This essay seeks to answer two questions: how does Fanny Price, the heroine of Jane Austen’s 1814 novel *Mansfield Park*, experience imperialism, and what might Fanny’s experience, and the novel’s ways of representing it, tell readers about the novel’s, Austen’s, or Britain’s relation to empire itself? In making the question of experience and its representation the focus of this essay and the novel it discusses, I depart from the recent critical orthodoxy that has made it difficult to read *Mansfield Park* other than as a synecdoche for contemporary imperial history. In so doing, however, I aim not so much to reclaim the novel from postcolonial approaches as to propose methods for investigating imperial questions that take into renewed account this novel’s specifically Romantic character.

Edward Said’s most significant contribution to the study of *Mansfield Park* was the respatialization of a novel that had, as Said put it, been read as ‘constituted mainly by temporality’, and his insistence on the dynamic interconnectedness of transatlantic space. Yet in establishing Sir Thomas Bertram’s Mansfield Park estate in the geographic context of colonialism and plantation slavery, Said represented his approach as supplementary, even prosthetic, in character, a matter of giving voice to what Austen’s novel, like nineteenth-century Britain in general, had forgotten or failed to say about its imperial dependency. As a result of this essentially corrective stance, a number of influential readers have responded by defending Austen against Said’s charges of inattention or complacency, most often by treating her domestic narrative as an extended metaphor for imperial injustice or suggesting that her characters’ forgetfulness of empire is an ironic rebuke to the Britain whose landed interests they represent.

Like Saree Makdisi, whose essay in this volume proposes a similar turn to the ‘psycho-affective’ dimension of Austen’s novel, I want to redirect
these debates away from Austen’s own geopolitical consciousness – the question of what she knew about empire, and when she knew it – towards the emotion and cognition of the heroine, Fanny Price. Indeed, before the 1990s *Mansfield Park* was most often read in a way that emphasized the protagonist’s subjectivity, and the atypically Romantic breadth of detail with which her psyche is represented in Austen’s novel. Unlike Makdisi, however, I will not suggest that a focus on the heroine’s affective experience is intrinsically at odds with a reading focused on what he calls ‘geoaesthetic questions’. Rather, the visible workings of the heroine’s understanding are what demarcate the place of empire in *Mansfield Park*, and they are represented, precisely, in terms that are simultaneously spatial and textual: geographical and literary-aesthetic. The novel’s detailed mapping of the movements of a consciousness as it mediates representations of empire and feels its own place in relation to them points to an arena within Romantic fiction more broadly where the representation of empire can be fruitfully observed and investigated.

Said’s questions of memory remain central to this discussion. The novel’s, or Austen’s, marginalization of imperial questions is, as Said suggests, a consequence of forgetting or deliberate erasure, but the forgetfulness in question is Fanny Price’s and not Austen’s. Moreover, and this is my primary focus here, it is not completely successful. The relation of *Mansfield Park* to empire can be charted by revisiting Fanny’s processes of remembering and by tracing the novel’s detailed anatomy of her memory’s failures and successes. That Fanny is weak of memory, and that retentive recollection is the chief index of intelligence and learning at Mansfield Park, are claims made very early in the novel by members of the Bertram family. Before long, however, Fanny trades forgetfulness and a head apparently empty of rote information for a mind that seems, however hard it tries, to be unable to forget. Once unable to recall the accumulated details of the schoolroom, Fanny now finds herself haunted by the recollection of the process by which she comes to learn them: by her passage from an impecunious Portsmouth childhood to Mansfield Park and the education that prepares the landed class for participation – imaginative as much as economic – in Britain’s imperial enterprise.

If, as I am suggesting, Fanny’s aristocratic achievements are troubled by her memories of class subordination that persist despite all efforts to suppress them, then it is worth investigating the ways in which Fanny’s history enables her collection of, and sympathy with, the historical remainders, the costs and consequences of imperial triumph. At the same time, it
is the proposition of this essay that Austen’s rendering of Fanny’s cognitive and affective processes, her experience, memory, and sympathy, not only testifies to the reliance of empire abroad on class distinctions at home but actually serves as a record of the processes of reading, thinking, feeling and forgetting that make imperialism possible.

In their essay in this volume, Jill Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman characterize the Romantic novel as a form of writing whose ‘heterogeneity […] of approaches to the real’, and the genre mixing that serves as its textual register, provoke its readers ‘to understand different kinds of communal imagining’. In keeping with this observation, this essay examines the intersections between textual form and human cognition in Austen’s portrait of Fanny and her education. It argues that print culture, and the mixing of genres that would later give way to separate disciplines of geography, imperial history and travel writing, provide Fanny’s memory with the content that Austen’s novel will anatomize.

First, I propose that an apt memory for the political organization of space, the proper object of schoolroom geographic learning, is a key index of imperial competence in the novel, a competence that is both a register and a product of socioeconomic privilege. Second, I trace Austen’s mapping of memory through metaphors of space that lay bare the historical content of spatial description and spatial experience. When Fanny looks at the Mansfield Park estate, she sees a museum where memories of her past are stored and an arena within which memory can be transcended by means of a picturesque imagination. The perspectival tension the novel establishes between these two ways of seeing defines Fanny’s memory as at once a crucial part and a characteristic, class-marked failure of imperial imagining. Third, I demonstrate that memory and imagination, like imperial space itself, are shown in Mansfield Park to be thoroughly mediated. Shaped and imprinted by print culture, Fanny’s cognition is marked, in particular, by the picturesque pamphlets that serve as the canonical texts of genteel geographical learning and by peripheral nationalist antiquarian texts that unsettle the orthodoxies of the British imperial landscape. The narrative of Fanny’s growth, and the representation of her memory, is haunted by the competing genres of imperial and anti-imperial nationalist geography, and by the even more troubling, conflicted historiography produced by the encounter between them.

It is in the representation of Fanny’s mind as a locus of empire and a product of print culture that a distinctively Romantic and distinctly critical account of British imperialism emerges in Mansfield Park: a process...
unfolding in national and personal experience, in imagination and affect as well as in history, and in the memories that alternately feed and haunt the heroine’s imaginings.

**Education**

*Mansfield Park* begins with an act of importation caught in a web of imperial connections and perceptions. Born to a family with more children than money, the ten-year-old Fanny Price is taken or sent – some readers say torn – from her Portsmouth home to make the ‘long journey’ to Mansfield Park.6 Moira Ferguson and Said have compared Fanny’s transportation to the contemporary traffic in slaves, Ferguson because of the lack of agency Fanny experiences at Mansfield and Said because she is ‘brought in […] and set to work’.7 In the eyes of her well-married aunt Lady Bertram and her plantation-owning husband, however, Fanny’s family, like the Bertrams’ Antigua plantations, is a provider of raw materials. The goal of her labours is what Lionel Trilling termed a ‘hygiene of the self’, for Fanny herself, as Makdisi also emphasizes, is the stuff on which the young Fanny works.8 She as closely resembles the imported produce as she does the labourer who processes and transforms it. And she is as much a local product as a source of imported labour, for it is both her kinship to the Bertram family and her distance and difference from them that motivates her importation.9 Her trajectory within England reproduces the completed circuit of Mansfield Park’s, and Britain’s, colonial trade: she is brought in to work and be worked on and readied to be sent out again. When Fanny is read metaphorically as an indentured colonial subject, she must also be read within a complex context that requires her to be simultaneously domestic and unfamiliar, at once alien and at home.

