place of work, and I intend to explore the ways in which Austen’s vision of an idealised landed masculinity changes between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*.

The estate is ideologically charged in *Emma*. Donwell Abbey stands for England more clearly than any of the other landed estates featured in Austen’s work. In this chapter I will consider Donwell Abbey both as the residence for the Knightley family and as a representation of England. In the course of the novel, Mr Knightley is associated with three potential marriage partners, Jane Fairfax, Harriet Smith and Emma Woodhouse. I argue that each of these potential unions has symbolic implications for national or domestic boundaries within the novel. Jane is associated with the Celtic fringe. In considering a union between Jane and the firmly English Mr Knightley, *Emma* flirts with the possibility of becoming a British marriage plot novel, a genre popular in the decades following the Act of Union which created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801. A marriage between Mr Knightley and the illegitimate Harriet Smith has implications for the spotless lineage of the Knightley family. This match can be read as a narrative of infiltration in which the domestic boundaries of Donwell Abbey and the Knightley family are potentially attacked by Harriet’s unknown ancestry. Finally a marriage between Mr Knightley and Emma can be understood in opposition to both these choices. Mr Knightley and Emma constitute an *English* marriage plot, rather than a British one, uniting differing English cultures and classes. Emma belongs to a family which has already been accepted and integrated into the Knightley clan. This marriage can be read as endogamous, perhaps slightly incestuous; it is a very different prospect to a marriage between Mr Knightley and Harriet Smith, whose provenance is totally unknown.

*Emma’s geographical world*

In terms of its physical settings, *Emma* is Austen’s most straightforward novel. At its centre is Highbury, the “large and populous village almost amounting to a town” (E 7) in Surrey, sixteen miles from London. In the course of the action the setting never ventures farther from Highbury than the seven miles to neighbouring Box Hill. The village of Highbury occupies a similar role to that of the Mansfield estate in the earlier novel. There is a division in both novels between characters who are natives of
the village/estate and those who are interlopers. Mr Woodhouse, Mr Knightley and Emma, like the Bertram family, are native inhabitants whereas Frank Churchill, Jane Fairfax, Augusta Hawkins are interlopers. However unlike the Crawfords in *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*’s interlopers have legitimate ties with Highbury through birth and marriage as well as associations with the world beyond.

There is a particularly static quality about the natives of Highbury and this is most apparent in the Woodhouse family. Despite it only being a journey of seven miles, twenty-one-year-old Emma has never been to Box Hill before and has never seen the sea. The sixteen mile trip to London to visit her sister seems an impossible journey. Mr Woodhouse is even more rooted to the spot, being unable even to venture beyond the walls of his own home: “Her father never went beyond the shrubbery, where two divisions of the grounds sufficed him for his long walk, or his short, as the year varied” (E 21). A comically large proportion of the text is taken up with his fretful musings on the logistics of leaving the house and the means of transport from one location to another. However, via its interloping characters, the novel engages with a range of off-stage settings, including Bath (where Mr Elton meets his wife Augusta), Bristol (Augusta’s hometown), Weymouth (a favourite haunt of Frank Churchill, and where Frank and Jane meet and become engaged), Yorkshire (where the Churchill estates, which Frank will inherit, are situated), and London (where Isabella and John Knightley are based and where Frank travels to get a haircut). The interlopers, hailing from all parts of England are much more active and worldly. Augusta Hawkins, for instance, as the daughter of a Bristol merchant, is connected to the world beyond England and the wider sphere of empire. Her language, like the Crawfords’ in *Mansfield Park*, is peppered with foreign words and phrases, although Augusta’s preference is for Italian rather than French (perhaps because, in this novel, symbolic association with France is reserved for Frank Churchill). References to her “caro sposo” recur through the novel and it is she who suggests dining “al fresco” in the scene set in Donwell Abbey.

*Emma* has the distinction of being the only Austen novel to engage with the Celtic fringe as a location (albeit off-stage), being the home of Mr and Mrs Dixon, friends of Jane Fairfax. Jane returns to her native Highbury because the Campbells, who have been Jane’s unofficial guardians since the death of her parents, go to visit Mrs Dixon,
their daughter, in Ireland. Jane declines to accompany them despite her obvious enthusiasm for that country. A connection with Scotland is embedded in Jane’s association with Ireland via the Dixons and the Campbells. Campbell is an unambiguously Scottish name. Jane Fairfax, we will see, can be read in terms of her symbolic links to the Celtic fringe, a location of some importance to England in the early part of the nineteenth century, the individual nations of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales having been subsumed into one identity, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in 1801. Another space with which the novel engages implicitly is France, via Frank Churchill who is geographically connected with that country through his association with Weymouth. Weymouth became connected with French émigrés who fled to England during the Revolution and continued their aristocratic, luxurious lifestyles in these coastal watering holes. Frank is also associated with France by more symbolic means, his name, his language and his foppish, degenerate aristocratic behaviour.

Natives and Interlopers in *Emma*

*Emma* ends with the marriage of Emma and Mr Knightley, native inhabitants of Highbury. I consider how the interloping characters, Frank Churchill, Jane Fairfax and Augusta Hawkins, disrupt the social hierarchies of Highbury society and, in the case of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax, complicate the novel’s marriage plots. Like the Crawfords in *Mansfield Park*, they offer alternative possibilities to a union between Emma and Mr Knightley.

Interestingly, both Jane and Frank have prior connections with Highbury. Austen is keen to establish that Jane, “[b]y birth [...] belonged to Highbury” (E 128). Frank’s father is a “native” and champions his son as one of Highbury’s own. “[H]is fond report of him as a very fine young man had made Highbury feel a sort of pride in him too. He was looked on as sufficiently belonging to the place to make his merits and prospects a kind of common concern” (E 14). That said, their actions rather than their words suggest that Jane and Frank have consciously rejected their Highbury identities in favour of the Celtic fringe and Yorkshire respectively. Frank chooses to assume the name of Churchill rather than Weston and fails to find the time to visit his father. Similarly, Jane seems uninterested in associating with her Highbury relatives and
admits to John Knightley that her closest friends lie outside the area, which is why she treasures her correspondence:

I can easily believe that letters are very little to you, much less than to me, but it is not your being ten years older than myself which makes the difference, it is not age, but situation. You have every body dearest to you always at hand, I, probably, never shall again. (E 230)

Roger Sales highlights the connection between post offices (particularly Jane Fairfax’s daily pilgrimage to the branch in Highbury) and news from the war effort and the wider world. “During the Napoleonic Wars people who lived away from the main coaching routes might walk to the post office for news of battles and national politics, as details were often displayed there”.¹ Sales suggests that Frank’s letters can be seen to be “playing the part of a national newspaper”² within the text of *Emma*. The post office in Highbury demonstrates how a small English village can exist within a nexus of national and global locations. The post office provides Highbury inhabitants with war news from the continent and the colonies, or personal communication from the Celtic fringe areas of the recently created Union of Great Britain and Ireland. England, the reader is reminded, exists within wider spaces. Even those who do not venture beyond Highbury can have connections with locations across the globe. As Ward Hellstrom states in his essay ‘Francophobia in *Emma*’, “the world of *Emma* is considerably larger than has been assumed”.³

**Churchill versus Knightley: Geography and masculinity in *Emma***

*Emma*’s hero, Mr Knightley, is one of Highbury’s “natives”. Knightley’s character is constructed in the context of his local environment, specifically his landed estate, Donwell Abbey, but he is also considered within a framework of national and global spaces. Austen constructs Knightley’s character in opposition to a version of French masculinity while simultaneously using the character to consider questions about England’s position within the United Kingdom.

Austen’s primary means of establishing Mr Knightley as a positive exemplification of English masculinity in *Emma* is by comparing him to Frank Churchill. They are the two contenders for Emma’s hand in marriage, and as Alistair Duckworth begins to suggest, they counter and oppose each other on almost every level:

From Churchill’s arrival until the end of the novel Emma is faced with the choice of two directions; Churchill and Knightley, and the choice she comes to from the depths of her true self is as crucial as that made by Edmund Bertram in *Mansfield Park* when faced with the matrimonial possibilities of Mary Crawford and Fanny Price. Like Edmund, Emma in the end chooses society rather than self, an inherited order rather than a spontaneous and improvised existence.

Further to Duckworth, I would suggest that in choosing between Mr Knightley and Churchill, Emma is also making a decision between two very different types of masculinity. These different versions of masculinity are connected to two different geographies. If Knightley represents an English masculinity that is firmly centred in his estate and the immediate environs of Highbury, Frank represents “anti-England”. He is associated with a variety of places that lie outside of Austen’s geographically confined version of England. Most pertinently to this debate, Frank expresses anti-English sentiment and is symbolically connected with France.

Frank lives in Yorkshire. His mother was “Miss Churchill, of a great Yorkshire family” (E 12) and after her death, Frank’s father gives his son over to the care of his grandparents: “the child was given up to the care and wealth of the Churchills” (E 13). Frank becomes even more closely connected with this county by adopting his mother’s name and assuming the role of heir to these estates: “[...] for as to Frank, it was more than being tacitly brought up as his uncle’s heir, it had become so avowed an adoption as to have him assume the name of Churchill on coming of age” (E 14). Yorkshire lies firmly outside Austen’s geographical universe. In all her published work she sets no on-stage action further north than Derbyshire, the location of Darcy’s Pemberley estate (see appendix I for a map of the settings of Austen’s novels). Evidence from Austen’s letters suggests that the far north of England

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remained an unknown and “foreign” place for her. In Austen’s only known piece of literary advice, a letter to her niece Anna Austen, she advises her to remove a character called Egerton geographically from the action of the novel in order to create a sense of mystery around him. Austen recommends possible locations to which he might disappear. In doing so she uses northern England and Scotland interchangeably, because, it seems, both are sufficiently geographically removed from her conception of England and “foreign” enough for the purpose:

What can you do with Egerton to increase the interest for him? [...] something to [take] him mysteriously away & then heard of at York or Edinburgh – in an old great Coat.5

Moreover, one can detect an element of anti-Englishness in Frank’s character. When viewing paintings of St. Mark’s Place, Venice and “Swisserland” at Donwell Abbey he declares his desire to get out of the country. “I feel a strong persuasion, this morning, that I shall soon be abroad. I ought to travel. I am tired of doing nothing”, he says, concluding “I am sick of England – and would leave it to-morrow if I could” (E 287). Frank is also associated with dangerous cultural influences of the European continent. In an impromptu dance at the Coles’s, Frank partners Emma in the waltz:

Mrs Weston, capital in her country-dances, was seated, and beginning an irresistible waltz; and Frank Churchill, coming up with most becoming gallantry to Emma, had secured her hand, and led her up to the top. (E 180)

As Adela Pinch in her notes to the Oxford edition points out, the waltz had been introduced from France and Germany in the early 1800s and was a controversial addition to English society, as a result of the shocking intimacy between couples (E 398).

In a novel centred around the static lifestyle of the Woodhouses, who barely venture beyond the limited environs of Highbury, Frank’s mobility is striking in comparison. He is connected with numerous locations in the novel: Yorkshire, London, Highbury and Weymouth, and he moves between them with great energy and speed. He has a particular association with the coast and his connections with Weymouth are dwelt

upon. Knightley remarks scathingly, “we hear of him for ever at some watering place or other”. Weymouth is specifically mentioned – “a little while ago he was at Weymouth” (E 115) – and it is here that a significant plot development takes place, the meeting of Frank and Jane and their subsequent betrothal. As Mrs Weston relates, “[t]here has been a solemn engagement between them since October – formed at Weymouth, and kept a secret from everybody” (E 311). As Roger Sales suggests, Knightley insinuates that there is something fundamentally “unEnglish” about Frank’s frequenting of coastal resorts such as Weymouth. Watering places were amongst the favoured refuges for French émigrés during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Mr Knightley, Sales argues, believes that Frank’s way of life resembles that of a French aristocrat rather than one appropriate for an English gentleman.

Frank and France

Frank is geographically associated with France via Weymouth. Ward Hellstrom, in his influential reading ‘Francophobia in Emma’, argues that Austen also connects Frank with France by means of symbolic language. Certainly, his Christian name is a paronym of the country, and though his surname is emphatically English, it is an assumed name – his original being Weston. Hellstrom’s argument pays particular attention to Frank’s association with the word “amiable”. Knightley objects to Emma’s description of Frank as “an amiable young man” (E 117), arguing that a true understanding of the English meaning of the word only proves how “unEnglish” Frank’s character is:

No, Emma, your amiable young man can be amiable only in French, not in English. He may be very ‘aimable’, have very good manners and be very agreeable; but he can have no English delicacy towards the feelings of other people: nothing really amiable about him. (E 118)

As Hellstrom notes, when discussing Frank, Mr Knightley tends to use a vocabulary of words derived from French, which is demonstrated in his ironic description of him as a “gallant young man” and his remark that “[t]here is one thing, Emma, which a man can always do, if he chuses, and that is his duty; not by maneuvering and finessing, but by vigor and resolution” (E 178).

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6 Sales, Representations of Regency England, 145.
Hellstrom’s argument is that *Emma* contrasts the French Frank with the English Knightley:

Churchill embodies the depravity of France and Knightley the goodness of England. The names of both characters suggest their national affinities. Knightley is clearly the English knight, whose real appreciation for the English yeoman Robert Martin reminds us of the knight and the yeoman in the *Canterbury Tales*. But more particularly he is associated with a specific knight – Saint George.\(^7\)

In order to explore the nature of Knightley’s English masculinity, the text makes comparisons between him and the symbolically French Frank Churchill. Further, Knightley’s name associates him with an Anglo-Saxon masculinity. The cult of St George was established in the ninth and tenth centuries, prior to the Norman Conquest. The word knight derives from the old English word cniht. In his work *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History* 1740-1830, Gerald Newman argues that from the 1760s into the early nineteenth century, the English demonstrated a new interest in national origins which became historiographical in character. As he states: “Every nationalist moment, according to the experts, involves a search for the ‘essence and inner virtue of the community’ – a quest, that is, of the National identity”.\(^8\)

As Newman demonstrates, the English found this by casting back to the era before the Norman invasion to their Saxon forefathers. The Saxons were the obvious choice to embody the essence of Englishness for a people anxious to disconnect themselves from associations with the French, with whom they spent most of the long eighteenth century at war:

[The] Saxon racial myth figured importantly in the expansion of the nationalist ideology. It provided a broad bottom on which to build the sense of nationality and citizenship.\(^9\)

\(^7\) Hellstrom, ‘Francophobia in Emma’, 611.
Newman notes that popular figures of folklore and caricature, which were associated with English identity, such as Robin Hood and John Bull, were given specifically Saxon provenance at this time and that King Alfred was celebrated as a heroic English law maker and just king. I suggest that Austen’s portrait of George Knightley demonstrates something similar. Knightley’s predecessor in Austen’s writings as exemplar of landed masculine authority is Fitzwilliam Darcy, who, along with his aunt Lady Catherine De Bourgh, is of unambiguously Norman stock. Knightley’s overtly symbolic name seems designed to connect him with an older and truer essence of English identity.

Frank and Knightley’s masculinity, then, is constructed in relation to different geographical spaces, France and England. In the previous chapter I suggested that through the character of Tom Bertram, Mansfield Park explores fears surrounding the influence of French manners and customs on idle English gentlemen. In Emma, Frank Churchill’s geographical and symbolic associations with France make these connections between English masculinity and French influence even more explicit than in Mansfield Park. Frank is not presented as a dangerous foreign intruder like Henry Crawford; rather, he exemplifies English masculinity that has been infected by French culture.

The feminine Frank and the masculine Knightley

Frank’s behaviour, lifestyle and mannerisms connect him to the idle and effeminate French aristocracy. His obsession with his personal appearance and his devotion to leisure and enjoyment rather than work has the effect of feminising him in the text. Highlighting Frank’s effeminacy serves to enhance Mr Knightley’s masculinity in the text as Frank’s behaviour acts as a foil for Knightley. Roger Sales suggests that Frank is Austen’s best rendition of the Regency dandy and that this dandyism manifests itself in Frank’s interest in clothes and grooming. As I have argued throughout this thesis, Austen often uses clothes to feminise her male characters; Henry Tilney’s masculinity, for instance, is mildly questioned by his knowledge of the quality and durability of muslins. Tom Bertram’s willingness to dress up as the cottager’s wife, and Mr Rushworth’s attachment to his pink satin cloak in the theatricals episode of Mansfield Park, cast doubts upon their sexuality. Frank’s association with clothing

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10 Sales, Representations of Regency England, 144.
does not have the same overtones that we see in *Mansfield Park*, but his interest in consumerism and fashion, demonstrated by his excursion to Mrs Ford’s shop to purchase a pair of gloves and the time devoted to the decision between “Man’s Beavers” and “York Tan”, suggests a shallow, dandified masculinity.

Above all Frank’s masculinity is comprehensively undermined by his association with hair and hairdressing. At a party at the Coles’s, Frank takes an exaggerated and wholly inappropriate interest in Jane Fairfax’s coiffure, a subject which should fall outside of the range of appropriate topics of conversation for a young man like Frank, and which he can only describe in foreign terms: “Miss Fairfax has done her hair in so odd a way – so very odd a way – that I cannot keep my eyes from her. I never saw any thing so outré! – Those curls – This must be a fancy of her own. I see nobody else looking like her! – I must go and ask her whether it is an Irish fashion” (E 174).

Frank’s association with his own hair undermines his masculinity further. One of Frank’s more outrageous acts is to travel to London for a haircut:

Emma’s very good opinion of Frank Churchill was a little shaken the following day, by hearing that he was gone off to London, merely to have his hair cut. A sudden freak seemed to have seized him at breakfast, and he had sent for a chaise and set off, intending to return to dinner, but with no more important view that appeared than having his hair cut. (E 161)

It is not certain that Frank’s trip to London is entirely motivated by a haircut, as the purpose of the London trip may have been to secretly purchase a piano as a gift for Jane Fairfax, so he may have been using the haircut as an alibi. However, as Darryl Jones suggests, “the point is that this is the kind of thing Frank might plausibly do”.11 It is entirely in keeping with his character to undertake such a long journey for such a frivolous reason. Roger Sales argues that Frank establishes himself as a dandy by the way in which he justifies the action rather than the action itself. “I have no pleasure in seeing my friends, unless I can believe myself fit to be seen”, Frank asserts (E 174). For Sales, this is “the kind of elegant, polished one-liner that was cultivated by Beau Brummell”.12

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The citizens of Highbury cannot condone Frank's frippery. Even Emma, Frank's champion in the text, disapproves of his actions, seeing "an air of foppery and nonsense in it which she could not approve" (E 161). However Austen states that the residents of Highbury judge Frank very gently, implying that his favourable appearance and pretty manners create goodwill towards him; "liberal allowances were made for the little excesses of such a handsome young man – one who smiled so often and bowed so well" (E 162). This comment is very significant in the light of Austen's interest in constructing a positive model of English masculinity in *Emma*. It suggests that superficial qualities such as appearance and manners are valued too highly by the community, who are distracted by their charm, instead of privileging masculine attributes that are more concrete, useful and genuinely worthy.

