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‘The Structure of Mansfield Park’

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LECTURE 1: THE DAUGHTER THAT HE WANTED

Jane Nardin, in her book *Those Elegant Decorums*, published in 1973, begins her sixth chapter with this sentence: "*Mansfield Park* is at present Jane Austen's most unpopular novel." It is certainly Jane Austen's most overtly didactic novel, and our present age is not one in which preaching is much in fashion. The chief difficulty, however, lies in the character of the heroine, for she turns out to be incorrigibly gentle and retiring. Her characterization is all the more remarkable in that she is the direct successor to Jane Austen's previous heroine, the vivacious Elizabeth Bennett of *Pride and Prejudice*. Jane Austen herself, however, came to regard this previous book as being "too light, and bright, and sparkling", and it was followed by the more staid novel *Mansfield Park*. One of the contemporary opinions of the book, which Jane Austen collected and transcribed, was that of Mrs Carrick, who declared that "All who think deeply and feel much will give the preference to *Mansfield Park*." It has certainly long been my own favourite among Jane Austen's novels.

What has become for me a major interest in the book is its structure. I propose to examine this structure in three ways. First I shall examine the process by which Fanny Price becomes Fanny Bertram, the daughter that Sir Thomas wanted. Next, in the second lecture I shall examine how the book is built upon a network of moral concepts: I have called this lecture after two of the central concepts, selfishness and ingratitude. Then in the final lecture I shall try to show how all the other characters are deployed about the heroine, who functions as their "judge and critic". For another remarkable fact about this seemingly unprepossessing heroine is that her judgement is never wrong.

The narrative and thematic structure of *Mansfield Park* depends basically upon the relationship between Fanny Price and Sir Thomas Bertram. Chapters 1-3 are introductory and expository, and I call them "Fanny's Coming to Mansfield Park". Chapters 4-18 I then call "The Absence of Sir Thomas". Chapters 19-37 I call "The Return of Sir Thomas". Then chapters 38-46 I correspondingly call "The Absence of Fanny", and chapters 47 and 48 "The Return of Fanny". It is noteworthy that during the absence of Sir Thomas the groundwork is laid for the family disasters which occur during the absence of Fanny. It is the course of this relationship between uncle and niece that I wish to trace.

That Fanny should come to Mansfield is Mrs Norris's idea, but "Sir Thomas was fully resolved to be the real and consistent patron of the selected child" (8).*

*Numbers in brackets refer to pages in R.W. Chapman's standard Oxford edition of *Mansfield Park*.

status in relation to his own children, and is careful to insist that she be firmly distinguished from them. He decides that "they cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations, will always be different. It is a point of great delicacy" (11). This decision constitutes one of the book's supreme ironies, for at the end Sir Thomas expresses "the high sense of having realised a great acquisition in the promise of Fanny for a daughter. . . Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted" (472). It is between these opposite poles that the world of *Mansfield Park* revolves, and that is why I have called this lecture series "Fanny Bertram".

The first meeting of the protagonists is not propitious. When Fanny arrives, she turns out to have a "quiet passive manner" (15), to be "exceedingly timid and shy, and shrinking from notice" (12). The result is that "Sir Thomas seeing how much she needed encouragement, tried to be all that was conciliating; but he had to work against a most untoward gravity of deportment" (12). In consequence, his "well-meant condescensions" are in vain (13). Nor is his parting from her propitious when he sets out for his West Indies estate. She is as much relieved at his going as are her cousins Maria and Julia (33). If only he had smiled at her and called her "my dear Fanny," she might have forgotten his former frowns and coldness.

Yet in Sir Thomas's absence Jane Austen supplies her heroine with a substitute. For her cousin Edmund is the only member of the family who takes the trouble to show a personal interest in her, to extend to her a positive kindness. Edmund enables her to write to her beloved brother William, who at home has been her constant companion and friend. Fanny's artless gratitude and delight awaken her cousin's particular interest. He is convinced that she has "an affectionate heart, and a strong desire of doing right" (17). He perceives, too, that her great timidity belongs with a sensitivity to her dependent situation in her grand new home. Readers and critics who find Fanny a cold prig might note that thus early in the book she is capable of forming an attachment which grows from emotional warmth, from "an affectionate heart".

From this day, therefore, Fanny grows more comfortable. She feels she has a kind friend, and this feeling gives her "better spirits with every body else" (17). Edmund is "uniformly kind" (17), and urges his sisters to be so too, for Fanny is good-natured, and of an obliging, yielding temperament (except, as we see later, in matters of principle). Indeed, "Edmund's friendship never failed her . . . he was always true to her interests, and considerate of her feelings, trying to make her good qualities understood, and to conquer the diffidence which prevented their being more apparent; giving her advice, consolation, and encouragement . . . his attentions were . . . of the highest importance in assisting the improvement of her mind, and extending its pleasures. He knew her to be clever, to have a quick apprehension as well as good

sense, and a fondness for reading, which, properly directed, must be an education in itself" (21-2). It was Edmund who "recommended the books which charmed her leisure hours, he encouraged her taste, and corrected her judgement; he made reading useful by talking to her of what she read, and heightened its attraction by judicious praise." In return "she loved him better than any body in the world except William; her heart was divided between the two" (22). It remains so for the rest of the book.

After Sir Thomas is gone, taking with him his elder son Tom, Lady Bertram is astonished to find "how well Edmund could supply his place in carving, talking to the steward, writing to the attorney, settling with the servants" (34), and generally saving her from exertion and fatigue. While Sir Thomas is away, therefore, Edmund initially acts as his surrogate. Jane Austen thus establishes him as the third member of the central group of characters.

During Sir Thomas's absence there occur the two events that are to determine the basic course of the rest of the book. The first of these events is Maria's engagement to James Rushworth. The second is the arrival of Henry and Mary Crawford. To the engagement Edmund is the only one of the family who can see any objection. His clear-sighted judgement perceives that Rushworth is "a heavy young man, with not more than common sense" (38), and that "If [he] had not twelve thousand a year, he would be a very stupid fellow" (40). But he "had recently succeeded to one of the largest estates and finest places in the country", and Maria is motivated by her realization that "a marriage with Mr Rushworth would give her the enjoyment of a larger income than her father's, as well as ensure her the house in town, which was now a prime object" (38).

Edmund's judgement is here superior to his father's, for Sir Thomas "was truly happy in the prospect of an alliance so unquestionably advantageous. . . It was a connection exactly of the right sort; in the same county, and the same interest; and his most hearty concurrence was conveyed as soon as possible" (40). Sir Thomas thinks only of worldly wealth and the proud status it confers.

On his return to England, however, Sir Thomas visits Rushworth, and discerns him to be "an inferior young man, as ignorant in business as in books, with opinions in general unfixed, and without seeming much aware of it himself." Sir Thomas further perceives that Maria's feelings for Rushworth are those of indifference. "Her behaviour to Mr. Rushworth was careless and cold. She could not, did not like him." Sir Thomas therefore perceives that his moral way is clear. He "resolved to speak seriously to her. Advantageous as would be the alliance, and long standing and public as was the engagement, her happiness must not be sacrificed to it." She assures him, however, that "She had the highest

esteem for Mr. Rushworth's character and disposition, and could not have a doubt of her happiness with him" (200). Sir Thomas too, therefore, is "happy to secure a marriage which would bring him such an addition of respectability and influence" (201). The truth is that Maria has waited in vain for Henry Crawford to rescue her from her engagement. Though Jane Austen's irony is always well-bred, it is often strong and trenchant. It is difficult to be sharp without being cutting, and here is the most critical example of her incisive and bitter irony in the whole book. For she declares that "In all the important preparations of the mind [Maria] was complete; being prepared for matrimony by an hatred of home, restraint, and tranquillity; by the misery of disappointed affection, and contempt of the man she was to marry" (202).

Yet despite Maria's unsatisfactory motives for marriage, Edmund is later able to report to Fanny that his "opinion of Maria's degree of comfort as a wife" is that "There is no appearance of unhappiness. I hope they get on pretty well together" (423). Presently, however, Fanny's father reads her the newspaper report of Maria's absconding with Henry. Finally we learn that Maria had at first coldly repulsed Henry in proud resentment, but that he had kept up his attack in a spirit of animated perseverance, entangled by his own vanity. It is the same spirit of perseverance with which he has already pursued Fanny, but she had stood firm against him. She thus shows herself Maria's moral superior.

Such, then, is one result of the calamities which were preparing during Sir Thomas's absence in Antigua and which actually occur during Fanny's absence in Portsmouth. The other result concerns Edmund's infatuation with Henry Crawford's sister Mary. This relationship is the most unsatisfactory in the book. Mary's interest is at first in Tom, as a pleasant and spirited young man who will one day inherit Mansfield Park and become *Sir* Thomas (47-8). Edmund, however, falls in love with her, and since Tom has gone off in pursuit of his own pleasures, she is prepared to find charm in Edmund's sincerity, steadiness, and integrity (65). She soon learns, however, that he is to be a clergyman, and later she pointedly rejects his vocation as being bound to leave him honest but poor.

Late in the book Sir Thomas is aware that Edmund has been pursuing Mary "with undoubted attachment, and strong probability of success; and [she] . . . would have been so eligible a connection" (452). But Sir Thomas is thinking again in terms of materialistic advantage, whereas Edmund's ultimate rejection of Mary is determined by considerations of morality. First, Mary considers that Henry and Maria's misconduct is not a vice but mere folly, and reprobates not the offence but merely its detection: it was only wrong because it was found out. And secondly, Mary attempts to lure Edmund back by means of "a

saucy playful smile, seeming to invite, in order to subdue me" (459). The final picture we are given of her is thus that of a siren, especially when we remember that she first charmed Edmund by playing on her harp, which we also remember was "as elegant as herself" (65).

But if the main interests immediately following Sir Thomas's departure are Maria's engagement to Rushworth and the arrival of the Crawfords, Fanny is not forgotten. She becomes the valued companion of Lady Bertram, and finds her aunt's tranquillity and kindness "unspeakably welcome" (35).

Sir Thomas's departure also extends Fanny's relationship with Edmund. She has already told him: "I love this house and everything in it" (26). He now provides her with a mare to ride for healthful exercise. As a result, "She regarded her cousin as an example of every thing good and great, as possessing worth, which no one but herself could ever appreciate, and as entitled to such gratitude from her, as no feelings could be strong enough to pay. Her sentiments towards him were compounded of all that was respectful, grateful, confiding, and tender" (37). In other words, we witness her growing emotional involvement with her kind and thoughtful cousin. When Edmund neglects her for Mary, she finally goes to bed with her heart full and in low spirits, "for she had been feeling neglected, and been struggling against discontent and envy for some days past . . . the pain of her mind had been much beyond that in her head" (74). Once again she is shown to us not as a cold prig, but as a sensitive young woman with warm feelings that are readily stirred and easily hurt.

Edmund shows his contrition by enabling Fanny to join the party to Sotherton. "She felt Edmund's kindness with all, and more than all, the sensibility which he, unsuspecting of her fond attachment, could be aware of; but that he should forego any enjoyment on her account gave her pain, and her own satisfaction in seeing Sotherton would be nothing without him" (79). Here, then, is the first specific indication of "her fond attachment" for the cousin who remains her mere confidant.

At Sotherton the young people divide into two symbolic groups: Henry with Maria and Rushworth, and Edmund with Mary and Fanny. Presently we discover the structural reason for the careful presentation of Fanny as being physically delicate. For if she did not soon grow tired and need to rest, she could not constitute the centre around which the winds of amorous emotion blow all the other youthful characters. In other words, her role is that of clear-sighted observer and interpreter of what happens in the symbolic wilderness.

First there is Mary's insistence on "how much we have wound about. We have taken such a very serpentine course" (94). This description is a strikingly symbolic representation of the future tortuousness of her relationship with Edmund. When they have wandered off, Fanny

is promptly joined by the other trio, and Maria symbolically sits between the two young men. One of them she will later marry, and later still she will abscond with the other. An iron gate prevents the trio from passing into the park, and Rushworth goes to fetch the key. Maria complains that the gate gives her "a feeling of restraint and hardship. I cannot get out," she says (99). Henry's reply makes it clear that what Maria wants to get out of is her engagement to Rushworth. Henry says: "And for the world you would not get out without the key and without Mr. Rushworth's authority and protection, or I think you might with little difficulty pass round the edge of the gate, here, with my assistance; I think it might be done, if you really wished to be more at large, and could allow yourself to think it not prohibited" (99). Fanny, the centre of firm and steadfast principle, "feeling all this to be wrong, could not help making an effort to prevent it. 'You will hurt yourself, Miss Bertram,' she cried, 'you will tear your gown—you will be in danger of slipping. . . You had better not go.'" (99-100). Fanny's concern prefigures Sir Thomas's own disquietude when he makes Rushworth's acquaintance. It is also, however, in its own right symbolic of Maria's ultimate moral lapse with Henry into adultery. And even Fanny cannot remain a *still* centre. In her increasing agitation she finally goes in search of Edmund and Mary, "and a few more windings brought them before her" (103).

There is nothing in this Sotherton episode to link Fanny specifically with Sir Thomas, or to indicate that she functions as his surrogate. Yet the fact remains that Fanny's role is consistently that of acting as a firm moral centre. The visit to Sotherton would never have taken place if Sir Thomas had not agreed to Maria's engagement to Rushworth, and Fanny could not have gone if Edmund had not offered to stay at home with his mother. Fanny, Sir Thomas, and Edmund are again linked as the book's central trio.

Fanny's link with Sir Thomas becomes even clearer in the next major episode, that of the theatricals. Edmund opposes the theatricals on aesthetic grounds. Though he admits that nobody loves a play more than he does, this is true only when he can see "good hardened real acting" (124). The young people, on the contrary, are only rank amateurs, capable only of "the raw efforts of those who have not been bred to the trade" (124). Edmund's opposition is stronger, however, on moral grounds. He considers that it would be "very wrong" and "highly injudicious" to attempt to stage a play. "I am convinced that my father would totally disapprove it (126) . . . His sense of decorum is strict (127). . . It would show great want of feeling on my father's account, absent as he is, and in some degree of constant danger (125). . . It would be taking liberties with my father's house in his absence which could not be justified" (127). This moral judgement is the basic valid reason for not staging a play, and its repetition is emphatic.

