

The Adaptation of Jane Austen's Symbolic Setting in Patricia

Rozema's *Mansfield Park*

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Summary

“The Adaptation of Jane Austen’s Symbolic Setting in Patricia Rozema’s *Mansfield Park*” explores the ways in which Jane Austen and Patricia Rozema respectively utilize symbolism of setting within their versions of *Mansfield Park*. Moreover, my thesis analyses how Rozema adapts and contemporarily contextualizes the instances of symbolic setting as originally written by Austen.

The introduction sets out the theoretical framework and definitions of working terms such as “symbolism” as used in my thesis. Furthermore, the introduction includes a general overview of the structure of my argument, including the research question which forms the basis for my analysis.

The first chapter discusses the ingenious ways in which Austen incorporates meaningful layers to her descriptions of setting in *Mansfield Park* which can be read as symbolic, especially as a result of the scarcity of such instances. Her careful and deliberate addition of meaningful layers to valuable elements such as settings can help bring the reader to a richer understanding of Austen’s era as well as a deeper understanding of societal or cultural implications and values, which form an interesting subject for comparative analysis with Patricia Rozema’s adaptation of *Mansfield Park*.

The second chapter encompasses the ways in which Rozema radically adapted Austen’s writings of setting in *Mansfield Park* in her 1999 screen adaptation. Such radicality is expressed by virtue of Rozema’s Postmodern and Post-heritage style, whose cultural and societal values strongly contrast to those of Austen’s era. Rozema’s *Mansfield Park* encompasses strong changes to the original in aspects such as style of filming, character depiction and general thematics that for example include feminist and post-colonialist implications. Her adaptation exists in line with Linda Hutcheon’s theory, and thus embraces

the fact that adaptations function on their own, yet can still be analyzed in dialogue with their originals. Consequently, Rozema's contemporary approach to Austen *Mansfield Park* from centuries ago redefines the original as well as diverges from the heritage tradition of fidelity so often seen in earlier Austen adaptations.

The extensive analysis of instances of symbolic settings and their adaptations in my thesis helps establish that symbolism is indeed adapted after centuries as a result of evolving societal and cultural values.

Introduction

Jane Austen is known as an author whose interest lies mostly in writing about the social aspects of society, or as Alistair M. Duckworth phrases it: “Jane Austen is concerned with defining a proper relation between the individual and society” (37). Such social aspects are often represented in the form of social relationships ranging from the famous romance between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy to the hostile behavior of Mrs. Norris towards Fanny Price.

In order to bring out or support her social themes, Austen produces meaningful writings of setting in her novels, be it only intermittently. It can be argued that Austen’s descriptions of setting carry a symbolically meaningful load as a result of their scarcity. For example, Austen seldom describes the architecture in *Pride and Prejudice*, except for when Elizabeth arrives at Mr. Darcy’s Pemberley. An extensive narration on the appearance of the estate follows, including many descriptive words that could also be attributed to Mr. Darcy: The estate symbolizes balance, and serves as an indicator that Mr. Darcy is in possession of great taste in matters of landscape, exterior and interior as well as substantial wealth. Duckworth argues that this results from the fact that “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” (38). This can arguably be ascribed to the symbolic load Austen’s descriptions of exterior as well as interior settings carry.

The term ‘symbolism’ as used in my thesis can be defined as the idea that textual or visual representations of settings within *Mansfield Park* carry an underlying, significant meaning that can be uncovered through the close analysis of a text or other medium such as film, and by relating such meanings to the societal and cultural views of the era to which the work in question belongs.

A well-known, radically different intermedial adaptation of *Mansfield Park* was produced by Patricia Rozema in 1999, almost two centuries after Austen's novel which was published in 1814. In the intervening period, new values came to the fore and gradually found their way into matters such as symbolism. Completely new societal and cultural values or views became prominent, perhaps influencing Rozema in the same way that Austen was predisposed to such views during her own lifetime. Rozema, again similarly to Austen, mainly employs ideas and concepts regarding social structures and conventions but in a more Postmodern manner as opposed to the conventions of Austen's traditional novel. As a definition, Postmodernism in relation to Rozema's film in this research can be understood as the use of meta-reference, wherein characters explicitly make known that they realize their own fictional existence. Meta-reference can also take shape as intertextuality, which is highly applicable to Rozema, as *Mansfield Park* as an adaptation is intertextual at its core.