Knightley is not so easily distracted by Frank's manners; the trip confirms his perception of Frank as shallow and lacking in substance. "Hum! Just the trifling, silly fellow I took him for" (E 162). Knightley, by contrast, takes virtually no interest in his attire or his hair; the suggestion in the text is that he has little time for such matters, being occupied by the administration of his estate, the business of Highbury and may be even the nation. It is significant that Knightley is reading a newspaper when he learns of Frank's trip to London and makes the remark quoted above. It is Knightley who suggests that the components of Frank's character which are praised by the people of Highbury are superficial and exterior: "I should be as ready to acknowledge his merits as any other man; but I hear of none, except what are merely personal; that he is well grown and good-looking, with smooth, plausible manners" (E 118).

What should be Frank's masculine merits all concern his outward appearance. The text suggests that style, etiquette and appearance are qualities appropriate to the aristocratic, French masculinity with which Frank is associated in the text. English masculinity, in the form of Mr Knightley, is based on attributes that are internal, more profound and more genuinely worthy as we shall see.

**Knightley the professional farmer and Frank the leisured gentleman**

A vital difference between Frank and Mr Knightley is their attitudes towards work and leisure. Frank is heir-in-waiting to a landed estate. He has no profession to
occupy him, and there is no indication that he plays any role in administering the Yorkshire estates. Austen gives the impression that Frank has ample leisure, demonstrated by the amount of time he is able to spend in coastal watering holes. Mr Knightley is unimpressed by the choices Frank has made, both in terms of how he spends his time and the places that he visits. When Frank’s duty to his father and his new wife is called into question, Emma argues that Frank finds it difficult to come to Highbury because of the demands the Churchills make on his time. Knightley points out that he is able to visit Weymouth whenever it suits him:

He cannot want money – he cannot want leisure. We know, on the contrary, that he has so much of both, that he is glad to get rid of them at the idliest haunts in the kingdom. (E 115)

I have already considered the geographical implications of Weymouth as a gathering place for French émigrés. In *Emma* coastal resorts are associated with the idle heirs of landed estates, who have no profession and nothing better to do than fritter their time away by gambling, drinking and carousing. By placing Frank in this space, Austen’s suggestion is that young heirs lead a similarly decadent lifestyle to the French aristocracy, contributing nothing useful to society and wasting time and resources in the pursuit of pleasure.

In Richard Allestree’s work, *The Gentleman’s Calling*, he recognises idleness as a problem for the contemporary gentleman:

GENTILITY has long since confuted Job’s aphorism, Man is born to labour; and instead thereof, has pronounced to its clients the Rich man’s Requiem, Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.¹³

Allestree maintains that the gentleman must be vigilant in putting his time to good use and devote the majority of it to virtuous works: “there remains only a third end imaginable, and that is the doing good; (for as for Sports and Pastimes, the best of them come so near to Idleness, and the worst of them to Vice, that as the one is not to be allowed any, so the other no considerable part of their Time).”¹⁴

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According to Allestree, to waste time on games and frivolities infantilises the subject and undermines his masculinity. “But whatever other Pastimes of this nature any Man suffers to usurp his time, he does in it extremely reproach himself, tacitly confesses, that he is unfit for generous and manly employments and calls himself Child, while he thus trifles and plays with his days”. This remark has great resonance for Frank Churchill, who is specifically associated with game-playing in *Emma*. Both *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* highlight the dangers inherent in allowing scions to lead such idle and purposeless existences. It is made clear in *Mansfield Park* that Tom Bertram’s boredom and idleness are what makes *Lovers’ Vows* so alluring.

In a symbolic sense, this allows dangerous influences from the continent to “invade” and corrupt the estate. Ultimately, idleness undermines masculinity as Tom allows “games” and “play” to distract him from his role as protector and guardian of the estate (in his father’s absence). Frank is not currently in charge of his estates, but the lifestyle he follows seems poor training for the role that he will eventually occupy.

In *Mansfield Park*, the theatricals episode is a symbolic depiction of invasion, conveyed via the damage done to the internal architecture and furniture of the house. Similar considerations are in evidence in *Emma*, when Frank organises a ball at the Crown Inn. The inn’s name can be read as a signifier of the state. The word crown indicates the head of state and “encourages Condition-of-England interpretations”, in the words of Sales.

As with the theatricals episode, much emphasis is placed on the function of the rooms and buildings involved. It had “been built many years ago for a ball-room, and while the neighbourhood had been in a particularly populous, dancing state, had been occasionally used as such; – but such brilliant days had long passed away” (E 155). The inn is currently used for more practical affairs, being the place where the local magistrates, the “gentlemen and half gentlemen” who constitute the ruling body of Highbury, meet to discuss parish business. England is occupied with serious matters; frivolous occupations, such as dancing, have been supplanted by the graver business of ruling the country in a time of war. Read in this way, Frank’s danger to Highbury and the nation becomes apparent – his aim is to override utility in favour of leisure: “They ought to have balls there at least every fortnight through the winter. Why had not Miss Woodhouse revived the former good old days of the

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15 Allestree, *Gentleman’s Calling*, 100.
room?” (E 155) Despite its original purpose, the venue is not now suitable for dancing: “At the time of the ball-room’s being built, suppers had not been in question; and a small card-room adjoining, was the only addition”. Another room is available for supper, but it is situated at the other end of the house, and involves going through “a long and awkward passage” (E 199). Like Tom in *Mansfield Park*, Frank overhauls the structures used for good governance in his pursuit of leisure.

Returning to Mr Knightley, Austen suggests that a strong work ethic is a key characteristic of the ideal English male. If Frank Churchill and Tom Bertram demonstrate how idle and dissipated the life of the landed gentry can be, Mr Knightley shows how the role can be interpreted very differently, with industry and utility at its heart. While Knightley’s work ethic as an estate owner is obvious in comparison to Frank Churchill and Tom Bertram, it is necessary to read Mr Knightley in comparison to Mr Darcy, Austen’s previous manifestation of an exemplary landowner, in order to demonstrate how Austen’s vision of model landownership has changed between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. Darcy’s style of landownership is much less practical. He is non-interventionist. Knightley as landlord encompasses the role of gentleman farmer and he is portrayed as being heavily involved in the business affairs and the physical labour of the estate. We see Knightley immersed in the mundane, physical tasks associated with the estate in a way that is inconceivable for Darcy.

Alistair Duckworth suggests that “what Darcy may be reliably be imagined to do, Knightley is constantly described as doing”.17 I would argue that it is difficult to imagine Darcy undertaking some of the actions which we observe in Knightley. I suggest that Darcy’s style of landownership is much less practical than Knightley’s. For instance, Knightley supplies the Bateses with good English apples from his “liberal supply”: “He sends us a sack every year; and certainly there never was such a keeping apple anywhere as one of his trees” (E 187). This is a world away from Darcy’s idea of patronage, which is characterised by its aloofness (where Knightley might get his hands dirty, help from Darcy might come in the form of the impersonal donation of money); or indeed from the employment Darcy considers fitting for an aristocrat: the genteel development of his library, the acquiring of art and the upkeep

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17 Duckworth, *Improvement of the Estate*, 156.
of furniture. The idea of Darcy offering apples throughout his parish is unthinkable. As Margaret Kirkham points out, Knightley dons the “thick leather gaiters of a working farmer” and discusses the details of farming with his brother John: “[t]he plan of a drain, the change of a fence, the felling of a tree and the destination of every acre for wheat, turnips or spring corn, was entered into with as much equality of interest by John, as his cooler manners rendered possible” (E 80). Darcy is the benefactor rather than the manager of his estate; unlike Knightley he is never portrayed as working on accounts or the business aspects of landowning.

In this way, Knightley seems to be a response to fears about the usefulness of the landed gentry, fears explored via the characters of Tom Bertram and Frank Churchill. Duckworth states that Knightley “is another of Jane Austen’s ‘professionals’, and the most convincing of them”. Considering Knightley as a “professional” landlord seems an accurate reflection of the seriousness and purpose he brings to the task of landownership. He sees his role as encompassing the roles of administrator and professional farmer in a way that Darcy does not. Constantly associated with activity and movement in the text, Knightley’s days are as full of business as his lawyer brother. If Frank’s ample leisure time and the dangerous games and riddles he indulges in to fill it associate him with the useless French aristocracy, Knightley demonstrates how a strong work ethic can be a defining component of English masculinity.

**English masculinity and class in *Emma***

Austen draws further comparisons between Mr Knightley and Frank Churchill in terms of class. Ostensibly, both men belong to the same class – being either a proprietor of an estate or heir to one, but as Margaret Kirkham notes, Knightley shows great affinity with the middle classes. In Kirkham’s words, he prefers the society of his “solid bourgeois neighbours, the Coles, Mr Perry and even Mrs Goddard, rather than anything ‘higher’”. Frank’s connections with the Churchills, that “great Yorkshire family” associate him with more exalted ranks of society.

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19 Duckworth, *Improvement of the Estate*, 156.
Mr Knightley demonstrates how Austen’s version of English masculinity has become more associated with middle-class values. Mr Knightley’s Francophobia serves to distance himself from the aristocracy and ally him with the middle classes of England. The Norman Conquest had established a connection between the English nobility and France that persisted until the French Revolution and, as Newman outlines, caused friction between the aristocracy and the middle classes for much of the eighteenth century. Association with French culture was the preserve of the leisured elite, and during the course of the eighteenth century, Francophobia became increasingly the preserve of the middle and lower classes. The Loiterer, the periodical edited by James Austen when at Oxford, published an essay entitled National Difference of Character between the French and English which comments upon the class-based nature of the conflict between the nations:

But amongst the middling and lower orders, which comprehends three-fourths of both nations, it [Francophobia] rages to this moment with as much violence as ever; and two Indian chieftains, whose ancestors have for ages past alternatively feasted on each other’s blood, scarce hate more cordially and more mutually, than an English Countryman and a French peasant.  

In Mr Knightley, Austen addresses the problems caused by the influence of French aristocracy on the landed English gentry, problems which – as we have seen in chapter three – constitute a crisis in masculinity in Mansfield Park. In championing a practical, utilitarian and more middle-class masculinity, Emma demotes genteel attributes which Austen advocated in her earlier novels. As I have argued, Austen presents Frank Churchill’s manners and appearance as superficial attributes. The symbolism of handwriting, for example, has developed from earlier novels. In Pride and Prejudice, Mr Darcy’s fine script is symbolic of a literate and sophisticated masculinity. In Emma, Emma admires Frank Churchill’s handwriting, declaring that he “writes one of the best gentlemen’s hands I ever saw” (E 233). For Knightley however, beautiful handwriting is not a positive male attribute – Frank’s pretty hand is a useless adornment that only feminises him; “I do not admire it […] it is too small – wants strength. It is like a woman’s writing” (E 233).

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21 The Loiterer, a Periodical Work, first Published at Oxford in the years 1789 and 1790, ed. James Austen (Dublin: P. Byrne & W. Jones, 1792), 56.
*Emma* portrays a society in which literacy and fluency in prose is not a skill confined to the upper levels of the gentry. A number of families are rising in gentility, from the upwardly mobile Coles to the apothecary Dr Perry. This category could also include Knightley’s employees, William Larkin, his indispensable farm manager, and Robert Martin, the young tenant farmer of Mill farm on Knightley’s estate. In her characterisation of Martin, Austen demonstrates that literacy is not the preserve of the gentry. Martin, though a practical farmer, is cultured and well read, as Harriet recounts:

> He reads the Agricultural Reports and some other books, that lay in one of the window seats – but he reads all them to himself. But sometimes of an evening, before we went to cards, he would read something aloud out of the Elegant Extracts – very entertaining. And I know he has read the Vicar of Wakefield. (E 23)

Ironically Robert Martin is probably better read than Emma herself, who is especially scathing about his class. She is later forced to admit that his letter writing skills belie his station:

> The style of the letter was much above her expectation. There were not merely no grammatical errors, but as a composition it would not have disgraced a gentleman; the language, though plain, was strong and unaffected, and the sentiments it conveyed very much to the credit of the writer. It was short, but expressed good sense, warm attachment, liberality, propriety, even delicacy of feeling. (E 40)

By confusing class boundaries, Robert Martin raises questions about English masculinity. The attributes of gentlemen such as Frank Churchill, whose masculinity is constructed around appearance, manners and deportment, are somewhat devalued when men like Robert Martin can combine some degree of gentility of manner with industriousness and utility within society.

This association with middle-class values raises questions about the degree of difference that exists between characters like Robert Martin or William Larkin and Mr Knightley, a gentleman who is prepared to roll up his sleeves. If Knightley has as much to do with the physical running of the estate as Larkin and Martin, and Robert
Martin is educated and literate, then what is the real difference between these men? The consequence of associating English masculinity more closely with the middle classes in *Emma* is that the boundaries between classes can become blurred, and this theme is explored within the text. Mrs Elton’s first reaction to Mr Knightley even confuses his rank. Emma is outraged that Mrs Elton must “discover” Mr Knightley’s rank subsequently; to Emma his gentleman status is self-evident: “[...] and discover that he is a gentleman! A little upstart, vulgar being [...] Actually to discover that Mr Knightley is a gentleman!” (E 218). While this implies a great deal about Mrs Elton, the fact that she casts some doubt over Mr Knightley’s genteel status is also significant. She could not, one surmises, have made the same mistake about Mr Darcy. The novel’s rather fierce insistence, particularly at its conclusion, on the difference in rank between Mr Knightley and Robert Martin (and its implications for Emma and Harriet’s friendship: “the intimacy between her and Emma must sink; their friendship must change into a calmer sort of good-will” (E 379)) protests too much in the light of the similarities between them explored throughout the narrative.

**Male and female power and the estate in *Emma***

At the start of this chapter I suggested that Knightley’s masculinity is constructed in terms of a number of spaces within the novel. Having considered the sense in which his English credentials are established in relation to Frank Churchill’s French-influenced masculinity, I now turn to the importance of the landed estate as a space to explore Knightley’s character. This chapter has already indicated the differences between Knightley’s style of estate ownership and Darcy’s. Despite the differences in the styles of landowning, the estate is just as important to Knightley’s masculine heroic status as it was to Darcy’s. Ownership of the estate distinguishes Knightley from Robert Martin and William Larkin. More importantly, the estate is crucial to Knightley’s desirability in Emma’s eyes.

The range of female empowerment depicted in *Emma* makes it unique in the Austen canon. While the immensely dominant and dictatorial Mrs Churchill is a familiar character type from *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Fairfax is a new development for Austen, the only one of her female characters to consider the (admittedly unhappy) prospect of working for money. Above all, Emma is unique amongst Austen’s heroines as she is in possession of a sizeable fortune of her own.
She is the only one of Austen’s heroines who does not need to marry as she is financially independent.

*Emma* can be read in conjunction with a number of novels which feature authoritative, autonomous and most particularly, sexually formidable women. In Fanny Burney’s *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties*, published in 1814, the weak and passive Albert Harleigh is matched with the radical, Jacobin, and sexually aggressive Elinor, a melodramatic heroine who is the opposite of all that is sweet, submissive and feminine. This novel also engages with the possibility of female employment, in the character of Juliet, who works as a music teacher, a seamstress and toys with the possibility of becoming an actress.

Obviously female authority in *Emma* does not take quite the same form, but readings of the novel have suggested that Austen engages with forms of female sexuality that are even more radical than Elinor’s predatory version. Critics have suggested that Emma sexually desires Harriet instead. Certainly, her appreciation of Harriet’s beauty, the type Emma “particularly admired” (E 19), is noted very clearly by Austen. It has been suggested that the adjectives which Austen uses to describe Emma – “handsome, clever and rich” (E 5) – have masculine connotations. With her confidence, slightly masculine edge and most importantly, her financial autonomy, Emma is certainly the most mannish of Austen’s heroines. An alternative reality is embedded within *Emma*, that instead of Emma, Harriet and Jane pairing off with Mr Knightley, Robert Martin and Frank Churchill respectively, Emma partners Harriet and provides for her financially, while Jane, being out of favour with Emma, becomes a governess, thus rendering all three young women unconstrained by dependency on the male.