Fanny’s education at Mansfield Park confirms her ambiguous imperial status. Brought in by a scheme of her mother’s family, she becomes subject, alongside the Bertram daughters, to the discipline of the governess Miss Lee. The lessons are structured around the history of empires, Roman as well as British, and the systematic comprehension of space and the systems that order it, from the table of the elements to the geography of Europe.10 The self-discipline Fanny and her cousins are encouraged to cultivate belongs to an imperial self. At the same time, however, Fanny receives lessons that sustain her difference from her cousins and equate it with inferiority. In planning for her arrival, Sir Thomas Bertram balances
his desire to integrate her fully into the household with his need ‘to make her remember that she is not a Miss Bertram’.

The object of both educations is Fanny’s memory; their shared tool is her memory’s instruction. As an essential part of her adoption into her uncle’s family and into the imperial economy in which the Bertrams participate, Fanny’s memory training produces a consciousness in line with Homi Bhabha’s account of colonized subjectivity: ‘a difference that is almost the same, but not quite’.

The novel frames Fanny’s growth to maturity between two contrasting scenes, which introduce and recapitulate the imperial investments of Mansfield Park. The assessment of her inadequate geographical knowledge by Sir Thomas’s daughters begins the first volume and her informed discussion of the West Indian slave trade with her uncle introduces the second. The treatment of geography in these scenes, and in the representation of Fanny’s memory and its training throughout the rest of the novel, reveals suggestive parallels with contemporary discussions within and about the emerging discipline of geography, which were taking place in the periodical and pamphlet press, as well as in public lectures and scientific institutions, throughout the early nineteenth century.

As Felix Driver has shown in his history of the discipline, geography was in the process of diverging from the polite literature of tourism and travel. Practitioners in these fields of inquiry were negotiating the relations and bounds between them through two intersecting debates: on the necessity and propriety of expertise in each, the appropriate genres for geographical and tourist writing, and whether or not these genres should appeal to leisured but unlearned reading audiences, especially upper-class women; and on the relation of geography, its genres, and their newly defined groups of readers to the formation and development of empire.

Austen’s investigation of the effects of geographical reading and instruction on Fanny’s memory offers a broader comment on the role of a geographical education conducted through polite letters in maintaining the conventions of upper-class femininity and the relation of these conventions to the maintenance of British national and imperial competence. The inconsistencies evident within Fanny’s experience of geography, as within the contemporary field of geography itself, enact the complexity of Fanny’s imperial relations.

Space and its mastery, its techniques, and their genres are at issue from the moment of Fanny’s arrival at Mansfield Park. Her cousins waste no time in taking her measure as uncharted terrain, beginning with ‘a full survey of her face and her frock’ and ‘reflections on her size’ before...
assessing her potential as the designated colonizer of her own still-uncivili-
ized self.14 Their investigations document, and convey to Austen’s readers, a child remarkable only for an ‘awkward’ demeanour and a total ignorance of geography:

Fanny could read, work, and write, but she had been taught nothing more; and as her cousins found her ignorant of many things with which they had been long familiar, they thought her prodigiously stupid, and for the first two or three weeks were continually bringing some fresh report of it into the drawing-room. ‘Dear Mamma, only think, my cousin cannot put the map of Europe together – or my cousin cannot tell the principal Rivers in Russia – or she never heard of Asia Minor – or she does not know the difference between water-colours and crayons! – How strange! [...] Do you know, we asked her last night, which way she would go to get to Ireland; and she said, she should cross to the Isle of Wight. She thinks of nothing but the Isle of Wight, and she calls it the Island, as if there were no other island in the world.15

The apparent randomness of the areas of competency in which Fanny is examined and found wanting belies the systematic character of the education Maria and Julia Bertram expect, and which they themselves receive. Contemporary conduct writers such as James Fordyce include geographical learning – ‘VOYAGES and TRAVELS’ as well as ‘GEOG-
RAPHY’, for these categories have not yet become fully detached from each other – among the ‘pleasing’ arts such as drawing that, as part of femi-
nine education, ‘prevent many a folly, and many a sin which proceed from idleness’ and are ‘useful in conversation’.16 Such views of education come under ironic scrutiny in Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, in which Mr Collins, wielding Fordyce’s Sermons, is no more able than anyone else to prevent Lydia Bennet’s elopement.17

Although Julia and Maria Bertram both repeat the ‘folly’ of elopement in Mansfield Park, however, something more than Fordyce’s assumption that the ornamental guarantees the ethical is called into question by Austen’s ironic exit survey of the Bertram ‘plan of education’.18 While the testing of Fanny displays an overriding concern with accomplishments as indices of upper-class feminine learning, the list of tests makes clear that a sense of place and of global position are paramount among them. To be unable to tell Ireland from the Isle of Wight, or to discern the relations that unite Northampton to both within the map of Europe, is a climactic defect of knowledge far worse then a confusion among painting implements. Fanny’s cousin Edmund, in particular, works to remedy the deficit, recommending the latest narratives by official and imperial travellers and...
explorers, such as John Barrow’s edition of George, Earl of Macartney’s voyages in Russia, Ireland and China. Geography is an acquirement of the landed class, to be learned and practised by young ladies in the schoolroom, making the propertied British woman a creature of imperial scope.

That this educational theory participates in a larger context of British thought about the relations between geography and imperial process is emphasized by Austen’s narration. The novel draws the reader’s attention to the Bertram sisters’ equation of Fanny’s educational differences from themselves with an inborn incapacity to learn. Moreover, the narrative emphasizes that in equating ignorance with stupidity, and in taking themselves as the standard against which ignorance and knowledge must be measured, Maria and Julia share the perspective of the adults who oversee their education as well as of the moralists who recommend its plan. To the sisters’ complaints about Fanny, their Aunt Norris responds that they ‘are blessed with wonderful memories’, while their ‘poor cousin has probably none at all. There is a vast deal of difference in memories, as well as in every thing else, and therefore you must make allowance for your cousin, and pity her deficiency’. Like Enlightenment stadial historians, or like Enlightenment travellers looking at the New World or Ireland or the Highlands of Scotland, a class of writers and writings with whom genteel education must have familiarized them, the Bertrams assume that all human intelligence and knowledge exists on a single, developmental scale. Learning is not measured according to any contingent body of knowledge but held up to an ideal of comprehensiveness, which issues in a judgement of perfection or imperfection, primitiveness or maturity that alone accounts for individual variation. A unified grasp of the world and its systems is the endpoint of this uniform intellectual history. In the hands of the Bertrams, educational assessments founded on these principles are both an expression of imperial participation and a scale for its measurement. Where empire as well as education is concerned, Fanny’s empty memory places her at the beginning of the developmental scale.

The novel’s initial emphasis on Fanny’s limited knowledge of the world beyond her Portsmouth home contrasts markedly with the later scene, the capstone of her education, in which she asks her uncle an informed question about his Antigua estates and ‘the slave trade’ that demonstrates the ‘curiosity and pleasure’ with which she receives colonial ‘information’. Taken together, the two moments establish a parallel, noted by Katie Trumpener and Clara Tuite in particular, between the heroine’s growth into maturity and the growth of her imperial awareness.
in this novel – ‘putting the map together’ – is an instrument of self-making that must take place in order for the obverse, self-making in the service of empire-building, to occur. The class dimension of these intersecting processes, in which geopolitical space and the selves that inhabit it are manufactured, has gone relatively undiscussed. Yet the ‘hygiene of the self’ through which Fanny transforms herself demands much in terms of ‘carrying’, ‘fetching’, ‘pains’, and other class-marked forms of labour not demanded of her cousins. The transformations of subjectivity that result are integrally linked to Fanny’s visible rise in class position. As a result, any continuing failures of geographical learning can be seen as evidence of imperfect social mobility – in the heroine and her memory – even as the failures themselves carry an imperial significance.