Fanny has "borne Edmund company in every feeling throughout the whole" (128). She takes the first opportunity to read the play that has been discussed, and is astonished to find it thoroughly unacceptable on moral grounds. "Agatha and Amelia appeared to her in their different ways so totally improper for home representation—the situation of one, and the language of the other, so unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty" (137). Edmund, too, disapproves of the choice of play as being "exceedingly unfit for private representation," and he urges Maria to show the others "what true delicacy is" by surrendering her role. Even the indolent Lady Bertram is moved to advise her: "Do not act anything improper, my dear. Sir Thomas would not like it" (140).

The play the young people choose to act is the English adaptation by Mrs Inchbald of a German drama by Kotzebue, published in 1791. The English title is *Lovers' Vows*, but the German title is *Das Kind der Liebe* (euphemistically the love child, that is the bastard). Mrs Inchbald's free version was performed at the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden. It must have been popular, for five editions were published in London in 1798, and it was frequently acted. Six productions were staged at the Theatre Royal in Bath during the years that Jane Austen lived there (1801-5).¹ Jane Austen must have been able to take for granted that her original readers would be sufficiently acquainted with it for them to understand why Edmund and Fanny reject it.

Within a few minutes of its opening, Agatha (that is Maria) is telling how, many years before, she had been seduced. Then she embraces her soldier son Frederick (that is Henry), leaning her head against his breast. Presently he takes her hand and puts it to his heart. All this is performed before the eyes of the man Maria is to marry, and who is allotted the thankless role of the foppish and foolish Count Cassel. If not downright immoral, the situation among these young people is socially tactless, and I am willing to be counted with Edmund and Fanny among those who find it objectionable and dangerous in the circumstances.

Kingsley Amis, in his celebrated essay "What Became of Jane Austen?" (1957), dismisses the play because "a cursory reading" shows that it is "innocuous rubbish". As a serious drama for performance by seasoned professionals, *Lovers' Vows* deserves to be so dismissed. But as Edmund has already pointed out, the cast at Mansfield Park are raw amateurs. They are also a group of emotionally susceptible young people whose propensity to venture precariously into an amorous wilderness has already been symbolically dramatized by their adventures in the

¹William Reitzel, *Mansfield Park and Lovers' Vows', Review of English Studies* ix (1933), 454. See the Appendix to the Oxford English Novels edition (1970), p. 433.

grounds of Sotherton. As Edmund tells Tom, play-acting "would be imprudent . . . with regard to Maria, whose situation is a very delicate one, . . . extremely delicate" (125).

Beyond this particular situation ("as we are circumstanced," says Edmund: 125), the play has a number of curious resemblances to Jane Austen's novel. These resemblances are revealed by a reading which takes the trouble to be more than cursory. That statement is not intended to sound priggish, but to indicate that we should make every effort to understand why Jane Austen takes so much trouble over this particular play.

To start with, the basic situation of the Baron, his daughter Amelia, her tutor the young clergyman, and the unsatisfactory Count Cassel is reflected in the basic situation of Sir Thomas's relationship with his daughter Maria in her marriage to James Rushworth, yet at the same time in Edmund's relationship to Fanny. In Act 2 Baron Wildenhaim takes only worldly considerations into account in the proposed marriage of his daughter to the Count. He says to her: "I think proper to acquaint you he is rich, and of great consequence". This is precisely the attitude to marriage that is taken not only by Sir Thomas, but also by Maria and by Mary. Presently, however, the Baron says to his daughter: "To see you happy is my wish." This likewise becomes Sir Thomas's prime consideration in talking with Maria after he has personally made the acquaintance of Rushworth. Then Amelia tells the Baron: "my tutor has always told me that birth and fortune are inconsiderable things, and cannot give happiness." This statement is reflected in Edmund's vocation as a poor clergyman, and in Mary's revelation of the wealthy but unhappy marriages of her two special friends in London.

Then in Act 3 Scene 2 the young clergyman Anhalt speaks to Amelia, at the Baron's request, on the subject of her proposed marriage to the Count. This situation is reflected in Edmund's discussion with Fanny, at his father's request, about her rejection of marriage with Henry. Amelia says: "My father has more than once told me that he who forms my mind I should always consider as my greatest benefactor. And my heart tells me the same." These words are clearly reflected in Fanny's attachment to Edmund. In the love scene which develops, however, Amelia takes the initiative in a way which would be unthinkable for Fanny. It is Amelia, too, who undertakes to reveal their mutual love to her father. She knows that he will begin in a passion because she is undutiful, but will soon relent because he wishes to see her happy. This detail is reflected in Sir Thomas's anger at Fanny's apparently inexplicable rejection of Henry, but his ultimate promotion of her happiness with Edmund. The subject is emphasized in Act 4 Scene 2 when Amelia tells the Baron of Anhalt's love, and reminds him "that I had once heard my father declare, he should consult my happiness in marrying me, beyond any other consideration."

Then in Act 5 Scene 2 the Baron proposes to settle Agatha on an estate near his castle: "There," he says, "her past sufferings shall be changed to peace and tranquillity." It is precisely the "peace and tranquillity" of Mansfield Park (391) that Fanny misses most amid the tumult and disorder of her parents' home in Portsmouth.

Meanwhile Frederick (that is Henry), preparing to reveal his identity to the Baron, has declared: "I am an illegitimate son. My seduced mother (that is Maria) has brought me up in patient misery." Later Henry will seduce Maria adulterously, while Fanny comes in for her own share of "patient misery". And the play ends with Agatha clasping Frederick in her arms.

Finally, in Act 5 Scene 1 Cottager's Wife tells her husband that Anhalt "is a very good gentleman; pays great attention to his parishioners; and where he can assist the poor, he is always ready." This is the same exalted view of the vocation of clergyman which is shared by Edmund, Fanny, and Sir Thomas, the central trio again. There are more details, but I think I have said enough to suggest that the influence of this particular play not only on the young people but on their creator as well, cannot simply be dismissed out of hand.

In deciding to act the role of Anhalt opposite Mary, Edmund rationalizes his capitulation. But significantly he comes to consult about it with Fanny. He says his decision is due to his wish to avoid importing an outsider (the "quiet-looking" Charles Maddox: 148) into the privacy of the acting group. Fanny's response is firm. "I am . . . sorry," she says, "to see you drawn in to do what you had resolved against, and what you are known to think will be disagreeable to my uncle" (155). But Edmund leaves her to meditate on his change of heart. "Her heart and her judgment were equally against Edmund's decision; she could not acquit his unsteadiness; and his happiness under it made her wretched. She was full of jealousy and agitation" (159). Again we note that though her judgement may be cool and firm, she is also capable of normal, and strong, emotional responses to a painful situation. Then she is obliged to endure the rehearsal of Edmund and Mary in her own room, where "She was invested, indeed, with the office of judge and critic" (170). Finally she is about to be obliged to read Mrs Grant's part at the first full rehearsal, when she is saved by the return of Sir Thomas as her *deus ex machina*.

Sir Thomas inquires after her particularly, singling her out for special attention. That he should do so is necessary to the structure of the book, but no explanation of why he does so is offered; it is not satisfactorily motivated, it is merely presented as a fact. "His manner seemed changed," we are simply told; "and all that had been awful in his dignity seemed lost in tenderness." It is not surprising to read that "Fanny knew not how to feel, nor where to look." Nor does the reader.

But Fanny is typically self-critical about the change: "his kindness altogether was such as made her reproach herself for loving him so little, and thinking his return a misfortune". Her self-reproach is particularly grave because Sir Thomas also inquires after her family, especially William. She is also distressed to see "that he was grown thinner and had the burnt, fagged, worn look of fatigue and a hot climate" (178).

Next morning Edmund gives his father "a fair statement of the whole acting scheme" (187). His statement culminates in the complete exoneration of Fanny alone. "Fanny is the only one who has judged rightly throughout, who has been consistent. . . She never ceased to think of what was due to you." While we know that this is true in actual fact, it is so only because Fanny's imminent participation has been prevented by the unexpected arrival of Sir Thomas; in other words, by the timely intervention of the author. We may also note that, like Sir Thomas, Fanny later returns to find her home in turmoil.

What is structurally important, however, about Sir Thomas's arrival and Edmund's account is that again they bring together the book's three central characters. Particularly do they begin to cement a closer bond between Fanny and her uncle. This is why I see chapter 19 as beginning the book's third movement, which I have called "The Return of Sir Thomas".

These central relationships are kept before us. Fanny tells Edmund: "I love to hear my uncle talk of the West Indies. I could listen to him for an hour together" (197). Edmund urges her to talk more to her uncle in the evening circle. He would have been pleased, for example, if she had followed up her question about the slave trade. Fanny's reply is one of the key instances of her moral sensibility. "I longed to do it," she explains, "but there was such a dead silence! And while my cousins were sitting by without speaking a word, or seeming at all interested in the subject, I did not like—I thought it would appear as if I wanted to set myself off at their expense, by shewing a curiosity and pleasure in his information which he must wish his own daughters to feel" (198). I do not find Fanny's hypersensitivity here unconvincing. On the contrary, such delicate responses to intricate social dilemmas seem to me to bespeak a particularly civilized intelligence.

Fanny's new prominence thus dates from her uncle's return, and his new interest in her and admiration for her are conveyed first by himself and then by Edmund. By these simple and economical means the centrality of this trio of characters is further emphasized.

It is this emphasis which determines that Maria now marries Rushworth, and that Julia goes with them for a holiday to Brighton. For the next episode then begins with this sentence: "Fanny's consequence increased on the departure of her cousins" (205). And "Not only at home did her value increase, but at the Parsonage too." She is soon invited to

dinner there, and though Edmund advises her to accept, "Fanny would not venture, even on his encouragement, to such a flight of audacious independence" (215). But Sir Thomas readily agrees to her going, and praises her for her hesitation: "Fanny was perfectly right in giving only a conditional answer. She appears to feel as she ought" (219). She wears for the occasion the new dress which he was so good as to give her for her cousin's wedding, he considerably sends her in his own carriage, and Edmund is her companion.

On a later occasion Sir Thomas becomes aware that his niece is the object of attentions from Henry Crawford. He is not offended by what he overhears. "There was no want of respect in the young man's address; and Fanny's reception of it was so proper and modest, so calm and uninviting, that he had nothing to censure in her" (246-7). The scene develops into an important statement of principle by Sir Thomas, on the proper duties of a clergyman. Speaking of Edmund in his future profession, he says: "He knows that human nature needs more lessons than a weekly sermon can convey, and that [he must] live among his parishioners and prove himself by constant attention their well-wisher and friend" (248). Again this is how Edmund and Fanny also view the prospect of Edmund's chosen career.

We have already seen Sir Thomas observing with complacency the enjoyment that Fanny and William take in each other's company. Now William expresses a wish to dance with Fanny. Therefore Sir Thomas resolves to give them a ball. He makes sure that Fanny has a partner in Henry, and insists that she must open the dancing. This fact so surprises her that she cannot suppress "a hint of her unfitness, an entreaty even to be excused. To be urging her opinion against Sir Thomas's, was a proof of the extremity of the case" (275). Here is a preliminary hint of her opposition to Sir Thomas's later recommendation of Henry as a husband. He watches her progress down the dance "with much complacency; he was proud of his niece", especially as "education and manners she owed to him" (276). And when he perceives that she is tired, he orders her to sit down entirely. Beyond that, he also perceives that "Mr Crawford [is] in love with Fanny" (280). Shortly afterwards he advises her to go immediately to bed, perhaps partly meaning to recommend her to Mr Crawford as a wife "by shewing her persuadableness" (281). This intention also becomes ironic in view of later events in which she is not persuadable. The important structural fact is that Henry's amorous pursuit of Fanny is constantly watched over by Sir Thomas.

When Henry brings Fanny news of William's promotion to the rank of Lieutenant, "she was eager to go down and be with her uncle, and have all the happiness of his joy as well as her own . . . Sir Thomas was as joyful as she could desire, and very kind and communicative; and she had a comfortable talk with him about William" (302-3).

Just as Fanny and Sir Thomas have attained this friendly intimacy, however, there is promptly juxtaposed against it their fundamental difference. This difference is made apparent in the great scene of confrontation. The scene begins quietly, as Sir Thomas expresses his surprise that Fanny has no fire in her room. She is literally "out in the cold", and he views this physical fact as a great mistake which must be rectified. But this mistake prefigures the far greater mistake that Sir Thomas himself makes in wholly recommending Fanny's acceptance of Henry's proposal of marriage.

Fanny, however, has already told Henry "without disguise" that his proposal is "very disagreeable" (314). Sir Thomas highly commends the discretion of her behaviour on that occasion, but now that Henry "has made his overtures so properly, and honourably—what are your scruples *now*?" (315). Fanny is forced by her anxiety to tell her uncle that he is "quite mistaken", that she gave Henry no encouragement, and that she cannot like him well enough to marry him. Maria has embraced marriage for the wrong reasons; Fanny rejects it for the right reasons; Mary will later reject it for the wrong reasons.

Sir Thomas is so strongly moved as to tell Fanny: "I am half inclined to think . . . that you do not quite know your own feelings" (316). We can readily agree with her when she replies that indeed she does, and that Henry's attentions were always what she did not like. But she cannot tell her uncle that she has reason to think ill of Henry's principles, for "Her ill opinion of him was founded chiefly on observations, which, for her cousins' sake, she could scarcely dare mention to their father. Maria and Julia—and especially Maria, were so closely implicated in Mr Crawford's misconduct, that she could not give his character, such as she believed it, without betraying them" (317-18). Again this behaviour strikes me as bespeaking a particularly sensitive and intelligent morality.

Sir Thomas, however, is led to say, "you have disappointed every expectation I had formed, and proved yourself of a character the very reverse of what I had supposed . . . I had thought you peculiarly free from wilfulness of temper, self-conceit, and every tendency to that independence of spirit . . . which in young women is offensive and disgusting. . . But you have now shewn me that you can be wilful and perverse, that you can and will decide for yourself, without any consideration or deference for those who have surely some right to guide you—without even asking their advice" (318). He conveniently forgets Maria's stubborn persistence in marrying Rushworth despite his own better judgement, and his outraged and frustrated authority finds vent only in the cheapness of anger.