This sense of contrast between the traditional novel and the Postmodern adaptation can be linked to works of research as performed by Dobie, Higson and Gibson. Their body of research globally encompasses the idea that the heritage tradition in film employs stylistic and architectural conventions of the countryhouse on screen. The heritage style thrives on excesses: there is often an extensive share of attention devoted to a highly idealized setting. Interior settings are especially detailed and depicted as grand, lavish and ornamented. Rozema contrastingly belongs to the post-heritage era, where the nostalgia-driven English heritage tradition is discarded as apotheosizing the past. Postmodernism works against specific conventions of the earlier heritage conventions as associated with Austen film adaptations in the earlier twentieth century. Rozema shifts away from the heritage era towards a more realistic approach to setting: her Postmodern, post-heritage interpretation of the countryhouse in *Mansfield Park* is far from glamorous.

Brownstein, in line with these views on the representation of settings, notes how

something similar occurs with the positions of female characters in twentieth-century adaptations: a more realistic, or in the case of *Mansfield Park*, modern feminist approach is taken. This is information which can be helpful in uncovering the symbolic links between the original and the adaptation, as Rozema takes a more realistic approach in her appraisal of the women's situation in the 1800's.

Fergus adds to the general discussion of heritage versus post-heritage by briefly touching upon heritage costume conventions as well as the ambiance as presented in Rozema's adaptation. Fergus preceded these statements with research on how the rooms within the estate of *Mansfield Park* carry a symbolic load and as a result interact with the characteristics of its corresponding inhabitants.

Donohue, as well as Edmundson, go into greater detail on this subject. Their research encompasses increasingly detailed ideas regarding the characters' personalities and their roles within the estate. This is an important aspect in researching how symbolism interacts with the characters' positions within the narrative as well as in the estate.

To conclude my theoretical framework, the heritage tradition as described in adaptation studies is conventionally faithful to its original narrative. Linda Hutcheon, who popularized her theory on adaptational fidelity, argues that an adaptation should be viewed as a work on its own, where the success of an adaptation is seen separate from how faithful the adaptation is to the original work. However, it is important to note that her theory also recognizes the fact that an adaptation is still inherently linked to its original, thus making it important to not only evaluate their differences, but similarities as well. Hutcheon's anti-fidelity discourse insists on the importance of the evolving and changing of narratives to fit the changing times, and consequently the changing societal, cultural and moral views. Against this background I will be reconsidering the symbolic implications of settings in Austen's novel and Rozema's film adaptation; I will discuss the adaptation in relation to its

original without judging its success at being faithful. Instead, I will employ Hutcheon's theory, which will aid me in highlighting the sameness and differences between the environments in both *Mansfield Parks* in relation to their respective eras.

I will divide my thesis into two chapters, each encompassing a different perspective on my thesis topic. The chapters will revolve around the ways in which we can understand symbolism with regard to the versions of *Mansfield Park* by Austen and Rozema respectively, and how such implications represent contemporary cultural and societal views.

In my thesis I wish to pay closer attention to *Mansfield Park*, so as to uncover and appreciate its in-depth symbolic qualities in the textual as well as the film-adapted version of Patricia Rozema. I seek to explain how the symbolic implications of the interior and exterior settings in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Patricia Rozema's adaptation are relevant to its characters, and how such implications are shaped by the contemporary societal and cultural context of both works by looking at how Rozema adapts the original text of *Mansfield Park* from two centuries earlier. The central question of my thesis is accordingly formulated as follows:

How does Patricia Rozema adapt and transfer the symbolism with regard to environment and characters as found in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* after centuries?