Knightley’s estate becomes crucial to his desirability in the eyes of the novel’s most eligible female. Plainly Emma has no financial motivation to marry. Early in the novel she tells Harriet that she has “very little intention of ever marrying at all” (E 70). As Emma outlines, the factors which motivate other women to marry do not apply to her: “I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry […] Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want” (E 70). However in the course of the novel Emma finds that consequence is in fact something she might come to lack in the absence of a well-chosen marriage.
The novel demonstrates how Knightley’s estate and his position within society could be understood as part of the reason why Emma desires him as a husband. Returning to the scene at the Crown Inn, this passage is notable for the way in which outsiders (specifically Frank and Mrs Elton) seize positions of power usually reserved for Highbury’s native residents. Frank assumes the position of master of ceremonies, the frivolous lord of festivities replacing the sombre, utilitarian triumvirate of Knightley, Mr Weston and Mr Cole. Augusta Elton’s married status means that she usurps Emma’s position as first lady of Highbury. Emma is less than pleased when she is forced to take second place:

Mr Weston and Mrs Elton led the way, Mr Frank Churchill and Miss Woodhouse followed. Emma must submit to stand second to Mrs Elton, though she had always considered the ball as peculiarly for her. It was almost enough to make her think of marrying. (E 255)

This tone of the passage is tongue in cheek but it suggests that Emma sees marriage as a means of ensuring her position at the top of Highbury society. As the wife of the primary landowner, the role of Mrs Knightley would trump all other positions in Highbury as Emma knows. When the prospect of Jane Fairfax marrying Knightley is first mooted, Emma objects indignantly, declaring that she “could not at all endure the idea of Jane Fairfax at Donwell Abbey. A Mrs Knightley for them all to give way to! – No” (E 179). There is a suggestion in the text that Emma’s desire to avoid “giving way” to a Mrs Knightley is partly what motivates her to step into the role herself. On hearing the news that Harriet considers a union with Mr Knightley to be a possibility, Emma is galvanised into considering marrying Mr Knightley herself. “Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!” (E 320)

While *Emma* considers alternative, radical possibilities of female power, posited above, it also acknowledges that landed property is still the ultimate arbiter in the social hierarchy. In terms of values, employment and leisure, there may not be much to differentiate Knightley from the middle-class characters in the novel, but custodianship of the novel’s most important space, the estate, differentiates him from Robert Martin and William Larkin. His ownership and good management of the estate establish him as Highbury’s most eligible male and the only one capable of tempting the independent Emma into marriage.
Donwell Abbey: the man and the estate

As with Fitzwilliam Darcy, Mr Knightley’s masculine attributes are best demonstrated within the setting of his estate. Austen constructs a set piece around Knightley’s estate, Donwell Abbey, which has many similarities with the Pemberley scene of *Pride and Prejudice*, examined in chapter two. Edward Neill sees the same conflation of the man and the estate as at Pemberley. The qualities of Mr Knightley, like those of Mr Darcy, can only be truly appreciated in the native setting of his estate:

We have already seen how, piquantly, Mr Knightley’s almost ‘numinous’ quality is correlated with, one might almost say ‘extracted from’, his house and grounds. (Has the over-determined, almost jokey quality of *George Knightley of Donwell* [=done-well?] been sufficiently remarked?) Emma’s famous meditation on his ‘goodly heritage’ and how it actually signifies the qualities of the owner is a development of the way in which, in *Pride and Prejudice*, the suddenly ‘good’ or ‘sublimated’ image of Mr Darcy rises like an exhalation from Pemberley when Elizabeth visits it.22

The Donwell Abbey episode of *Emma* is more overtly a celebration of Englishness than similar scenes in any of her previous novels. Donwell Abbey is depicted as a celebration of English landscape and culture: “It was a sweet view – sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive” (E 176). As Neill’s reading suggests, the man and the estate become conflated and the quintessentially English landscape translates into a quintessential English masculinity in Mr Knightley.

The Donwell Abbey scene brings together a number of strands that are integral to Mr Knightley’s version of landed English masculinity. It is particularly interesting to consider the differences between the attributes emphasised in Donwell Abbey and those highlighted in Pemberley. The Knightley ancestors are not foregrounded in the way that the Darcy family is in the visual symbol of the wall of ancestral portraits. Emma feels their presence in a more subtle fashion: “Emma felt an increasing respect

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for it, as the residence of a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding” (E 281).

Instead, emphasis is placed on Knightley’s role as a farmer and his connection to the land, which is more profound than for any of Austen’s previous heroes. The scene is imbued with evidence of the labour which Knightley and his tenants and employees have invested in the estate. While considering the glories of the strawberry beds, the reader is gently reminded of the efforts required to till and tend to them. The description of the Abbey-Mill farm attached to the estate, “with all its appendages of prosperity and beauty, its rich pastures, spreading flocks, orchard in blossom, and light column of smoke ascending” (E 283) suggests the enjoyment of the fruits of farm labour. But time and effort must be spent in maintaining pastures, tending to flocks and planting and pruning orchards. Knightley is the only one of Austen’s heroes who actually tills the English land he owns, engages with the annual cycles of crop growing and tends to English produce such as turnips, apples and strawberries.

The scene set in Donwell Abbey establishes Knightley as particularly connected to the soil, living in harmony with English seasons and English native produce. It also paints a positive picture of how English society functions with Knightley at its helm. Mr Knightley, the chief landowner in the community, acts as host and demonstrates great consideration towards his guests. Different levels of society, from Mr Knightley himself to the humbler Harriet Smith, interact harmoniously. We see Mr Knightley engaging Harriet on one of his favourite topics of conversation: “[h]e was giving Harriet information as to modes of agriculture” (E 283). Earlier in the text, when Mr Knightley classifies Frank Churchill as “aimable” rather than “amiable” he defines amiability as having “English delicacy towards the feelings of other people” (E 118). This is exactly the trait demonstrated by Knightley in the Donwell episode. He is particularly mindful of Mr Woodhouse’s comfort, ensuring that his visit to the abbey is as pleasant as possible, settling him in “one of the most comfortable rooms in the abbey” (E 281) and preparing material for his entertainment:

Mr Knightley had done all in his power for Mr Woodhouse’s entertainment. Books of engravings, drawers of medals, cameos, corals, shells, and every other family collection within his cabinets, had been prepared for his old
friend, to while away the morning; and the kindness had perfectly answered.
Mr Woodhouse had been exceedingly well amused. (E 284)

Duckworth describes the scene set in Donwell Abbey as a depiction of “an organic
society” and this seems a very accurate assessment. The space over which
Knightley has dominion is organic in that it depicts man and nature working
harmoniously together, and members of society interacting together amicably and
peacefully as an organic whole. This very positive portrait of English masculinity and
English society with men such as Knightley at the helm is thrown into sharp relief by
the scene which immediately follows, the excursion to Box Hill.

Such harmony is noticeably lacking in the Box Hill section of the novel. It is Frank
who assumes master of ceremonies in this episode and the worst behaviour is shown
by him and Emma. Frank, secretly engaged to Jane, flirts openly and pointedly with
Emma:

Every distinguishing attention that could be paid, was paid to her […] in the
judgement of most people looking on it must have had such an appearance
as no English word but flirtation could very well describe. ‘Mr. Frank
Churchill and Miss Woodhouse flirted together excessively’. They were
laying themselves open to that very phrase. (E 289)

When Frank suggests playing a game, Emma uses the opportunity to mock Miss
Bates. Each one of the company must say “one thing very clever”, “two things
moderately clever” or “three things very dull indeed”. Miss Bates comments that she
shall be “sure to say three dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth” and Emma
cannot resist a sly and offensive retort: “Ah ma’am, but there may be a difficulty.
Pardon me – but you will be limited as to number – only three at once” (E 291). For
Mr Knightley, Englishness requires delicacy towards the feelings of others, so it is
unsurprising that he finds Emma’s behaviour thoroughly un-English at Box Hill. He
admonishes her for in offending the sensibilities of a woman older and more
vulnerable than she: “How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How could you
be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation? – Emma, I
had not thought it possible” (E 294). Unsympathetic behaviour from Emma and

23 Duckworth, Improvement of the Estate, 175.
Frank at Box Hill serves to emphasise the fact that Donwell facilitated exemplary English manners by contrast.

**The marriage plots of *Emma*: Knightley’s prospective wives**

Austen imbues Mr Knightley and his estate with ideological importance in *Emma*. Knightley represents an exemplary English heritage and specifically English habits and behaviour. Donwell Abbey is a representation of the English state, embodying agriculture, landscape, architecture and history. Considering the symbolism of both the man and the property, the issue of Knightley’s marriage becomes significant. Knightley’s wife must provide heirs for a dynasty of “true gentility, untainted in blood” (E 281) as well as becoming the mistress of an estate which exemplifies English society at its best.

Knightley’s potential marriage partners, Jane Fairfax, Harriet Smith and Emma herself all raise questions about the borders of the nation or the boundaries of acceptability for entry into the Knightley family. Jane Fairfax is connected to the “Celtic fringe” elements of Britain. In considering a marriage between her and Mr Knightley, Austen experiments with the possibility of turning *Emma* into a British marriage plot novel, a genre which was popular in the twenty years following the Act of Union with Ireland in 1801. Harriet Smith is of unknown and illegitimate provenance. As a potential wife for Knightley, she raises questions about the domestic boundaries of the estate and the Knightley family. Is the illegitimate Harriet a suitable wife for Mr Knightley, whose family is of spotless lineage? Emma, by contrast, represents the local and the familiar. She too is native to Highbury and belongs to a family that has already been assimilated with the greater Knightley dynasty.

**A British marriage plot? Jane and Mr Knightley**

Within *Emma*’s narrative of insiders and outsiders, Jane’s association with Ireland has a particular ideological importance in the novel. We have seen that Jane returns to Highbury because the Campbells, who have been Jane’s unofficial guardians, go to visit their daughter, Mrs Dixon, in Ireland. Jane declines to accompany them (for reasons connected to her relationship with Frank Churchill). As we find out from her aunt, Jane has formed a strong friendship with her friend’s husband, Mr Dixon, whose
estate, Ballycraig is in county Antrim and is apparently "a beautiful place [...] Jane has heard a great deal of its beauty; from Mr Dixon I mean" (E 125). Miss Bates continues "Jane was quite longing to go to Ireland from his account of things" (E 125).

More symbolically, Jane's alliance with the Campbell family suggests her association with Scotland too. Campbell is an emphatically Scottish name, a fact that would not have been lost on the novel's early readers. Jane, through the Campbells and the Dixons, is symbolically linked to both Ireland and Scotland, or what might be termed the British "other". It is also worth noting that, though the nationality of her father is never specified in the novel, Fairfax is also a Scottish name.²⁴

Jane's associations with the Celtic fringe are particularly significant as *Emma* is the only one of Austen's novels specifically to refer to the Act of Union of 1801, responsible for the creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The reference is in the meanderings of Miss Bates:

> The case is, you see, that the Campbells are going to Ireland [...] They had not intended to go over till the summer, but she is so impatient to see them again – for till she married, last October, she was never away from him so much as a week, which must make it very strange to be in different kingdoms, I was going to say, but however different countries. (E 124-125)

This allusion to the Union raises *Emma*'s engagement with national discourse in the context of a combined British identity. Katie Trumpener has considered Irish, Scottish and English literature of the 1800s and the 1810s in detail in her 1997 work *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* and I will be building on her work in this discussion. Trumpener examines the resurgence of national literature which took place around the time of the Act of Union. In particular, Trumpener considers how literary traditions of the period used marriage as a metaphor for the exploration of national identity and a means of examining the new relationship which was emerging between England and the Celtic fringe countries.

²⁴ The title Lord Fairfax of Cameron was created as a Scottish peerage for Sir Thomas Fairfax in 1627. The name later became associated with the north of England too. The third Lord Fairfax, Thomas, or "Black Tom" distinguished himself in his campaigns in Yorkshire during the English Civil War and was appointed General of the parliamentary forces in the north.
This trend originates with Jonathan Swift’s ‘The Story of the Injured Lady, Being a True Picture of Scotch Perfidy, Irish Poverty and English Partiality’ (written in 1707), which recast the Union of Scotland and England in terms of a marriage plot novel, with Ireland assuming the role of a lady spurned by her seducer England in favour of Scotland. In the wake of the 1801 Union with Ireland, it became a favourite trope of the “national tale”: a symbolic representative of Ireland or Scotland marries a symbolic representative of England in an allegorical representation of “Union”. As Trumpener outlines:

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, novelists in Ireland, then in Scotland and England, continue to rewrite this national marriage plot. In its initial post-Union reincarnations, in the early novels of Owenson, Edgeworth, and Maturin, the national marriage plot gives the deceptive appearance of allegorical – and therefore political – transparency stepping back from the emotional ambiguities of ‘A True Story’ to present the Union as a happy ending.²⁵

The text of *Emma* seriously considers the possibility of a marriage between the English Mr Knightley and the Celtic Jane Fairfax. Mrs Weston suggests a match between Mr Knightley and Jane, who “has always been a first favourite with him” (E 178). A union between them is a possibility that the text refuses to rule out. Emma herself is so disturbed by the prospect that she takes it upon herself to question Mr Knightley, insinuating that “the extent of your admiration [for Jane] may take you by surprize [sic] some day or other”. Austen takes care to depict Knightley’s reaction as ambiguous: “Mr Knightley was hard at work upon the lower buttons of his thick leather gaiters, and either the exertion of getting them together, or some other cause, wrought the colour into his face, as he answered” (E 225). Knightley declares that he has no intention of marrying her, citing her lack of open temper as his reason. Just as both the reader and Emma conclude that everyone is mistaken, Mrs Weston keeps the possibility alive:

I say that he is so very much occupied by the idea of not being in love with her, that I should not wonder if it were to end in his being so at last. (E 226)

From this point until Jane's engagement to Frank is made common knowledge, the text offers no evidence to refute Mrs Weston's suggestion. Knightley's reaction to the engagement is again ambiguous. He abuses Frank roundly and questions his masculinity again, labelling him an "abominable scoundrel" and "a disgrace to the name of man" (E 334) but it is never clear whether he is upset on account of Frank's treatment of Emma or of Jane. Given that Mr Knightley does not propose to Emma until after Jane is "off the market", the reader can never really be sure of the extent of his feelings for her.

While this marriage is never realised, the possibility hangs over the second half of the novel. In this way Emma can be read in the context of a number of works which are constructed around a British marriage plot. The clearest example can be found in Sydney Owenson's The Wild Irish Girl, first published five years after the Act of Union. The English protagonist Horatio is banished to his father's Irish estates, where he meets the Milesian Prince of Inismore and his beautiful daughter Glorvina, whose red hair, Catholicism, abilities on the harp and in national dance, and appreciation of her national poetry make her an idealised representative of Ireland. The novel concludes with their marriage, in which the symbolism of this union is emphasised strongly:

In this the dearest, most sacred, and most lasting of all human ties, let the names of Inismore and M____ be inseparably blended, and the distinctions of English and Irish, of protestant and catholic, for ever buried. And while you look forward with hope to this family alliance being prophetically typical of a national unity of interests and affections between those who may be factiously severed, but who are naturally allied, lend your own individual efforts towards the consummation of an event so devoutly to be wished by every liberal mind, by every benevolent heart.26

This pattern is repeated by other novelists, for instance, Maria Edgeworth, in The Absentee (1812), in which the child of Irish parents, Lord Colambre, brought up in London, returns to his absentee father's estates and falls in love simultaneously with Ireland and his cousin, Grace Nugent. We see the same configuration again in Walter

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Scott’s *Waverley* (1814), in which the English hero, Edward Waverley marries his Scottish sweetheart, Rose Bradwardine:

>A tear mingled with the wine which the Baron filled, as he proposed a cup of gratitude to Colonel Talbot, and ‘The Prosperity of the united Houses of Waverley-Honour and Bradwardine’.  

Austen was very familiar with all of these writers and clear about her opinions of their work. Her admiration for Maria Edgeworth is well known, but she seemed less enamoured with Sydney Owenson, particularly the novel in question, as we can see from a remark in her letters: “We have got Ida of Athens by Miss Owenson; which must be very clever, because it was written as the Authoress says, in three months. – We have only read the Preface yet; but her Irish Girl does not make me expect much”. Austen was very familiar with Scott’s poetry and there are numerous references to him throughout her letters. Her admiration of his work almost reaches the point of jealousy in her reaction in a letter to his novel-writing: “Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones. – It is not fair. – He has Fame & Profit enough as a Poet, and should not be taking the bread out of other people’s mouths. – I do not like him, & I do not mean to like Waverley if I can help it – but fear I must”.

Returning to the marriage plot novel, the consequences of the Union are considered more deeply in Susan Ferrier’s *Marriage* (1818), a novel that brings to mind Daniel Defoe’s ideal perception of the Union:

>But if the Union be an Incorporation [...] to the extent of the letter, it must then be a Union of the very Soul of the Nation, all its constitution, customs, trade and manners, must be blended together, for the mutual, united, undistinguished good, growth and health of one whole united Body; and this I understand by Union.'

Ferrier, who was known as the Scottish Jane Austen, enacts something close to Defoe’s vision in *Marriage*. The novel moves away from the English/Scottish or English/Irish marriage plot and into a world in which all of the admirable characters have a mixed British heritage. Alicia Douglas, the heroine’s surrogate mother, has a Scottish father and an English mother, was brought up in England and married a Scot, Major Douglas of Glenfern. Mary, the heroine, is the child of a Scottish father and English mother, and was brought up in Scotland. The novel charts her journey to visit her mother in England. Here she meets Charles Lennox, the product of another international marriage, in the suggestively named Rose Hall, his mother’s home, which is described as “perfectly English [...] a description of place of which there are none in Scotland”.

The reader soon learns of his Highlander father. “[H]e is as brave as a real Highlander, though he has the misfortune to be only half a one. His father, General Lennox, was a true Scot to the very tip of his tongue, and as proud and fiery as any chieftain need be”. Compared to the purely English or Scottish characters in *Marriage*, who are portrayed as either snobbish or foolish (Lady Juliana and Miss Grizzy respectively), these mixed characters are beacons of sense and virtue. The marriage of Mary to Colonel Lennox is, then, a British union taken to the next stage, a blending of the attributes of both nations, producing a perfect couple.

Returning to *Emma*, we can identify a change in attitude in Austen’s engagement with British identity, via the British marriage plot. Evidence from Austen’s juvenilia suggests that early in her career she felt little connection between England and the Celtic fringe countries of Scotland, Wales and Ireland. This is clarified in the juvenilia piece ‘Love and Freindship’, written when Austen was seventeen. In its gleeful parody of the sentimental fiction of the 1780s, the piece contrasts two heroines, Isabel and Laura, who seem to represent England and anti-England:

Isabel had seen the world. She had passed 2 Years at one of the first Boarding schools in London; had spent a fortnight in Bath and had supped one night in Southampton.

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33 Ferrier, *Marriage*, 263.
‘Beware my Laura’ (she would often say) ‘Beware of the insipid Vanities and idle Dissipation of the Metropolis of England; Beware of the unmeaning Luxuries of Bath and of the Stinking fish of Southampton’.  

The assertion that Isabel has “seen the world” is ludicrous, particularly in comparison with the more cosmopolitan Laura. However, there is an ideological sense in which this is actually correct: the contours of London, Bath and Southampton (east, west and south) do actually constitute “the world” for Austen’s novels and Isabel actually manages to define the “limits of Englishness” more succinctly than any of the mature heroines. If Isabel is representative of England, then Laura signifies “otherness” or “anti-England”:

My Father was a native of Ireland and an inhabitant of Wales; My Mother was the natural Daughter of a Scotch Peer by an Italian Opera-girl – I was born in Spain and received my education at a convent in France. When I had reached my eighteenth Year I was recalled by my Parents to my paternal roof in Wales. Our mansion was situated in one of the most romantic parts of the Vale of Uske.

In this assortment of nations, Ireland, Scotland and Wales are categorised with Italy, Spain and France, the implication being that all are equally “foreign” and “other”. In this way, Austen seems to reject the idea of a shared British identity. Austen is emphasising the romantic, Catholic aspects of the Celtic fringe, elements which highlighted the differences rather than the similarities between the Celtic fringe and England.