Henry, on the other hand, he considers "a young man of sense, of character, of temper, of manners, and of fortune, exceedingly attached

to you, and seeking your hand in the most handsome and disinterested way" (319). But he has already given his real reason for accepting Henry: "I am an advocate for early marriages, where there are means in proportion" (317). His final injustice is thus to accuse Fanny of ingratitude. By this time she is crying bitterly. "Self-willed, obstinate, selfish, and ungrateful. He thought her all this. She had deceived his expectations; she had lost his good opinion. What was to become of her?" (319). This is the nadir of her relationship with her uncle. It is due not to any cold priggishness, but to the warmth of passion with which she acts upon her sense of principle in refusing to marry the man she cannot love. To add to her distress, she is miserably alone. To undergo her sharpest moral trial she must be. "She had no one to take her part, to counsel, or speak for her. Her only friend [Edmund] was absent" (321). Nonetheless, "she trusted . . . that she had done right, that her judgment had not misled her; for the purity of her intentions she could answer" (324). She hoped further that, as a good man, Sir Thomas would feel "how wretched, and how unpardonable, how hopeless and how wicked it was, to marry without affection" (324).

The connexion between Sir Thomas's attitude to Fanny's marriage and his attitude to Maria's marriage is here made explicit. Of Fanny we read: "Her uncle's kind expressions . . . and forbearing manner, were sensibly felt; and when she considered how much of the truth was unknown to him, she believed she had no right to wonder at the line of conduct he pursued. He who had married a daughter to Mr. Rushworth. Romantic delicacy was certainly not to be expected from him" (331). Sir Thomas does in fact say to Fanny, "You cannot suppose me capable of trying to persuade you to marry against your inclinations" (330-1). Mary has already told Henry that she does not think Fanny would marry him "without love" (293). And later Edmund reassures Fanny by saying: "How could you imagine me an advocate for marriage without love? . . . You did not love him—nothing could have justified your accepting him. . . So far your conduct has been faultless" (346-7).

Yet ironically Edmund is "entirely on his father's side of the question", and hopes and believes that Henry and Fanny will at last be "united by mutual affection". "Sir Thomas could not regard the connection as more desirable than he did" (335). So he tells her: "I consider Crawford's proposals as most advantageous and desirable, if you could return his affection" (346). The scene is powerfully ironic, as the man Fanny secretly loves tries to persuade her to marry the man she has long rejected, both secretly and now openly. So she is able to assure Edmund that Henry "never will succeed with me" (347), and with further unconscious irony Edmund replies: "I wish he had known you as well as I do, Fanny" (348). These words are ironic because Edmund never suspects the secret feelings of Fanny's heart. Nor does Henry, for we

have been told: "He knew not that he had a pre-engaged heart to attack. Of *that*, he had no suspicion" (326).

Fanny sets down her dislike of Henry to incompatibility of temperament. "We are so totally unlike . . . we are so very, very different in all our inclinations and ways. . . There never were two people more dissimilar. We have not one taste in common" (348). She goes on to detail the reason for her fundamental rejection of Henry. "I cannot approve his character. I have not thought well of him from the time of the play. I then saw him behaving, as it appeared to me, so very improperly and unfeelingly . . . by poor Mr Rushworth, not seeming to care how he exposed or hurt him, and paying attentions to my cousin Maria . . . in short, at the time of the play, I received an impression which will never be got over" (349). Presently she sums up her attitude to Henry by declaring: "I am persuaded that he does not think as he ought, on serious subjects" (350). Her objections to Henry, therefore, go deeper than those of personal incompatibility. They are based on firm moral principle. Fanny also goes on to state a basic feminist principle: "Let him have all the perfections in the world, I think it ought not to be set down as certain, that a man must be acceptable to every woman he may happen to like himself" (353).

We have already been told that Sir Thomas knew Fanny "to be very timid, and exceedingly nervous" (320). He therefore continues to watch her, now for signs of regret that the Crawfords have gone. But "She was always so gentle and retiring, that her emotions were beyond his discrimination. He did not understand her" (366). These words align him with Henry, who has earlier told his sister: "I do not quite know what to make of Miss Fanny. I do not understand her" (230). The alignment diminishes Sir Thomas's moral stature, as does his alignment with Mary because of his worldly attitude to marriage as a socio-economic advantage.

But William arrives on leave, and Sir Thomas, again after consulting Edmund, determines that Fanny shall "accompany her brother back to Portsmouth, and spend a little time with her own family" (368). "His prime motive in sending her away," however, is that "he . . . wished her to be heartily sick of home before her visit ended; and that a little abstinence from the elegancies and luxuries of Mansfield Park, would . . . incline her to a juster estimate of the value of that home of greater permanence, and equal comfort, of which she had the offer." Here Jane Austen uses one of her infrequent metaphors. She says that Sir Thomas's plan "was a medicinal project upon his niece's understanding, which he must consider as at present diseased." The metaphor is pregnant with prophetic irony, because it turns out to be his own two daughters whose understanding is diseased, while Tom later suffers from an actual physical illness. But Sir Thomas decides that "A residence of eight or nine

years in the abode of wealth and plenty had a little disordered her powers of comparing and judging" (369).

How little her powers of comparing and judging have been disordered by her life at Mansfield Park is demonstrated in the next section of the book. This section I have called "The Absence of Fanny". In that earlier section of the book which I have called "The Absence of Sir Thomas", we do not follow Sir Thomas to Antigua; we stay at home with Fanny as the book's moral centre. For the same reason we now follow Fanny to Portsmouth, and news of Mansfield Park and of London comes through Fanny's correspondents Lady Bertram, Mary, and Edmund.

So little are her powers of comparing and judging impaired that she quickly perceives the turmoil and the noise of her parents' home. Not surprisingly, we presently read these words: "Could Sir Thomas have seen all his niece's feelings, when she wrote her first letter to her aunt, he would not have despaired. . . Could he have seen only half that she felt before the end of a week, he would have thought Mr. Crawford sure of her, and been delighted with his own sagacity" (388).

Fanny, of course, idealizes Mansfield Park in contrast to her Portsmouth home, and in any case the idealization is ironic in view of Mansfield's later disruption by Tom's illness, and by the scandal of Maria's and Julia's elopements. Indeed, the noisy turmoil of Portsmouth can be seen as a symbol of the noisy turmoil of the scandal in London. The link between the two is Henry's visit. And as Sir Thomas has later to try to restore order in the family affairs in London, so Fanny tries to take positive action at home in Portsmouth. First she makes herself useful in preparing Sam's linen so that he may be shipped off ready for sea. Secondly she buys Betsey a silver knife so that Susan may reclaim her own. And thirdly she joins a circulating library, and tries to inspire in Susan a taste for biography and poetry.

Tom's serious illness is a symbol of the moral disease of materialism which stifles the very air of London: "They were apprehensive for his lungs" (429). His illness is also prefigured by Fanny's situation in Portsmouth. She is "beginning to feel the effect of being debarred from her usual, regular exercise; she had lost ground as to health since her being in Portsmouth" (409). She also suffers from an inadequate diet. "After being nursed up at Mansfield, it was too late in the day to be hardened at Portsmouth; and though Sir Thomas, had he known all, might have thought his niece in the most promising way of being starved, both mind and body, into a much juster value of Mr Crawford's good company and good fortune, he would probably have feared to push his experiment farther, lest she might die under the cure" (413). Portsmouth is only a lesser version of London. Bath is corrupting too. It is the abode of sheer idle pleasure. Tom goes to the races there, and Mrs Rushworth retires there to her evening card-parties.

In Fanny's conversations with Susan, too, no subject "returned so often, or remained so long between them, as Mansfield Park. . . Susan, who had an innate taste for the genteel and well-appointed, was eager to hear. . . Poor Susan was very little better fitted for home than her elder sister" (419). This passage, of course, is careful, ironic, and unobtrusive preparation for Susan's replacement of Fanny at the end. Susan is also the only one at Portsmouth who is "always ready to hear and to sympathize" (428) when Fanny receives her daily letter from Aunt Bertram about the progress of Tom's illness. Tom's preference for Edmund as his sickroom attendant is also symbolic, for Edmund represents those qualities of seriousness and self-denial to which Tom's self-indulgent pleasures stand in striking contrast. And of course Fanny frets that she is not at home at Mansfield in order to be of service at such an anxious time. Then comes the scandal of the adulterous elopement of Henry with Maria, and Fanny realizes that Sir Thomas and Edmund must be the greatest sufferers. Significantly for the structural linking, it is Edmund who brings her home at Sir Thomas's behest. Significantly too, when he arrives in Portsmouth "He looked very ill" (445), for he has come from London.

When she does return to Mansfield (and only with her does healing come), Fanny feels for Sir Thomas "most acutely. He could have no comfort but in Edmund. . . His displeasure against herself she trusted . . . would now be done away. *She* should be justified" (452). So again the central trio are carefully linked. And when Edmund is finally disillusioned about Mary, "Fanny's friendship was all that he had to cling to" (460).

If we sense a note of triumphant smugness in Fanny's feeling of being vindicated, we must take into account that in the final chapter Jane Austen uniquely calls her heroine "My Fanny". The context of this appellation is Fanny's happiness despite the distress of those around her. Her happiness is due to the fact that she is useful and beloved at Mansfield Park, she is safe from Mr Crawford, Sir Thomas has given her proof "of his perfect approbation and increased regard", and Edmund is "no longer the dupe of Miss Crawford." Her close structural link with the other central characters is again made clear, for the next paragraph deals with Edmund's unhappiness, and the next with Sir Thomas: "poor Sir Thomas, a parent, and conscious of errors in his own conduct as a parent, was the longest to suffer. He felt that he ought not to have allowed the marriage, that his daughter's sentiments had been sufficiently known to him to render him culpable in authorising it, that in so doing he had sacrificed the right to the expedient, and been governed by motives of selfishness and worldly wisdom" (461).

It only remains, then, for Edmund to be struck with the idea that Fanny was "growing as dear, as important to him in all her smiles, and

all her ways, as Mary Crawford had ever been." He therefore becomes "as anxious to marry Fanny, as Fanny herself could desire" (470). He has long held her in high regard, and is conscious of her growing worth. He has been loving, guiding, and protecting her since she was ten years old, his care has to a great degree formed her mind, and her comfort has largely depended on his kindness. He is happy "in knowing himself to have been so long the beloved of such a heart", and Sir Thomas's "joyful consent" (471) forms "a contrast with his early opinion on the subject when the poor little girl's coming had been first agitated" (472). Jane Austen thus makes explicit the contrast in the uncle's attitudes to his niece on which the structure of the book is based. Having done so, she then devotes one of her most forceful paragraphs to defining the relationship between the two characters:

"Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted. His charitable kindness had been rearing a prime comfort for himself. His liberality had a rich repayment, and the general goodness of his intentions by her, deserved it. He might have made her childhood happier; but it had been an error of judgement only which had given him the appearance of harshness, and deprived him of her early love; and now, on really knowing each other, their mutual attachment became very strong. After settling her at Thornton Lacey with every kind attention to her comfort, the object of almost every day was to see her there, or to get her away from it" (472).

The marriage of Edmund with Fanny is, however, ironic on two counts. At the very beginning, Mrs Norris assures Sir Thomas that if Fanny is bred up with her male cousins, even supposing her to have the beauty of an angel, "she will never be more to either than a sister" (7). This statement seems proved true much later, at the ball which Sir Thomas arranges in Fanny's honour. Here Fanny and Edmund dance together "with such sober tranquillity as might satisfy any looker-on, that Sir Thomas had been bringing up no wife for his younger son" (279).

"Any looker-on" might well include Edmund himself, for until the end he never gives the slightest indication of any amorous interest in Fanny. When they are about to drive to the Parsonage for dinner, he admires her appearance, and tells her so "with the kind smile of an affectionate brother" (222). When William, too, is about to escort Fanny home to Portsmouth, Edmund gives her "the affectionate farewell of a brother" (374). Again, when Edmund comes to Portsmouth to fetch her home, he presses her to his heart with the scarcely articulate words: "My Fanny—my only sister—my only comfort now" (444). It therefore seems possible to detect the faintest whiff of incest in Edmund's ultimate perception that "her warm and sisterly regard for him would be foundation enough for wedded love" (470).

There is another central irony that calls for comment. At the time of the theatricals Tom wants Fanny to play the role of Cottager's Wife. Her immediate response is: "Indeed you must excuse me. I could not act any thing if you were to give me the world. No, indeed, I cannot act" (145). Taking these words to refer to her role in the whole novel, I think we must conclude that she does not need to act. As Tony Tanner has written, in his Introduction to the Penguin edition (p. 8), "She sits, she waits, she endures". But she also fumes. She knows misery, mortification, indignation, resentment, anger, jealousy, hatred, and spite. Edmund tells her that Mary "has great discernment. I know nobody who distinguishes characters better" (198). Later, when Henry determines to marry Fanny, Mary does show discernment in pointing out to him that Fanny is not friendless or forgotten by all: "Her cousin Edmund never forgets her" (297). Her discernment fails, however, to take the further step of perceiving that Fanny loves Edmund. Nor is the truth suspected by either Henry or indeed Edmund himself. In a sense, therefore, Fanny is the most accomplished actor of them all. Her own nature provides her with the role of submissive passivity which enables her to conceal her most important secret, and yet in the end to win the man she loves.

LECTURE 2 : SELFISH AND UNGRATEFUL

It was D.H. Lawrence who wrote, in an essay on Whitman in his *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1924), that "The essential function of art is moral. Not aesthetic, not decorative, not pastime and recreation. But moral. The essential function of art is moral." This theory of the moral purpose of art is, of course, an ancient and honourable one. It was the Roman poet and critic Horace who wrote: "Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci." In the first great critical essay in English, the poet Sidney declared that the purpose of literature is "delightful teaching". Dr Johnson, too, who was Jane Austen's favourite prose writer, declared in his Preface to Shakespeare that "The end of writing is to instruct; . . . it is always a writer's duty to make the world better". Indeed he takes Shakespeare to task for being "so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose." It is among such distinguished company that Jane Austen also belongs, and nowhere more so than in *Mansfield Park*.