Chapter 1: Unraveling Jane Austen: Symbolism of Setting in the Traditional Novel *Mansfield Park*

Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* is a work that like most of Austen's works includes a scarce amount of descriptive passages on setting, whether it be interior or exterior. As mentioned in the introduction with an example from *Pride and Prejudice*, however, Austen writes these rare fragments purposefully. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the symbolic qualities of the descriptions of settings within the textual version of *Mansfield Park*, in order to later compare it to its videographical counterpart. In Austen's *Mansfield Park* the descriptions of setting and their symbolic links to characters are especially challenging to find. The symbolic links between settings and characters are essential, as Duckworth explains that "estates function not only as the settings of action but as indexes to the character and social responsibility of their owners" (38). As a result, this issue is interesting as a subject for examination: how exactly can such symbolism be understood in such passages from *Mansfield Park*, and how do they represent contemporary societal and cultural views?

The largest share of symbolically loaded textual representations of setting are exterior descriptions of the estate of Mansfield Park and Fanny's family home in Portsmouth. It is by no accident that Austen laid such an arguably explicit focus on these two properties as a result of attributing such a significant portion of her scarce descriptions of setting to them. Fanny, upon experiencing Portsmouth after two decades, explicitly informs Austen's readers that "Every thing where she now was, was in full contrast to it [Mansfield Park]. The elegance, propriety, regularity, harmony — and perhaps, above all, the peace and tranquility of Mansfield Park, were brought to her remembrance every hour of the day, by the prevalence of every thing opposite to them here" (363).

Fanny describes The family house in Portsmouth almost exclusively in negative terms, emphasizing several times its “smallness”: “the narrow entrance-passage of the house” (350), “so small that her first conviction was of its being only a passage-room” (350), “The smallness of the house, and thinness of the walls” (354), “The smallness of the rooms above and below indeed, and the narrowness of the passage and staircase, struck her beyond imagination” (359).

Mansfield Park, as more extensively described in the novel than Portsmouth which encompasses mostly extensive commentary on its size, carries a symbolic load in its descriptions of rooms within the estate. When Fanny first arrives at Mansfield Park, she “does not begin her fictional existence in security-in the center of her family's property” (Duckworth 72). The narrator presents an emotional Fanny: “The grandeur of the house astonished but could not console her. The rooms were too large for her to move in with ease,” (Austen 15). This description of Mansfield Park corresponds to her discomfort at Portsmouth in a juxtaposing manner. Fanny is in discomfort at both locations, initially because of Mansfield Park’s grandeur, and finally as a result of the smallness of the house in Portsmouth. This contrast again stands for Fanny’s growth from an anxious, poor child into a sophisticated member of upper-middle class society.

In volume I, another general description of Mansfield Park is given through the eyes of Miss Crawford: “A spacious, modern-built house, so well-placed and well-screened as to deserve to be in any collection of engravings of gentlemen's seats in the kingdom and wanting only to be completely new furnished” (Austen 45-6). Aside from unveiling the greedy disposition of Miss Crawford, this description unveils the general spatial aspects of the estate. Even through the eyes of a materialistic onlooker such as Miss Crawford, Mansfield Park is a tasteful and spacious estate situated in a refined landscape. We are furthermore informed that the interior is perhaps outdated, as its “wanting only to be

completely new furnished” is mentioned. However, Miss Crawford as a character carries materialistic and opportunistic traits to an extent, which means this statement should be interpreted warily. Nevertheless, the Bertram family is in financial trouble as a result of Tom’s lavish spending and the situation in Antigua, so it may be the case that improvement or maintenance of the estate is due. It can be argued, in relation to Mansfield Park being described as modern-built, that the Bertram family does not belong to the aristocracy but has a status of relatively new money. This contrasts to the Rushworth family, whose estate is described as ancient.

