

1”



1/2”



Baldwin 1

Samantha Baldwin

Professor Greene

1”



English 425

15 May 2021

**Single Tab**

Marriage as a Dubious Goal in *Mansfield Park*



Jane Austen’s 1814 novel *Mansfield Park* begins and ends with the topic of marriage. In this regard, it seems to fit into the genre of the courtship novel, a form popular in the eighteenth century, in which the plot is driven by the heroine’s difficulties in attracting an offer from the proper suitor. According to Katherine Sobba Green, the courtship novel “detailed a young woman’s entrance into society, the problems arising from the situation, her courtship, and finally her choice (almost always fortunate) among suitors”(2). Green adds that often the heroine and her eventual husband are kept apart initially by misunderstanding, by the hero’s misguided attraction to another, by financial obstacles, or by family objections. The overcoming of these problems, with the marriage of the newly united couple, forms the happy ending anticipated by readers. Sometimes, as in Shakespearean comedy, there are multiple marriages happily celebrated; this is the case, for example, in Austen’s own *Pride and Prejudice*.

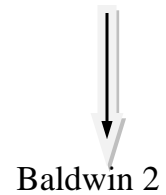
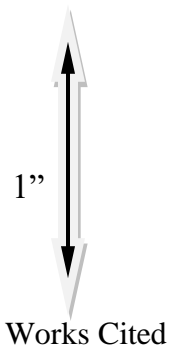
Despite the fact that *Mansfield Park* ends with the marriage of the heroine, Fanny Price, to the man whom she has set her heart on, her cousin Edmund Bertram, the novel expresses ambivalence toward the pursuit and achievement of marriage, especially for women. For Fanny, marriage may be a matter of the heart, but for other characters in the novel, marriage, or the desire for marriage, is precipitated by vanity, financial considerations, boredom, and the desire to “oblige” one’s family (Austen, *Mansfield Park* 5).

1”



1”





Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*. Edited by Kathryn Sutherland, Penguin Book 2015.

- - -. "To Cassandra Austen." *Jane Austen's Letters*, edited by Deirdre Le Faye,

↙ 3rd ed., Oxford UP, 1995, pp. 25-28..

**Single Tab**

Brophy, Elizabeth Bergen. *Women's Lives and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*. U of South Florida P, 1991.

Copeland, Edward. "Money." *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, edited by Copeland and Juliet McMaster, Cambridge UP, 1997, pp. 131-48.

Green, Katherine Sobba. *The Courtship Novel 1740-1820: A Feminized Genre*. UP of Kentucky, 1991.

Hinnant, Charles H. "Jane Austen's 'Wild Imagination': Romance and the Courtship Plot in the Six Canonical Novels." *Narrative*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2006, pp. 294-310. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/20107392](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20107392).

Johnson, Claudia L. "*Mansfield Park*: Confusions of Guilt and Revolutions of Mind." *Mansfield Park*, by Jane Austen, edited by Johnson, W. W. Norton, 1998, pp. 458-76.

Tomalin, Claire. *Jane Austen: A Life*. Vintage Books, 1999.