However, by the time Austen comes to write *Emma*, her attitude to the Celtic fringe and to Britain as an entity has changed. This is not particularly surprising when we consider the dates these novels were written. The juvenilia were written in the late 1780s/early 1790s, predating the British “marriage plot novels” which were all published after the Act of Union (*The Wild Irish Girl* in 1806, *The Absentee* in 1812, *Waverley* in 1814 and *Marriage*, the most enthusiastic about the Union, as late as 1818).

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35 Austen, *Catherine*, 76.
Although the possibility of a British marriage plot is raised in *Emma* and hovers over the second part of the novel, it is never actually realised. Yet, by even entertaining the possibility, the novel moves beyond the position of the juvenilia. The possible acceptance of Britishness is suggested in other facets of the novel. The Dixons’ estate, Balycraig, is situated in Antrim, one of the four overwhelmingly Protestant counties of Ulster, and the name Dixon is unambiguously Anglo-Irish, rather than native. The name Campbell is also allied to Britain, being not only Scottish, but of a clan which was famous for its support of the British government. (Clan Campbell fought against the rebel Jacobites at the Battle of Falkirk and held out against them during the Siege of Fort William. Soon afterwards, they formed part of the Highlanders Regiment and helped finally to defeat the Jacobites at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. Their feud with the fiercely Jacobite MacDonald clan entered legend. The name then, is indicative of pro-British forces in Scotland).

It is significant that this novel, which features Austen’s most emphatically English male hero, is also the one which engages with the idea of a combined British identity and pays most attention to the farther flung spaces of the United Kingdom. Ultimately *Emma* reneges on a British marriage plot in favour of an English marriage plot, a concept which I will develop in more detail below. *Emma* is Austen’s most geographically contained novel and presents a very enclosed picture of English life, but, not least through the realised possibility of a British marriage plot, simultaneously demonstrates an awareness of England existing within the context of wider national, European and global spaces.

**A match that is “far from impossible”: Harriet and Mr Knightley**

By considering a match between Mr Knightley and Jane, Austen addresses the topic of national boundaries and England’s position within the United Kingdom. By entertaining the possibility of a potential marriage between Knightley and Harriet Smith, Austen reflects on the importance of boundaries in a domestic sense. When Emma considers the possibility of Jane marrying Knightley, her reaction focuses on the eventual outcome of his estates. As Emma’s sister is married to Knightley’s brother John, Emma objects on the grounds that the match would deprive her nephew, Henry, of his rightful inheritance:
Mr Knightley must not marry! – You would not have little Henry cut out from Donwell? – Oh! no, no, Henry must have Donwell. I cannot at all consent to Mr Knightley’s marrying [...] I could not bear to have Henry supplanted. – Mr Knightley marry! – No, I have never had such an idea, and I cannot adopt it now. (E 176)

Emma’s reaction to Knightley’s possible marriage is entirely focused on the inheritance of his land. The idea of marriage as a romantic attachment is not discernable in this passage. Knightley’s wife is considered solely as mother to Knightley’s eventual heirs, rather than as a romantic partner.

Knightley’s “lineage” becomes an important consideration when contemplating Harriet Smith as a potential marriage partner. Harriet occupies an unusual position in the text. Unlike Jane Fairfax, Frank Churchill and Augusta Hawkins, she is present in the text from a very early stage (chapter three), coming into Emma’s circle from Mrs Goddard’s school. However in some ways Harriet is an even more dangerous outsider than the others. It is well-known that Harriet was born out of wedlock. She is the natural daughter of “somebody” and she lives in Mrs Goddard’s school without the social framework of parents and family. As we find out in chapter three “somebody had placed her, several years back, at Mrs. Goddard’s school, and somebody had lately raised her from the condition of scholar to that of parlour-boarder”; this is “all that was generally known of her” (E 19). If the other “outsider” characters in Emma are associated with specific geographies outside of Highbury, Harriet has no geographical associations. She has no ties or connections whatsoever, having “no visible friends but what had been acquired at Highbury” (E 19).

Harriet’s position is quite similar to one explored in Burney’s The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties, published just a year before Emma. At the centre of this novel is a character initially known only as “the Incognita”. This young woman demonstrates society’s unease with inscrutable young women who exist entirely without connections. In the opening chapters of the text, she is able to defy definition entirely. The crew of the ship that finds her is unable to ascertain her nationality, French or English, her race, “a tawny hottentot or a fair Circassian”, or class “I have lost all

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hope of a pretty nun. She can be nothing above a housemaid." Mrs Ireton vindictively describes how effectively the Incognita has managed to avoid the signifiers which would enable her audience to read her:

O, I am diving too deeply into the secrets of your trade, am I? Nay, I ought to be contented, I own, with the specimens with which I have already been indulged. You have not been niggardly in varying them. You have been bruised and beaten; and dirty and clean; and ragged and whole; and wounded and healed; and a European and a Creole, in less than a week. I suppose, next, you will dwindle into a dwarf; and then perhaps find some surprising contrivance to shoot up into a giantess. There is nothing that can be too much to expect from so great an adept in metamorphoses.

The presence of this character demonstrates the consequence of place and space, family and friends, and attire and appearance in situating a character within the spectrum of society. The Incognita (Juliet, as her name is eventually revealed to be) manages to avoid or confuse all of the signifiers which would enable her audience to read her effectively. She literally cannot be placed.

*The Wanderer* is a contemporary narrative of invasion. Although it is set "during the dire reign of the terrific Robespierre", rather than the later Napoleonic conflict, it confronts the danger which England faced from France. The opening chapter begins with the escape of a group of English Jacobins from now-hostile France:

[In the dead of night, braving the cold, the darkness and the damps of December, some English passengers, in a small vessel, were preparing to glide silently from the coast of France, when a voice of keen distress resounded from the shore, imploring, in the French language, pity and admission.]

The unidentifiable French female infiltrates the boat and as a result, the country. Although Juliet turns out to be half English and a benign presence in the novel, her

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means of entering the country and her unclassifiable status mean that she a figure of suspicion for the majority of the novel.

In many ways, Harriet’s position in *Emma* resembles Juliet’s in *The Wanderer*. She too cannot be placed. The ubiquity of Harriet’s surname (Smith) is just as significant as the absence of Juliet’s. Clues about her identity cannot be gleaned from it. Harriet’s illegitimate and unclassifiable status is more dangerous than it might initially appear. The possibilities of Harriet’s background are limitless; her class, nationality, even race are impossible to determine.

Chapter three considered *Mansfield Park* in the context of a potential invasion of England. *Emma* can also be read as engaging with themes of invasion and infiltration, albeit in a different way. The text establishes Donwell Abbey as a quintessentially English residence and Knightley as an ideologically English hero. Knightley’s native roots are deep and his lineage spotless. With these facts in mind, the prospect of Knightley marrying a young woman of completely unknown background, who is not native to Highbury, has no geographical associations with the place and is of illegitimate parentage is troubling.

When Emma finds out that Harriet’s father is not a gentleman as she imagined, she is horrified at her part in playing matchmaker between Harriet and the gentlemen of the novel:

> She proved to be the daughter of a tradesman […] Such was the blood of gentility which Emma had formerly been so ready to vouch for! – It was likely to be as untainted, perhaps, as the blood of many a gentleman: but what a connexion she had been preparing for Mr Knightley – or for the Churchills – or even for Mr Elton! – The stain of illegitimacy, unbleached by nobility or wealth, would have been a stain indeed. (E 379)

The language of this passage is very telling. Emma focuses on Harriet’s “blood” and uses words that suggest contamination and infection: taint, stain, unbleached. The text asks us to consider the implications of Harriet as a mother to the next generation of Knightleys, a family which is thus far “untainted in blood and understanding” (E 281). The language of *Emma* presents such a marriage as an infection or infiltration of Knightley blood. Elaine Jordan’s reading of the text dwells on the threat which the
“stain” of Harriet’s illegitimacy potentially poses to a fair and pure England represented by Donwell, “sweet to the eye and the mind”.41

Emma’s reaction to Harriet’s announcement that she feels Mr Knightley returns her affection is significant in this regard: “It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself” (E 320). Austen’s word choice here has been commented on a great deal, with the emphasis on the metaphorical allusion to cupid’s bow, suggesting Emma’s romantic feelings for Knightley. However the darting arrow imagery is also a signifier of attack. The possibility of Harriet marrying Mr Knightley is perceived by Emma as a threat to England.

An English marriage plot: Knightley and Emma

We have seen that the novel entertains the possibility of matching the symbolically English Mr Knightley with Jane, who is associated with the Celtic fringe, therefore considering a British marriage plot within the novel. Emma also raises the possibility of matching Knightley’s impeccable lineage with Harriet’s illegitimate, unknown background. This could be construed as a kind of invasion narrative in which the perfect environs of Donwell Abbey and the future generations of the Knightley family are infiltrated by a stranger.

While these possibilities are raised, Emma’s final partnership matches the symbolically English Mr Knightley with Emma. Anthony Mandal reads Emma as an English national tale, a genre that was “one of the most important trends affecting the market for fiction during the late 1800s and 1810s”.42 One of the tropes of the national tale is the national heroine, in whom the essence of the patriotism and nationalism of the text is embodied. In Scott’s Waverley this role is occupied by Flora Maclvor, a zealot for the Jacobite cause. Owenson’s The Wild Irish Girl features the character of Glorvina, who exemplifies the Irish nation and culture. Mandal suggests that Emma Woodhouse can be understood in the context of the Staëlilian national heroine, pointing out that this is the only one of Austen’s novels with a girl’s name as

the title, following the tradition instigated by Staël’s *Corinne; or, Italy* (1807). Mandal reads Emma’s attempts to construct narratives for those around her in conjunction with the national heroine’s attempts to construct her nation’s history:

Much as Corinne is an improvisatrice of poetry and a reconstructor of her own history, Emma is an improvisatrice when it comes to other people’s histories and relationships.\(^{43}\)

While I suggest that Knightley is much more ideologically English than Emma is, Emma’s English credentials are clear in the text and she is definitely constructed as English in comparison to Jane. If Harriet has no geographical roots and no family associations, Emma’s geographical and familial connections are intimately familiar to Knightley. She is rooted in the same local space as Knightley: she is associated entirely with Highbury. She has barely ventured outside of the small town and her geographical limitations are demonstrated by the fact that she has never seen the sea.

Miranda Burgess, in *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order, 1740-1830*, suggests that symbolic marriage, so important to the romance narrative, is fundamental to Austen’s marriage plots. Burgess argues that in uniting different strands of English society, Austen’s marriages demonstrate the nature or national character of England:

Like the gothic romances and national tales Austen revised, her national romance used symbolic marriage to unite competing cultures and classes and to celebrate what it defined as Britain’s national character.\(^{44}\)

Although Burgess does not specifically refer to *Emma*, concentrating instead on *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, the marriage of Emma and Mr Knightley is an example of a symbolic marriage that unites competing cultures and classes to represent an English national character. If Knightley represents land-based English culture, Emma is the scion of a cash-rich family. Her ten thousand pounds is of tremendous value to Knightley’s estate. Knightley and Emma are both ideologically associated with England and both have strong geographical connections with the same

\(^{43}\) Mandal, *Jane Austen and the Popular Novel*, 156.

\(^{44}\) Miranda Burgess, *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order, 1740-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 156.
place: the locality of Highbury. In uniting landed and cash-rich families, *Emma* represents not a British marriage plot but an English one.

The union between Emma and Knightley is endogamous, even slightly incestuous. Emma comes from a family that has already been assimilated into the Knightley circle as her sister Isabella is married to Knightley’s brother John. The brother-and-sister dynamic is intimated throughout the novel. Early in the text, Mr Knightley describes his relationship with Emma in the following terms: “I have a very sincere interest in Emma. Isabella does not seem more my sister” (E 33).

As a marriage choice for Knightley, Emma represents the local and particular, the familiar and the known, as opposed to Harriet, who is a stranger. Glenda Hudson in her 1992 work *Sibling Love and Incest in Jane Austen’s Fiction* considers the endogamous marriages that conclude *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*. In her analysis, such marriages are concerned with the exclusion of outsiders:

> Several of the works conclude with relationships that can be called incestuous in that they are kept within the family. In many cases, dangerous outsiders are [...] excluded, and marriage takes place between in-laws and first cousins who have fraternal bonds.45

Mr Knightley’s marriage to Emma rejects Harriet, whose provenance is unknown, and Jane, who is associated with the Celtic fringe rather than England. Mr Knightley and Emma’s marriage is contained and localised, joining a couple from the same geographic setting, even the same family. While *Emma* presents a cosy picture of English village life and the final marriage is an endogamous, English partnership, the novel simultaneously considers how England exists within a nexus of national and European spaces. This is demonstrated via characters such as Jane Fairfax, Frank Churchill and Augusta Elton, all of whom have strong ties to Highbury, but also connections with the world beyond its borders.

Mr Knightley is Austen’s most positively drawn and ideologically English hero. Mr Knightley’s masculinity and Englishness are constructed in conjunction with a number of spaces within the novel. In the character of Frank Churchill, Austen

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symbolically evokes the space of France. Frank represents a dandified, feminised, French masculinity within the text of *Emma* and by using Frank as a foil for Knightley, Austen is able to establish Knightley's specifically English, even pre-Norman, attributes in opposition to French characteristics. In establishing Knightley as a model of landed English masculinity, Austen considers him within the setting of his landed estate. Austen constructs a set-piece around Donwell Abbey which is very similar to the Pemberley set-piece in *Pride and Prejudice*. In this section of the novel, Knightley's industry and professionalism are highlighted, along with his associations with his native land and produce. As Knightley is Austen's most symbolically English hero and Donwell Abbey is a clearly signified English space, Knightley's marriage choices can be read in a figurative light. In matching Knightley with Emma, the novel closes with a vision of English village life as a contained space; but through other characters the novel demonstrates England's connectedness to the wider spaces of the United Kingdom and Europe.
Chapter five

**Persuasion: the triumph of naval masculinity**

*Persuasion,* Austen’s last complete novel, is set in “the summer of 1814” (P 13). It is the only one of her novels to give a specific date for the opening of the action, as Tony Tanner notes: “[T]he significance of that date (the end of the Napoleonic Wars – apart from ‘the hundred days’ of Napoleon’s abortive return, concluded by the Battle of Waterloo in 1815), becomes increasingly obvious: it marks a big change in English history and society”.¹ As James Kinsley points out in his notes to the Oxford edition, this places the action directly after the Treaty of Paris (30 June 1814), signed following Napoleon’s abdication as emperor. This treaty ended conflict between France and Britain for the first time since the short interval which succeeded the Treaty of Amiens in 1802. The Treaty of Paris did not actually mark the end of the Napoleonic Wars; in March 1815 Bonaparte escaped from exile in Elba and seized power in Paris. His final defeat did not take place until the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. However for the characters of *Persuasion,* the wars have been won and England is at peace for the first time in more than ten years. In chapter three, Mr Shepherd, Sir Walter’s lawyer, makes direct reference to “this peace” which will “be turning all our rich Navy Officers ashore” (P 20).

Victory in the Napoleonic Wars had a profound impact on the way in which England saw itself on the world stage. Firstly, it established English power across the globe. Linda Colley points out that by the end of the Napoleonic Wars the English had established themselves as the major global power, expanding English dominion worldwide: “[T]he ensuing division of the spoils at the Congress of Vienna ensured that the British empire emerged from the war the largest the world had ever known”.² Saree Makdisi notes the extent of British hegemony: “In the years between 1790 and 1830, over one hundred and fifty million people were brought under British imperial control”.³ Secondly, long-held fears concerning the invasion and possible annihilation of England which were potent during the period of the Napoleonic Wars and explored within the text of *Mansfield Park* were finally eradicated. In chapter

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three I considered *Mansfield Park*’s depiction of the imperial space as dangerous and uncontrollable. In *Persuasion* England has unchallenged jurisdiction over much of the world and the anxious mood associated with the imperial space in *Mansfield Park* is replaced with confidence and optimism.

The global scale and colonial nature of the Napoleonic Wars was also reflected in the wartime experiences of the Austen family. Brian Southam records the breadth of colonial spaces defended by Austen’s two naval brothers, Frank and Charles:

> During the Long War, the sailor brothers served in all the theatres of action and saw duty of every kind: patrolling the North Sea; blockading the French fleet in the Channel ports, the Mediterranean and off the coast of Spain; carrying troops; escorting convoys in the Baltic to the West Indies, to India and onwards to China; and patrolling on the North American station, from Halifax to Bermuda.⁴

Austen received news by letter from a large number of colonial outposts, ranging from Charles in the East Indies and Frank in Gibraltar, Nova Scotia, the Baltic and the West Indies, to Cassandra’s fiancé Tom Fowles, who died of yellow fever in the West Indies, where he was employed as a navy chaplain. Austen’s personal experience of the war, then, reflected the global nature of the conflict.

This chapter will consider the spaces explored within the text of *Persuasion*. The colonial dimension of this novel, filtered through military success in securing the empire, allows Austen to investigate a military, heroic masculinity. In the context of England’s triumph on the world stage, Austen’s portrayal of military-based masculinity is a very positive one in *Persuasion*. In the course of this chapter I consider how Austen compares two different kinds of men operating in two different kinds of spaces. While the naval characters have accomplished a major feat in defeating the French in the colonial sphere, the novel’s example of land-based masculinity, Sir Walter Elliot, has failed in the comparatively simpler task of management and upkeep of his own estate. I will examine Austen’s portrayal of landed masculinity in the novel, arguing that she symbolically presents the landed gentry as inert in comparison to the adventurous, sexually desirable hero, Captain

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Wentworth. I will consider to what extent *Persuasion* embodies a wholesale change in Austen’s version of English masculine values. Is the novel suggesting that the essence of the English nation is best represented by the meritocratic professional classes, rather than the aristocratic landed gentry?

A situation of war fought in the colonial space gave men the opportunity to capitalise on their natural abilities and energies and establish their fortunes. Seen in this light, the naval space rewards merit and is key to the establishment of Captain Wentworth as a romantic hero in the novel. This chapter also considers what meritocracy actually means in *Persuasion* and how the novel deliberates the demerits of a meritocratic system for less able participants. Finally, I demonstrate how *Persuasion* uses its naval characters to create links between colonial and domestic spaces, closing with a discussion of Austen’s use of architecture as a symbolic representation of the connection between domestic spaces and the wider world. Anxieties present in *Mansfield Park* about the gap between the colonial and the domestic are erased in *Persuasion*, as the naval contingent is seen to be equally comfortable and useful in both spaces. In *Persuasion*, the colonial has its homecoming.