At the beginning of the novel, when Fanny is introduced to the Mansfield household, she is appointed the little white attic (11). The highly specific, descriptive name of the room as produced by Austen, denotes the way in which she communicates the dimensional and physical aspects of the attic to the reader. She possibly found that it was unnecessary to devote more extensive description to the room: after all, there is not much to describe about a space this small. Furthermore, the room is generally dismissed as insignificant by the Bertram family. Austen's omission of a description that encompasses more than merely a name symbolically reflects how trivial the reader is supposed to find the little white attic.

When looking at the name in fragments such as “little”, “white” and “attic”, it can be established that Austen interestingly concentrated many symbolic features into these three simple words. Each word carries a symbolic implication linked to character traits intrinsic to Fanny. “Little”, for example, is a spatial description of the attic which signifies her humble disposition in being satisfied with such a confined personal space, as well as her initial inferiority within the household. The fragment “White” symbolizes Fanny’s morality: white is often seen as symbolic for innocence, purity and virtue. The “whiteness” of the attic can therefore be linked to Fanny’s upright and arguably pure intentions and mind. Finally, the last fragment of the title, “Attic”, stands for Fanny’s superior morality as it is the spatially highest

located room within Mansfield Park. In her virtues, she stands literally and figuratively above even the Bertrams.

In addition to the fact that the attic is the highest room within the estate, it is interesting to look at the location of Fanny's attic in relation to other rooms. The space is located between the maid's room and the rooms of her cousins Julia and Maria Bertram (11). Austen deliberately chose to situate Fanny "in-between": she is neither on the level of status of the Bertram sisters, nor as inferior as the maid when she first arrives at Mansfield Park.

However, as a result of Fanny's growth, a symbolic shift occurs. Another one of the most, if not the most, substantial symbolic descriptive passages in the novel occurs when Sir Thomas Bertram is away from home and the remaining inhabitants of Mansfield Park decide to rehearse a performance of *Lover's Vows*. Fanny wants nothing to do with this initiative, and retreats to the room in which she finds most comfort: the East Room, as it was called after it was dismissed after its function as a schoolroom (139-41). Fanny, throughout the years, starts occupying the East Room increasingly instead of her little white attic. As a result, she allows herself to take up more space in the house instead of withdrawing to the small confines of her humble attic. The East Room had been the schoolroom for the Bertram sisters and Fanny: "It had been their school-room — The room had then become useless, and for some time was quite deserted, except by Fanny, when she visited her plants, or wanted one of the books, which she was still glad to keep there" (140). After the Bertrams no longer required formal education, the room was left abandoned. This once more can be seen as a symbol of Fanny's development. She has become intellectually invested and is dedicated to her books. Fanny embodies the quality of harmony, gentleness and tranquility that were of contemporary societal value for the upper-middle class. The room is of humble proportions, and scantily furnished with a writing desk "and her works of charity and ingenuity" (140). An extensive, emotional description from Fanny's perspective follows:

The room was most dear to her, and she would not have changed its furniture for the handsomest in the house, though what had been originally plain, had suffered all the ill-usage of children — and its greatest elegancies and ornaments were a faded foot-stool of Julia's work. (141)

The description implies the inferiority of the furniture as compared to the rest of this house. The passage demonstrates Fanny's unproblematic nature as well as her humbleness. Her position within the house has shifted to imply her function within the household: as the East Room originally existed for educational purposes, it is implied that Fanny now functions as a moral compass for the Bertrams. She surrounds herself with items that matter to her only, taking distance from unnecessary material objects: "Where Tintern Abbey held its station — a collection of family profiles — and by their side — a small sketch of a ship sent four years ago from the Mediterranean by William." (141). The presence of the family profiles meaningfully represents the comfort and fondness towards the Mansfield estate and the Bertram family.

Another element central to the debate on symbolic settings is that of "improvement". One passage in *Mansfield Park* demonstrates this distinctly, as several viewpoints on the development of setting such as landscape and exterior are addressed. The passage in question revolves around the visit to Mr. Rushworth's Sotherton which features a number of descriptions regarding setting. An extensive review on the improvement of the estate is held by the characters, which as a result can help the reader distinguish conservative and progressive qualities in the characters.