By documenting Fanny’s origins in the milieu of her father, a ‘Lieutenant of Marines, without education, fortune, or connections’ who elopes with her mother, a small-town lawyer’s niece, Mansfield Park demonstrates that its heroine’s imperial grasp develops only as a result of her movement to her uncle’s landed estate. From the house Lieutenant Price rents at Portsmouth, the Isle of Wight looms large across the harbour, screening in Fanny’s view of the world and establishing an outer limit for any aspiration his daughter might have to travel: wherever she might choose to go, ‘she should cross to the Isle of Wight’ first. At Mansfield, however, Fanny’s education eventually gives her the credentials to take her place as ‘the only young woman in the drawing-room, the only occupier of that interesting division of a family in which she had hitherto held so humble a third’. With her passage into the heart of the estate, coinciding with her maturation and with the integration of imperial knowledge that defines it, ‘not only at home did her value increase’, but in society as well. An eye that takes in Britain’s place in its empire and the world, in this novel, is contingent not only on a memory for geographic knowledge, but also on the privileged class position of which such an imperial eye is an expression.

Yet despite the apparent competence Fanny achieves and the novel’s affirmation of her value, her rise in position is never fully realized. Although education closes the gap that exists in childhood between her geographical ignorance and the expansive knowledge of her Bertram cousins, a new and jarring fracture opens in adulthood between her eager expressions of concern for colonial matters and her cousins’ jaded disinclination for geographical discussion. While Julia and Maria preserve what Fanny calls a ‘dead silence’ about the history of Caribbean slavery, ‘sitting by without speaking a word, or seeming at all interested in the subject’,
Fanny asks her uncle a question that declares a lively interest in human conditions in the Caribbean and in the economic dependencies that yoke Mansfield Park to Sir Thomas’s plantations.30

The difference between Fanny and her cousins can be understood in two ways. First, unlike Bertram’s daughters, Fanny cannot wear her learning lightly. To be perceived as a gentlewoman, especially by her uncle, who has engineered and cannot fail of remembering the whole history of her adoption from the indigent household of his wife’s sister, she must remind her relations of her geographic understanding. She does so even as she recognizes that she may give the impression of wishing ‘to set myself off at their expense’ by speaking when they are silent.31 Second, because she carries with her the lingering memory of her childhood inability to ‘put the map of Europe together’ and the class distinction exposed by her failure, the adult Fanny emerges not only with the requisite understanding of the physical and political geography of the British empire, but also with an active interest in the human history that has produced it.

Perhaps, like Austen herself, Fanny has been reading Thomas Clarkson’s *History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament* (1808).32 What conditions Fanny’s interest, however, is what she remembers: the special position, with regard to empire, of the low end of the urban lower-middle class, to which she by birth belongs. Fanny’s father belongs to ‘a subordinate and inferior branch of the Navy’ that acts as an oceangoing bodyguard to protect ships’ officers from mutiny and from onshore attack, not least on imperial adventures.33 His ‘profession’ is unlike the church and the law, and equally unlike the army or navy, in being, as the narrator puts it, ‘such as no interest could reach’.34 Fanny’s mother, meanwhile, has a continually increasing, imperfectly documented, and uncountable number of offspring, a ‘superfluity of children’ particularly ill-suited to her ‘want of almost everything else’, financial or educational. Her sister Mrs Norris, who attempts to keep up with the Prices’ birthrate, ‘now and then’ tells the Bertrams ‘in an angry voice, that Fanny had got another child’.35 Though the Prices are above the reach of charitable institutions, they are equally far beyond the pale of the Mansfield social circles. They produce children who seem to the Bertrams likely to suffer, at the very least, from ‘gross ignorance’ and ‘vulgarity’, if not a ‘really bad’ disposition, and who require to be ‘introduced into the society of this country’, as Mrs Norris puts it, through what the Prices view, in their turn, as a ‘foreign education’.36 Although three of the Price children eventually learn the polite geographies that initiate them into this
society, the family continues to share much with the Bertrams’ perception of the colonized peoples that are among geographers’ chief subjects.

Yet although they are analogous in the Bertrams’ minds to the natives of colonized places, the Price family, like other members of the contemporary lower-middle class, do the daily work of empire, participating in the colonizing of lands they will not own and from which they earn no more than wages. As a naval midshipman, Fanny’s older brother William takes tours of duty to the West Indies; a younger brother, ‘midshipman on board an Indiaman’, has joined the merchant marine. Having placed William and Fanny decisively among the transactors and beneficiaries of imperialism, Mrs Price’s ambitions for her remaining children include the hope of one son’s becoming ‘useful to Sir Thomas in the concerns of his West Indian property’ – ‘No situation would be beneath him’ – and another’s being ‘sent out to the East’, and it is likely that their father has also laboured at imperial work. Like Fanny herself, they are simultaneously positioned as quasi-colonial raw materials and as eager participants in empire. Their involvement in imperial exploration and commerce is of a sort equally different from the landed stake held by Sir Thomas Bertram and from the consumption of polite tourist literature by his daughters and by Fanny.

To the imperious gaze of Mansfield Park, the Price household is at once domestic and beyond the pale, as peripheral and mysterious as a tract of uncharted ground yet as familiar as those who are sent out to cultivate it. In their relationship to empire, the closest resemblance of the Prices, as the Bertrams’ condemnation of their feckless fecundity suggests and as their own desperate willingness to take part in colonial projects equally implies, is to the migrant Irish poor who preoccupied the moralists, political arithmeticians, and political economists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As the longstanding subject of British geographical investigation and colonial intervention, Ireland had come, in the wake of the Union in 1801, to confront the United Kingdom with a domestic and increasingly urban set of problems. That Austen’s heroine feels some such connection is underlined by the ten-year-old Fanny’s striking sense of Ireland’s closeness and accessibility: to the Price children, only the Isle of Wight seems to stand between Ireland and their Portsmouth home. Fanny is mistaken, of course, so far as the map is concerned, but in the context of the novel’s representation of her own imperial experience, she may not be far wrong in her imaginings, however hard she tries later on to forget.

The novel’s paradoxical representation of the Price family as at once the
soldiers and objects of empire emphasizes that theirs is work carried out by those who must first, in a practical sense, be colonized. *Mansfield Park* ends with Sir Thomas’s affirmation of the sameness and the difference of the Prices and Bertrams and his own contribution to each. Conducting a final survey of Fanny, William, and Susan, he believes he has ‘reason to rejoice in what he had done for them all, and acknowledge the advantages of early hardship and discipline, and the consciousness of being born to struggle and endure’.42 To be useful to Mansfield and Britain, the Prices’ stationary daughters and seafaring sons must be taught a sense of themselves and their world that is ‘almost the same, but not quite’ as the imperial eye of the landed classes that employ them. Yet in producing difference, Sir Thomas also emphasizes existing differences, in this case the history of class difference and class subordination that divides the Bertram family from the Prices.