**Persuasion’s global and domestic spaces**

*Persuasion* begins in Somerset, and moves to Lyme Regis on the Dorset coast. The action of the novel concludes in Bath, a location Austen had employed previously in *Northanger Abbey*. However the novel engages with the wider space of the British empire and the naval characters refer to locations all across the world. Admiral Croft is a “rear admiral of the white” who “was in the Trafalgar action and has been in the East Indies since” (P 24). Captain Wentworth was “made commander in consequence of the action off St. Domingo” (P 26) and has also seen action in the West Indies, Gibraltar and Lisbon (P 56-59). We are informed that Captain Harville “met with a clever young German artist at the Cape” (P 81).

*Persuasion* depicts England as a confident, powerful nation with a commanding global presence. In exploring masculinity, the British empire is a crucial “off-stage” setting in *Persuasion*. The global spaces referred to in *Persuasion* encompass more than the British empire. However the space of war and the colonial space are often identical in *Persuasion*, for two reasons. Firstly, English and French colonial spaces
and the seas that connected them to Europe were important territories for battle and hence, naval money-making, the activity which is fundamental to the treatment of masculinity in *Persuasion*. Secondly, one of the most important consequences of the Napoleonic Wars was the establishment of English supremacy on the colonial/global stage. The colonial space serves a different purpose than in *Sense and Sensibility* or *Mansfield Park*, novels which also feature the empire. In *Sense and Sensibility*, empire was an ideologically uncomplicated space that featured only as a place for generating wealth for colonial adventurers. In *Mansfield Park*, empire was a space on which England had become dependent to maintain its standard of living. In the context of the ongoing Napoleonic Wars, the imperial space was a destabilising one, creating a danger of dependency which could threaten the security of England. In *Persuasion*, empire is the conquered and secure space that demonstrates English supremacy on the world stage.

While the colonies are vital as a space for the exploration of masculinity in *Persuasion*, the action of the novel opens within a landed estate, specifically Kellynch in Somersetshire, the seat of Sir Walter Elliot. In *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, Pemberley and Donwell Abbey are spaces characterised by good governance. However the opening chapters of this novel show Sir Walter being forced out of his family seat as a result of his poor financial management. Sir Walter, we learn, is unable to live within his means:

> While Lady Elliot lived, there had been method, moderation, and economy, which had just kept him within his income; but with her had died all such right-mindedness, and from that period he had been constantly exceeding it. It had not been possible for him to spend less; he had done nothing but what Sir Walter Elliot was imperiously called on to do; but blameless as he was, he was [...] growing dreadfully in debt. (P 14)

Sir Walter’s money problems lead him to rent his property to a stranger and take up residence in Bath. Sir Walter is the latest in Austen’s line of ineffectual landlords, with insufficient awareness of the duties and dignity of the landowner.

Responsible landownership as Burke defines it is characterised by the fulfilment of one’s duties to employees, family and community. Sir Charles Grandison, for
example, believes that in the maintenance and governance of Grandison Hall he is “fulfilling a duty required by God as well as a duty to his tenants and to his own posterity”. Sir Walter’s inability to control his finances is an abdication of his responsibility to his servants and tenants. By removing himself from their lives and pursuing his own pleasure in Bath he demonstrates his lack of commitment to his duties towards them as a landlord. For Alistair Duckworth, Sir Walter’s failure is “tantamount to his rejecting an entire cultural heritage, for though his house under his trusteeship can hardly have been a centre of traditional order, the intrinsic value of his inheritance is indicated in its ‘valuable pictures’ and its ‘precious rooms and furniture’”.

In *Persuasion*, the two spaces of empire and the estate serve to contrast two different kinds of men and the way in which they have contributed to the good of the English nation. The navy has done its duty and secured the country against enemy attack. The landed gentry as represented by Sir Walter has failed even to maintain its estates. In fact, as Brian Southam points out, having helped to save the nation, Admiral Croft finds himself bailing out Sir Walter: “Having preserved the country throughout the war, the navy, in the person of some ‘rich Admiral’, as yet unknown, is now to save the bankrupt Baronet in a time of peace”. The opening chapters of *Persuasion* contrast two very different kinds of masculinity, a land-based Burkean gentry which has been found wanting, and a military-based masculinity which has been responsible for saving England.

**Masculinity and Utility**

*Persuasion* has a particular interest in the usefulness of individuals in society. The very first thing that Sir Walter is prepared to say about the navy is that “the profession has its utility” (P 22). The evident usefulness of the navy calls Sir Walter’s own purpose into question. In the opening scene of the novel he is envisaged in the midst of one of his favourite activities, perusing the Baronetage (a listing of the English nobility, probably Debrett’s *Baronetage of England*):

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Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch-hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; there he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one. (P 9)

This passage is a pithy summary of Sir Walter Elliot’s character. Austen’s choice of words immediately highlights concerns about his utility in society. Sir Walter reads, but does not prove his worth by his learning; the Baronetage is the only book he is inclined to take up. Studying the Baronetage provides “occupation” in Sir Walter’s life. In comparison to the matters which have occupied the navy, Sir Walter’s perusal of the Baronetage seems vain, self-regarding and frivolous. It provides consolation in an “idle hour”, of which he has many.

As Duckworth puts it, Sir Walter has “substituted a vanity of status for a pride in function”.\(^8\) For him, worth is determined by what people are, rather than what they do. Employment, function, or utility are not valued by him in the slightest. While the navy has proven its worth by securing England’s supremacy on the world stage, Sir Walter has contributed nothing beyond cutting a fashionable figure. Significantly, two of his favourite pastimes are passive, self-reflexive and two-dimensional, perusing his entry in the Baronetage and staring at himself in mirrors (of which there is a plentiful supply in Kellynch Hall). Sir Walter is pre-occupied with these external signifiers which – in the absence of any other achievements as a powerful landowner to prove it – reassure him of his position in society, even his existence as a human being.

The navy on the other hand is characterised by a clear sense of purpose even after its return to shore. When Anne, Captain Wentworth and the Musgroves visit Captain Harville’s home in Lyme Regis, Austen draws attention to Harville’s natural instinct for utility and occupation, despite physical disability. Although his lameness prevents him from much physical labour, he puts his time to good use. Unlike the self-regarding and passive Sir Walter, Captain Harville is purposeful and productive: his focus is on employment, the upkeep of his home and making products for others to enjoy:

\(^8\) Duckworth, *Improvement of the Estate*, 186.
His lameness prevented him from taking much exercise; but a mind of usefulness and ingenuity seemed to furnish him with constant employment within. He drew, he varnished, he carpentered, he glued; he made toys for the children, he fashioned new netting-needles and pins with improvements, and if every thing else was done, sat down to his large fishing-net at one corner of the room. (P 83)

A sea-change in English values?

One of the questions which *Persuasion* raises for critics is whether Austen intends Sir Walter to be a representative figure for the English gentry, or whether she creates him as a lone individual who has abandoned his duty. To what extent can Sir Walter be read as a symbol of the demise of the gentry? In the context of the Napoleonic Wars, won by the professional, military classes, is Austen condemning the entire landed gentry class as a useless and ineffectual section of society? Certainly, criticism of landed gentry who fail to fulfil their duties in society is a theme found throughout Austen’s work; it is embodied by characters such as Mr Bennet and John Dashwood. Austen also explores concerns about the utility of the gentry in *Mansfield Park*, although *Emma*’s Mr Knightley demonstrates how usefulness to society can be central to the role of the landed gentleman, as chapter four discussed.

Conservative critics such as Alistair Duckworth warn against overemphasising the modernity of *Persuasion*. According to Duckworth, Austen is not condemning landed existence in general, but Sir Walter in particular: “It would be quite wrong, for example, to argue that Jane Austen is in her last novel rejecting an inherited social morality and embracing, near her death, a moral subjectivism”. Likewise, Marilyn Butler’s conservative reading of the novel sees Sir Walter as an example of deficiency within the gentry rather than a demonstration that the entire class was defunct and useless.

However for many commentators this novel explores a dramatic change which took place in English society following the Napoleonic Wars. As Linda Colley outlines in *Britons*, the period following the Napoleonic Wars was marked by questions about

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how power should be distributed in society. Calls to extend the franchise were made, in order to recognise the huge part which the armed services had played in securing the nation’s future:

Having been compelled to draw on the armed service and incomes of unprecedented numbers of its population so as to defeat France, the men who governed Great Britain found themselves under pressure after the peace to change the political system so that all men of property, and all working men, were given access to the vote.11

Lately, many readings of *Persuasion* consider it as a post-war novel which engages with questions about “who should win the peace” in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, suggesting that those who have secured England’s safety should be rewarded for their endeavours. As Darryl Jones states:

The novel is both a reflection and a product of the social changes wrought by the Napoleonic Wars, changes which amounted, in Linda Colley’s words, to ‘nothing less than a redefinition of the nation’ [...] It is, profoundly, the most modern of Austen’s six canonical novels, one which shows the very beginnings of a new polity in anticipation of the 1832 Reform Act, and beyond that of the gradual widening of the franchise across the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries.12

The act with which the novel opens, the removal of Sir Walter from Kellynch Hall and his replacement with Admiral Croft, can certainly be read as a symbolic gesture in light of the victories of the Napoleonic Wars, representative of a great shift in the social order following the Battle of Waterloo. The defunct, unproductive landed gentry is usurped by the meritocratic professional classes. Anne’s thoughts on visiting the Crofts for the first time since they settled in the house suggest that the novel is concerned with issues about what class of men are “deserving” in this post-Napoleonic world. Who has the right to assume positions of authority and privilege in this new society?

11 Colley, *Britons*, 323.
she had in fact so high an opinion of the Crofts, and considered her father so very fortunate in his tenants, felt the parish to be so sure of a good example, and the poor of the best attention and relief, that however sorry and ashamed for the necessity of the removal, she could not but in conscience feel that they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch-hall had passed into better hands than its owners’. (P 102)

Aside from the appropriate ownership or occupation of Kellynch Hall, there are clear indications that this novel represents a great change or development in society. As Claudia L. Johnson amongst others has pointed out, the narrative of *Persuasion* contains a much greater sense of temporality than Austen’s other novels. As Johnson puts it “*Persuasion* is a calculated tangle of years and dates, and the passage of time itself is foregrounded”.13 Johnson draws attention to the way in which the reader is constantly being pointed backwards. The reader’s attention is focused on stretches of time which have changed the lives of individuals, such as the thirteen years which Miss Elliot has been on the marriage market, the eight years since Anne refused Wentworth, the twelve years which have changed Anne from “the blooming, silent, uniformed girl of fifteen, to the elegant little woman of seven and twenty”, and the same twelve years that had transformed the “fine-looking, well-grown Miss Hamilton, in all the glow of health and confidence of superiority into a poor, infirm, helpless widow” (P 124). These examples demonstrate that the passing of years can alter lives and prospects dramatically. Considering this on a national level, *Persuasion* suggests that in the eight years since Anne has last seen Captain Wentworth, England has changed so dramatically that different masculine role models are required.

As Roger Sales points out, *Persuasion* shows Wentworth making twenty-five thousand pounds out of the war at the same time as Sir Walter is running badly into debt. This reversal of fortunes for the landed gentry and talented professionals seems to signify the transfer of power and values within society, and a resulting shift away from Burke in what, for Austen, constitutes ideal English masculinity. Having said that, the ambiguous ending of the novel prevents us from drawing strong conclusions on this point. In the beginning of the novel, Admiral Croft replaces Sir Walter as the

resident of Kellynch, but Austen doesn’t signify whether he will take up a more permanent address there. William Walter Elliot is still the legal heir of Kellynch Hall.

The future of English masculinity

Austen’s portrayal of masculinity within the text of *Persuasion* substantiates a reading in which the professional classes usurp the gentry as models of English masculinity. The symbolic discourse employed to great effect in *Persuasion* suggests the future of England lies with the new professional classes, whose chief representative, Wentworth, is portrayed as virile, physically strong and desirable. The landed gentry on the other hand is depicted as effeminate and static. Sir Walter is the most important representative of landed gentry within the text. His masculinity is explored in great depth. The opening scene, in which he studies his family entry in the Baronetage, undermines his masculine virility from the outset. The reader is informed of his inability to produce an heir, his duty as the head of a landed family:

Walter Elliot, born March 1, 1760, married, July 15, 1784, Elizabeth daughter of James Stevenson, Esq. of South Park, in the country of Gloucester; by which lady (who died 1801) he has issue Elizabeth, born June 1, 1785; Anne, born August 9, 1787; a still-born son, Nov. 5, 1789; Mary born Nov. 20, 1791. (P 9)

The failure to produce an heir is used by Austen to signify a compromised masculinity in a number of characters, from Mr Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* to Mr Woodhouse in *Emma*. Sir Walter’s stillborn son is a particularly potent symbol. The only information we are given about Sir Walter’s son suggests that Austen does intend to make a point about the redundancy of the gentry/aristocracy in this novel. Austen provides us with the date of the child’s birth and death, 1789. The date is a particularly significant one in the context of debates about landed masculinity. Austen links the demise of the Elliot family to the French Revolution, the biggest threat to the landed classes in centuries.

Sir Walter’s masculinity is undermined in a variety of ways. His obsession with his appearance feminises him. We are told that “vanity was the beginning and end of Sir Walter Elliot’s character” (P 10) and this particularly feminine vice is apparent in the superfluity of mirrors with which he furnishes his home. When Admiral Croft
moves into the estate, one of the major changes he makes is to dispose of Sir Walter’s mirrors: “I have done very little besides sending away some of the large looking-glasses from my dressing-room, which was your father’s [...] I should think he must be a rather dressy man for his time of life. – Such a number of looking-glasses!” (P 104). He keeps only a “little shaving glass in one corner, and another great thing that I never go near” (P 104) which the text seems to agree is quite sufficient for a sensible gentleman, and which serves to highlight Admiral Croft’s focus on the utility of the objects as well as the masculine activity of shaving.

Sir Walter has a preoccupation with his personal appearance, second only to his concern with rank. We are told that “few women could think more of their personal appearance than he did” (P 10). In Bath, he promenades along the street passing caustic judgement on all he observes:

The worst of Bath was, the number of its plain women. He did not mean to say that there were no pretty women, but the number of the plain was out of all proportion. He had frequently observed, as he walked, that one handsome face would be followed by thirty, or five and thirty frights; and once, as he had stood in a shop in Bond-street, he had counted eighty-seven women go by, one after another, with out there being a tolerable face amongst them.

Sir Walter’s most severe judgement is reserved for his own sex:

[A]nd as for the men! they were infinitely worse. Such scarecrows as the streets were full of! (P 115)

Like Frank Churchill, another feminised gentleman, he harbours a great appreciation of the hairdresser, which belongs to the realm of the female rather than the male. This is evidenced by his reaction to Admiral Croft’s appearance on their first meeting: “if his own man might have had the arranging of [the Admiral’s] hair, [Sir Walter] should not be ashamed of being seen with him any where” (P 31).

Sir Walter’s interest in his personal appearance serves two purposes in this novel. As well as signifying Sir Walter’s female vanity, it also helps to convey the sense of stasis that is characteristic of the landed gentry in *Persuasion*. Austen portrays a class
frozen in time. In a novel which draws attention to the passage of time, a sense of progression and development are missing from Austen’s portrayal of landed existence. This is particularly apparent in Sir Walter’s looks. While other characters grow older, develop, react to the passing of time, Sir Walter and his daughter Elizabeth seem static. They maintain their good looks while the years are played out on the faces of family and friends: “himself and Elizabeth as blooming as ever, amidst the wreck of the good looks of every body else; for he could plainly see how old all the rest of his family and acquaintance were growing. Anne haggard, Mary coarse, every face in the neighbourhood worsting; and the rapid increase of the crow’s foot about Lady Russell’s temples had long been a distress to him” (P 12).

Later in the text, Sir Walter’s maintenance of his looks is specifically attributed to the fact that he is not subject to “toil and labour of the mind” (P 22-23), let alone the body, as those who are engaged in the professions must endure. Sir Walter objects to the navy as a profession because it “cuts up a man’s youth and vigour most horribly; a sailor grows old sooner than any other man” (P 22). Mrs Clay suggests that this is not exclusive to the navy, rather that most professional endeavour takes its toll on beauty and youth: “But then, is not it the same with many other professions, perhaps most other?” She suggests that “Soldiers, in active service are not at all better off’” and that even the quieter professions take their toll: “The lawyer plods, quite care-worn; the physician is up at all hours, and travelling in all weather; and even the clergyman [...] is obliged to go into infected rooms, and expose his health and looks to all the injury of a poisonous atmosphere” (P 23).

Aging and the loss of youth, then, are natural developments which signify progress and practical effort. The fact that Sir Walter has managed to arrest the process of aging suggests that he is suspended in time and place, and that there is a sense of stasis and inertia about his existence – he is not moving and developing with the times like everyone else. The sense of stasis that accompanies his “eternal youth” in addition to his position as a useless, “blood-sucking” member of society causes Darryl Jones to label him “vamipiric”.14

This sense of stasis amongst the landed gentry is also conveyed via the repetition of their names. Speaking of the cousins, Charles Hayter and Charles Musgrove, Claudia

14 Jones, Jane Austen, 180.
L. Johnson suggests that “the redundancy of Hayter’s Christian name, doubling with that of Charles Musgrove, calls attention to what is undistinctive about eldest sons in general.” It certainly does do this, but it also signifies a sense of inertia amongst the landed classes. The doubling of names in the text is very widespread. Sir Walter Elliot will be succeeded by his heir, William Walter Elliot. Charles and Mary Musgrove’s two sons are named Charles and Walter. The women also share the same two names over and over again. Austen makes reference to “all the Marys and Elizabeths” which the Elliot family have married and who are listed in the Elliot entry in the Baronetage (P 9). Sir Walter’s defiance of the aging process, along with the repetition of the first names of Charles and Walter amongst the Elliot family, associates the landed gentry with circles of endless repetition and unchanging existence. They cannot represent the future as they cannot progress.

