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**Imperialism in the novels of Aphra Behn,
Jane Austen and Jean Rhys:
A reading of *Oroonoko*, *Mansfield Park* and
*Wide Sargasso Sea***



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Abstract

World history today is largely shaped by the history of imperialism. The traces and effects of imperialism can not only be found in the works of dominant writers, but many African and Asian writers also refer to the presence of slavery and colonisation in European writings. Such English writings include *Oroonoko* (1688) by Aphra Behn, *Mansfield Park* (1814) by Jane Austen and *Jane Eyre* (1848) by Charlotte Brontë. *Oroonoko* gives us the earliest account of slavery and British imperialism in Surinam. *Mansfield Park* is a domestic novel that helps us to understand the contribution of slave labour to the European economy. On the other hand, there are some contemporary novels that respond to European accounts of imperial history. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) is a response to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. *Wide Sargasso Sea* portrays the imperial history from a Creole West Indian's point of view. These works show that different accounts of imperialism are still important both as a reference of history and as records of how imperialism that have shaped the world and individual lives.