There remains something awkward about Fanny in particular, something poorly adapted to her situation at Mansfield Park, which troubles the landed estate and its imperial investments. The fate of the differences between Fanny and the Bertrams charts the history of class within the novel. Not least, it highlights the effects of domestic class relations on Austen’s representation of Britain’s imperial interests. This is not to suggest that empire is a vehicle for the exploration of class in this novel, which, as I have been arguing, presents the process of making Britain’s empire as both analogous to and reliant on class subordination. Rather, the relation between empire and class as it is represented in *Mansfield Park* provides a context for the narrative of the heroine’s incomplete class rise as it is played out in her recollections. Faulty at first and then inescapably stubborn, it is, above all, Fanny’s memory that registers the presence in Austen’s novel of empire’s troubling history, in Britain and abroad.

**Perspective**

In outlining a context in imperial history for the way in which Fanny Price’s memory is portrayed in *Mansfield Park*, I have come some way from the account of her geographical learning and thinking with which I began. But the journey has been shorter than it first appears, for I want now to propose that Fanny’s memory is itself a colonial terrain. To make this argument, let me turn to Austen’s representation of her heroine’s processes of remembering through metaphors of space, or, to put it another way, to
Austen’s depiction of geographies as historic sites and devices for the storage of memory. In the two key scenes in the novel in which Fanny reflects on her own history, her change of homes, her education, and her consequent rise in class position, she finds her memory of past events figured in the landscape. Under Fanny’s gaze, Mansfield Park and its environs register the contrast between the territory of the past, recalled in its uncultivated natural state, and the tamed and polished landscape of the present, even as Fanny tries and fails to efface the distinction from remembrance. Like Fanny herself, the terrain this novel charts is haunted by historical process.

To turn to these scenes is also to return, in a double sense, to the question of Mansfield Park’s Romanticism: its mixing and quotation of contemporary genres, especially poetry, and its relevance to later debates about the significance of these genres. In depicting Fanny’s perception of the spaces around her and her attempts at comprehending them, the novel takes up the problem of relations between history and imagination that is the subtext, as New Historicist scholarship especially emphasized, of much Romantic poetry. It is not my intention to rehearse the debates about history and transcendence that dominated the field of British Romantic studies in the 1980s and early 1990s, but rather to consider the question of Austen’s intervention in the contemporary conversations that were their object. In Mansfield Park, Fanny Price tries and fails to imitate the Romantic approaches to thinking about space that were provided by contemporary locodescriptive poetry and by manuals of picturesque description – genres that outlined many of the assumptions and techniques with which, as William Galperin has shown, Romantic writers approached the depiction of history. When Fanny engages in explicit quotation, and imitation, of William Wordsworth’s ‘Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey’ and William Gilpin’s Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, it is precisely in order to grapple with the problem of historical experience. Repeatedly demonstrating Fanny’s inability to surmount her past in an imaginative relation to landscape, the novel advances and rejects the idea that nineteenth-century Britons can fully achieve, through imagination, any transcendence of a context that necessarily includes imperial history.

This rejection of the possibility of forgetfulness in Mansfield Park raises questions for Said’s account of the novel’s blind-spots about history – an imperviousness or forgetfulness, he suggests, that it shares with Romantic novels more broadly. At the same time, however, Fanny’s failed imitation of the cognitive processes she borrows from canonical Romantic genres
establishes Austen’s novel in a relation of critical distance to these contemporary forms. It is in these scenes that Austen most concretely and insistently raises the question of mediation: the shaping of memory and imagination by print culture and, in particular, by the competing genres of geographical writing – poetic, tourist, scientific – that mark the early-nineteenth-century scene of the discipline’s emergence.

The first of Austen’s paired scenes takes place between Fanny and Mary Crawford on the grounds of the Parsonage at Mansfield. As the two young women sit in the garden of Mary’s sister Mrs Grant, Fanny expresses her admiration of its arrangement:

‘Every time I come into this shrubbery I am more struck with its growth and beauty. Three years ago, this was nothing but a rough hedgerow along the upper side of the field, never thought of as any thing, or capable of becoming any thing; and now it is converted into a walk, and it would be difficult to say whether most valuable as a convenience or an ornament; and perhaps in another three years we may be forgetting – almost forgetting what it was before. How wonderful, how very wonderful the operations of time, and the changes of the human mind! […] If any one faculty of our nature may be called more wonderful than the rest, I do think it is memory. There seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is sometimes so retentive, so serviceable, so obedient – at others, so bewildered and so weak – and at others again, so tyrannic, so beyond controul! – We are to be sure a miracle every way – but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting, do seem peculiarly past finding out.’

Fanny’s denization at Mansfield is evident in her reflections on this scene, for although she has travelled no farther than across the park, she borrows the language of the picturesque tour to describe her surroundings. Fanny’s rhetorical borrowing from a genre that remains the linchpin of her and her cousins’ imperial education points toward what I will argue is the heart of this garden scene: the metaphoric relation between the development of the garden and Fanny’s memory training.

Fanny assesses the shrubbery in the terms of Gilpin’s Observations, drawing her evaluative vocabulary from his strictures on the design of gardens belonging to houses. Because ‘a house is an artificial object’, Gilpin writes,

the scenery around it, must, in some degree, partake of art. Propriety requires it: convenience demands it. But if it partake of art, it should also partake of nature, as belonging to the country. It has therefore two characters to support;
and may be considered as the connecting thread between the regularity of the house, and the freedom of the natural scene [...]. [The] business of the embellished scene, is to [...] remove offensive objects, and to add a pleasing foreground to the distance.45

For Gilpin, two processes are crucial in producing such picturesque scenes: the creation of ‘distance’ and the removal of ‘offensive objects’ that have become, over time, a part of the garden site. Through these two methods, the gardener enables the viewer to rise, as it were, above the two existing, conflicting characters of the garden, perceiving a new and harmonious beauty in the scene. In advocating such a distanciated perspective on landscape, Gilpin prefigures New Historicist readings of poems such as ‘Tintern Abbey’, which emphasizes the speaker’s self-positioning above the prospect he describes and his pleasure in the way the elements of his scene, including evidence of pollution and poverty, ‘lose themselves’ among the harmonious picture of the landscape.46 Elsewhere in Observations, Gilpin writes that although the ‘regular intermixture’ of domestic, industrial, and natural elements in landscape produces often deformity on the nearer grounds; [...] when all these regular forms are softened by distance – when hedge-row trees begin to unite, and lengthen into streaks along the horizon – when farm-houses, and ordinary buildings lose all their vulgarity of shape, and are scattered about, in formless spots, through the several parts of a distance, it is inconceivable what richness, and beauty, this mass of deformity, when melted together, adds to landscape.47

In Observations, Gilpin provides a manual, a groundbreaking set of aesthetic instructions, for viewers who wish, through the achievement of what for him remains a physical and spatial kind of transcendence, to distance themselves from the pain and disorder of history and to understand the distance as improvement. In making use of Gilpin’s aesthetic practice in her account of Mrs Grant’s shrubbery, Fanny makes the implied connection between transcendent landscape and history more explicit. It is only with the passage of time, she suggests, that the ‘beauty’ and ‘convenience’ of the garden have become impossible to distinguish from each other. It is a consequence of passing time that the viewer is distanced from the rough history of the scene, which is lost in a pleasing landscape.

In conjoining time and space, memory and landscape, Austen’s scene unfolds a metaphoric as well as a physical geography. Its cohesion, when considered from close up, yields irreconcilable elements that form a counterpart to the contradictions within the narrative of Fanny’s geographical education that I discussed earlier in this essay. Yet the rhetoric and
outcomes of Fanny’s reverie about the shrubbery also replicate the narrator’s account of Fanny’s own development from roughness into ‘value’ and from domestic ‘convenience’ to an ornamental role as ‘the only young woman in the drawing-room’. The novel’s metonymic linkage of the geography of the tour to polite education intersects with its metaphoric treatment of memory as a terrain to be emptied of disregarded content, refilled, and then charted.