The possibility of being a part of this circle of repetition and inertia is an option which is open to Anne Elliot and would be facilitated by a marriage to her cousin, William Walter. William Walter Elliot is the heir to the Kellynch estate. Lady Russell reminds Anne that in marrying him, she would become mistress of Kellynch, therefore “occupying your dear mother’s place, succeeding to all her rights, and all her popularity, as well as to all her virtues” (P 129). Lady Russell suggests that Anne should recreate her mother’s existence, married to Sir (William) Walter as Lady Elliot, mistress of Kellynch. “[I]f I might be allowed to fancy you such as she was, in situation, and name, and home, presiding and blessing in the same spot” (P 130). Anne’s reaction shows the appeal of this kind of existence, safe and secure in “The idea of becoming what her mother had been; of having the previous name of ‘Lady Elliot’ first revived in herself; of being restored to Kellynch, calling it her home again, her home for ever, was a charm which she could not immediately resist” (P 130). She does of course resist, but if we examine the language of this statement, we can see that Anne considers the possibility of “reviving” and “restoring” her mother’s existence in herself, rather than forging a different future for herself. In Persuasion the landed gentry is characterised by its effeminacy, but more importantly inertia. They certainly do not embody the future.

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15 Johnson, Jane Austen, 158.
Captain Wentworth: *Persuasion*’s model of masculinity

In rejecting William Walter and marrying Wentworth instead, Anne decides that her future will be associated with a completely different kind of English masculinity. In Burke’s conservative vision English structures and values are maintained and handed down via the estate. Wentworth is the first of Austen’s heroes to be completely disconnected from this system. In *Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*, Austen’s heroines end their respective novels by settling into a landed estate or a parsonage. In *Emma*, Emma does not immediately move into Donwell Abbey, but the expectation is that she will in the near future. *Persuasion* however, removes the prospect of the landed estate entirely. Mary Musgrove, Anne’s snobbish younger sister, consoles herself with the thought that although Captain Wentworth is richer than her own husband “Anne had no Uppercross-hall before her, no landed estate” (P 201).

Wentworth embodies the opposite of Burkean ideology. Ronald Paulson draws attention to Burke’s understanding of the French Revolution as caused by the “dreadful and portentous energy” of the revolutionaries. As Paulson puts it:

> Sheer energy, the energy of ability without property, Burke believes to be the most dangerous threat to ordered society; for ‘ability is a vigorous and active principle’, and property is ‘sluggish, inert and timid’.

Wentworth embodies this very concept very effectively. His energy and ability are immediately obvious. Lady Russell, a champion of traditional Burkean values in the text, is suspicious of these very qualities manifested in Wentworth. In the face of Wentworth’s confidence “that he should soon be rich”, his brilliancy and his headstrongness, Lady Russell detects “a dangerous character” (P 27).

*Persuasion* contrasts Burkean with anti-Burkean masculine values; an aristocracy in which position in society is determined by birth with a meritocracy. The Baronetage, lovingly read and reread by Sir Walter, is the reference book of the aristocracy/gentry and its purpose is to define where each individual exists within this system. The navy lists perform a very similar function within a meritocratic system, and receive

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numerous mentions in *Persuasion*. The text does not specify what navy lists are being consulted, but the reference, as Sales notes, is probably to publications such as *The Naval Chronicle, Pepys’ List of the Royal Navy* or *Steel’s Original and Correct List of the Royal Navy.*

Navy lists charted earnings and promotions amongst the navy, and by using them Anne is able to monitor Wentworth’s career from afar. These lists make Wentworth’s position and his relative wealth in comparison to his peers very clear:

> He had distinguished himself, and early gained the other step in rank – and must now, by successive captures, have made a handsome fortune. She had only navy lists and newspapers for her authority, but she could not doubt his being rich. (P 29)

In fact, parallels are drawn between the satisfaction Sir Walter gets from reading about his family in the Baronetage and Captain Wentworth’s enjoyment in tracing his progress through the navy lists. We see this quite clearly in the scene in which the navy lists are perused by Louisa and Henrietta in the Musgrove household:

> The girls were now hunting for the Laconia; and Captain Wentworth could not deny himself the pleasure of taking the precious volume into his own hands to save them the trouble, and once more read aloud the little statement of her name and rate, and present non-commissioned class, observing over it, that she too had been one of the best friends man ever had. (P 58)

The difference of course is that Sir Walter gains satisfaction from the achievements of his ancestors, whereas Captain Wentworth achieves fulfilment in perusing his own successes. Both are forms of vanity, but Wentworth’s vanity is at least centred in what he has achieved, rather than what he has been born into. Austen certainly treats Captain Wentworth’s vanity with infinitely more sympathy than she does Sir Walter Elliot’s.

Work by commentators such as Tim Fulford in his book *Romanticism and Masculinity* suggests that the debate played out in *Persuasion* about aristocratic versus meritocratic masculinity was part of a wider discourse which explored these

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competing masculine systems across the time-frame of the Napoleonic Wars. I have considered Fulford’s work in depth in chapter two of this thesis and I now want to return to his treatment of the Duke of York, the second son of George III who was Commander-in-Chief of the army at the time. Fulford outlines the sexual scandal that damaged the reputation of the army in 1808 in which Anna Clarke, the Duke of York’s mistress, was found to be accepting sexual favours and bribes from officers seeking promotion. Such scandals undermined the authority of the army and suggested that the institution, once seen as chivalrous and masculine, had been corrupted by feminine authority and sexual indiscretions. Fulford argues that during the Napoleonic Wars the British looked to the aristocratic classes to provide military heroic models who would demonstrate English superiority on the colonial stage. However the Duke of York, representative of the upper echelons of the aristocracy proved to be a disappointment in this regard:

Britain wanted a hero to prove its power and manliness against the French; in the Anti-Jacobin Canning called for a return to ‘manlier virtues, such as nerved/Our fathers’ breasts’. But the nation did not find a great warrior amongst its Princes. York had commanded troops in the French wars in 1799, but had attracted ridicule for marching back and forth (or up and down, as the nursery rhyme has it) to little effect.¹⁸

Fulford points out that while the “effeminate” and “ineffective”¹⁹ Duke of York disappointed as a military hero, a far more compelling individual presented himself to fulfil this role. Nelson, the son of a rector, joined the navy at twelve as a midshipman and led the British to victory in the Battle of Trafalgar. As Fulford points out, Nelson was “revered” for defeating Napoleon. His personality along with his death in action led to a popular cult which commemorated him in songs, sonnets and fiction (notably that of Sir Walter Scott). As Jocelyn Harris suggests in her 2007 work A Revolution Almost beyond Expression: Jane Austen’s Persuasion, Wentworth’s triumph within a meritocratic system is analogous to Nelson’s: “The rapid trajectory of Wentworth’s

¹⁸ Tim Fulford, Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics and Poetics in the Writings of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincey and Hazlitt (Hampshire and New York: Macmillan/St. Martin’s, 1999), 6.
¹⁹ Fulford, Romanticism and Masculinity, 7.
career follows the early stages of Nelson’s meteoric rise”. Nelson was a captain by the age of twenty. Wentworth also fights his way through the ranks, his first command being that of the Asp, a humble one-masted sloop of war.

For Fulford, Nelson “saved the nation” in the popular imagination and this popular view “depended not least on the belief that he had vindicated British manliness”. Redeeming duty and honour from the corruption into which the Prince Regent and the Duke of York allowed them to fall, his defeat of the French must be understood as “a triumph of British character”. Fulford suggests that the behaviour and achievements of Nelson in comparison to the Duke of York led to a repositioning of male chivalry and heroism amongst the middle rather than the aristocratic classes:

Chivalric manhood did not die; it was relocated in the middle classes. They made duty, honour and paternalism the basis of their claim to govern just as they had formerly been the foundation of the aristocracy’s defence of its power. And so the appearance of proper authority and good government stayed masculine even as they passed from the exclusive grasp of the nobility.

*Persuasion* can be understood as part of a much wider national discourse in which the Napoleonic Wars raised the issue of the competing claims of aristocratic/landed and meritocratic masculinity. The experience of the Napoleonic Wars underscored the value of professional characteristics such as endurance, bravery, hard labour, while high profile members of the aristocracy were found to be ineffective and corrupt. Though it features landed gentry rather than aristocrats, *Persuasion* enters this debate about inherent rather than inherited worth.

**The making of Wentworth in the colonial space**

The Napoleonic Wars provided opportunities for a certain class and calibre of men to prove their worth and establish their fortune. *Persuasion* demonstrates the way in which the colonies and the arena of war is the optimal space for a man like

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Wentworth to capitalise on his natural energies and abilities. Within the novel, the colonial space is central to the establishment of Wentworth as a romantic hero and masculine role model. Wentworth’s experience in the colonies sets him up, not just as a national saviour, but a confident, sexually desirable male. The complex, anxiety-ridden relationship between empire and England which is explored in *Mansfield Park* is not apparent in *Persuasion*. I maintain that this can be attributed to the sense of control which the English have now asserted across the colonial space. The Battles of Trafalgar and St Domingo established the English as the world power across the seas. In *Persuasion*, England is no longer at risk in the global sphere. The idea of empire as a space for facilitating wealth creation, explored relatively straightforwardly in *Sense and Sensibility* and in a much more complex fashion in *Mansfield Park*, is clearly in evidence in *Persuasion*.

Although the historical contexts of *Persuasion* and *Sense and Sensibility* are very different, one being a post-war novel of 1817, the other largely the product of the 1790s, colonial wealth functions in a similar fashion in both novels. Wealth accumulated in the empire is brought home and used to restore country estates and land-based economies. Sir Walter’s extravagance and mismanagement of the estate is repaired by the cash of the Crofts. The fundamental difference between this novel and *Sense and Sensibility* is that the wealth required to renew the estate is not earned by the family itself, but by those outside it. Sir Walter may object to the navy as “being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamed of” (P 22), but ironically it is a naval fortune which is his financial saviour.

In *Persuasion* Wentworth is most associated with capitalist endeavour and best represents how the colonial space facilitates money-making. *Persuasion* is Austen’s most unashamedly capitalist novel, a fact demonstrated by its hero Wentworth’s own reminiscence, “Ah! Those were pleasant days when I had the Laconia! How fast I made money in her” (P 58). Claudia L. Johnson labels Wentworth as “nouveau riche with a vengeance”, having accumulated a fortune of “mythically immense proportions”. Certainly, Captain Wentworth’s joy in the reminiscence of money-making is totally out of keeping with the rest of Austen’s work. He is also delighted

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for his friend Captain Harville who wants to make a fortune for the sake of his family "Poor Harville, sister! You know how much he wanted money – worse than myself. He had a wife. – Excellent fellow! I shall never forget his happiness. He felt it all, so much for her sake (P 58).

Wentworth’s capitalist confidence and drive are an aphrodisiac for Anne:

But, he was confident that he should soon be rich; – full of life and ardour, he knew that he should soon have a ship, and soon be on a station that would lead to every thing he wanted. He had always been lucky; he knew he should be so still. – Such confidence, powerful in its own warmth, and bewitching in the wit which often expressed it, must have been enough for Anne; but Lady Russell saw it very differently. (P 27)

Just as Mr Darcy’s wealth is crucial to his position as male hero, Wentworth’s fortune, which demonstrates his ambition, skill and bravery, is essential to his. Anne pays homage to “The Navy […] who have done so much for us” (P 21). However, in the context of Austen’s portrayal of Captain Wentworth as a desirable masculine model, much more importance is placed on his capitalist endeavour in the colonial space than his role in saving the nation from the French.

The navy lists are symbolically linked to Wentworth’s status as a potential husband. Apart from Wentworth himself, the only characters who study his career in the navy lists are the women interested in him as a partner, creating another connection between Wentworth’s fortune and his desirability as a husband. Following Wentworth’s career via navy lists and newspapers, Anne is able to deduce two crucial facts about his current situation. Firstly, Wentworth is wealthy – “she could not doubt his being rich” – and secondly, he is single – she “had no reason to believe him married” (P 29). In the years following Anne’s refusal of Wentworth, newspapers and navy lists communicate that he is growing richer and is still single, thus ever more eligible as a marriage partner.

The Miss Musgroves begin to consult the navy lists after Wentworth has been introduced into their circle, the point at which they “seemed hardly to have any eyes but for him” (P 55). Despite the fact that their brother Dick was in the navy, the navy
lists are "the first that had ever been at Uppercross" and they are delighted to "pore over it" (P 56) in the company of Wentworth himself.

The opportunities which the navy afforded for wealth creation in times of war were well-known and long-standing. As Brian Southam explains:

The principle of prize-money was well understood. It was the Admiralty's system for sharing out the spoils of war, originally designed (according to the Cruizer and Convoy Act of 1708) 'for the better and more effectual encouragement of the Sea Service' 'adding to the encouragement of the captors and the terror of the enemy' as a Marine Dictionary of 1815 has it.\(^25\)

As Southam outlines, the system was developed to reward success and to compensate sailors, who were relatively poorly paid, for placing their lives at risk. Given the Austen family's naval associations we can assume that Jane understood the intricacies of naval payments.

Roger Sales goes into some detail about the different kinds of prizes which were available within the navy. As he suggests "prize money attracted both officers and crews to the navy"\(^26\) so the war offered opportunities for all classes of men to accumulate wealth. The most straightforward type of prize money came from the sinking of an enemy ship, for which all members of the victorious ship received a reward (known as "Head and Gun\(^27\)" money because the size of the reward was determined by the number of men and guns on the enemy vessel). But "officers and their men did not get rich from this kind of prize-money": real opportunities for wealth creation came from the capture of an enemy ship, which the Admiralty was often prepared to buy from them:

The best payouts for those of Wentworth's rank came if the captured ship was carrying a valuable cargo. Unlike 'Head and Gun' money, this kind of prize-money was divided up in such a way that officers received more than the men [...] Under a revised set of regulations which became effective in 1808, a captain was entitled to claim a quarter of the prize-money. His

\(^{25}\) Southam, Jane Austen and the Navy, 121.
\(^{26}\) Sales, Representations of Regency England, 183.
\(^{27}\) Sales, Representations of Regency England, 183.
entitlement became higher if he were sailing under what were known as Admiralty Orders because then there was no admiral of his station to demand a cut. Captains received three-eighths of the prize money under such circumstances.  

While the implications of financial gain from slave labour may contribute to the sense of unease which can be discerned in Mansfield Park, Persuasion does not appear to have any moral objections to wealth gained from the looting of enemy ships. As Susan Fraiman points out in her essay ‘Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism’, “[f]ar from questioning colonialism, Persuasion celebrates (as a meritocratic alternative) the British navy that made it possible”.

However if we consider the actions which lie behind Wentworth’s fortune we can see that he embodies a much more physical, daring and traditional military masculinity than any of Austen’s previous heroes. In fact there is an air of glamour and derring-do about Captain Wentworth that makes him quite unique amongst Austen’s heroes. As Jocelyn Harris argues:

What needs to be addressed is the sheer glamour of frigates and their captains, whose exploits [...] were keenly followed in the newspapers. Typically they fought single-ship actions, being licensed by the Admiralty to ‘cruise against the enemy and take, sink, or burn their shipping [...] as opportunity offers’. Thus when Wentworth talks about the money he made in the Laconia [...] he refers to their quasi-piratical liberty to prey on enemy shipping.

Capturing enemy ships on the high seas is a far cry from Fitzwilliam Darcy’s stewardship of the family estate and maintenance of the family library.

Tim Fulford’s work on masculinity in this period suggests Nelson’s battle-worn body came to exemplify wartime manliness, scarred by heroism and battle. Physical perfection and masculine beauty were trumped by bodily imperfections which evidenced his heroism and spirit of adventure. “His body, mutilated by many battles

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28 Sales, Representations of Regency England, 183.
30 Harris, A Revolution Almost Beyond Expression, 94.
in which he had exposed himself to fire, was proof of a manliness defined by the ability to command himself and others.\textsuperscript{31} This championing of battle-scarred masculinity can be discerned in \textit{Persuasion} in the form of the naval characters whose looks have been adversely affected by their time at sea. Sir Walter sees the “deplorable” looking Admiral Baldwin as a typical example of naval looks: “his face the colour of mahogany, rough and rugged to the last degree” (P 22). Captain Harville features as a positive example of masculinity whose body has been maimed by the action of the war. Having said that, the novel is not quite ready to present its hero as battle-scarred; Captain Wentworth is portrayed as still dashing and handsome despite his naval adventures.

Nevertheless, only the idle gentry in this novel value fashionable appearance above more practical attributes. In keeping with its disdain for shallow appearances, \textit{Persuasion}, like \textit{Emma}, rates refined, polished manners less highly than Austen’s earlier works. The novel draws a distinction between those who value the veneer of refined manners and those less impressed by appearances. Anne recognises that Admiral Croft’s manners “were not quite of the tone to suit Lady Russell”, but they “delight” Anne; “[h]is goodness of heart and simplicity of character were irresistible” (P 103-104). Lady Russell is a much more sensible representative of the gentry than Sir Walter, but she still has “prejudices on the side of ancestry” (P 15) and the novel demonstrates that her inaccurate judgements of character stem from the emphasis she puts on manners and etiquette. William Walter Elliot’s smooth behaviour charms and deceives her: “because Mr. Elliot’s manners had precisely pleased her in their propriety and correctness, their general politeness and suavity, she had been too quick in receiving them as the certain result of the most correct opinions and well regulated mind”. This eventually forces her “to admit that she had been pretty completely wrong” (P 200). In some of Austen’s earlier works, men who lacked refined manners and a polished gentlemanly appearance are depicted as uncouth and yobbish: John Thorpe is one example. In \textit{Persuasion}, these exterior attributes are connected with the leisured gentry such as Sir Walter and William Walter who are presented in an unsympathetic light in the text. The positive treatment of characters such as Admiral Croft demonstrates that unaffected decency and a commitment to duty and professionalism in society are more important than pretty manners.