Sotherton is generally described as faded glory despite its impressive exterior features

such as its size of building and surrounding landscape, which is said to be seven hundred acres large (51). The first passage includes an explicit description of Sotherton's features: "The house was built in Elizabeth's time, and is a large, regular brick building — it is ill-placed, at one of the lowest spots in the park; in that respect, unfavorable for improvement" (54). Despite the fact that its location is not suitable for improvement, Mr. Rushworth succumbs to Mr. Crawford's suggestions for development of the estate. As mentioned before, the Rushworths belong to the aristocracy as implied by the fact that their estate was built in Elizabeth's time. This is an important reason why Sir Thomas is eager to establish a marriage between his daughter and Mr. Rushworth.

Another interesting symbolic implication is made while Mr. Rushworth shows his guests around the estate, upon the party's entrance into the estate's chapel. Fanny is highly disappointed when the chapel does not meet her initial expectations: the room had neither the interior elegance nor the grandeur Fanny expected it to have and she explains the importance such a room would have to her. This symbolizes Fanny's conservative and religious features: in her opinion, the presence and interior attributes of a chapel are central to the family as a cornerstone as she would highly value collective prayer. Austen suggests, through the conservative character of Fanny, that never-ending improvements such as those at Sotherton are nonsense. Fanny is strongly against changing Sotherton's surrounding woods, and the concept of modifying the respectable or traditional in more general terms. Another example of this can be found in the passage of the East Room where she lovingly addresses its old-time features such as its furniture and former function. Miss Crawford functions as her foil in this matter and takes a stance similar to her brother's, who is the instigator of many ideas regarding improvement. Their arguably progressive view suggests that all change is good, or improvement, whereas Fanny is strongly protective of tradition as a result of her conservative nature.

There are furthermore symbolic religious links to the landscape surrounding Sotherton, which simultaneously correlate to Fanny's conservative nature. During the episode of the outing to Sotherton, the landscape is suggested to be riddled with temptations, representative of the temptation that Mr. Crawford is to Maria Bertram, and Miss Crawford to Edmund. The paths in the park are serpentine and the landscape has dangerous pitfalls, contrasting to Fanny who strives to remain on the right, moral path. Such dangerous pitfalls, in the novel described as the "Ha-Ha" (93), carry a double meaning as produced by Austen. When Fanny implies that Maria could be in trouble and fall into the Ha-Ha, she does not just mean the literal ditch: it suggests that Maria is in danger of becoming a laughing-stock by having an affair with Mr. Crawford.

Ultimately, it can be argued that Austen ingeniously interlaces symbolic passages relating to setting in her novel. Not only does she attach symbolic implication to her writings of setting, in many instances she connects such implications to characters and their personalities. Furthermore, she uses her writings of setting to highlight social implications such as status. As a result of the scarcity and obscurity of writings of setting, it is challenging to identify symbolic implications in her work, making them notably compelling for analysis.

Chapter 2: Unraveling Patricia Rozema: Symbolism of Setting in the Postmodern Adaptation
of *Mansfield Park*

Patricia Rozema's adaptation of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* features radical changes to the original in aspects such as character development and thematics. Most important to this thesis, however, is the radical alteration of setting which in many aspects can be seen as more extreme versions of the original settings as suggested by Austen's writings and the period in which she lived. As film was not yet present in the age in which Austen lived, it is natural that her novels are particularly subject to cultural and visual adaptations upon being transferred to the cinematic screen. This is especially the case for Rozema's *Mansfield Park*, which as a result of having Postmodern tendencies is unfaithful to the original novel. Moreover, Rozema belongs to the post-heritage movement. The post-heritage movement embraces the idea that the past should not be apotheosized, and directly criticizes heritage film for glamorizing life from the past, thus arguably misleading the audience. Rozema strives to shift away from the heritage style towards a more realistic approach to setting and to depict the past more accurately with an increased sense of modernity as a result of the changing of the times and consequential evolution of narratives as can be derived from the adaptational theory as generally described by Linda Hutcheon.