Even so, despite its formal sophistication, the correspondence between Fanny and the landscape that emerges in this scene is attributed to the heroine rather than to the narrator. It is Fanny’s own recognition of the parallel that prompts her thoughts in the direction of the nature of memory, whence they move in a now-familiar pattern from a mind that is empty of recollection to one that is uncomfortably retentive. Although Fanny begins her reflections by declaring her awe at the human capacity to forget the past, she stumbles – as Gilpin and Wordsworth never stumble – over the chasm between ‘forgetting’ and ‘almost forgetting’ and comes to wonder, equally, at memory’s insistence. As it is metaphorized in landscape, memory to Fanny is both marvellous and painful, at times forgetting what needs to be remembered (as in her childhood struggles to make a coherent whole of the map of Europe) and at other, more ‘tyrannic’ times, stubbornly remembering what she wishes to forget (hence the adult Fanny’s uncomfortable recollection of her struggles with education, imitation, and difference).

As in the scene of Fanny’s earlier display of geographical memory in conversation with Sir Thomas, it is apparently only the heroine, with her lower-middle-class history, whose glance at the successful transformation of the garden fails to forget the difference between present beauty and past roughness. Instead Mary Crawford sees the reflection of her polished, perfected, aristocratic self. While her way of looking replicates Fanny’s self-absorption, Mary is, in two senses, a better viewer of the garden than Fanny, for she does not recognize, and cannot remember, the history of its transformation. Mary has, that is, fully internalized both the explicit and the implicit lessons of the picturesque: that viewers should notice only the finished landscape if they wish to take pleasure from it, and that their pleasure derives from their own perspective on the landscapes they perceive. Like Maria and Julia Bertram, moreover, Mary makes light of her polite but tutored knowledge, so that its origins in the contemporary picturesque tour are no longer visible. Fanny, with her remembrance and quotation of Gilpin’s teachings, is unable, once again, fully to inhabit her
own learning and so to forget the history of class mobility that complicates it.

As with the earlier scenes of geographical memory to which I have been comparing Fanny’s landscape experience, I want to underline the national and imperial as well as the class dimensions of Austen’s narrative. An incipient nationalism is evident in Gilpin’s text in a form that sets the perspective of the native viewer in natural harmony with the national landscape his or her perspective organizes. Even as Gilpin protests that he does not ‘wish to speak merely as an Englishman’, he insists that the act of appreciating landscape is peculiarly and locally English, because, he writes, ‘this country exceeds most countries in the variety of its [sic] picturesque beauties’.50 The supremacy exists because the process of harmonizing the disparate marks history leaves on the land – such as the Wordsworthian ‘intermixture of wood and cultivation’ – is a strength ‘found oftener in English landscape than in the landscape of other countries’.51 In creating smoothness and sameness from the coming together of discordant elements, Britain, it seems, has colonized its own landscape. The sentiment that takes particular pleasure in this achievement matters more than class divisions among the tourists Gilpin addresses.

Tim Fulford has emphasized Gilpin’s detachment of his tourist-readers’ pleasure in landscape from the necessity of owning or inheriting the land they view.52 Reading ‘Tintern Abbey’ in conversation with Gilpin’s relatively egalitarian literature of the tour has allowed readers, such as Fulford, who wish to rethink the New Historian examinations of the poem to argue that Wordsworth seeks not to transcend historical conflicts and sufferings but rather to enact them metaphorically in the new form of landscape aesthetics.53 Such readings stress that the poem’s scene includes the ‘houseless’ charcoal burners and the evidence of Enclosure Acts in ‘hedgerows’, however ‘sportive’, and in farms that are ‘green to the very door’.54 More recently, Debbie Lee has re-examined this revisionist reading of Wordsworthian ‘aesthetic distance’ in the context of contemporary abolitionism, suggesting that an imagination that transcends the merely local and individual becomes, for such writers, an imagination capable of trans-imperial empathy.55 It is distance, that is, that allows the imaginative viewer to see common ground in particularity, though, as Lee points out, such a perception does not necessarily oppose itself to imperialism.56

To achieve such empathy requires a viewer who has access to a judicious spatial and historical distance. In Austen’s depiction, however, the process of viewing landscape by Gilpin’s rules – learning to take the long view, and
to look with explicitly English eyes – remains unperfected by those who
do not participate, or who like Fanny must grow into participation, in
landed Britain. The gaze of such participants notes the residue of their own
class history in the landed English scene they witness. The scene of Fanny’s
reveries reveals the mistake the Bertram sisters make when they assume
that every education, every intellect, and, by extension, every place and
people follows an identical trajectory of development with greater or lesser
success. In learning to put the map of England together as Fanny literally
does in the Parsonage garden, she follows a path that, as Austen demon-
strates, is wholly distinct from theirs. I have argued that Fanny’s
distinctness is framed by Austen’s account of her imperial education and
that the framing allows Fanny’s experience of her memory training to
dramatize her own and her family’s ambiguous relation to empire. If
Austen’s garden set-piece demonstrates that Fanny’s relations to Britain
remain equally distinct, so, I would like to suggest, the picture of Britain’s
relation to its imperial entanglements that emerges in the novel not only
calls Gilpin’s achievement of transcendence into doubt but also questions
the perspective that makes Wordsworth’s discordant elements ‘lose them-
selves’ in harmony.

The second of the paired scenes in which Austen maps the colonial
terrain of Fanny’s memory brings together an act of landscape apprecia-
tion that is founded on Gilpin’s, and that refers to Wordsworth’s, while
enumerating the imperial stakes of such figurings of Britain. Left alone in
the former schoolroom at Mansfield, Fanny contemplates the collection
of objects that have accumulated there. Deliberately acquired or
consigned by chance, all are artefacts of the history that has brought her
among a landed class that benefits from empire:

Her plants, her books – of which she had been a collector, from the first hour
of her commanding a shilling – her writing desk, and her works of charity and
ingenuity, were all within her reach; – or if indisposed for employment, if
nothing but musing would do, she could scarcely see an object in that room
which had not an interesting remembrance connected with it. – Everything was
a friend, or bore her thoughts to a friend; and though there had been some-
times much of suffering to her – though her motives had been often
misunderstood, her feelings disregarded, and her comprehension under-
valued; though she had known the pains of tyranny, of ridicule, and neglect,
yet almost every recurrence of either had led to something consolatory […] –
and the whole was now so blended together, so harmonized by distance, that
every former affliction had its charm. The room was most dear to her [though]
[…] its greatest elegancies and ornaments were a faded footstool of Julia’s
work, too ill done for the drawing-room, three transparencies, made in a rage for transparencies, for the three lower panes of one window, where Tintern Abbey held its station between a cave in Italy, and a moonlight lake in Cumberland; a collection of family profiles thought unworthy of being anywhere else, over the mantle-piece, and by their side and pinned against the wall, a small sketch of a ship sent four years ago from the Mediterranean by William, with H.M.S. Antwerp at the bottom, in letters as tall as the main-mast.\textsuperscript{58}

‘Harmonized by distance’: here again, Fanny, and thus Austen’s novel, is talking about time in conventional, spatial terms. Surveying the borrowed demesne of the schoolroom, Fanny echoes Gilpin’s account of diversity ‘softened by distance’, or, as the first of the transparencies stationed between her eye and her view of the Park seems to suggest, she imitates the Wordsworth of ‘Tintern Abbey’.