\textsuperscript{31} Fulford, \textit{Romanticism and Masculinity}, 6.
Meritocracy in *Persuasion*

*Persuasion* celebrates meritocracy and champions a talented, industrious young man in Captain Wentworth. The novel glosses over the fact that the navy is not a truly meritocratic system, largely ignoring the role which patronage plays in establishing naval careers. However, in contrast to the landed systems with which it is compared in the novel, the navy certainly rewards merit. The novel also explores another side to a competitive and meritocratic society. In this novel masculinity is associated with a proto-Darwinian belief in the survival of the fittest. Wentworth’s shadowy “other” in the text is Dick, the useless, pathetic son of the Musgroves who also joins the navy. Instead of distinguishing himself in his profession and amassing a fortune like Wentworth, Dick dies at sea:

The real circumstances of this pathetic piece of family history were, that the Musgroves had had the ill fortune of a very troublesome, hopeless son; and the good fortune to lose him before he reached his twentieth year; that he had been sent to sea, because he was stupid and unmanageable on shore; that he had been very little cared for at any time by his family, though quite as much as he deserved; seldom heard of, and scarcely at all regretted, when the intelligence of his death abroad had worked its way to Uppercross, two years before. (P 45-46)

The astonishing thing about how Dick Musgrove is presented in the text is the callous stance taken towards him by the narrative voice. The lack of sympathy shown to a hopeless young man who died in his youth is unlike anything else in Austen’s work. Dick is portrayed as “thick-headed, unfeeling, unprofitable”, having “never done any thing to entitle himself to more than the abbreviation of his name, living or dead” (P 46). When his mother Mrs Musgrove remembers her child, her “large fat sighings” (P 59) provoke amusement in the novel: “A large, bulky figure has as good a right to be in deep affliction, as the most graceful set of limbs in the world. But fair or not fair, there are unbecoming conjunctions, which reason will patronise in vain, – which taste cannot tolerate, – which ridicule will seize” (P 59). The presentation of Mrs Musgrove’s sorrow has the effect of robbing parental grief of its dignity, suggesting that Dick, “whom alive nobody had cared for” (P 59) is unworthy even of his mother’s tears.
This incident is constructed to compare the deceased Dick with the living Wentworth. Mrs Musgrove, observing Captain Wentworth in lively conversation suggests fondly “if it had pleased Heaven to spare my poor son, I dare say he would have been just such another by this time” (P 56). Even Anne can barely suppress a smile at the delusion of this belief, which only a mother’s tenderness and Mrs Musgrove’s stupidity could sustain. If the colonial is a space in which someone like Wentworth can prove his worth as a man and establish his fortune, it is also a space in which those who are weak can be overwhelmed. While the novel spends a great deal of time focusing on the positive attributes of meritocratic systems, the character of Dick Musgrove exemplifies the novel’s acceptance of the need for moral hazard in a meritocracy. This novel, dedicated to celebrating success, has little sympathy for those who fail.

*Persuasion* is also concerned with the difference between potential and results in a meritocratic organisation like the navy. While the action of the novel takes place in 1816, there are allusions to events of eight years previously, when Wentworth and Anne first embarked upon their relationship. At this point Wentworth is a “remarkably fine young man” with a great deal of “intelligence, spirit and brilliancy” (P 26) but he has yet to make his fortune. While Wentworth is “confident that he should soon be rich” (P 27), Lady Russell has a much more cautious outlook on his future prospects, seeing him as “a young man, who had nothing but himself to recommend him, and no hopes of attaining affluence, but in the chances of a most uncertain profession, and no connexions to secure even his farther rise in that profession” (P 27).

The text, via the medium of Wentworth himself, condemns Lady Russell for not appreciating Wentworth’s potential. However, there is another sense in which Lady Russell is perfectly justified in taking this view. The kind of heroism which *Persuasion* exemplifies is dependent on results (and indeed survival!), not potential. As Duckworth suggests, Wentworth himself could be accused of not understanding the fact that his own expectations and belief in himself are not worth much in a
society which judges upon results: “Wentworth has the fault of trusting too implicitly in his own prior conceptions”.32

While Anne falls for Wentworth’s self-belief and ardour, his fundamental desirability as a man is connected to his achievements. A connection is drawn between Wentworth’s increased sexual desirability and his increased wealth that marks the difference between him as a desirable male in 1815 and eight years previously. Jill Heydt-Stevenson draws attention to a scene towards the end of the novel in which Anne, travelling with Lady Russell in Bath, glimpses Wentworth across the street. Lady Russell’s antipathy towards Wentworth was a major reason for the abandoning of the marriage eight years previously, and as Anne is contemplating reunion with Wentworth, she is anxious to solicit Lady Russell’s opinion. However, Lady Russell refuses to acknowledge that she has seen Wentworth and focuses her attentions instead on curtains. She is searching for “the handsomest and best hung of any in Bath”, which Lady Alicia and Mrs Frankland told her about the previous evening. As Heydt-Stevenson suggests:

The event functions as a displacement of Lady Russell’s earlier rejection of Wentworth – his poverty prevented her from seeing his intrinsic worth; here again, she cannot see him because she fixes her eyes on the literal materials (curtains) – those that are the handsomest and best hung of any curtains in Bath – which function as a metonym for her fixation on material wealth.33

Heydt-Stevenson argues that the curtains, “handsome and best hung”, act as a displacement for Wentworth, whose body she is contemplating at the time. The passage connects Wentworth’s sexual prowess with material wealth. Now that Wentworth has made his fortune, Lady Russell can, at least on a subconscious level, appreciate his qualities as a sexual partner.

One of the novel’s most important images signifies potential very clearly, though within the novel it is used to symbolise something else entirely. Wentworth uses the symbol of a nut to signify characters of “decision and firmness”. The nut is “beautiful” and “glossy” and “blessed with original strength, has outlived all the

32 Duckworth, Improvement of the Estate, 275.
storms of autumn. Not a puncture, not a weak spot anywhere" (P 74). The symbolism of the nut is used by Wentworth to condemn Anne for concluding their relationship eight years previously. Anne was persuaded by Lady Russell to set aside her feelings for Wentworth and he interprets this as a lack of decisiveness, a weakness in Anne’s character. “My first wish for all, whom I am interested in, is that they should be firm” (P 74), Wentworth says to Louisa Musgrove. Wentworth’s belief that he will realise his own destiny is certainly firm, and because his potential is realised, he blames Anne for not showing the same confidence and marrying him at that point. However, considering the further implications of the image of the nut, it is very possible that Austen may have been using the symbol to comment on Wentworth’s own situation. The nut might symbolise firmness for Wentworth, but it also signifies potential, the seed that has not yet grown into a tree. Austen may be using this symbol to comment on Wentworth’s position as well as Anne’s. It is certainly notable that Wentworth uses the nut to condemn Anne for not having sufficient faith in him, when the nut is also symbolic of potential that has not yet been realised. Unrealised potential is exactly what Wentworth stood for eight years ago. While his story unfolds exactly how he intends - “[a]ll his sanguine expectations, all his confidence had been justified. His genius and ardour had seemed to foresee and to command his prosperous path” (P 29) - the novel also draws our attention to the role played by luck in the establishment of naval fortunes. Captain Harville does not have the same good fortune as Wentworth in the Mediterranean, so is unable to make more money following his triumph on the Laconia. While Wentworth’s confidence in his abilities is a positive character trait, Austen’s symbolism suggests it is presumptuous of him to expect others to gamble on his potential before it has been realised.

**Colonial and domestic spaces in Persuasion**

In *Mansfield Park* there is considerable anxiety about the gap between the domestic and the colonial, an issue explored in chapter three. Edward Said has analysed the problematic nature of the novel’s geographies, since it depicts an English estate which depends for its subsistence on a far-flung colonial island. In *Persuasion*, the gap between the domestic and the colonial is given its clearest expression in the form of a conversation between two married ladies, the much-travelled Mrs Croft and Mrs Musgrove, who has little or no conception of the outside world:
'I have crossed the Atlantic four times, and have been once to the East Indies, and back again; and only once, besides being in different places about home – Cork, and Lisbon, and Gibraltar. But I never went beyond the Streights – and never was in the West Indies. We do not call Bermuda or Bahama, you know, the West Indies'.

Mrs Musgrove had not a word to say in dissent; she could not accuse herself of having ever called them any thing in the whole course of her life. (P 61)

In *Mansfield Park*, anxiety surrounding the gap between the domestic and the colonial is never allayed. The conclusion of that novel remains geographically problematic because the English estate is still dependent on a colonial sugar plantation, the links to which are threatened by war with the French. However, *Persuasion* effectively closes this gap in its final lines, not by educating the Mrs Musgroves about the world beyond, but by relating the global space in which the navy is dominant back to the national role it plays, and emphasising new-found domesticity above all in the closing sentence:

[...T]he dread of a future war was all that could dim [Anne’s] sunshine. She gloried in being a sailor’s wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm, for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than its national importance. (P 203)

As Jocelyn Harris points out, in writing this passage Austen may have been influenced by an inscription she would have seen in Bath Abbey, Joseph Nollekens’s magnificent wall monument to Colonel Alexander Champion: “Not less adorned, exalted, and endear’d by domestic Virtues, than by professional Abilities”. This inscription suggests that the emphasis of the navy’s domestic credentials as its members returned to shore was an important element of the post-war national discourse.

While the navy is obviously associated with England’s adventures and triumphs in the colonial sphere, the novel goes to great lengths to emphasise the domestic virtues of

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34 Harris, *A Revolution Almost Beyond Expression*, 85.
the profession. Austen portrays the naval characters as being equally comfortable, happy and useful at home and abroad. In this way, they represent an English masculinity that has won plaudits for bravery and skill abroad, but is also characterised by its exemplary behaviour in a domestic setting.

Mrs Croft, a beacon of sense in the novel, describes her own happy marriage and the levels of domestic comfort which can be achieved within the confines of a naval vessel:

[N]othing can exceed the accommodations of a man of war [...] I can safely say, that the happiest part of my life has been spent on board a ship. While we were together, you know, there was nothing to be feared. (P 61)

While life at sea is not unpleasant, homecoming is a particularly important theme in the novel. In *Mansfield Park* there was anxiety about the English moving outward into lands and cultures unknown; in *Persuasion* there is comfort in the fact that they have returned home. The consequence of this homecoming is indicated in the opening chapters which disclose the search by the Crofts for a permanent habitation on their return to England, and their gradual establishment in Kellynch Hall. Sir Walter’s lawyer Mr Shepherd alludes to the theme when he attempts to persuade his client to rent Kellynch. “This peace will be turning all our rich Navy Officers ashore. They will be all wanting a home” (P 20). Austen’s employment of the word home rather than house carries connotations of domesticity and the return to one’s native land. In *Persuasion*, the colonial has its homecoming.

Once ensconced in Kellynch Hall the Crofts embark upon the improvement of the domestic environment, small improvements which presumably Sir Walter never troubled himself to undertake, such as mending the laundry-door. Admiral Croft describes the work: “We told you about the laundry-door, at Uppercross. That has been a very great improvement. The wonder was, how any family upon earth could bear with the inconvenience of its opening as it did, so long! – You will tell Sir Walter what we have done, and that Mr Shepherd thinks it the greatest improvement the house ever had. Indeed, I must do ourselves the justice to say, that the few alterations we have made have been all very much for the better” (P 104). If Admiral Croft has made the colonies a secure space for England on the world stage, he also
demonstrates his commitment to making the domestic space as comfortable and convenient as possible.

However Captain Harville is the most touching example of domesticated masculinity in the novel. When the assorted Musgrove, Wentworth and Hayter party arrive at Lyme Regis, they are entertained by Captain Harville and his wife, whose instinct towards hospitality is greater than their pockets can afford. Anne finds a “bewitching charm” in “a degree of hospitality so uncommon, so unlike the usual style of give and take invitations” (P 83). The Harvilles have invited the party to dine, an offer which they refuse, but when Anne visits their accommodation she sees that their desire to be hospitable is so strong that it has overridden practicality. “[S]he found rooms so small as none but those who invite from the heart could think capable of accommodating so many” (P 83).

Anne is touched by Captain Harville’s attempts to make the best of his rented rooms and create a comfortable and personalised domestic space. She is affected by the sight of the “ingenious contrivances” and “nice arrangements” which Captain Harville has employed to “turn the actual space to the best possible account, to supply the deficiencies of lodging-house furniture, and defend the windows and doors against the winter storms to be expected” (P 83). Captain Harville’s skill and creativity are also demonstrated in his living space. Anne notices “some few articles of a rare species of wood, excellently worked up” (P 83). This picture of the domestic space also acknowledges and incorporates the colonial in the examples of artefacts “curious and valuable from all the distant counties Captain Harville had visited” (P 83). In this episode, the constituent parts of Captain Harville’s character: professionalism, industry, the domestic and the colonial, are all combined and expressed in the description of his living quarters. For Anne this constitutes something “more than amusing [...] connected as it all was with his profession, the fruit of its labours, the effect of its influence on his habits, the picture of repose and domestic happiness it presented, made it to her a something more, or less, than gratification” (P 83).

In her presentation of Wentworth as hero, Austen emphasises his domestic attributes in addition to his military prowess. Jocelyn Harris notes that this is where Austen’s portrayal of Wentworth parts company with Nelson. While Nelson’s bravery and skill on the battlefield was exemplary, his behaviour within the domestic space was
much less so. Nelson’s very public affair with Emma Hamilton scandalised the nation. As Harris suggests, the adulterous admiral is no example of the “domestic virtues” lauded in the last sentence of her novel.\(^{35}\) Wentworth’s declaration of love and commitment to Anne is the one of most romantic incidents in all of Austen’s fiction. Against the backdrop of a conversation on the constancy of male and female love between Anne and Captain Harville, Wentworth writes:

\[\text{I can listen no longer in silence. I must speak to you by such means as are within my reach. You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope. Tell me not that I am too late, that such precious feelings are gone forever. I offer myself to you again with a heart even more your own, than when you almost broke it eight years and a half ago. Dare not say that man forgets sooner than woman, that his love has an earlier death. I have loved none but you. Unjust I may have been, weak and resentful I have been, but never inconstant […] You do believe that there is true attachment and constancy among men. Believe it to be most fervent, most undeviating in F.W. (P 191)}\]

This passionate plea, written outside of the constraints of Austen’s narrative voice, has no equivalent in her other works, and reveals Captain Wentworth to be the perfect amalgamation of classical, physical heroism and the domesticated, educated, honourable gentleman. Interestingly, in the context of comparisons with Nelson, it is Wentworth’s constancy that is emphasised, his commitment to no-one but Anne.

**Old England versus new**

Finally, *Persuasion* signifies a vision of an “old” versus a “new” England via its architecture and buildings. The Musgrove family embody this generational shift from an older version of England to a newer one very effectively: “the Musgroves, like their houses, were in a state of alteration, perhaps of improvement. The mother and father were in old English style, and the young people in the new” (P 37-38). Austen employs the domestic residences of the older and younger branches of the Musgrove family in a symbolic fashion to comment on this paradigm shift in English society, explicitly contrasting the “old” and the “new” English style:

\(^{35}\) Harris, *A Revolution Almost Beyond Expression*, 91.
Uppercross was a moderate-sized village, which a few years back had been completely in the old English style; containing only two houses superior in appearance to those of the yeomen and labourers, – the mansion of the squire, with its high walls, great gates, and old trees, substantial and unmodernised – and the compact, tight parsonage, enclosed in its own neat garden, with a vine and a pear-tree trained round its casements; but upon the marriage of the young squire, it had received the improvement of a farm-house elevated into a cottage for his residence; and Uppercross Cottage, with its veranda, French windows, and other prettinesses, was quite as likely to catch the traveller’s eye, as the more consistent and considerable aspect and premises of the Great House, about a quarter of a mile farther on. (P 34)

If we look at the contrast between the mansion house and the cottage in Uppercross we see while the mansion house is defensive and insular, represented by “high walls” and “great gates”, the architectural features of Uppercross cottage suggest wider vistas and views. In Austen’s unfinished fragment Sanditon we observe something very similar. Mr Parker’s new residence in Sanditon, has “low French windows” in the drawing room in addition to an “ample Venetian window”, a terrace and a balcony (S 340). Windows, doors and verandas are architectural features of the domestic residence which mark the connection between the home and the world beyond. In the case of French doors, Venetian windows and verandas, these architectural features overtly reference the world beyond England.

Persuasion depicts an England in which the colonial and the domestic exist in conjunction with each other. In this depiction of the modern domestic residence, we see the symbolic invocation of the world beyond. Franco Moretti argues that in the work of Walter Scott, for example, metaphors increase as one moves closer to the border.36 He suggests that we see something very similar in a range of other novels, although these borders are seldom geographical entities:

[U]sually, it belongs to a scale of experience for which the term ‘geography’ is wholly inappropriate. The staircase of the Gothic, the window in *Wuthering Heights*, the threshold in Dostoevsky, the pit in *Germin*al.\(^{37}\)

I suggest that Austen’s use of windows, doors, terraces and balconies function in exactly the same way: they act as metaphors for a new England, symbolically opening out to the world. The England of *Persuasion* is a nation that has established its place as a world power and this has been facilitated by a newly emergent class of men, characterised by their ability and energy rather than their inherited property. These naval men are appropriate models for this new England as, unlike the Mrs Musgroves of this world, they understand and are comfortable with England’s colonial dimension. As Fraiman argues this is in contrast to Sir Walter Elliot and his daughter Elizabeth who “are unable to see beyond the bit of land they happen to inhabit, as if its contours and horizons, its interests and intrigues, were the only thing in the world”.\(^{38}\) The naval characters are more appropriate role models for this new England, not least because they combine their knowledge of colonial sphere with a love of home and the domestic.

In the opening chapters of *Persuasion*, Austen contrasts two different kinds of English masculinity, the landed and the naval, and compares the performance of these men within their respective spaces, the estate and the colonial. The symbolic discourse of *Persuasion* suggests that landed masculinity has become static and blinkered, whereas the naval professional classes, above all in the form of Wentworth, are virile, energetic and far-sighted. The novel considers how the colonial space gives a man of ability and energy such as Wentworth opportunities to capitalise on his talents and establish himself as a desirable romantic hero. While meritocracy is treated as a laudable system in the novel, there are negative aspects to it and these are acknowledged in the form of the character of Dick Musgrove. If the gap between the domestic and the colonial is a disquieting idea in *Mansfield Park*, *Persuasion* depicts an England that is finally comfortable with its position on the world stage. The international space, as symbolised in homecoming heroes as well as architecture, can be welcomed in the domestic sphere. The gap between the domestic and the colonial is effectively closed via the naval characters, who are shown to be equally


comfortable and useful within the domestic space of the home as on the colonial stage.
Conclusion

Space, place and English masculinity

The purpose of this work has been to examine Austen’s depiction of English masculinity through the lens of space and place. In order to understand English masculinity, it is helpful to understand England’s, and Englishmen’s, position in the world. The lens of space and place is a particularly useful approach as it enables us to build up a multi-dimensional view of the subject. From an analysis of Austen’s depiction of masculinity within the context of the estate, to regional and community-based masculinity, to national constructions of masculinity, to English masculinity as it operates within a European, colonial and finally the global sphere, the spaces which surround Austen’s male characters say much about the men. The resulting picture is a fuller delineation of what English masculinity means in Austen’s work.