Rozema skillfully integrates symbolic loads in scenes that overtly foreground setting. Rozema's instances of symbolism contrast greatly to Austen's novel, despite being present in more or less the same types of setting (e.g. *Mansfield Park* and *Portsmouth*). The Postmodern approach Rozema takes allows her to redefine the original according to contemporary thinking, including concepts such as postcolonialism and modern feminism which are meaningfully integrated in Rozema's representations of setting.

(One of the) first instances of setting as written by Austen mentioned in my thesis

discusses the little white attic. Similar to the novel, in the film the attic carries strong symbolic implications. However, the symbolism in itself diverges extremely from the original connotations of pureness and morality as written by Austen: the interior features of the attic as depicted in the film strongly connect to Rozema's radical Fanny.

What is interesting, however, is that both Fannys are initially equally timid and homesick, and are sent to stay in the attic which is, by the Bertrams, deemed to be equally insignificant as it is located between the maid's room and the rooms of Julia and Maria Bertram. In Rozema's adaptation this insignificance is not represented in terms of a symbolic name, but in terms of its disuse. Upon Fanny's entrance into the small attic, the audience is confronted with an extremely dusty room filled with stacks of old and broken furniture (Rozema 00:10:48). The evident disuse of this chamber meaningfully communicates that Fanny does not receive a warm welcome, and is rather an object of arguably strained charity on behalf of the Bertrams similar to the novel.

However, the interior of the room progresses along with Fanny's personal development: as she starts finding her place within the Bertram family, the chamber features increasingly interesting interior details. Such details, for example, include the (exposing of the) color of its wallpaper. As opposed to Austen's emphasis on "white" in describing Fanny's little white attic, Rozema decided on having the attic decorated with patterned wallpaper. The colors feature an indigo blue background layered with an intricate, dark amber pattern (00:14:22). Such strangely lavish patterns and colors symbolize the colorful and rebellious Fanny in Rozema's *Mansfield Park*, yet fully contrast to the conservative, innocently "white" Fanny as written by Austen.

Her progressive, feminist characteristics are furthermore incorporated in the furniture that is placed in the attic. The first of such furnishings is as a desk (00:12:25), in this case feminist as it accommodates her rebellious writings, as contrasting to Austen's Fanny who

occupies her desk in the East Room with much milder intentions such as writing letters to her brother. This can be seen as another instance of symbolism: the desk in Rozema's adaptation is placed not in a space that stands for tranquility and a safe space such as the East Room in Austen's novel, but directly in Fanny's radically colorful attic. The importance of the desk is emphasized when a number of scenes depict the transition from a young to a grown up Fanny sitting at the exact same desk, reading out the writings she has produced (00:12:27-00:13:30). The implicit passing of time and Fanny's unchanging position symbolize her fondness of the piece of furniture as well as the time she has spent at it. The room furthermore features an extensive range of windows, arguably symbolizing Fanny's radical open-mindedness and progressive nature.

Shifting to a more general shot of the Mansfield estate, Rozema chooses to further implement her radical mode of deviating from Austen. Whereas in the novel the estate is described as "A spacious, modern-built house, so well-placed and well-screened as to deserve to be in any collection of engravings of gentlemen's seats in the kingdom" (Austen 45-6), Rozema's depiction of Mansfield Park could not have been more pitiful. Upon Fanny's arrival at the estate, the house is only partially and vaguely visible as a result of it being nighttime (00:04:55), cloaking its shockingly decaying exterior. The cloak of darkness arguably functions in Rozema's advantage in order to emphasize the grandeur of Mansfield Park (00:05:10-20), so as to shock the audience even more upon the revelation of the actual state of the estate upon dawn (00:05:55-00:06:00).

Its exterior is again shown at 00:15:00, when Fanny and Edmund playfully hurry to fetch the horses. The Mansfield court seems bare and empty, its walls filthily yellow and stained, with window sills that have turned green and mossy. Another exterior shot occurs at 00:21:30, upon Mary and Henry Crawford's walk around the park as well at 00:22:00.