Such a reminder of the literary critical tradition in which this novel belongs should help us to perceive that its central concern is with education. Late in the novel Fanny, in her eager and impatient longing to be of use at Mansfield Park during Tom's illness, keeps remembering a pertinent line from William Cowper's poem "Tirocinium" (line 562). This poem, which was published in 1785, is about the education of children. (The Latin title means "raw recruits", or "being under age".) Towards the close of the poem there occur these lines:

From education, as the leading cause,
The public character its colour draws;
Thence the prevailing manners take their cast,
Extravagant or sober, loose or chaste. (911-914)

Whether Jane Austen ever had these lines in mind while writing her novel, there is doubtless now no way of telling. Their spirit, however, is captured in the sentiments expressed by both Edmund and his father on Edmund's choice of a profession in the Church. Edmund tells Mary that a clergyman "has the guardianship of religion and morals, and consequently of the manners which result from their influence" (92). Sir Thomas tells Henry that unless a clergyman lives among his parishioners and gives them his constant attention, "he does very little either for their good or his own" (248).

Education, then, is the first and most basic concept which Jane Austen's novel explores. I shall therefore deal with it first, and then proceed to other central concepts which stem from it. The chief among these other concepts are principle, judgement, duty, propriety, kindness, happiness, selflessness, and gratitude. I shall deal with each of them in turn, while not neglecting the fact that they all function together so as

to form a system of morality for the whole book. This moral system is both coherent and consistent.

We hear nothing about Tom's education, but then he is something of a nonentity. Edmund has a public education at Eton and Oxford, being destined for the Church. The daughters Maria and Julia are educated at home by Miss Lee. They consider Fanny stupid and ignorant because she knows nothing of the principal rivers in Russia, how to get to Ireland, the chronological order of the kings of England, the Roman emperors, classical mythology, "and all the Metals, Semi-Metals, Planets, and distinguished philosophers" (19). The irony of these accomplishments is made clear in the author's comments which follow. For despite their "promising talents and early information", the two sisters are "entirely deficient in the less common acquirements of self-knowledge, generosity, and humility. In every thing but disposition, they were admirably taught" (19). Jane Austen, therefore, sees the primary function of education to be not informational but moral. The attics of the sisters' minds are cluttered with useless cerebral lumber.

The result of the kind of education which the Bertram sisters *have* received, is indicated early. They "were now fully established among the belles of the neighbourhood; and as they joined to beauty and brilliant acquirements, a manner naturally easy, and carefully formed to general civility and obligingness, they possessed its favour as well as its admiration. Their vanity was in such good order, that they seemed to be quite free from it, and gave themselves no airs; while the praises attending such behaviour, secured, and brought round by their aunt, served to strengthen them in believing they had no faults" (34-5). In other words, their education has merely provided them with a veneer of social accomplishments. It has not provided them with the formative influences that go to determine character. As Sir Thomas realizes at the end, when it is too late, "To be distinguished for elegance and accomplishments . . . could have had . . . no moral effect on the mind" (463).

Jane Austen's next presentation of the ill effects of a faulty upbringing appears later in the same chapter, when she introduces the Crawfords. Henry and Mary are orphans, who have been brought up by an uncle and an aunt, who have spoilt them. "In their uncle's house they had found a kind home. Admiral and Mrs Crawford, though agreeing in nothing else, were united in affection for these children, or at least were no farther adverse in their feelings than that each had their favourite . . . The Admiral delighted in the boy, Mrs. Crawford doated on the girl" (40). But "Admiral Crawford was a man of vicious conduct," who, when his wife died, "chose, instead of retaining his niece, to bring his mistress under his own roof" (41). There is a direct reflection of this situation much later, when Henry returns from a visit to London determined to marry Fanny. Mary suggests he went to consult

the Admiral before making up his mind. Henry stoutly denies this. "He knew his uncle too well to consult him on any matrimonial scheme. The Admiral hated marriage, and thought it never pardonable in a young man of independent fortune" (292). With the example of this uncle before him, it is not surprising to hear his sister declare that "If you can persuade Henry to marry, you must have the address of a Frenchwoman. . . He is the most horrible flirt that can be imagined. If your Miss Bertrams do not like to have their hearts broke, let them avoid Henry . . . I assure you he is very detestable—the admiral's lessons have quite spoiled him" (42-3). Here, then, is a second example of the same kind of unsatisfactory education. It is an education in worldly cleverness and charm, but not in moral character.

Then again, Sir Thomas was too reserved in manner to enter affectionately into the lives of his daughters, and to their education "Lady Bertram paid not the smallest attention" (19). So the daughters have been left to the flattery of their aunt. Henry Crawford, on the other hand, has had before him the active example of his uncle's vicious ways. As his sister tells him, "You have been in a bad school for matrimony" (46). The fundamental cause of Henry and Maria's adultery is thus seen to be their lack of moral education.

The deficiencies of Mary's education are brought forward again when she gives Edmund her adverse opinion of clergymen. Edmund can only reply: "I suspect that . . . you are not judging from yourself, but from prejudiced persons, whose opinions you have been in the habit of hearing. . . You are speaking what you have been told at your uncle's table" (110). He takes up this theme in a later conversation with Fanny: "the influence of her former companions . . . gives to her conversation, to her professed opinions, sometimes a tinge of wrong." Fanny gently replies: "The effect of education" (269). In a later conversation again, Edmund tells Fanny that he was "afraid of the bias of those worldly maxims, which she has been too much used to hear" (351). Edmund also blames Mary's materialism on "the influence of the fashionable world" and "the habits of wealth" cultivated by her London friends, who are mercenary and socially ambitious; he believes "They have been leading her astray for years" (421). His diagnosis of Mary's failings is clearly the defectiveness of her upbringing, the lack of those formative moral influences that develop character.

Henry's failings are similarly diagnosed. We are told that he would have done better "had he been more in the habit of examining his own motives, and of reflecting to what the indulgence of his idle vanity was tending; but, thoughtless and selfish from prosperity and bad example, he would not look beyond the present moment" (114-15). Edmund later agrees with Fanny that Henry "has not thought at all upon serious subjects. . . How could it be otherwise, with such an education and ad-

viser?" (350). In her final dismissal of Henry, too, the author explains that he was "ruined by early independence and bad domestic example" (467). Against this example Edmund sets up the ideal of an education in "the most valuable knowledge we could any of us acquire—the knowledge of ourselves and of our duty" (459). At the end, too, Sir Thomas acknowledges "the advantages of early hardship and discipline, and the consciousness of being born to struggle and endure" (473). He has also told Henry that Edmund knows "that human nature needs more lessons than a weekly sermon can convey" (248). Sir Thomas, too, suffers longest from the family scandal, because "the anguish arising from the conviction of his own errors in the education of his daughters, was never to be entirely done away" (463). He perceives that "the excessive indulgence and flattery" of his daughters by their aunt Norris has been increased by his own severity, for it has taught them "to repress their spirits in his presence [so] as to make their real disposition unknown to him. . . Wretchedly did he feel, that with all the cost and care of an anxious and expensive education, he had brought up his daughters, without their understanding their first duties, or his being acquainted with their character and temper" (463-4). Again the fundamental problem is diagnosed as faulty upbringing. The formative influences that help to determine character have been missing.

Sir Thomas is thus to be seen as flattering himself in his complacent pride in his niece at the ball, for he considers that "education and manners she owed to him" (276). We know, on the contrary, that she owes them to Edmund, though Sir Thomas did supply the opportunity. Talking to her about Henry's proposal, Sir Thomas says: "you will feel that *they* were not least your friends who were educating and preparing you for that mediocrity of condition which *seemed* to be your lot" (313). Again he views education merely as a process of social conditioning.

At home in Portsmouth, Fanny tries to teach Susan "the juster notions . . . which her own more favoured education had fixed in her" (396). She tries to widen Susan's mental horizon with books, but achieves little success because "The early habit of reading was wanting" (419). At home, too, Fanny is very anxious that "her foreign education" should not make her less than useful and helpful. Her anxiety is increased by observing that her mother "neither taught nor restrained her children" (390). Sir Thomas's motive in sending Fanny home to Portsmouth is also basically educational. He wants her to learn the value of the home that Henry is offering her. But again his idea of education is dictated by worldly materialism.

If education is the basic concern in the book, we may ask what it is expected to produce. The answer seems to be, men and women of

principle. The word "principle" and its cognates occur in the book more than twenty times.

Principle is specifically linked to education in the description of Julia's misery at Sotherton. Having enjoyed Henry's company all the way there, she is later confined to the company of her Aunt Norris and Mrs Rushworth. This is how Jane Austen describes her situation: "The politeness which she had been brought up to practise as a duty, made it impossible for her to escape; while the want of that higher species of self-command, that just consideration of others, that knowledge of her own heart, that principle of right which had not formed any essential part of her education, made her miserable under it" (91). At the same time, Edmund is explaining to Mary the influence of the clergy on public manners, and he says: "The *manners* I speak of, might rather be called *conduct*, perhaps, the result of good principles" (93).

Then in the episode of the theatricals, Julia is angry and hurt at Maria's flirtation with Henry. Jane Austen tells us that "the sisters . . . had not affection or principle enough to make them merciful or just, to give them honour or compassion. Maria felt her triumph, and pursued her purpose careless of Julia" (162-3). Later, when Sir Thomas questions Fanny about her rejection of Henry's proposal of marriage, she longs to tell her uncle that she thinks ill of Henry's principles (317). And Henry's selfish perseverance makes her feel that he had "always known no principle to supply as a duty what the heart was deficient in" (329). Later Fanny recognizes that the Rushworth scandal has been made possible because of Henry's "unsettled affections, wavering with his vanity, *Maria's* decided attachment, and no sufficient principle on either side" (441). When Edmund's eyes are finally opened to Mary's deficiencies, too, he asserts that "Her's are faults of principle" (456). And when Sir Thomas finally surveys his "grievous mismanagement" of his daughters' education, he fears that what has been lacking is "principle, active principle" (463).

So far we have been examining the negative aspect of the problem, the deficiencies of an education which fails to inculcate moral principles. On the positive side, Sir Thomas listens with full satisfaction to the "clear, simple, spirited details" of William's adventures in the navy, for he sees in them "the proof of good principles, professional knowledge, energy, courage, and cheerfulness—everything that could deserve or promise well" (236). Fanny, too, convinced that Edmund will marry Mary, is ready to suppress her own affection, for "She had all the heroism of principle" (265). Henry is ready to marry her because he feels "the worth of good principles in a wife," and is "inspired by the knowledge of her being well principled and religious" (294). Discussing Henry's proposal with Fanny, Edmund too calls her "a woman who [is] firm as a rock in her own principles" (351).

In Portsmouth she marvels that Susan "should have formed such proper opinions of what ought to be" when she "had no cousin Edmund to direct her thoughts or fix her principles" (397-8). When the Rushworth scandal becomes public, she recognizes that it will fall most heavily on Sir Thomas and Edmund, the latter because of his "upright principles" (442). At the end, even Henry takes only a very few months to learn, by the force of contrast with Maria, "to place a yet higher value on the sweetness of [Fanny's] temper, the purity of her mind, and the excellence of her principles" (468). Sir Thomas, too, prizes more and more "the sterling good of principle" (471). Scattered as they are throughout, but accumulating as the book progresses, these references clearly exemplify a major moral theme.

But the network of significances spreads, for if your conduct is grounded in principle you should be able to exercise sound judgement. This word "judgement" and its cognates occur in the book more than seventy times. Like sound principle, sound judgement is used as a touchstone to distinguish the good characters from the others. The word is first used, significantly, to link Edmund and Fanny. For "he recommended the books which charmed her leisure hours, he encouraged her taste, and corrected her judgment; he made reading useful by talking to her of what she read, and heightened its attraction by judicious praise" (22). His education at Eton and Oxford has not been wasted; he has an able and willing pupil; and they enjoy an ideal one-to-one relationship.

The same word links Fanny with Henry. Mistakenly Mrs Grant is "persuaded that no judgment could be equal to" Henry's (61). But Fanny observes him flirting with both the Bertram sisters, and would probably have confided in Edmund "had her confidence in her own judgment been equal to her exercise of it" (115).

Edmund's basic objection to the acting is that "it would be highly injudicious" (125). Tom's support for the acting is also expressed in terms of judgment; he tells Edmund, "Don't imagine that nobody in this house can see or judge but yourself" (128). His words are unconsciously ironic, for the only person who does see and judge it all for herself is Fanny. Edmund tries to persuade Maria to surrender her role after reading aloud the first act of the play to her mother or her aunt: "It will not be necessary to send you to your *father's* judgment, I am convinced" (140). Mrs Norris reproaches Fanny for not obliging her cousins by acting, but Edmund defends her by declaring that "Her judgment may be quite . . . safely trusted" (147). His words are ironic, for it turns out that Fanny's is the *only* judgment that can be trusted. Undecided as to whether she ought to join the others in acting, Fanny wonders: "would Edmund's judgment, would his persuasion of Sir Thomas's disapprobation of the whole, be enough to justify her in a determined denial in spite of all the rest?" (153). When Edmund pro-

poses to play the role of Anhalt opposite Mary, however, and talks the problem over with Fanny, her hesitation makes him say: "I see your judgment is not with me" (154). It is Fanny who remains single-minded and strong-minded. It is Edmund who weakly capitulates. "Her heart and her judgment were equally against Edmund's decision; she could not acquit his unsteadiness" (159). Henry is the best actor because he has "more judgment than Tom" (165). And finally Fanny herself is invested by Edmund and Mary "with the office of judge and critic" (170), the role she has been implicitly playing all the time. Edmund is thus able to report to his father that "Fanny is the only one who has judged rightly throughout, who has been consistent" (187). In its turn this statement stands in sharp contrast to those about Aunt Norris, for her judgment had been blinded, whereas Sir Thomas had hoped that "her judgment must certainly have disapproved" the whole scheme (188).