For Fanny, however, the tyrannic waywardness of memory means that the disparate elements that make up the landscape of the schoolroom are imperfectly ‘blended together’. Every object in the room serves as a repository for memories of emotional experience and the history that has produced them. The long perspective lent by the privileged present cannot entirely harmonize, let alone erase or ‘lose’, these isolated, painful traces of the past Fanny shares with objects ‘thought unworthy of being anywhere else’. And so her ‘works of charity’, signs of the social role of a woman of the landed classes, lie side by side with objects marked with her experience of ‘tyranny’; with the remnants of an education designed at once to highlight and to remedy an ‘under-valued’ intellect by alternating ‘ridicule and neglect’; and with the artefact most visibly linked to the imperial role of her family and her native class and place: a sketch of the Antwerp, the ship on which her older brother serves not just in the Mediterranean but also in the West Indies of the Bertrams’ colonial plantations, all the while failing to rise beyond his position at the bottom of the ranks.\textsuperscript{59} The schoolroom is Fanny’s British museum, where the artefacts of a complex personal and imperial history are stored. But the broken relics of this history never resolve themselves, as the collections of an imperial nation must, into a narrative of upward and outward progress.\textsuperscript{60} Instead they persist, each in its irreducible quiddity, bearing the fractured traces of competing histories.

In \textit{Mansfield Park}, Austen rewrites the scene of ‘Tintern Abbey’ with an eye to the details of British landscape, the physical leavings of a domestic history that is also a history of colonial involvement, which refuse to harmonize or vanish. Fanny’s schoolroom musings are more in line than Wordsworth’s poem with what Fulford and others argue about the persist-
ence of history in the Romantic poetics of landscape. The citation of ‘Tintern Abbey’ coupled with the reduction of its scene to a transparency – an object to be seen through, remnant of a brief ‘rage for transparencies’ and only one among the discordant objects that have found their way into Fanny’s museum – emphasizes the perspectival differences that distinguish the novel from the poem and its picturesque apparatus. For Austen, the gulf between these perceptions of Britain arises from the distinction between ‘forgetting’ and ‘almost forgetting’. Born of domestic differences in birth and landed power, the distinction has implications for the experience of empire at home and for the character of Britons’ imperial participation abroad.

Mediation

The history of readers’ responses to ‘Tintern Abbey’ opens a window on the larger topic of history and transcendence in British Romantic writing. Austen’s representation of the tension between ‘forgetting’ and ‘almost forgetting’ in *Mansfield Park* allows us to open another that is specific to the Romantic novel. From readings of ‘Tintern Abbey’ for its aesthetic of ‘oversight’ to assertions that historicist criticism reinscribes Romantic transcendence, scholars have spent much of the past two decades exploring the relation between the Romantic imagination and history.61 More recently, revisionist readers have revived the topic of imagination as something more than ideology, emphasizing its continuing historical engagement, or argued that the local and the particular persist in Romantic writing as hallmarks of British nationalism.62 Still others have suggested that not only what post-Romantic readers notice in Romantic texts, but also which texts they continue to notice, is a consequence of the naturalization of British nationhood, and of a developing national literature, in nineteenth-century criticism, and the novel in particular.63 In order to fulfil the last of the promises with which this essay began, an account of the mediated character of psycho-affective processes such as ‘almost forgetting’ in *Mansfield Park*, I want to bring these approaches together. The scenes of Fanny Price’s geographical education and her response to the landscapes of Britain provide the contours of an aesthetic imagination whose historical engagement is founded on inescapable memory. I will conclude by proposing that Austen’s depiction of Fanny’s memory as an accumulation of historical details is indeed associated with nationalism, but
that the lineaments are drawn from the anti-imperial nationalism of the United Kingdom’s peripheries, and that the significance inheres in what the heroine remembers: a mix of British picturesque writing and peripheral nationalist print production.

It will be useful to restate what I have been arguing throughout this essay: that the protagonist’s memory, as it is represented in *Mansfield Park*, is a thoroughly textual one. Both as a consequence of its training at Mansfield and as a result of Austen’s techniques for portraying it, Fanny’s mind is an aggregate of imperfectly harmonized passages from books. Picturesque tours and Lake School poetry figure especially prominently in her recollected reading. But Fanny also reads beyond the official Bertram syllabus. All kinds of current books accumulate in the schoolroom, in part because Fanny has early become a ‘collector’ of them but also, perhaps, because those Bertram acquisitions that do not hold the interest of Maria and Julia – from the picturesque manuals and abolition history whose influence is implicit in Fanny’s conversations to Macartney’s travels and the narrative poems by Walter Scott and William Cowper Fanny quotes in the novel – are likely to wash up there. Moreover, during Fanny’s brief return to Portsmouth, she subscribes ‘in propria persona’ to a circulating library, becoming, in her state of textual deprivation, ‘a renter, a chuser of books’.64 As Fanny’s reading diverges from Maria’s and Julia’s, so Austen’s mapping of her memory comes to hinge on a genre whose conventions Fanny, alone among the occupants of Mansfield and its neighbourhood, appears to recognize and recall.

Along with the English picturesque tourism of Gilpin and his followers, Fanny’s perspective on landscape and history bears the markers of a closely related competitor: the antiquarian tour of Britain’s peripheries. Now little read, the antiquarian tour is among the genres whose literary-historical ‘forgetting’ took place through what Clifford Siskin has theorized as a retrospective attribution of ephemerality.65 Yet notwithstanding the Bertrams’ indifference, the peripheral tour was a popular and diverse Romantic literary form with a readership in Britain.66 Irish examples encompass poetry as well as prose, ranging from esoterica such as those Charles Vallancey published in his *Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis* (1781–82) to expensive quartos such as Charlotte Brooke’s *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (1789), an urbane collection whose subscribers included Charlotte Smith and Anna Seward.67 In the work of Irish and Scottish writers alike, the genre often takes the form of included set-pieces within novels and narrative poems, among them Sydney Owenson’s *Wild Irish Girl* (1806), Maria
Edgeworth’s *The Absentee* (1812) and Scott’s *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) and *Lady of the Lake* (1810), all of which Austen or her characters cite in writing and conversation.68

The peripheral antiquarian tour, as Trumpener has shown, responds dialectically to metropolitan tourist writing, including picturesque tours that considered Ireland as a colonized and thus as an increasingly systematized and coherent terrain.69 Its techniques centre on imitation of British picturesque writing, in the oblique form of parody and pastiche.70 What differentiates the genre from the metropolitan picturesque tour, despite an identical range of generic markers, then, is its concentration on landscape, in particular that of colonized Ireland, as ‘a site simultaneously of historical plenitude and historical loss’.71 In this genre, as in Fanny Price’s memory and Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, histories are played out across geographic space and landscape observation becomes a source of historical testimony.

Peripheral nationalist tourists read historical details back into a landscape that has been rendered harmonious by what they see as a distanciated and thus as a superficial perspective. So, for example, the picturesque pleasure Owenson’s English tourist Horatio M. takes in his travels from London to the far west of Ireland, where castle ruins ‘grand even in desolation, and magnificent in decay’ crown a ‘wildly romantic’ peninsula, is tempered by learning that his ancestors have pushed the castle’s owners off more arable land.72 Similarly, when Edgeworth’s Lord Colambre journeys to Ireland to view the effects of his father’s absenteeism on his Irish estates, a tenant informs him that ‘the desolation of the prospect’ is a consequence of mismanagement and distance rather than the intrinsically wild or barren character of the land.73 The historical breakdown of the picturesque in these novels provides a model for Fanny’s querying of harmonious distance and forgetting in the schoolroom and in Mrs Grant’s garden. In the antiquarian scenes that Owenson and Edgeworth include in their own Romantic novels, territories once viewed as well-composed romantic landscapes are repopulated and re-historicized in being seen up close.