Similarly, the walls are barren and the paint is flaking. This communicates an apparent sense of ongoing decay and overdue maintenance.

In Rozema's adaptation, much more than in Austen's novel as described in the first chapter, the financial troubles in Antigua and the problematic nature of slavery are foregrounded and symbolized. Rozema attempts to criticize the past or ideas introduced by Austen which are seen as problematic at present, arguably in order to attain an increased sense of awareness instead of turning a blind eye to controversies which are otherwise neglected or glamorized by heritage film. Rozema, for example, targets the exploitative implications inherent to the original *Mansfield Park* as a result of her Postmodern disposition: the adaptation is strongly unfaithful to its original as a result of including strongly feminist and post-colonial aspects which are prevalent in present-day society as a contrast to Austen's era.

It can be argued that Mansfield Park is symbolically depicted as an embodiment of the 'whited sepulchre', meaning that the estate is "one whose fair outward semblance conceals inward corruption" (OED "whited sepulchre"). The term implies the inextricable ties the Bertram family and Mansfield Park have to slavery and the derogatory effects of colonial exploitation on all parties involved. The originally clear colors of the exterior walls of Mansfield Park turn into increasingly worsening hues of yellow and brown. The ongoing decay of the estate furthermore communicates the financial struggles the Bertrams experience as a result of the hardships in Antigua resulting in its neglected maintenance. The exterior of the house is a visual symbolic sign of the immoral undertakings of Sir Thomas that originally helped finance the building of Mansfield Park, and furthermore functions to communicate the critique Rozema is trying to convey with regard to slavery.

The interior of Mansfield Park is similarly barren and decaying, but most of all

extremely sparse. Upon Fanny's introduction to the Bertram family from 00:06:30 onward, the interior is exposed to the audience. The living room is hardly furnished at all, the walls and floor are cracked and bare, and the windowsills flaunt no curtains or ornaments at all. Rozema's aforementioned emphasis on Mansfield Park's grandeur is wholly undermined by a nearly comical lack of interior abundance.

Another interesting symbolic implication can be found in the shape of Sir Thomas' study. The room is first mentioned upon Fanny's arrival at Mansfield Park as a child, when Fanny is warned to never disturb Sir Thomas when he is present at his study, establishing his role as the center of the family: the working patriarch who provides finances for the Bertrams. Moreover, his central position in the family is asserted through his position within the house as well. His study is located at the exact center of Mansfield Park as it features doors that provide access to the room from opposing sides, meaning that it is likely located between two to four other rooms or corridors. Its centrality symbolizes the pillar-like, governing role of Sir Thomas to the Bertram family. As a result of the initial obscurity surrounding the study and its prohibited entry, Rozema implicitly forebodes the unsettling nature of the business Sir Thomas is involved in. The interior of the room is eventually revealed: the room is laden with Antigua trinkets and adornments, windowsills filled with native instruments, statues and vases (00:41:25). This stands in great contrast to the rest of Mansfield Park which is sparsely furnished and generally bare, implying a particular selfishness on Sir Thomas' part in keeping such lavish items solely to himself. Most of all, to a modern sensibility, the possession of such objects is seen immoral as a whole as it signifies colonial exploitation. Such sumptuousness at the center of a house so scantily furnished as a result of financial troubles reflects and symbolically communicates once more the concept of the 'whited sepulchre'. Not only is Mansfield Park decaying, Sir Thomas' room stands at the literal core of the problem.

Donohue describes the problem in terms of Sir Thomas' ineptness as a stable center for the Bertram family: "The disintegration of order is initiated by Sir Thomas' failure as an educator and parent" (174). Donohue hereby implies that Sir Thomas fails to successfully guide his family which eventually results in the misfortunes that befall the Bertram family such as Maria's affair and Julia's elopement. It can be argued that Rozema, in order to make her adaptation increasingly feminist, purposefully made Sir Thomas and his study the symbolical center of the house, as to mock his incompetence and tyrannous disposition as a patriarch upon the disintegration of the Bertram family.