The principal types of masculinity on which I have concentrated are military masculinity, explored in the context of the Napoleonic Wars with France, fought in both Europe and the colonial space; colonial masculinity, considered in the light of England’s changing position on the world stage; national constructions of English masculinity in opposition to a European “other”; and English masculinity based around the roles and responsibilities of the estate holder. The lens of space and place also captures other forms of masculinity less clearly connected with a specific place, for example masculinities constructed around domestic or professional existence, and these are more briefly discussed in this thesis. Critical approaches to masculinity in Austen’s work, where they have reflected upon space and place, have tended to focus on single spaces as a means by which we can consider Austen’s construction of English masculinity. In the introduction I discussed Lionel Trilling’s rhapsodic response to Austen’s presentation of the landed estate, the “noble” life appropriate to the “great and beautiful houses with the ever-remembered names”.1 Alistair M. Duckworth’s 1971 work, The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen’s Novels, established the estate as a space in which Austen explores Englishness and English masculinity. His work has been enormously influential, if contested, and I have referred to it throughout my argument. Duckworth prompted a number of critics

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1 Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 73.
to read Austen as a Burkean conservative in the light of her presentation of the English male within the estate. More recently, attempts have been made to read Austen’s male characters in relation to other spaces, and these have been considered in detail as they apply to the specific arguments in the body of this work. Brian Southam’s *Jane Austen and the Navy* examines English masculinity in the context of the Napoleonic Wars and the spaces of Europe and the colonies. Edward Said’s reading of *Mansfield Park* in *Culture and Imperialism* established the colonies as an appropriate space in which to understand Sir Thomas Bertram.

In the course of my argument, I have suggested that the best way to understand English masculinity in Austen’s fiction is to read it within the context of the variety of spaces explored both within and across the novels, not exclusively in relation to a single space, as many critics have chosen to do. For example, within *Emma*, Knightley’s position as a quintessential English hero is established in the context of his estate, but is more profoundly understood when we also read him in conjunction with other spaces, chiefly France and the Celtic fringe. This thesis will conclude by drawing some comparisons between the treatment of different kinds of masculinity across Austen’s oeuvre.

Different spaces across Austen’s novels facilitate different kinds of English masculinity. Fitzwilliam Darcy exemplifies a Christian, patriarchal, socially-conservative masculinity which takes inspiration from Samuel Richardson’s paragon of English virtue, Sir Charles Grandison. This style of masculinity is suitable for the space of the landed estate, as chapter two discussed. Captain Wentworth on the other hand represents a militaristic, adventurous, energetic masculinity which is expressed in the global sphere of the Napoleonic Wars. The comparison shows that Austen creates very different versions of English masculinity depending on the spaces in question. Darcy and Wentworth represent contrasting personalities and masculine attributes, particularly when considered in Burkean terms. Darcy is the embodiment of Burkean conservative values, whereas Wentworth personifies the exact opposite, being representative of the energy of ability without property, which Burke believed was the most dangerous threat to ordered society. Yet despite their different masculine traits, within their respective novels and spaces both Darcy and Wentworth function as idealised romantic heroes and embody English values.
The dynamic spaces of Austen’s world

The spaces and places explored within Austen’s novels cannot be described as static entities. Critics such as Claire Lamont and Michael Rossington in their work *Romanticism’s Debatable Lands* draw attention to the fluidity of borders during the Romantic period. Napoleonic’s armies crossed and redefined national borders. Imperial boundaries expanded. Britain absorbed Ireland in 1801. During the Napoleonic Wars England was threatened by French invasion and even national annihilation, but following British victories against Napoleon the nation emerged as the foremost world power. The British empire underwent great expansion at the same time as England redefined its identity within the context of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The changing nature of English borders and England’s position in the world has an impact on the kinds of masculinities featured in particular novels.

This is certainly not to suggest that Austen adopts a teleological approach in her novels; after all, there was no teleology in the geopolitical vicissitudes of Austen’s times. The outcome of the wars with France, for example, was far from certain during much of Austen’s writing career. If anything, the fluid nature of space and place across the novels highlights a historical and political context, rather than a teleological trajectory, as space and place is a major way of mediating historical and political change. Different attitudes towards and expectations of different kinds of masculinities can be discerned in different novels. Because (changing) representations of space and place are a key way of mediating (changing) historical and political contexts, the lens of space and place is again enlightening.

To take one comparison, there is a huge difference between Austen’s depiction of military masculinity in *Pride and Prejudice* and in *Persuasion*. Both use enemy France as a space against which to define military masculinity, but England’s relationship with this space radically alters between the novels, and there is a corresponding change in the military masculinity the space engenders. In *Pride and Prejudice* the militia is portrayed as debauched and feminised; in *Persuasion* naval

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masculinity is characterised by its industry and utility. War with France is in the background of *Pride and Prejudice* and the militia is represented as an inadequate last line of domestic defence. *Persuasion* was written and set in the aftermath of victory and celebrates naval/military masculinity. The novel captures the triumphant mood which followed the victory of 1814 and members of the naval contingent are hailed as heroes for their role in securing the peace. Anne lauds “The Navy […] who have done so much for us” (P 21).

Austen’s presentation of idealised landed masculinity also changes across the novels. *Pride and Prejudice* offers an unambiguously positive exemplification of how landed English masculinity can function in practice. Darcy represents a perfect Burkean model. His family has been established in Pemberley for generations and as proprietor of the estate he takes his duties seriously, from honouring his antecedents to protecting his family and governing his servants. However in *Emma*, traditional occupations such as the maintenance and upkeep of the estate and veneration for one’s ancestors are less important than professionalism and utility. Mr Knightley’s role encompasses gentleman farmer as well as resident landowner, a function not seen in Mr Darcy. Between these novels, Austen wrote *Mansfield Park*, in which idleness and lack of purpose amongst the landed gentry is portrayed as potentially dangerous to the safety of the nation. Mr Knightley could be interpreted as Austen’s response to the incipient dangers of leisure amongst the landed classes. In Mr Knightley she redefines landed English masculinity in relation to a changed version of the estate in which industry and labour play a prominent role.

**Austen and England – A national masculinity**

The introduction to this work referred to G.E. Mitton’s designation of Austen as the “most thoroughly English” of writers as a starting point for the discussion. Austen is associated with the space of England, particularly outside of academia and in what Roger Sales refers to as the “heritage industry”. In the introduction I considered the extent to which Austen’s connection with an English space was established via non-textual elements, particularly the marketing of Austen’s work by her family after her death. The topic of English nationalism is beyond the scope of this study and I do not

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attempt to make a case for Austen as a nationalist writer. However, there are certainly moments in Austen’s novels in which she engages with ideas about and definitions of Englishness. This is most apparent in *Northanger Abbey* and *Emma*. For the purposes of this work, it is significant that in both novels Englishness and English space are clearly connected to masculinity. In *Northanger Abbey*, Henry is defending his father from Catherine’s accusations when he delivers his famous oration on the behaviour to be expected of an Englishman, which includes the line “Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians” (NA 159). In *Emma*, Austen presents a patriotic homage to Donwell Abbey through the narrator’s voice which can be interpreted as a homage to the man and the estate, his natural space: “It was a sweet view – sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort” (E 176). In both of these novels, English masculinity is constructed in opposition to a European “other”. Henry’s speech depicts England as a Protestant, rational, modern, law-abiding place. Absorbing Henry’s lesson, Catherine concludes that England is all of these things, placing her faith in the “laws of the land and the manners of the age”. Italy, Switzerland and the South of France are by contrast “fruitful in horrors” (NA 160). In *Emma*, Mr Knightley, ensconced in the environs of Donwell Abbey, is constructed as English in opposition to France, as symbolically represented by Frank Churchill.

However it is important to remember that *Northanger Abbey* does not actually support the version of Englishness which Henry expounds. Henry may be affronted by Catherine’s (mistaken) suspicions about the criminal capabilities of his father, but the novel does not support a positive representation of English masculinity constructed around modernity and rationalism. The General is unquestionably committed to modernity and technology in *Northanger Abbey*, but instead of illustrating his civilised status, it exposes his greed. In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen’s engagement with English national myths and English self-perception is ambiguous. In *Emma*, Austen’s overt consideration of Englishness must be understood differently. In Mr Knightley, Austen is not playing with ideas about English identity, but evoking them powerfully for her own ends. Mr Knightley represents English masculinity defined in opposition to French masculinity as embodied by Frank Churchill. He is hardworking and industrious rather than leisured and indolent. His manners are gentlemanly and
considerate, not elaborate and feminine. His appearance is pleasing, but he is not vain or preening. Mr Knightley is Austen’s most deliberately English hero and it is significant that she suggests a Saxon provenance for him through his name and his association with St George. In this way Austen further distances Knightley from France and French influence, by associating him with the Saxons rather than the Normans. Knightley’s Englishness is also explored through the other spaces considered within the novel. A posited relationship between him and Jane Fairfax can be read in terms of a British marriage plot novel, with Knightley representing England while Jane embodies the Celtic fringe. In Knightley, Austen consciously creates a positive, deep-rooted and industrious version of landed English masculinity in contrast to fears expressed in Mansfield Park and Emma itself concerning French influence on the English gentry/aristocracy.

**Austen and Empire – Wealth creation**

Empire is present as an implicit space within the majority of Austen’s novels. Edward Said’s commentary on Mansfield Park in Culture and Imperialism focused attention on empire as an important space within Austen’s fiction, examining “the importance of an empire to the situation at home”. For Austen’s characters, empire is a space associated with money-making, from the nabobs, gold mohrs and palanquins of Sense and Sensibility, to the sugar plantations of Mansfield Park, and the looting of French ships in colonial waters in Persuasion. This connection between the imperial space and wealth is further demonstrated in Sanditon. The Griffiths are explicitly identified as a “rich west Indian [family] from surry [sic]”. Mr Parker is delighted to welcome them to the seaside resort of Sanditon because of the cash they will bring:

‘A West Indy Family […] that sounds well. That will bring Money – No people spend more freely, I believe, than W. Indians’ observed Mr Parker.

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5 *Pride and Prejudice* is notable for the absence of the colonial space; it is alluded to only in passing in Northanger Abbey and Emma.


The imperial space facilitates wealth creation and as such it provides opportunities for male characters who have no provision within the landed system to establish fortunes. Empire is a space associated with younger sons, the disinherited, the property-less. Money can be made in the imperial space, whether this takes the form of commerce, embodied by institutions like the East India Company, or the wartime exploits of the naval professionals of *Persuasion*. In *Persuasion* and to a lesser extent *Sense and Sensibility*, the colonies are more meritocratic spaces than the aristocratic landed systems, rewarding inherent rather than inherited masculine values, as chapters two and five discussed.

In Austen’s work, England’s changing position within the global hierarchy of nations can be compared to the differing treatment of types of English masculinity, particularly in the colonial space, where the changes were most keenly felt. In *Persuasion*, for example, written in the aftermath of the Treaty of Paris, the space of empire is associated with a sense of English self-confidence within the world sphere. This is in great contrast to the imperial space as it is represented in *Mansfield Park*. At this point, England is still at war with France, a fact reinforced by the presence of a French privateer which Sir Thomas encounters on his way home from Antigua. English dependency on empire to maintain its living standards creates a sense of anxiety within the colonial space. Sir Thomas can be seen to be weakened by his dependency on colonies; a space that he should own is in fact unsettled and out of his control.

**Austen and the Estate**

The estate is the primary space associated with Austen’s male characters, as mentioned above. A great deal of critical interpretation of the estate in Austen’s work is concerned with situating the author politically on either side of the “war of ideas” of the 1790s. Through my reading of Austen’s men and their primary space, I suggest that Austen does not take up a clearly defined position. I agree with Roger Sales’s argument that: “there may be debates within the texts themselves between these two positions”. However, I further suggest that reading the space of the estate purely in the context of the debates of the 1790s is limiting. Two examples suffice here: Sales reads Tom

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Bertram’s period of control at Mansfield during Sir Thomas’s sojourn in Antigua as a Regency period for the estate, drawing comparisons with the English Regency of 1811-1820. *Emma*, which features Mr Knightley’s overtly English estate, Donwell Abbey, can be read in the context of the ‘British marriage plot’ novels of the 1800s/1810s.

A wealth of masculine behaviour is explored within the space of the landed estate. Austen presents paragons of landed masculinity in Fitzwilliam Darcy and Mr Knightley. They can be contrasted with estate owners who have abandoned their duties, such as Sir Walter Elliot, or who are motivated by avarice and self interest like General Tilney and John Dashwood. However, Austen also considers the impact which the structures of landed inheritance have on other men who must operate within these systems. If we consider Austen’s younger men, who are heirs-in-waiting to landed estates, we see that the landed system has the capacity to weaken and feminise them. Austen often portrays these young men at the mercy of wealthy, capricious relatives. Willoughby’s inheritance is in the hands of his elderly cousin Mrs Smith. Frank Churchill is within the control of his dictatorial grandmother. In the later novels in particular, Austen highlights the dangers inherent in the leisured, purposeless lifestyles led by young heirs such as Tom Bertram and Frank Churchill. Such an existence is portrayed as poor training for the responsibilities and duties of the estate proprietor. Austen suggests that the encouragement of such behaviour amongst the young English gentry is potentially damaging to the country. While landed gentlemen such as Darcy and Knightley are among Austen’s most positive representations of English masculinity, characters such as Willoughby and Frank Churchill exemplify the emasculating effect which the structures of landed inheritance can have on those who are waiting to assume control of their estates.

Finally, in Austen’s last novels and the unfinished fragment *Sanditon* we see a movement away from the estate as a space in which to explore English masculinity. There is a suggestion of this trend in *Emma*. The heroine does not move from her father’s house to her husband’s house on marriage at the end of the novel. Instead Mr Knightley comes to reside at Hartfield with the Woodhouses. At the novel’s close, the great estate, Donwell Abbey, is unoccupied (although there is a strong suggestion that this is a temporary measure). *Persuasion* makes a radical departure from the
estate. Wentworth is the first of Austen’s heroes to be completely disconnected from the estate; Anne the first of her heroines to have “no Uppercross-hall before her, no landed estate” (P 201). In chapter five I considered whether this departure should be interpreted as Austen moving away from landed, aristocratic masculinity as a model for Englishness and towards some more meritocratic system. The sense of temporality evident in Persuasion, coupled with the novel’s symbolic characterisation of the gentry as inert and static seems to suggest this. The unfinished narrative of Austen’s last novel, Sanditon, also enacts a movement away from the estate. However, in the absence of a plan for the plot of Sanditon, the spaces and places of its closing stages are undefined and it becomes unsafe to speculate further. What is clear, as this thesis has shown, is that the changing nature of space and place in Austen’s writing continues to exert a strong influence on the masculinity which is fundamental to an understanding of her canonical novels.
Appendices

I  Maps of the settings of Austen’s novels
II  Map of Austen’s global spaces
III  Map of the settings of Gothic novels, 1770-1840
IV  Illustration of rafts built for the French invasion of England
Appendix I

Maps of the settings of Austen’s novels

Appendix I locates the geographical settings of Austen’s six completed novels on the map of England.
1. Bath: The setting for the first half of the novel.

2. Wiltshire: The Morlands’ family home.

1. Sussex: Norland Park, the Dashwood family estate is located here.

2. Devonshire: Barton Cottage, the Dashwoods’ new home is located here.


4. London: Elinor and Marianne visit London with Mrs Jennings.

5. Plymouth: Edward Ferris and Lucy Steele get engaged here.

6. Bath: Colonel Brandon’s ward Eliza is abducted here by Willoughby.

7. Somerset: Cleveland Park is situated here.
Pride and Prejudice

1. Hertfordshire: The setting for Longbourn and Netherfield.

2. Derbyshire: Darcy’s estate Pemberley is located here.


5. Kent: Rosings, the estate of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and the home of Mr Collins is here.


7. Newcastle: Following their marriage, Lydia and Wickham are “banished” here.

8. Scotland: Lydia and Wickham are believed to have eloped to Gretna Green.
1. Northamptonshire: The location of Mansfield Park.
2. Portsmouth: Fanny Price comes from Portsmouth and returns there in the course of the novel.
3. Isle of Wight: Fanny has a special association with “The island”.
5. Norfolk: Henry Crawford’s estate is located here.
6. Cornwall: Mr Yates comes to Mansfield from the Ecclesford estate in Cornwall.
7. Newmarket: Tom becomes ill while staying here.
8. Scotland: Julia and Mr Yates elope to Scotland to get married.
1. Surrey: Highbury is located here.

2. Bristol: Augusta Hawkins comes from here.

3. Yorkshire: The estates that Frank Churchill will inherit are in Yorkshire.

4. Weymouth: This is the setting for Frank and Jane's romance.

5. Northern Ireland: Jane's friends the Dixons have an estate here.

1. Somersetshire: Kellynch Hall is located here.

2. Bath: The Elliots move to Bath.

3. Lyme Regis: This is the site of Louisa Musgrove’s accident.
Appendix II

Map of Austen’s global spaces


2. Radcliffe’s southern European settings: the south of France, Italy, Switzerland, mentioned in *Northanger Abbey*.

3. The East Indies: Colonel Brandon spent time in the army here in *Sense and Sensibility*.

4. Napoleonic France: Austen’s writing career corresponds with a prolonged period of war with France. The war is alluded to in *Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, Emma* and *Persuasion*.

5. Antigua: the setting of Sir Thomas’s sugar plantation in *Mansfield Park*. He journeys here in the course of the novel.

6. Scotland and Ireland, the Celtic fringe: *Emma*’s Jane Fairfax has friends in Ireland and symbolic associations with Scotland.

7. The East Indies, South Africa, the West Indies and the Mediterranean: scenes of naval battle which are mentioned in *Persuasion*. 
Appendix III

Map of the settings of Gothic novels, 1770-1840

The following map is a reproduction from Franco Moretti’s *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*. The dots indicate the geographical settings of gothic tales in the period 1770-1840. Moretti describes the trajectory of settings over the period:

In general, Gothic stories were initially set in Italy and France; moved north, to Germany around 1800; and then north again, to Scotland, after 1820. Except for one tale located in Renaissance London, no other story takes place inside Austen’s English space.

Appendix IV

Illustration of rafts built for the French invasion of England

The following illustration shows “The real View of the French Raft as intended for the Invasion of England. Drawn from the Original at Brest”.

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