In recovering the history of each landscape that gives aesthetic pleasure to its viewer, these writers defend the significance of material artefacts, not just as objects to be preserved in picturesque scenes but also as essential sources in the writing of history and historical accounts of landscapes. For Owenson, the assertion that ‘manuscripts, annals, and records, are not the treasures of a colonized or a conquered country’ because ‘it is always the
policy of the conqueror, (or the invader) to destroy those mementi’ amply justifies an obsessive focus on caches of rusting weaponry, the history of musical instruments, and the details of ‘ancient Irish’ dress that prefigures Fanny’s enumeration of the disparate objects in the East Room at Mansfield Park. In substituting antiquities for narrative, Owenson suggests not only that the evidence of the linguistic past is a kind of frozen history but also that artefacts can speak and be heard. Unlike Fanny, who attempts to divorce her privileged state at Mansfield from her remembered past experience, Owenson demonstrates through the recovery and description of antiquarian fragments that the Irish present is a product of Ireland’s past, and of its colonial experience in particular. Yet Fanny’s enumeration of the relics in her schoolroom museum, and the almost forgotten memories she unwillingly acknowledges amid attempts to find harmony in distance, recapitulate this accounting of the past, its pains, and the costs of progress. In Fanny’s memory, despite her best efforts, the fragments of the past persist and speak.

Conventions drawn from the antiquarian tour give shape to Austen’s presentation of what Fanny remembers. The inclusion of these genres in Mansfield Park marks the return of the heroine’s early sense of strangeness. Dividing Fanny from the Bertrams by complicating her relation to the English picturesque of Mansfield Park, these generic recollections simultaneously re-establish Fanny’s childhood affinity for Ireland. Bhabha has posited a variety of uncanny experience, a ‘paradigmatic colonial […] condition’, that reveals itself as a subject moves between a culture and its colonial others. What should feel familiar is estranged by intra-imperial travel, and painful histories that should have been forgotten return to haunt the present. Fanny’s memory, I suggest, is the site of such a haunting: a print cultural uncanny.

In his analysis of Irish Romantic texts such as Owenson’s novels, Leerssen identifies ‘auto-exoticism’ as the means by which their writers distinguished Ireland from Britain and, after Union, from the United Kingdom that had absorbed it. He concludes that ‘Romantic exoticism’ is ‘chronological as well as […] geographical’: Irish writers looking at the Irish past appropriate this strange history in much the same way as Britain weaves strange countries and their produce into its seamless imperial fabric. In this way Irish antiquarian tourists transform the history of Ireland into ‘an undifferentiated pool of diverse mementos and memories’, paradoxically homogeneous in its calculated difference from the modern British present – a kind of historiographic bog that is, of course, the fore-
runner of Fanny’s schoolroom, equally crowded with mementos. To Leerssen, antiquarian thinking is an essentially reactionary phenomenon, a nationalism that defends itself against the British impulse towards modernizing the colonies by clinging to the traces of a past the colonial present supersedes.

The characteristic fragmentation of antiquarian objects, however, along with the loss of their lived context, provides material for a history that is alternative to nationalist nostalgia as well as to imperialism, as Yoon Sun Lee has pointed out. There are numerous moments in Owenson’s writing that exemplify such a history. Praising a Sligo landscape in *Patriotic Sketches of Ireland* (1807), Owenson begins by echoing Gilpin and Wordsworth as well as her own *Wild Irish Girl*: what she sees is a ‘scene of romantic variety, which frequently combines the most cultivated and harmonious traits, with the wildest and most abrupt images of scenic beauty’; an ‘expansive prospect’ that ‘dissolve[s] every object into one mild and indistinct hue’. But Owenson’s landscape, like the garden at Mansfield Parsonage and like Fanny’s similarly ‘blended’ and ‘harmonized’ schoolroom memories, turns out to be imperfectly harmonious. Viewed more closely, the rural Irish picturesque discloses the contrast between past and present, juxtaposing ‘opulent’ towns with ‘ruinous and wretched villages’ marked alike by the ‘violence of the tide’ and ‘the vicissitudes of civil dissension’. Owenson concludes that the landscape’s details are ‘an epitome of the fate of all earthly states’ and of ‘the rise, climacteric, decline, and fall of every empire’, including Britain’s.

In describing the process in which Fanny Price reflects on landscape, Austen mirrors the kind of analytic progression that Owenson establishes in *Patriotic Sketches* and *The Wild Irish Girl*. In her reveries on the Parsonage garden and the schoolroom, Fanny wishes to emphasize the evidence of progress she finds in the present scene: her wonder at the shrubbery’s ‘valuable’ present and her pleasure in the ‘charm’ of objects ‘blended together’ in a schoolroom prospect ‘harmonized by distance’. Yet, like Owenson, she cannot help falling back into the scene from whose history she has raised and distanced herself, recovering and enumerating the traces of ‘rough hedgerow’ that lurk in the one and of ‘the pains of tyranny, of ridicule, and neglect’ preserved in the artefacts of the other.

Perhaps most significantly, Fanny, unlike Owenson, never attempts to exoticize the past or seek out history’s traces. Rather they haunt her, emerging unwilled in her memory and appearing randomly in her schoolroom at the whim of the Bertrams: even as she strives to develop a grateful
pleasure in the harmony of past and present with which her hardscrabble origins blend into her imperial education, the traces of her history trouble her precisely as ‘almost forgetting’ troubles the prospect of forgetfulness.

Conclusion

In her experience of haunting by her half-forgotten past, Fanny Price is haunted by genre, and by a generic competition for the authority to define the relation between the national present and its imperial history. Pulled between the inescapable remnants of the past and the desperate quest to forget them, the unstable narrative form of Fanny’s historical reveries emerges from the clash between imperial picturesque and colonial antiquarianism. Austen’s account of Fanny’s cognition itself forms a kind of textual museum, preserving the fragmentary traces of the competing genres that surface in their shared, repeated keywords: harmony, blend, and distance; suffering, tyranny, neglect, object. The mind that emerges is an assemblage of shards from contemporary print culture. This textual form – a new, unstable, and internally conflicted genre – of the heroine’s memory is also the genre of empire in this novel as it explores the media of what Heydt-Stevenson and Sussman call ‘communal imagining’.

The mapping of memory and imagination in Austen’s Mansfield Park offers an exemplary opportunity for investigating the mediation of empire in the novel of British Romanticism. In representing a consciousness thematically as a product of literary form and in enacting this representation generically, Austen’s novel allows its readers to propose anew the ties between mind, letters, and history – not as an evasion of Britain’s troubled political past but precisely as an encounter with it. At the same time, in demonstrating the mediated character of its heroine’s Romantic mind, Mansfield Park makes a case for literary writing and reading as a historically active process, capable of serving the British nation’s geographical ends but equally capable of preserving the memorials that allow a questioning of Britain’s imperial history.

Notes

1 One could instance the literalness with which Patricia Rozema’s 1999 film addressed Fanny’s curiosity about Antigua. But there is also an extended history in the criticism. Although neither Alistair M. Duckworth nor Marilyn Butler...


