

Thinking about Said and Fraiman--Some starting points:
Was it necessary for the culture to make "colonialism" thinkable?
What part did literary works play in 'gaining consent' for imperialist policies?
Is the novel inherently conservative?

Edward Said, "Jane Austen and Empire," from *Culture and Imperialism*

1. Near the end of his treatment of Austen, Edward Said writes, "Yet only in the global perspective implied by Jane Austen and her characters can the novel's quite astonishing general position be made clear" (95).

What is that "global perspective"? What is that general position?

ES also says that "*Mansfield Park* connects the actualities of British power overseas to the domestic imbroglio within the Bertram estate" (95). How does that connection work, according to Said? How do you evaluate the connection?

2. And what does he mean by saying, "In order more accurately to read works like *Mansfield Park*, we have to see them in the main as resisting or avoiding that other setting, which their formal inclusiveness, historical honesty, and prophetic suggestiveness cannot completely hide" (96)?

3. How does Said keep his argument from degenerating into the "rhetoric of blame, so often now employed by subaltern, minority, or disadvantaged voices" (96)?

4. At the beginning of his article, Said quotes a writer who says that "empires must have a mould of ideas or conditioned reflexes to flow into" (80). What does this claim mean (how might you restate it?) and how does Said use this claim for his argument about the enabling tendencies of Western culture generally and of Austen's MP in particular?

5. How does Said develop the following claim: "Perhaps then Austen, and indeed, pre-imperialist novels generally, will appear to be more implicated in the rationale for imperialist expansion than at first sight they have been" (84).

6. What is Fanny Price's place in Said's argument?

Quotations from "Narrative and Social Space," the section of *Culture and Imperialism* that precedes "Jane Austen and Empire":

"Nearly everywhere in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century British and French culture we find allusions to the facts of empire, but perhaps nowhere with more regularity and frequency than in the British novel. Taken together, these allusions constitute what I have called a structure of attitude and reference. In *Mansfield Park*, which within Jane Austen's work carefully defines the moral and social values informing her other novels, references to Sir Thomas Bertram's overseas possessions are threaded through; they give

him his wealth, occasion his absences, fix his social status at home and abroad, and make possible his values, to which Fanny Price (and Austen herself) finally subscribes. If this is a novel about 'ordination,' as Austen says, the right to colonial possessions helps directly to establish social order and moral priorities at home" (62).

"I am not trying to say that the novel—or the culture in the broad sense—'caused' imperialism, but that the novel, as a cultural artifact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other. Of all the major literary forms, the novel is the most recent, its emergence the most datable, its occurrence the most Western, its normative pattern of social authority the most structured; imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible, I would argue, to read one without in some way dealing with the other" (70-1).

"By the 1840s the English novel had achieved eminence as *the* aesthetic form and as a major intellectual voice, so to speak, in English society Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Mrs. Gaskell shaped the idea of England in such a way as to give it identity, presence, ways of reusable articulation. And part of such an idea was the relationship between 'home' and 'abroad.' Thus England was surveyed, evaluated, made known, whereas 'abroad' was only referred to or shown briefly without the kind of presence or immediacy lavished on London, the countryside, or northern industrial centers such as Manchester or Birmingham" (71-2).

Susan Fraiman, [Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism](#)

1. How, according to Fraiman, have reviewers "read" Said?
2. What does Fraiman mean when she says that Said has made Austen into a "flatly conservative figure" (807)? How does Fraiman make Austen a more contradictory figure and what does she mean by saying that "a more general gender politics underl[ies]" Said's "postcolonial project"? (807 ff.)
3. What objections to Said's argument does Fraiman outline on pp. 808-9?
4. What is Fanny's place in Fraiman's argument? What do you think of Austen's 'retrospective irony'? What does a retrospective irony do to readers' assessment of Fanny?
[Consider what we have said about the ironic field's creation of a pattern for later reading (e.g., Austen's treatment of John Dashwood). Is MP similar to or different from the other novels in its use of irony?]
5. Summarize Fraiman's analysis of Austen's treatment of Sir Thomas Bertram.
6. How does our discussion last Thursday of the place of the "estate" and "inheritance" in Austen's fiction, help you to assess Fraiman's claims?

7. Fraiman says that she agrees with Said that “Antigua and its laborers per se . . . are large elided and always subordinated to the English material” (813). How large is this concession? What does it do to Said’s main argument? And to Fraiman’s overall assessment of Said’s argument?

8. What about the Isle-of-Wight section? What is Fraiman’s claim here?

9. How does Said’s “inattention to Austen’s feminist critique of authority” weaken his argument?

10. What is the gender allegory that Fraiman sees as underlying Said’s argument about imperialism (817 ff)?