There is the same word-link between Fanny and Mary. When Mary begins to cultivate their intimacy, Fanny derives only "occasional amusement" from her conversation, "and *that* often at the expense of her judgment" (208). The same link occurs between Fanny and Henry, for Henry believes Fanny to be one of those "unconquerable young ladies of eighteen . . . [who] are never to be persuaded into love against their judgment" (231). The further verbal link with Edmund is made when Fanny, resolving to renounce him to Mary, decides that "She would endeavour to be rational, and to deserve the right of judging of Miss Crawford's character and the privilege of true solicitude for him by a sound intellect and an honest heart" (265). And having rejected Henry, "she trusted . . . that she had done right, that her judgment had not misled her" (324). She also believes that Edmund's influence had done "little in clearing [Mary's] judgment, and regulating her notions" (367). His early influence upon herself, on the other hand, has largely made her his moral superior. As Jane Austen says at the end: "She was of course only too good for him" (471).

Sir Thomas decides to send Fanny home to Portsmouth in order to "incline her to a juster estimate" of the home that Henry offers her (369). "A residence of eight or nine years in the abode of wealth and plenty," he mistakenly considers, "had a little disordered her powers of comparing and judging" (369). In Portsmouth, however, she clear-sightedly discovers that to Betsey her mother "was most injudiciously indulgent" (389), and that altogether "her mother was a partial, ill-judging parent" (390). On his visit to Portsmouth Henry tells Fanny with unconscious irony: "Your judgment is my rule of right" (412). The statement is ironic because it is Fanny's judgment which later convinces her that the newspaper report of the Rushworth scandal is true. So "*She* should be justified" (452) in refusing Henry, Sir Thomas sees

"how ill he had judged" (463), and his treatment of Fanny "had been an error of judgment" (472). Mrs Norris is finally dismissed as having "no judgment" (465).

Sound judgement based on correct principles enables one to do one's duty, and duty is another of the values highly prized in the moral world of *Mansfield Park*. The word and its cognates occur nearly seventy times, and if we add the idea of obligation, of what one ought to do, this number increases considerably. Again, different people have different ideas of duty. Some see it as a social observance, others as a moral imperative. Maria sees it in terms of socio-economic advantage: "Being now in her twenty-first year, she was beginning to think matrimony a duty; and as a marriage with Mr. Rushworth would give her the enjoyment of a larger income than her father's, as well as ensure her the house in town, which was now a prime object, it became, by the same rule of moral obligation, her evident duty to marry Mr. Rushworth if she could" (38-9). Similar worldly sentiments are expressed by Mary when she tells Fanny that "It is every body's duty to do as well for themselves as they can" (289). Mary's creed is that it is everybody's prime obligation to secure advantages for oneself. Lady Bertram's advice to Fanny about marriage is the same: "it is every young woman's duty to accept such a very unexceptionable offer" (333). At Sotherton, too, Julia remains with the two older women only from a sense of "The politeness which she had been brought up to practise as a duty" (91), that is, as a mere social formality, not as an expression of warm personal sincerity. Similarly Maria's engagement is not entered into without "due reference" (39) to the absent Sir Thomas, that is, as a necessary formality.

Edmund, on the other hand, understands duty as being a moral obligation. He defends the vocation of clergyman in terms of the duty of teaching and recommending Christian doctrine, for "as the clergy are, or are not what they ought to be, so are the rest of the nation" (93). Fanny, too, praises Dr Grant as "a sensible man" who is "in the habit of teaching others their duty every week" (112). Edmund and Fanny are united in conceiving duty as a turning outwards from the self with a sense of obligation to others.

One's duty is not always clear and plain. Fanny feels "undecided as to what she *ought to do*" (152-3) about joining in the theatricals. She considers "the claims of her cousins to being obliged," and grows bewildered in her attempt "to find her way to her duty" (153). At the final rehearsal, too, when she looks like having to read Mrs Grant's part, she is irritated and distressed because "she had known it her duty to keep away" (172). Then she has "to perform the dreadful duty of appearing before her uncle" (177). But Edmund champions her by telling his father: "She never ceased to think of what was due to you" (187).

Mary gives the word another value when she allows Fanny to choose a gold necklace to wear to the ball. "[Henry] gave it to me," she says, "and with the necklace I make over to you all the duty of remembering the original giver" (259). Mary here uses Fanny's strong sense of duty as an unfair weapon of moral suasion, urging her to feel an obligation which is unwanted. Fanny sees duty differently. Convinced that Edmund will marry Mary, she represses her own feelings. "It was her intention, as she felt it to be her duty, to try to overcome all that was excessive, all that bordered on selfishness in her affection for Edmund . . . She . . . was determined to do her duty" (264-5). Even if the self must suffer, the claims of others come first. But Henry views the concept in a worldly sense, for he believes that by marrying Fanny he will give her "the consequence so justly her due" (297). The last thing that Fanny thinks about is consequence. She realizes that the basis of a happy marriage is love.

Sir Thomas has the right moral view of duty when he tells Fanny he is sure that she will never fail to treat her Aunt Norris "with the respect and attention that are due to her" (313). But he also thinks it his "duty to mark my opinion of your conduct" (318) in rejecting Henry. And if either of his daughters had done likewise without consulting him, he would have thought such a proceeding "a gross violation of duty and respect" (319). Despite her uncle's displeasure, however, Fanny knows that "She must do her duty, and trust that time might make her duty easier" (331). In other words, she must persevere in the moral obligation she feels to refuse Henry, even if this means continuing to earn Sir Thomas's displeasure.

Sir Thomas sends Fanny home to Portsmouth partly on the grounds that it is her duty sometimes to see her family (370). At Portsmouth she perceives that "nothing was done as it ought to be" (388-9), and she reflects that at Mansfield "every body had their due importance" (392), everyone had obligations to others. For this reason Fanny tries to give Susan "juster notions of what was due to every body" (396).

The last words on the subject of duty, however, are given not to Fanny but to the other two members of the book's central trio. It is Edmund who declares that "the most valuable knowledge we could any of us acquire [is] the knowledge of ourselves and of our duty" (459), that is, of our obligations to others. And it is Sir Thomas who reflects that his daughters "had never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers, by that sense of duty which can alone suffice . . . he had brought up his daughters, without their understanding their first duties" (463-4). These duties are apparently their moral obligations to their family, for Sir Thomas's reflections are immediately preceded by the reformation of Tom: "He became what he ought to be, useful to his

father, steady and quiet, and not living merely for himself" (462).

The moral network on which the book is built extends even further, in an organized and connected pattern. For if one fulfils the moral obligations of duty in accordance with sound judgement and correct principles, then one conducts oneself properly, or with propriety. These words and their cognates occur oftener than sixty times. Interestingly, they are introduced into the book by odious Mrs Norris. She agrees with Sir Thomas "as to the propriety of doing every thing one could by way of providing for [the] child" (Fanny). And she goes on to say: "Give a girl an education, and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well, without farther expense to any body" (6). It seems that the idea of introducing the girl into the world "properly" is to allow her to make an advantageous marriage, to settle well as Mrs Norris's euphemism has it. This is certainly the case with Mary Crawford, who declares: "I would have every body marry if they can do it properly", by which she means that "every body should marry as soon as they can do it to advantage", that is, to their own advantage (43). We can see, therefore, that like other key concepts in the book, the measure of what is proper is not fixed. Jane Austen's exploration of these concepts can only be fully understood by reading the novel through to its end. Whether the reader arrives at a firm and refreshed awareness of the meaning and value of these concepts must depend partly upon his own active participation in the process.

The word is next used in relation to Edmund. Though he admires Mary, he is sorry to hear her speak so freely of her uncle. "It did not suit his sense of propriety" (57). This word thus early establishes the keynote of their relationship, for it is finally the impropriety of Mary's conduct in London that alienates Edmund's affection. The word forms another early link with Henry, who offers his services to Rushworth "after properly depreciating his own abilities" (61). The word here attracts overtones of mock-modesty. It also links Edmund and Fanny again when he blames himself for neglecting her in favour of Mary's horse-riding: "Nothing of this would have happened had she been properly considered" (74). Again, at Fanny's first ball Mrs Norris assures Mrs Rushworth that "dear Maria has such a strict sense of propriety" (117). In view of later events Mrs Norris's words take on an unconscious irony. And in view of the later episode of the theatricals, the same comment applies to her further statement that "It is quite delightful, ma'am, to see young people so properly happy, so well suited" (118).

Indeed, the concept of propriety plays a leading part in the episode of the theatricals. Reading the play for herself, Fanny is astonished by it. "Agatha and Amelia appeared to her in their different ways so totally improper for home representation" (137). Even the torpid Lady Bertram is stirred sufficiently to remark to Maria: "Do not act anything

improper, my dear. Sir Thomas would not like it" (140). Edmund finally decides to act opposite Mary in order to avoid importing an outsider for the role, for such an importation would be "the end of all the privacy and propriety which was talked about at first" (153). Ultimately Fanny too looks like becoming involved by having to read Mrs Grant's part; she feels that she is "properly punished" (172) for attending the rehearsal at all. Once Sir Thomas arrives, too, the Crawfords "soon agreed on the propriety of their walking quietly home and leaving the family to themselves" (177). They are not merely extricating themselves from an embarrassingly awkward situation. Rather is Jane Austen showing them to be the moral superiors of Mr Yates, who, "having never been with those who thought much of parental claims, or family confidence, could not perceive that any thing of the kind was necessary". Especially as they are all strangers to Sir Thomas, he displays a lamentable lack of proper discretion and tact. As for Sir Thomas himself, he "saw all the impropriety of such a scheme among such a party, and at such a time". He soon has the house "restored to its proper state" (187). Mrs Norris, on the other hand, "was ashamed to confess having never seen any of the impropriety which was so glaring to Sir Thomas" (188). And finally Tom has to explain the situation to his friend Yates, "with proper apologies for his father's particularity" (191).

The same word is used with trenchant irony to describe Maria's wedding. Socially, the wedding is "very proper" (203). But it is not proper morally, for Maria enters upon married life with "an hatred of home, restraint and tranquillity; [in] the misery of disappointed affection, and [with] contempt of [her husband]" (202); and further, with anticipations of the mere material delights of life in London.

There is more irony in Mrs Norris's reminder to Fanny about going to dine at the Parsonage: "people are never respected when they step out of their proper sphere" (220). Edmund has to seek his father's opinion as to the *propriety* of Fanny's accepting the invitation (217), and he praises her because she wears no finery, "nothing but what is perfectly proper" (222). On the later occasion of the ball, Sir Thomas too commends "The neatness and propriety of her dress" (272). Nor has he anything to censure in Fanny's "proper and modest" reception of Henry's respectful address after the game of cards (246). When Henry proposes to her, however, she considers it as "mere trifling", and therefore feels "that it was treating her improperly and unworthily, and in such a way as she had not deserved" (301). He then applies to her uncle, who tells Fanny that "he had done it all so well, so openly, so liberally, so properly" (314), and reminds her that she always received his attentions "very properly" (316). Next day Henry comes again, and Sir Thomas is "Satisfied that the cause was now on a footing the most proper and hopeful" (330). When Edmund returns, Fanny confides to him

her moral objection to Henry's character: "I have not thought well of him from the time of the play. I then saw him behaving, as it appeared to me, so very improperly and unfeelingly—so improperly by poor Mr Rushworth" (349). Edmund admits that "Nothing could be more improper than the whole business" of the theatricals, but he also declares that Henry's proposal of marriage "shews his proper estimation of the blessing of domestic happiness, and pure attachment" (350). Fanny's reply is that "The higher his deserts, the more improper for me ever to have thought of him" (353). Sir Thomas is afraid that "she might not have persuaded herself into receiving his addresses properly, before the young man's inclination for paying them were over" (356). His "prime motive in sending her away," therefore, "had very little to do with the propriety of her seeing her parents again" (369). He wants instead to educate her in "a little abstinence from the elegancies and luxuries of Mansfield Park".

Its very propriety, however, is one of the qualities of life at Mansfield Park that Fanny misses most at Portsmouth. "In her uncle's house there would have been . . . a propriety" (383); her father's house stands in complete contrast to "The elegance, propriety, regularity, harmony—and perhaps, above all, the peace and tranquillity of Mansfield" (391), for it is "the abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety" (388). She comes to wonder how Susan, "brought up in the midst of negligence and error, . . . should have formed such proper opinions of what ought to be" (397-8). On Henry's brief visit, therefore, she is pleased that "there was something particularly kind and proper in the notice he took of Susan" (406). She is also pleased that he attends to her mother "with the utmost politeness and propriety" (400). She also finds it pleasing "to hear him speak so properly" of attending to his estate and its tenants in Norfolk (404).

The last word again belongs to Sir Thomas, however, as he laments that his daughters "had never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers" (463).

Beyond the basic importance of education for the inculcation of correct principles that will ensure sound judgement and provide a sense of duty and propriety, the moral value that Jane Austen's novel prizes most is kindness. This word and its cognates occur more than 120 times. At the beginning, for example, Mrs Price's pleading letter to the sisters from whom she has been many years estranged, "re-established peace and kindness" (5). Sir Thomas, too, realizes that unless Fanny can be adequately provided for, "there would be cruelty instead of kindness in taking her from her family" (6). It is ironically Mrs Norris who recommends Fanny to the kindness of her uncle and aunt, ironically because Mrs Norris is never kind to her herself, and so Fanny cannot love her (25).

Her aunt and uncle do receive her "very kindly" (12), but Sir Thomas is too grave, and Lady Bertram succeeds better "by the mere aid of a good-humoured smile". But Fanny spends a miserable first week. "Nobody meant to be unkind, but nobody put themselves out of their way to secure her comfort" (14). At the end of a week, however, Edmund comes to feel "that she required more positive kindness." He urges her claims to the kindness of the others, and is "uniformly kind himself" (17). He is personally helpful. "You have good sense, and a sweet temper," he tells her, "and I am sure you have a grateful heart, that could never receive kindness without wishing to return it. I do not know any better qualifications for a friend and companion" (26).