Fanny is finally banished to Portsmouth by Sir Thomas, where she hopes to reconnect with her home. However, Portsmouth, similar to Austen's novel, is nothing like she remembered and she is shocked at its state. Whereas Mansfield Park was already made into a tragic, decaying version of its description in the novel, Portsmouth is truly depicted as tragically unpleasant and gruesome. Upon her arrival, Fanny is invited into her family home, which is as miniscule as it is described in the novel. However, Rozema made the house look truly dirty and chaotic with the addition of a filthy table speckled with maggots (01:04:05). Such elements arguably symbolize the infested morality of the Price family, resulting in the gray and chaotic life they are forced to live at Portsmouth. The full exterior extent of the house in Portsmouth is shown at 01:08:49. Its smallness is visible even from the outside: the building is roughly rectangular and covered in a homogenous type of gray brick flaunting a single window and a single door. The visuals clearly communicate the poverty in which the Price family lives in the adaptation as opposed to the situation of genteel poverty where the family at least had a maid in the novel. The extreme unattractiveness of the Portsmouth house is arguably an effect of Rozema's post-heritage style of filming in which there is no romanticization of the past.

As demonstrated in these examples, the symbolism in Austen's novel and Rozema's

adaptation functions more or less similarly, despite its underlying meaning diverging strongly as a result of the changing of societal, cultural and moral values. The adaptation features radical changes to the original novel by Jane Austen in aspects relating to the development of characters, style of filming and contemporary thematics such as postcolonialism and feminism. The alteration of the settings as depicted in Rozema's *Mansfield Park* are in many aspects extremized versions of the symbolic settings in the original, making the adaptation unfaithful by virtue of its Postmodern tendencies.

Conclusion

Jane Austen's careful writing of symbolic settings in *Mansfield Park* has been adapted ingeniously by the Postmodern director Patricia Rozema, who diverged decidedly from her mostly heritage-influenced predecessors. My thesis considers the ways in which symbolism functions in relation to setting in Austen's original as well as in Rozema's radical adaptation. By analyzing the relation between symbolic setting and characters, it can be established that symbolism is indeed adapted after centuries by virtue of changing societal and cultural values.

Jane Austen generally writes descriptions of setting sparingly. In *Mansfield Park*, this is especially the case, making instances of symbolism in relation to setting challenging to find. Austen's writings of setting in *Mansfield Park* can be understood as a careful and deliberate addition of symbolic implications to her narrative, for example functioning as a supplement for expressing her characters more in-depth, to highlight societal implications such as status. Her addition of meaningful layers to her writings of setting can help bring the reader to a deeper understanding of her contemporary societal or cultural implications and values, which in their turn are interesting for comparative analysis, in this case with Patricia Rozema's adaptation of *Mansfield Park*.

Rozema takes a radical Postmodern turn in her adaptation. Her *Mansfield Park* features extreme changes to the original in aspects such as character development, filming style and general thematics or topics (such as feminism and post-colonialism), while at the same time basing her symbolic implications on those presented by Austen in the original *Mansfield Park*. The changing of the times effected a great shift in cultural and societal values. In line with Linda Hutcheon's theory, as a result of the changing of the times, adaptations evolve correspondingly. Hence, Rozema's Postmodern, post-heritage adaptation features symbolic depictions of settings which strongly diverge from Austen's. Her modern

views allow her to redefine the original *Mansfield Park* by including concepts such as postcolonialism and modern feminism, as well as to diverge from the heritage tradition of fidelity.

Although this topic solely covers *Mansfield Park* and a single adaptation, there are endless possibilities for research on a topic as widely applicable as setting. Austen is an ingenious author, and despite the already abundant body of research on her oeuvre, the cooperation between the disciplines of literature and adaptational studies makes for an effective match to extend studies on instances of symbolism in Austen adaptations.

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