

PUGS IN ART



Tissot, James. "Young Lady in a Boat." 1870. Retrieved from WikiCommons

Etymology of "Pug" taken from the OED

1731, N. Bailey *Universal Etymol. Eng. Dict.*:
Pug, a Nickname for a
Monkey, or Dog.

1749, D. Garrick *Lethe 22*:
A fine Lady...keeps a Pug-
dog, and hates Parsons.

1789, H.L. Piozzi, *Observ. Journey France* 1.148:
The little pug dog or Dutch
mastiff has quitted London
for Padua, I perceive... Every
carriage I meet here has a
pug in it.

1821, *Joseph the Book-man*
133:
My Lady, in her parlor snug,
Is still delighted with her pug.

Pugs Before & After *Mansfield Park*

During Jane Austen's time, the "pug dog"—certainly not to be confused with the "pug monkey," or marmoset—was known by many names. Besides being called "mops," from the Dutch word *Mopshund* (*mopperen*: "to grumble"), and "Carlin", after the 18th century French actor famous for playing harlequin clowns, the pug was also ubiquitously known as the "Dutch Mastiff" for its association with Dutch House of Orange despite being a known Chinese breed.

Allegedly, a courageous pug that once belonged to the Dutch king, William the Silent (1533-1584), saved his master's life from an attempted assassination during the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish Hapsburgs in the 1560s. William the Silent's grandson, William of Orange, along with his wife, Mary, would take up the grandfather's love of pugs when they came to England in 1688. Ready to take the English crown as co-regents following the deposition of the Catholic king, James II, William and Mary brought several pugs bedecked in orange ribbons along with them as mascots of the Royal House of Orange.

This association with royalty would continue on well into the nineteenth-century, thanks to Queen Victoria's love of dogs (especially pugs)—and despite Austen's censure of the pug as an aristocratic loafer:

“To the education of her daughters Lady Bertram paid not the smallest attention. She had not time for such cares. She was a woman who spent her days in sitting, nicely dressed, on a sofa, doing some long piece of needlework, of little use and no beauty, thinking more of her pug than her children, but very indulgent to the latter when it did not put herself to inconvenience, guided in everything important by Sir Thomas, and in smaller concerns by her sister.” (Ch. II, 20)

Discussion Questions

Question 1

The most famous pug in art during Jane Austen’s time was “Trump,” the dog featured foremost in the self-portrait of his famous 18th-century owner: William Hogarth (1697-1764). Hogarth was known as a painter, printmaker, and satirist, famous especially for his painting series “A Harlot’s Progress” (1731), “A Rake’s Progress” (1735), and “Marriage a la Mode” (1745). In his self-portrait, Hogarth not only features “Trump” the pug quite prominently, but also books by Shakespeare, Swift, and Milton, and a quote, “The Line of Beauty and Grace” under a serpentine line as curly as Trump’s tail.



William Hogarth, 1745.
“Self-Portrait with Pug,”
Retrieved from tate.org.uk

- What do you make of the pug as symbol in the three examples of pug paintings shown in this handout: Tissot’s “Young Woman in a Boat” (1879), Hogarth’s “Self-Portrait with Pug” (1745), Barker’s “Blonde and Brunette Pug” (1870)?
 - Does Lady Bertram’s pug conform to any of these representations?
 - Hogarth certainly situates the pug as significantly “English” as the authors of the texts also featured in his painting, but pugs, with both Chinese and Dutch origins, evoke both the foreign as much as the familiar—East as much as West. What do you make of the intrusion of this foreign and familiar creature into the Bertram home?

"I hope she [Fanny Price] will not tease my poor pug," said Lady Bertram; "I have but just got Julia to leave it alone."

- MANSFIELD PARK, CH. I, 12

Question 2

According to Markman Ellis, lapdogs of 18th-century literature frequently “emblemize the malevolent, spiteful, and hypocritical quality of their family owners, who demonstrate an ‘unfeeling’ nature” (101). Read over passages about Lady Bertram and Pug from Ch II (pg. 20), Ch VIII (pg. 75-76), Ch. XIX (pg. 166-167), and Ch. XXXIII (pg. 308) and think over other instances where Pug is not mentioned, but Lady Bertram is.

- Does Lady Bertram personify the “malevolent, spiteful, and hypocritical” 18th-century lapdog-owner?
- How does she treat her pug and how invested in her pug is she truly?

Question 3

Barbara Seeber argues that “the precariousness and potential transgression of the pet is pivotal to the novel’s examination of slavery” (78), an argument which follows Sally Palmer’s suggestion that the pug “nestled so comfortably in his mistress’s lap, is for readers not only a sign of opprobrium for Lady Bertram’s selfish inaction, but an indictment of Sir Thomas, for absenting himself from the family due to colonialist imperatives.

Symbolizing the colonized and enslaved and even the marginalized because of sex, the pug points the finger, or perhaps we should say the paw, of blame at the patriarchy for keeping women like Lady Bertram confined and bored into a lifetime stupor. It also reprimands traditional culture for keeping women like her daughters Maria and Julia repressed to the point where they erupt in rebellion against strictures of all kinds, especially those prescribing lives as human lapdogs for themselves.”

- What do you make of the connection between a pet like Pug and women like Lady Bertram, Maria, Julia—and even Fanny?
- Given that pugs are famous for the breed’s congenital flaws, as “a triumph of human manipulation, dominance, and colonization” according to Palmer, what can we further make of Austen’s linking of woman and pets?

Question 4

In an article by Stephanie Howard-Smith on pugs, the Penrhyn family, and *Mansfield Park*, Howard-Smith shows how Austen may have utilized Lord and Lady Penrhyn, notable for their slave-holdings in Jamaica and overindulgent pug-fancy, as models for Sir and Lady Bertram.

- Is the connection between the pug and British colonial endeavors in *Mansfield Park* more than a minor biographical allusion to the Penrhyn family?

**“Happy Julia!
Unhappy Maria! The former was on the barouche-box in a moment, the latter took her seat within, in gloom and mortification; and the carriage drove off amid the good wishes of the two remaining ladies, and the barking of Pug in his mistress's arms.”**

- MANSFIELD PARK, CH. VIII, 75-76

- Look again at Barber’s painting “Blonde and Brunette Pug,” which also hints at British colonial endeavors. What might such representations suggest about broader nineteenth-century connections between the pug, women, and colonialism?

Question 5

Kathleen Kete argues that pugs were also symbols of modernity. With urbanization, people no longer surrounded themselves with farmyard or working animals, and could now substitute the pug at the family hearth in place of the once more important pointer (3).

- What do you make of this idea of the pug as a sign of modernity in *Mansfield Park* and after?
- Consider the place of Pug within the family circle. Does his place within the family hierarchy suggest anything significant about the ways in which families were changing?



Barber, Charles Burton. “Blonde and Brunette Pug.”1879. Retrieved from www.mimimatthews.com

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