As Lady Bertram's companion she enjoys "perfect security . . . from any sound of unkindness" (35), and in providing her with a mare to ride Edmund demonstrates again "that kindness from which her pleasure sprung" (37). She significantly finds that, in comparison to Edmund, Henry "had no active kindness" (68). It is "Edmund's kindness" again which enables Fanny to join the party to Sotherton (79).

In the episode of the theatricals Mrs Norris reproaches Fanny for not agreeing to act with her cousins, "So kind as they are to you!" (146). But except for Edmund they aren't. Mary quietly comforts Fanny, and though Fanny does not love Mary, "she felt very much obliged to her for her present kindness" (147). She owes her more gratitude for her "kind exertions" (159) in persuading Mrs Grant to replace Fanny for a part in the play. In her own "kind-heartedness" Fanny tries to help Rushworth to learn his lines, a task which should have been embraced by his fiancée Maria. Later Henry tells her that her "kindness and patience" on that occasion "can never be forgotten" (224). She also exercises her "kind offices" (170) in prompting Mary and Edmund for their rehearsal.

Sir Thomas's return shows him offering Fanny a surprising new kindness. He "came forward with a kindness which astonished and penetrated her. . . He had never been so kind, so *very* kind to her in his life" (178). With his "solemn . . . paternal kindness" (200) he also questions Maria about her coming marriage. Mary and Mrs Grant show Fanny a new kindness, too, and Mrs Norris considers Sir Thomas "a great deal too kind" (222) in sending her to dine with them in his own carriage.

Henry's amorous pursuit of Fanny begins with his telling Mary that "I only want her to look kindly on me" (231). When he determines to marry Fanny, he similarly tells Mary that Maria and Julia will now see their cousin treated as she ought to be, "and I wish they may be heartily ashamed of their own abominable neglect and unkindness" (297). Henry tries to win Fanny's favour by helping William, so he lends him a horse as "the means of conferring a kindness where he

wished to oblige" (237). And when he announces to Fanny that he has secured William's promotion, she can only keep repeating "How kind! how very kind! . . . how very, very kind!" (300). "Your kindness to William," she goes on, "makes me more obliged to you than words can express" (302). Mary brings up the subject again on her farewell visit, and Fanny still says, "How very, very kind of him" (364). Kindness should be a spontaneous gesture from the heart, and should not look for recompense. Henry, however, supported by Mary, Sir Thomas, and even Edmund, considers that it should earn him Fanny's acceptance.

Then again, though Sir Thomas is angry at Fanny's inexplicable refusal of Henry, he is also kind. His discretion in keeping the episode confidential "was an act of kindness which Fanny felt at her heart" (322), especially as it was a kindness which would spare her "from her aunt Norris's interminable reproaches." Yet Sir Thomas omitted nothing "of civility, compliment, or kindness" (329) that might assist Henry's plan. "Upon her disposition he believed kindness might be the best way of working" (330). He is right, for on Fanny's side "Her uncle's kind expressions, . . . and forbearing manner, were sensibly felt" (331). At Mary's departure, too, she gives Fanny "A very, very kind embrace" (364). Indeed, in their last conversation Mary had shown her "much personal kindness" (367). Unfortunately, it is a sprat to catch a mackerel. It is not disinterested. For Henry, securing William's promotion is an investment, which looks for a profitable return in the form of Fanny's love. The transaction is basically mercenary, like Maria's with Rushworth. Significantly, they both fail.

In Portsmouth her mother meets her "with looks of true kindness" (377), and when Susan makes some tea, Fanny soon feels the better "for such well-timed kindness" (384). Her mother continues to be "not unkind" (389), but never *grows* in kindness. Fanny's growing influence with Susan originates "in an act of kindness" (396), the restoration of her silver knife. Henry, too, notices Susan with particular kindness (406).

When Tom takes ill in London, "Edmund kindly proposes attending his brother immediately" (426), and his letter to Fanny expresses Sir Thomas's kindness in sending for herself and Susan (443). Upon their return to Mansfield, Susan is received by Lady Bertram "with quiet kindness" (448), and Fanny comforts their aunt with "kindness and sympathy" (449). Edmund's disclosures about Mary also make him conscious that he is taxing Fanny's kindness as his listener (453). Mary herself finds that she has had "enough of vanity, ambition, love, and disappointment", and is "in need of the true kindness of her sister's heart" (469). Fanny's comfort may therefore freely depend on Edmund's kindness (470). Sir Thomas, too, comes to recognize that "His charitable kindness [to Fanny] had been rearing a prime comfort for

himself", and he settles her at Thornton Lacey "with every kind attention to her comfort" (472).

Yet, if we may judge by word-counts, the highest value in Jane Austen's fictional world of *Mansfield Park* is happiness. Happiness is the *summum bonum*, the ultimate goal. The word and its cognates occur more than 230 times. If we add "pleasure" and its cognates (over 260 times), "delight" and its cognates (over 70 times), "agreeable" and its cognates (some 70 times), and such related words as "gay", "merry", "mirth", and "enjoy", these together form the broadest basis of Jane Austen's structure of values in this novel. Yet again different characters seek happiness in different ways. We early learn, for example, that Fanny's happiness consists in being with William (21), whereas Edmund is not pleased to learn that Mary's happiness centres in a large income (40).

Julia is happy with Henry in travelling to and from Sotherton, Maria while they are there. In the theatricals Henry's choice of Maria as Amelia makes her realize that she can only be happy at Julia's expense (136). Sir Thomas experiences "all the felicity of being again at home" (183): "I come home to be happy and indulgent," he declares (185). He is concerned to ensure that, in marrying Rushworth, Maria must not sacrifice her happiness (200). He does not know that in failing to rescue her from Rushworth, it is Henry who has already "destroyed her happiness" (202). The measure of Henry and Mary's moral obtuseness is conveyed by the fact that they both found supreme happiness in acting, in role-playing (225, 358). Fanny's happiness, on the contrary, is "of a quiet, deep, heart-swelling sort" (369). Sir Thomas's worldliness is evident again when he assures Fanny that in recommending Henry to her, "Your happiness *and advantage* are all that I have in view" (331, my emphasis). Edmund is more single-minded in considering that in marriage the prime consideration is happiness (chapter 35), and he believes that Henry's proposal "shews his proper estimation of the blessing of domestic happiness" (350). Fanny, on the contrary, believes that she and Henry are "so totally unlike" that they could never be "tolerably happy together" (348). On her farewell visit to Fanny, Mary even quotes Anhalt from the play: "When two sympathetic hearts meet in the marriage state, matrimony may be called a happy life" (358, 504). But she cynically goes on to say that she looks upon her friends the Frazers as being "about as unhappy as most other married people" (361). She too uses William's promotion as a moral bribe for Fanny to return Henry's love: "I cannot imagine Henry ever to have been happier than when he had succeeded in getting your brother's commission (363) . . . What a happy creature William must be!" (364).

Sir Thomas's experiment in sending Fanny home to Portsmouth has nothing at all to do "with any idea of making her happy" (369),

and while she is there she spends much time in considering that her happiness lies at Mansfield. At the immediate prospect of going there Susan, too, is "all happiness" (444).

Sir Thomas's matrimonial worldliness is evident again when he considers that Edmund is now cut off from happiness with the woman who in everything but her despicable brother, would have been "so eligible a connection" (452). Mary, too, believes that Fanny would have made Henry "happy for ever" (455), and Henry reproaches Maria as "the ruin of all his happiness in Fanny" (464). The author says, however, that it was Henry's "cold-blooded vanity" that ruined his chance of happiness with Fanny (467). Fanny herself has much to be happy about, but especially that Edmund's eyes have been opened to the true character of Mary. At the end Sir Thomas finds it "so great a felicity" to be relieved from Mrs Norris (466). Edmund finally sets out on the "road to happiness" with Fanny, and "it must have been a delightful happiness" to know himself "so long the beloved of such a heart" (471). And so the book ends with the happiness of their marriage.

In Jane Austen's fictional world, however, happiness is not a free gift. It has to be earned with suffering, or as Jane Austen is more likely to say, with misery and wretchedness, vexation and distress. At her first coming to Mansfield, indeed, Fanny's "consciousness of misery was . . . increased by the idea of its being a wicked thing for her not to be happy" (13). We are told of her misery when William leaves her in order to join the navy (21). When Edmund deserts her in order to participate in the play, "it was all misery" (157). When her uncle first returns from Antigua, "she was miserable in considering how much unsuspected vexation was probably ready to burst on him" (178). Henry's proposal of marriage makes her feel miserable (302), and she assures her uncle that marriage with Henry would make her miserable, "that great black word *miserable*" (320). In her parents' home at Portsmouth she finds "The living in incessant noise . . . was the greatest misery of all" (391). poor and miserable" (424). The Rushworth scandal makes her realize "the misery that must ensue" (440), and she is so shocked by it that her own evening "passed without a pause of misery" (441). At the prospect of returning to Mansfield "she felt she was in the greatest danger of being exquisitely happy, while so many were miserable." But she has to make speedy preparations for departure, and since "There is nothing like employment, active, indispensable employment, for relieving sorrow", "She had not time to be miserable" (443). Yet she is conscious of the misery that Edmund, who is coming to fetch her, must be suffering (444). She is also conscious that Edmund is the only one of his children who is not at this time "a source of misery" to Sir Thomas (451). It is also significant that the misery which Maria occasions by her adultery

(462) is a direct reflection of "the misery of disappointed affection" for Henry which constitutes one of her chief motives for marrying Rushworth (202).

The word "misery" and its cognates occur some thirty times. So do the word "agitation" and its cognates, and the word "vexation" and its cognates a similar number of times. The word "distress" and its cognates occur some forty times. Such words as "wretchedness, anger, resentment, and disgust" occur less frequently, but together they constitute a network of emotional states which complement the book's more intellectual abstractions such as principle, judgement, duty, and propriety.

In the world of *Mansfield Park* the worst moral defects are selfishness and ingratitude. These are the defects that Fanny takes most miserably to heart among all Sir Thomas's accusations when she rejects Henry's proposal of marriage. For the accusations to carry their full moral weight, however, the concepts of selfishness and ingratitude have been well aired before we reach Sir Thomas's climactic confrontation with the heroine.

Selfishness enters the book as a moral imperative in relation to Tom. His father tries to make him feel shame and sorrow for the extravagance which is robbing Edmund of much of his prospective income. Tom, however, is soon able to rationalize his shortcomings "with cheerful selfishness" (24). It is not until the end that he is able to outgrow "the thoughtlessness and selfishness of his previous habits", and to learn that there is more to life than "living merely for himself" (462).

In the time sequence of the book it is Mary who is next exposed as living for herself. She apologizes to Fanny for depriving her of exercise by riding her mare, but she does so sentimentally, by declaring that "Selfishness must always be forgiven . . . because there is no hope of a cure" (68). The falsity of this convenient aphorism is demonstrated in Tom's final reformation. Selfishness can be cured by suffering.

Next it is Henry who is characterized by the narrator as being "thoughtless and selfish from prosperity and bad example" (115). After the aborted theatricals the narrator describes Henry's departure as ending "all the hopes his selfish vanity had raised in Maria and Julia Bertram" (194). When William is relating his adventures in the navy, Henry becomes conscious of his own shortcomings: "The glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance, made his own habits of selfish indulgence appear in shameful contrast" (236). His persistence in pestering Fanny with his proposal of marriage makes her angry and disgusted: "Some resentment did arise at a perseverance so selfish and ungenerous. Here was again a want of delicacy and regard for others" (328). This last phrase is echoed at the end of his visit to Fanny at Portsmouth: "she was quite persuaded of his being astonishingly more . . .

regardful of others than formerly" (413-14).

When Mary pays her farewell visit to Fanny, we have similarly been told that "Her mind was entirely self-engrossed" (358). In Portsmouth, too, Fanny remains convinced that Mary "loves nobody but herself and her brother" (424).

Yet even Edmund and Fanny are not entirely free of this cardinal defect of moral character. Tom and Maria are delighted when Edmund joins the cast of the play: "he was to act, and he was driven to it by the force of selfish inclinations only. Edmund had descended from that moral elevation which he had maintained before" (158). Fanny, too, had held aloof from the play; she had "looked on and listened, not unamused to observe the selfishness which, more or less disguised, seemed to govern them all, and wondering how it would end" (131). But even Fanny is perplexed about holding out: "Was it not ill-nature—selfishness?" (153). Is selfishness based on principle a lesser evil than the injudiciousness of disrupting Sir Thomas's home?

In the consternation at Sir Thomas's unexpected return, too, Julia's announcement is made in the suspension of "Jealousy and bitterness" she has felt towards her sister Maria: "selfishness was lost in the common cause" (175). Similarly Fanny, when she feels convinced that Edmund will marry Mary, feels also what it is her duty to do: "It was her intention . . . to try to overcome all that . . . bordered on selfishness in her affection for Edmund" (264). Much later, however, she is still waiting for Edmund to make up his mind, and so "She could just find selfishness enough to wonder whether Edmund *had* written to Miss Crawford" (427). Miss Crawford, too, views Tom's alarming illness as a possible advantage: "to her selfishness and vanity it would be good luck to have Edmund the only son" (430). If Tom dies, Edmund will inherit, and thus become an eligible marriage partner for Mary. "Edmund would be forgiven for being a clergyman, it seemed, under certain conditions of wealth" (436).

Nor do Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram escape the charge of selfishness. In his great confrontation with Fanny about Henry's proposal of marriage, Sir Thomas says he had thought her "peculiarly free from . . . self-conceit" (318). At the end of the book, however, he is forced to realize that in allowing Maria to marry Rushworth without love, "he had sacrificed the right to the expedient, and been governed by motives of selfishness and worldly wisdom" (461). In the moral education of his daughters he comes to perceive "the necessity of self-denial and humility" (463). Julia's folly is less reprehensible than Maria's guilt because "education had not given her so very hurtful a degree of self-consequence" (466). And of course Lady Bertram does not want Fanny to marry Edmund, because Fanny had long been "Selfishly dear" to her (472).