5 Mary Lascelles, in her pioneering *Jane Austen and her Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 189, 194, highlighted the significance of Fanny’s consciousness of time both in the development of the character and in what Lascelles saw as Austen’s developing ‘technique for using the consciousness of her characters as a means of communication with the reader’.


suggests that by the turn of the nineteenth century systematic thinking and synthetic analyses within the discipline of chemistry had ceased to be associated only with ‘overweening science’ and revolutionary French theory. It influenced even popular textbooks for young ladies, such as Jane Marcet’s Conversations on Chemistry (London: Longman, 9th edn, 1824), which refers to the ‘great change chemistry has undergone since it has become a regular science’ (p. 7). The Bertram sisters’ tabular conception of the ‘Metals’ and ‘Semi-Metals’ reflects this new influence. The reading together of Norse, Greek and Roman legend implied in Austen’s reference to ‘Heathen Mythology’ is part of the prehistory of ‘Western civilization’ as an Anglocentric concept, inculcated in popular children’s literature throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; see Siân Echard, Printing the Middle Ages (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming 2008).

Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 8.


Austen, Mansfield Park, pp. 10–11.

Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 15.

James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women, 2 vols. (London: Millar, 1794), Vol. 1, pp. 200–201; Vol. 1, p. 215. See also the insistence of Laetitia Matilda Hawkins (Letters on the Female Mind, its Powers and Pursuits, Addressed to Miss H. M. Williams, with particular reference to her Letters from France, 2 vols. (London: Hookham, 1793), Vol. 1, pp. 11, 13) that every ‘ornamental science or study’ is appropriate to women; Hawkins includes ‘geography, natural philosophy, natural history, civil history’ and music and drawing among these. Thomas Gisborne, in An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (London: Cadell, 1797), pp. 20–21, is more explicit, dividing polite reading from geographical practices, including ‘the acquirements subordinate to navigation; the knowledge indispensable in the wide field of commercial enterprise; the arts of defence, and of attack by land and sea’.


Austen, Mansfield Park, pp. 412, 422.

Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 140. John Barrow, 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 (London: Cadell, 1807).

Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 16.


22 Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 178.


24 Examinations of social and economic status in Mansfield Park tend to view the novel as an affirmation of or a brief for the bourgeois improvement of the imperially dependent landed aristocracy, or to view the heroine’s anomalous class position in isolation from the matter of the nation and its empire. For the former perspective, see for example Ferguson, Colonialism, pp. 66–67; for the latter, see Johnson, Women, Politics, and the Novel, pp. 107–108.

25 Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 17.

26 Austen, Mansfield Park, pp. 1–2.

27 Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 15.


29 Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 184.

30 Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 178.

31 Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 178.

32 Jane Austen, Letter to Cassandra Austen, 24 January 1813, in Letters, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, new edn, 1997), p. 198. That Fanny quotes from a contemporary work from the same publisher, Walter Scott’s Lay of the Last Minstrel (London: Longman, 1805) suggests that she would have had access to Clarkson’s text through her uncle’s account with the bookseller.


34 Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 2.

35 Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 2. In the first chapter of Mansfield Park (p. 3), Mrs Price is ‘preparing for her ninth lying-in’ a year before Fanny departs to be adopted by the Bertrams, and she is later described (p. 355) as the ‘mother of nine children’. But the list of her named children includes William, Fanny, and Susan, as well as Mary (p. 351), who dies young, ‘Betsey […] and John, Richard, Sam, Tom, and Charles’ (p. 355). That Mary is five years old when Fanny leaves for Mansfield, and that Charles and Betsey have both ‘been born since Fanny’s going away’, suggests that the total number of Price children has reached at least eleven, with at least one name going unrecorded.

36 Austen, Mansfield Park, pp. 4, 8, 356.


38 Austen, Mansfield Park, pp. 213, 347.

39 Austen, Mansfield Park, p. 3.


41 See especially Ferris, The Romantic National Tale, pp. 3–4, 31–32. Ferris’s account is a suggestive supplement to debates on Ireland’s status as a colony or a subject of domestic imperialism; see Michael Hechter, Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe as a Subject of British Colonial Development, 1556–1966 (London: Routledge, 1975); S. J. Connolly, ‘Eighteenth-Century Ireland: Colony or Ancien Régime?’, in D. George...

49 Austen, *Mansfield Park*, p. 189. Fanny’s obsessive rememberings, and the way they contrast with Mary’s lack of interest while mirroring her reading of the scene as a reflection of herself, complicate Tuite’s recent argument, in ‘Domestic Retrenchment’, that *Mansfield Park* argues for a bourgeois reform, through Fanny, of a landed aristocracy represented by Mary.
57 Sonia Hofkosh, in *Sexual Politics and the Romantic Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 123, points out that Fanny’s schoolroom is known as ‘the East room’, associating it with the geographic East as well as with the class marginality of the governesses who once occupied it.
59 Austen, *Mansfield Park*, pp. 213, 270; William does not join the *Thrush* until he gains a lieutenancy, which happens only when Henry Crawford uses his connections in the admiralty.
Representations 32 (1990), p. 76.


76 Homi Bhabha, ‘Introduction: Locations of Culture’, in *The Location of Culture*, p. 11.

77 Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, pp. 37, 49.

78 Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 50.

79 Yoon Sun Lee, ‘A Divided Inheritance’.


The timid protagonist of Mansfield Park, Fanny Price, is a very passive, quiet character. She’s totally unlike most of Jane Austen’s other heroines, who are spunky, active, and outspoken. Fanny doesn’t do a whole lot, though there is a good deal going on in her head. Who hasn’t had problems with feeling shy, unsure, or socially awkward at some point? Fanny battles with her shyness, her low self-esteem, her tendency towards depression, and her difficulties communicating with others. Fanny’s shyness often means that she is misunderstood by others, and misunderstandings and doubts are things that plague all the characters in the novel, shy or not. This is a novel that focuses on the ways in which difficult people try to deal with one another. Remembering to Forget: Memory and Suffering in Mansfield Park. Colleen Weir On Suffering: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue on Narrative and Suffering, 2012. Mansfield Park and National (Be)longing. Lisa Kasmer Traumatic Tales, 2017. Fanny Price: â€œIs she solemn?â€"Is she queer?â€"Is she prudish?â€. Fanny Price and the Sentimental Genealogy of Mansfield Park. Amy J. Pawl Eighteenth-Century Fiction, 2004. A Modest Question about Mansfield Park. Jenny Davidson Eighteenth-Century Fiction, 2004. "Your Complexion Is So Improved!": A Diagnosis of Fanny Price's "Dis-ease". Takei Akiko Eighteenth-Century Fiction, 2005. Theme Parks in Mansfield. Classes & Workshops in Mansfield. Paint & Pottery Studios in Mansfield. A great Museum but the Tourist Info Centre inside was amazing 7 years or so back Even probably 2 and half to 3 years back it was still fairly half decent - I have seen better TIC’s and many far far worse - even compared to the level it is at now, it's still "average" - though i guess this is what cutbacks and corona brings as physical TICs are closing at the same rate as pubs Sadly as a frequent-ish visitor to Mansfield - it has a way better Centre than Chesterfield - but the Council should do more I think to compete with Chesterfield and get Mansfield's Official TIC Status back that it lost Burgess, Miranda. â€œFanny Price's British Museum: Empire, Genre, and Memory in Mansfield Park.â€ Recognizing the Romantic Novel: New Histories of British Fiction, 1780-1830. Ed. Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2008. 208-36. Butler, Marilyn.