Sir Thomas's second accusation, that Fanny is ungrateful, has a particularly nasty barb. As a dependent poor relation, Fanny has always been made conscious that she owes an unlimited debt of gratitude to her benefactors. This debt is a moral big stick which her odious aunt Norris is particularly fond of wielding. "Mrs. Norris had been talking to her the whole way from Northampton of her wonderful good fortune, and the extraordinary degree of gratitude and good behaviour which it ought to produce" (13). Her aunt returns to this method of attack in her attempt to bully Fanny into taking part in the theatricals. Sharply Mrs Norris says, "I shall think her a very obstinate, ungrateful girl, if she does not do what her aunt and cousins wish her—very ungrateful indeed, considering who and what she is" (147). This charge is similar to that of Sir Thomas when she rejects Henry's proposal of marriage: "Self-willed, obstinate, selfish, and ungrateful" (319).

But Fanny does not show herself ungrateful. Indeed, gratitude is the very basis of her love for Edmund. When he initially helps her to write to her brother William, we are told that for his kindness "her countenance and a few artless words fully conveyed all their gratitude and delight" (16). Then when she fears she may have to live with her aunt Norris, her first thought is: "I hope I am not ungrateful" (25). When her uncle departs for Antigua, too, her inability to grieve makes her fear that "her feelings were ungrateful" (33). Again, when Edmund provides her with a mare to ride, she realizes that she owes him her gratitude (37). When he enables her to join the party to Sotherton, he is able to do so in the assurance that "Fanny will feel quite as grateful as the occasion requires"; and sure enough, "Fanny's gratitude when she heard the plan, was in fact much greater than her pleasure" (79). On the other hand, she cannot feel much gratitude towards Tom for dancing with her only in order to avoid playing whist with his elders (119).

Mary, too, acknowledges Fanny's capacity for showing gratitude. When Henry determines to marry Fanny, Mary tells him: "You will have a sweet little wife; all gratitude and devotion" (292). And again: "The gentleness and gratitude of her disposition would secure her all your own immediately" (293). Henry prefixes his proposal of marriage, however, with the news of his having secured William's promotion. Fanny has therefore to mitigate her displeasure and resentment. "While her heart was still bounding with joy and gratitude on William's behalf" (301), she must firmly reject Henry, yet at the same time recognize "how gratefully she could esteem him for his friendship to William!" (302). Again she is faced with a moral dilemma, and here she manages to have the best of both worlds: she refuses William's benefactor while acknowledging her gratitude for his benefaction.

Though Sir Thomas is at a loss to understand her rejection of Henry, his basic kindness enables him to assure her of his discreet secrecy.

He thus leaves her "in a glow of gratitude." Later, too, when she returns from her exercise in the fresh air, as he had recommended, she finds that he has not omitted to have a fire lit in her cold room for the first time. In the circumstances she regards the fire as an indulgence, which excites her "painful gratitude" (322). In her subsequent interview with Henry, too, "She must have a sensation of being honoured, and whether thinking of herself or her brother, she must have a strong feeling of gratitude" (328). On his side also, Henry responds to Sir Thomas's every encouragement "with grateful joy" (330). When Edmund returns, he too advises Fanny to "prove yourself grateful and tender-hearted (347) . . . I cannot suppose that you have not the *wish* to love him—the natural wish of gratitude" (348).

At Portsmouth, too, Fanny perceives that to Susan their mother shows "no gratitude for affection past or present" (396). On the other hand Mrs Price "was overflowing with gratitude, artless, maternal gratitude" to Henry for having secured William's promotion (400). Henry in his turn is "very gratefully disposed to avail himself" of Mr Price's offer to show him the dock-yard, in order to spend more time with Fanny (402). And finally Fanny too is grateful to Henry for standing up as a friend towards a poor tenant who has been oppressed by the agent on his estate: "Nothing could be more grateful to her" (404), that is, nothing could make her feel more gratitude.

When news of the scandal breaks, however, Fanny feels most acutely for Sir Thomas. She also feels frustrated in seeming unable to help him. "Her uncle's displeasure was terrible to her; but what could her justification, or her gratitude and attachment do for him?" (452). Nor does she forget her aunt Bertram. Susan is delighted to become the stationary niece in attendance. She is fitted for the task by "Her more fearless disposition and happier nerves", by "quickness in understanding" and "no natural timidity"; and she is "equally well adapted for it by a readiness of mind, and an inclination for usefulness, as Fanny had been by sweetness of temper, and strong feelings of gratitude" (472). It is thus abundantly clear that in the fictional world of *Mansfield Park* both selflessness and gratitude are, like kindness, cardinal virtues, and the evidence goes to show how ill a judge of Fanny's motives and behaviour her uncle is in accusing her of their opposites.

But each and every character stands implicitly or explicitly commended or condemned according as he measures up to, or falls short of, the system of values, whether social or moral, intellectual or emotional, which the book sets out to explore and define. This system constitutes one of the essential structural bases of Jane Austen's fictional art, and demonstrates the confidence with which she analyses and portrays human motives and human behaviour. If, at the end, reward and punishment, illumination and reformation seem too neatly apportioned, we

may remember that it is in the nature of comedy to end happily with the marriage of the hero and the heroine. The morality which the book presents is positive and wholesome, for happiness is awarded to those who have suffered and endured, and who are basically good because they recognize and practise disinterestedly the obligations they owe to others, in terms of the virtues of principle, judgement, duty, kindness, and gratitude. If these comments make the book sound more solemn than serious, we may be tempted to recall what Miss Prism says to Cecily Cardew about her own three-volume novel: "The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means."

LECTURE 3 : JUDGE AND CRITIC

A third structural device which Jane Austen uses in *Mansfield Park* is her deployment of the other characters about the protagonists. Every other character may be seen as serving a particular purpose in relation to one or more of the central trio, Sir Thomas, Edmund, and Fanny. But the morality of the book is chiefly carried by Fanny. Hers is the unfailing judgement in accordance with which we are invited to assess the values of her society. I shall therefore speak briefly about minor characters with whom she has no extensive association, and then about three pairs of major characters: her two aunts, her two female cousins, and the Crawfords.

Soon after Fanny has left home, her brother William determines to be a sailor, and is invited to spend a week with his sister before going to sea. The author's purpose in arranging this visit is to demonstrate the close emotional bond between them. She thus assures us that there is one member of the family at home in Portsmouth who cares about Fanny; and she also enables us to see that Edmund is one member of the family at Mansfield Park who similarly cares about her by being kind, considerate, and helpful.

After the passage of many years Fanny finds that William still has "an affection on his side as warm as her own, and much less incumbered by refinement or self-distrust. She was the first object of his love, but it was a love which his stronger spirits, and bolder temper, made it as natural for him to express as to feel." Sir Thomas observes their "amiable affection" with complacency, while Henry Crawford "honoured the warm-hearted, blunt fondness of the young sailor," and perceives that Fanny has "genuine feeling." Indeed, "Fanny had never known so much felicity in her life" (234).

William again provides a link between Fanny and Edmund by giving her a pretty amber cross from Sicily. Presently Edmund gives her a new chain for this cross, as "a token of the love of one of your oldest friends" (261). But the occasion of the ball also links Fanny with the Crawfords, for Mary gives her an old gold necklace which was a gift from Henry. Later Mary reveals that this gift to Fanny was prompted by Henry's own suggestion. Presently Fanny finds herself in a dilemma about which of these three gifts to wear to the ball. She solves the problem by discovering that Edmund's chain fits William's cross, "those memorials of the two most beloved of her heart, those dearest tokens so formed for each other by every thing real and imaginary" (271). But she considers that Mary has a claim, too, and so she wears her chain as well. By this simple and economical means, therefore, Jane Austen provides a neat symbolic link among all the major characters centred on Fanny.

William reappears only once more. The author arranges for him to be again very conveniently on leave, for she needs him to escort Fanny back to Portsmouth in fulfilment of Sir Thomas's scheme to send her home. Once arrived, Fanny is allowed a brief moment of "speechless admiration" (384) when William appears in his uniform, but within four days he is shipped off to sea. Structurally he has served his purpose, for the author has now to direct our attention to Susan. Significantly, Susan is like William, "and Fanny hoped to find her like him in disposition and good will towards herself" (384). For Susan has to be groomed to take Fanny's place as Lady Bertram's companion. William therefore disappears from the book, apart from a perfunctory mention, in the third last paragraph, of his "continued good conduct, and rising fame" (473). But his emotional relationship with Fanny must give way to her emotional relationship with Edmund.

Another minor character is her cousin Tom. His initial attitude to Fanny is made clear very early. He indulges in "that sort of merriment which a young man of seventeen will always think fair with a child of ten. He was just entering into life, full of spirits, and with all the liberal dispositions of an eldest son, who feels born only for expense and enjoyment. His kindness to his little cousin was consistent with his situation and rights: he made her some very pretty presents, and laughed at her" (17-18).

When Sir Thomas sets out to superintend the management of his Antigua estate in person, "he took his eldest son with him in the hope of detaching him from some bad connections at home" (32). His socio-economic heir is thus replaced at home by his spiritual heir Edmund, whose character is one of "strong good sense and uprightness of mind" (21).

But before long Tom returns. Jane Austen has to get him back in time for the arrival of the Crawfords, for Mrs Grant promptly allots him to Mary: "the eldest son of a Baronet was not too good for a girl of twenty thousand pounds" (42). Mary readily appraises Tom as a prospective husband. She finds him lively, gallant, and agreeable, having been much in London. But Tom's interest lies in his own pleasures, and he promptly leaves for the races at Bath. Indeed, throughout the book, he shows no interest in women.

Nor can he be allowed to be a member of the party to Sotherton, because he would spoil Jane Austen's neatly symbolic grouping of the other characters. By the time he returns from Bath, his indifference to Mary, and her association with Edmund, make her prefer the younger brother.

Tom is needed, however, as proxy master of the house, to introduce his new friend Yates as the manager of the theatricals. Tom's enthusiasm brings him into friendly conflict with Edmund, and he assumes

responsibility in relation to his father's likely disapproval. It is also Tom who chooses *Lovers' Vows* as the play they will act (132). He comes to share Edmund's disapproval, but will not admit it. Instead, he tries to persuade Fanny to play a role, but she makes her firm declaration, "I cannot act" (145). He is triumphant when Edmund capitulates by agreeing to take a part opposite Mary. When Sir Thomas returns, however, Tom can only praise the Crawfords, and he realizes that the play is over.

Then he disappears from the book until much later. We learn that he "had gone from London with a party of young men to Newmarket, where a neglected fall, and a good deal of drinking, had brought on a fever" (426). He becomes dangerously ill. His illness is a symbol of the dissipation to which the worldly side of Mansfield Park's values can lead. For Tom, as the elder son and heir, is a self-indulgent and extravagant lover of pleasure. It is significant that the character who fetches him home from London, and who becomes his favourite sickroom attendant, is his younger brother. For this younger brother has a serious vocation in view, and represents the spiritual sincerity which is another aspect of the great house.

In keeping with the book's happy ending, Tom gradually regains his health. His recovery is symbolic, for it is associated with moral reformation. As Fanny realizes, "there must be a mind to be properly guided" (430). "He was the better for ever for his illness. He had suffered, and he had learnt to think, two advantages that he had never known before". And he reproaches himself for being an accessory to Henry and Maria's deplorable scandal, "by all the dangerous intimacy of his unjustifiable theatre" (462).

When his friend Yates is introduced, we are simply told that he "had not much to recommend him beyond habits of fashion and expense, and being the younger son of a lord with a tolerable independence" (121). He has been disappointed by the destruction of a scheme to act *Lovers' Vows* at Weymouth. He tries to make himself agreeable to Julia, who has been left without a part, and he is a member of the committee that studies the play. His great moment comes when he is declaiming his lines as Baron Wildenhaim and suddenly finds himself confronted by the real baronet Sir Thomas. Nor has he the discernment to let an apology suffice, but volubly launches into an account of what they have all been doing. He is indignant at Sir Thomas's destruction of their plans, but he soon leaves. Sir Thomas finds him "trifling and confident, idle and expensive" (194), and wishes him a pleasant journey with genuine satisfaction. It is significant that Tom characterizes the self-indulgent pleasure-seeking of their play-acting in the same image as much later becomes symbolic of his own moral condition. For he sees their activities as an "infection" imported by Yates. The only character who does not contract the infection is Fanny.

Yates also serves to show up Mary's worldly materialistic attitude to marriage, in contrast to Fanny. Mary reports to Fanny by letter that Yates's attentions to Julia continue, but asserts that "she ought to do better. A poor honourable is no catch . . . if his rents were but equal to his rants!" (394). After they have eloped, they are at least repentant. Julia "was humble and wishing to be forgiven, and Mr. Yates, desirous of being really received into the family, was disposed to look up to [Sir Thomas] and be guided. He was not very solid; but there was a hope of his becoming less trifling—of his being at least tolerably domestic and quiet; that is, of being like his friend Tom. Sir Thomas is comforted to find "his estate rather more, and his debts much less, than he had feared," and to be "consulted and treated as the friend best worth attending to" (462). We have already been told that "Julia was yet as more pardonable than Maria as folly than vice" (452). But clearly Yates serves partly as a structural device so that Jane Austen may neatly pair off all the young people except Tom. He also enables the author to achieve a neat moral gradation among the various couples, from Henry and Maria's adultery, through Yates and Julia's elopement, to the orthodox marriage of Edmund and Fanny.

As Fanny's aunts, the two sisters Lady Bertram and Mrs Norris are temperamental opposites. "Lady Bertram . . . was a woman of very tranquil feelings, and a temper remarkably easy and indolent," whereas "Mrs. Norris had a spirit of activity" (4). Mrs Norris thus has the potential to become a force of disruption, an interfering busybody. Lady Bertram, on the contrary, "was a woman who spent her days in sitting nicely dressed on a sofa, doing some long piece of needle-work, 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 every thing important by Sir Thomas, and in smaller concerns by her sister" (19-20). So is Fanny guided initially by Edmund, but she actively and positively learns, with the result that she becomes Edmund's moral superior. Much later Fanny makes a similar discovery about her mother: "Her disposition was naturally easy and indolent, like Lady Bertram's". Without Lady Bertram's affluence, however, she is "a dawdle, a slattern," and a poor household manager (390). But though Fanny silently judges her mother, she does not judge Lady Bertram, for with her she finds a haven of quiet tranquillity.

Mrs Norris initiates and concert plans with Sir Thomas for the coming of Fanny, but she "had not the least intention of being at any expense whatever in her maintenance. As far as walking, talking and contriving reached, she was thoroughly benevolent, and nobody knew better how to dictate liberality to others: but her love of money was equal to her love of directing, and she knew quite as well how to save her own as to spend that of her friends" (8). In short she is a mean-

spirited, niggardly woman, despite her hypocritical insistence that she never spares her own trouble (9). When her husband dies, she insists that she cannot take Fanny to live with her, because she is "a poor desolate widow" in broken spirits, "with barely enough to support [her] in the rank of a gentlewoman" (29). For Fanny's part, "She had never received kindness from her aunt Norris, and could not love her" (25). Edmund tells Fanny that their aunt "never knew how to be pleasant to children" (26). She has none of her own. We have already heard her, however, flattering Maria and Julia about their superior accomplishments; and at the time of the theatricals we learn that Tom and Maria are her favourites, "all-powerful with her" (129). During the arrangements to help poor Mrs Price, too, "Sir Thomas sent friendly advice and professions, Lady Bertram dispatched money and baby-linen, and Mrs. Norris wrote the letters" (5). Much later (chapter 38) there is the episode of her failing to send a gift to her god-daughter Betsey. "There had been at one moment a slight murmur in the drawing-room at Mansfield Park, about sending her a Prayer-book; but no second sound had been heard of such a purpose. Mrs. Norris, however, had gone home and taken down two old Prayer-books of her husband, with that idea, but upon examination, the ardour of generosity went off. One was found to have too small a print for a child's eyes, and the other to be too cumbersome for her to carry about" (387).

Everyone who reads *Mansfield Park* agrees that the word to describe Mrs Norris is "odious". Yet readers seem to neglect the fact that she is often odious in a ludicrous way, which makes her a figure not only of detestation but also of satirical fun. For example, when Sir Thomas sends Tom home from Antigua, Mrs Norris thinks that he has done so "under the influence of a foreboding of evil to himself". As the long autumn evenings come on, therefore, she is so "terribly haunted" by "dreadful presentiments", "in the sad solitariness of her cottage, as to be obliged to take daily refuge in the dining room of the park" (38). Again, the ostensible purpose of the visit to Sotherton is for Henry to advise Rushworth about improvements to his estate, but the only member of the party who comes away improved is Aunt Norris. She is loaded with loot. Upon Sir Thomas's unexpected return, too, she whisks away the pink satin cloak she has been sewing for Rushworth in the play, and we never hear what becomes of it (179-80). From Sir Thomas's sight she also contrives to remove another article that might have distressed him. This article is the green baize curtain for the stage. It goes "off with her to her cottage, where she happened to be particularly in want of green baize" (195). From Sir Thomas's ball for Fanny, too, she makes off "with all the supernumerary jellies to nurse a sick maid" (283). Consider the masterly economy with which those few words characterize her acquisitive officiousness, and spare a thought for that poor sick

maid being stuffed with jellies. While William is relating some of his adventures at sea, too, to an otherwise attentive audience, Mrs Norris fidgets about the room, disturbing everybody "in quest of two needlefulls of thread or a second hand shirt button" (236). She has already similarly interrupted Sir Thomas himself: "in the most interesting moment of his passage to England, when the alarm of a French privateer was at the height, she burst through his recital with the proposal of soup" (180). Or again, she self-importantly (and quite incorrectly) insists that Sir Thomas has sent not for Fanny but for herself, even as she accuses Fanny of being "so very eager to put yourself forward" (325). Yet she has already told Sir Thomas, "I hate to be worrying and officious" (189). It is possible to see her, therefore, as the most horribly delightful and even the most unforgettable character in the book. Like the dominating Lady Wishfort and Mrs Hardcastle, at the end she is sadly deflated, but Jane Austen patently *enjoys* her.

She also insists on having promoted Maria's marriage. Indeed, she believes that forming the connection with the Rushworths has been "Her greatest support and glory" (188). Ironically, it turns out to be the cause of her own downfall as well as that of her favourite. They end up living together in exile as "their mutual punishment" (465).

On the other hand, "Mrs. Norris had no affection for Fanny, and no wish of procuring her pleasure at any time" (79). When she learns that Fanny has rejected Henry's proposal of marriage, she is bitterly angry, but "more angry with Fanny for having received such an offer, than for refusing it. It was an injury and affront to Julia, who ought to have been Mr. Crawford's choice; and, independently of that, she disliked Fanny, because she had neglected her; and she would have grudged such an elevation to one whom she had been always trying to depress" (332). On the occasion of Fanny's dining at the parsonage, her aunt has already admonished her along these same lines: "Remember, wherever you are, you must be the lowest and last" (221). It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that when Maria finally absconds with Henry, Mrs Norris, "in the blindness of her anger", should charge Fanny with being "the daemon of the piece. Had Fanny accepted Mr. Crawford, this could not have happened" (448).

When Mrs Norris resolves "to quit Mansfield, and devote herself to her unfortunate Maria," Fanny is not the only one to feel relieved at her departure. For Jane Austen continues: "Mrs. Norris's removal from Mansfield was the great supplementary comfort of Sir Thomas's life. His opinion of her had been sinking from the day of his return from Antigua; . . . from that period . . . she had been regularly losing ground in his esteem, and convincing him . . . that he had considerably overrated her sense, and wonderfully borne with her manners before. He had felt her as an hourly evil" (465).

The truth of this statement has been borne out in one of the most triumphant episodes in the book, that in which Sir Thomas has forestalled Mrs Norris in his arrangements for Fanny and William's ball. Her immediate response is one of surprise and vexation: "His daughters absent and herself not consulted!" She derives comfort, however, from the conviction that "*She* must be the doer of every thing; . . . it would all fall upon *her*. She should have to do the honours of the evening". She is therefore "ready with her suggestions as to the rooms he would think fittest to be used, but found it all prearranged; and when she would have conjectured and hinted about the day, it appeared that the day was settled too. Sir Thomas had been amusing himself with shaping a very complete outline of the business" (253). And Jane Austen must have been amusing herself in shaping this account of it.

Lady Bertram is only shocked out of her habitual torpor by Tom's dangerous illness, and writes to Fanny at Portsmouth "in the language of real feeling and alarm." "Poor Tom," she writes, "I am quite grieved for him, and very much frightened, and so is Sir Thomas" (427). When Fanny returns, her aunt meets her "with no indolent step," and simply says, "Dear Fanny! now I shall be comfortable" (447). Her customary state, however, is vividly illustrated upon Sir Thomas's return from Antigua: "her own time had been irreproachably spent during his absence; she had done a great deal of carpet work and made many yards of fringe" (179). As late as the book's second-last chapter, we are still being told that "Lady Bertram did not think deeply, but, guided by Sir Thomas, she thought justly on all important points . . . Her affections were not acute, nor was her mind tenacious", but she realizes the enormity of Maria's "guilt and infamy", and that Maria's disgrace means that this daughter is lost (449).

One of the novel's most warmly delightful touches is Sir Thomas's gentlemanly chivalry to his wife about Fanny's invitation to dinner at the Parsonage. He is on the point of closing the door as he leaves the room, when Lady Bertram calls him back. Then Jane Austen writes: "Her tone of calm languor, for she never took the trouble of raising her voice, was always heard and attended to; and Sir Thomas came back" (218). The sentence and its context go to show that for all her torpor, Sir Thomas treats his wife as a person and as a lady.

The episode reminds us of an earlier scene which provides a brief but telling comparison. Tom is arguing with Edmund that acting a play will be a means of amusing their mother during Sir Thomas's absence. "It is a *very* anxious period for her," argues Tom. Then Jane Austen writes: "As he said this, each looked towards their mother. Lady Bertram, sunk back in one corner of the sofa, the picture of health, wealth, ease, and tranquillity, was just falling into a gentle doze" (126). Edmund smiles and shakes his head, while Tom throws himself into a chair

with a hearty laugh. They good-humouredly recognize that their mother is a moral nullity.

The relationship between Fanny and her cousins Maria and Julia is based on one of the book's fundamental ironies. Mrs Norris prognosticates that Fanny would learn from them "to be good and clever" (10), and Sir Thomas is concerned to preserve a proper distinction between Fanny and his own daughters. Fanny has a "quiet passive manner" (15), whereas the sisters have plenty of confidence and no shyness. Maria and Julia therefore do not become Fanny's companions. Instead, "they could do no more than make her a generous present of some of their least valued toys, and leave her to herself" (14). When they complain to their aunt Norris that Fanny is stupid and ignorant, she assures them that "it is not at all necessary that she should be as accomplished as you are; — on the contrary, it is much more desirable that there should be a difference" (19). It is ironically because she escapes the corrupting influence of this aunt that Fanny remains her cousins' moral superior.

When their father leaves for Antigua, we are told that he "was no object of love to them, he had never seemed the friend of their pleasures, and his absence was unhappily most welcome. They were relieved by it from all restraint" (32).

It is Aunt Norris, too, who recommends Maria to Mrs Rushworth as "the pride and delight of them all — perfectly faultless — an angel" (39). But no sooner is she engaged to Rushworth than the Crawfords arrive, and Maria finds herself attracted to Henry. On the journey to and from Sotherton, therefore, she is perpetually irritated by the conversation and merriment between Henry and Julia. At Sotherton itself Henry flirts with *her*. In the chapel he privately tells her: "I do not like to see Miss Bertram so near the altar" (88). In the grounds he successfully tempts her to escape from Rushworth by passing round the locked gate, but then they are pursued by Julia.

Later both girls welcome Henry's return from his estate in Norfolk. "Fanny was the only one of the party who found any thing to dislike; but since the day at Sotherton, she could never see Mr. Crawford with either sister without observation, and seldom without wonder or censure" (115). She voices to Edmund her suspicion that Henry prefers Maria, but to no avail.

The fact that Edmund is a less clear-sighted judge than Fanny is borne out in the episode of the theatricals. Here Henry, playing the role of Frederick, chooses Maria to play opposite him, as Agatha. Henry's choice of Maria, however, alienates Julia, who angrily rejects the role of Amelia and stalks out of the room. She leaves behind awkward feelings but small compassion. Only Fanny greatly pities her in being "under the agitations of *jealousy*" (136). This emotional link with the heroine is strengthened when Edmund finally decides to play Anhalt opposite

Mary's Amelia, for then Fanny too "was full of jealousy and agitation" (159).

Julia is angry and hurt at her disappointment. "The sister with whom she was used to be on easy terms, was now become her greatest enemy; they were alienated from each other," and Julia hopes for some distress and punishment to Maria "for conduct so shameful towards herself, as well as towards Mr Rushworth" (162). Julia too is to blame, however, for her bitter vindictiveness: "Julia could never see Maria distinguished by Henry Crawford, without trusting that it would create jealousy, and bring a public disturbance at last" (163). These sentiments are full of prophetic irony for the scandalous events which occur much later in the book.

Structurally, however, in relation to the deployment of the other characters about the central trio, what is important here is the emotional connexion of Julia with Fanny. Jane Austen writes: "Fanny saw and pitied much of this in Julia; but there was no outward fellowship between them. Julia made no communication, and Fanny took no liberties. They were two solitary sufferers, or connected only by Fanny's consciousness" (163). Fanny's clear-sighted compassion can find no expression. Her judgement of Julia's suffering is correct, but she must remain silent.

Structurally, too, Fanny becomes the centre of the rehearsals. For many frictions develop among the cast, and Fanny becomes the confidante of everyone. Her judgement is generous as she enjoys watching Henry and Maria rehearse the first act, for they both act well. And then she has to superintend the rehearsals of Edmund and Mary. "She was invested, indeed, with the office of judge and critic, and earnestly desired to exercise it and tell them all their faults; but from doing so every feeling within her shrank; . . . her conscience . . . restrained her from venturing at disapprobation" (170). This is Fanny's characteristic procedure. Unless she can discreetly confide in Edmund, she is so conscious of her subordinate position as to keep her judgements to herself.

When Sir Thomas returns and breaks up the plans for the play, Maria is incensed that Henry should depart for Bath instead of rescuing her from Rushworth. Yet his going also ends the sisters' enmity. So long as Maria has not gained him, Julia can dispense with any other revenge.

But it is time for Jane Austen to be rid of these characters so that she may develop the relationship between Fanny and the Crawfords, while Sir Thomas keeps upon it a watchful eye. Maria is therefore summarily dismissed to her loveless marriage with Rushworth, and Julia goes with them to Brighton. Jane Austen finds it necessary to explain this curious arrangement, but her explanation is also curious. Since they are no longer rivals for Henry, the sisters were recovering their former

friendly understanding. Maria needed some other companion than her dull husband, "and Julia was quite as eager for novelty and pleasure as Maria" (204).

The entry of the Crawfords into the book is timed significantly. It follows immediately upon Sir Thomas's approval of Maria's engagement to Rushworth as "an alliance so unquestionably advantageous". Sir Thomas's socio-economic worldliness is at once juxtaposed with the statement that the Crawfords "were young people of fortune. The son had a good estate in Norfolk, the daughter twenty thousand pounds" (40).

What is chiefly stressed about Henry, at the beginning, is his restless fickleness. "To any thing like a permanence of abode, or limitation of society, Henry Crawford had, unluckily, a great dislike" (41). This fundamental point is presently taken up in a conversation significantly between Fanny and Edmund—significantly because Fanny will later reject Henry and finally marry Edmund. Fanny says of Henry, "I had understood he was so very fond of change and moving about", and Edmund replies that even his sister Mary "does not like his unsettled habits" (115-16).

Henry's flirtatiousness is promptly confirmed by the author herself. "Mr. Crawford did not mean to be in any danger; the Miss Bertrams were worth pleasing, and were ready to be pleased; and he began with no object but of making them like him. He did not want them to die of love; but with sense and temper which ought to have made him judge and feel better, he allowed himself great latitude on such points" (44-5). Several chapters later, his flirtatiousness remains unchanged. "The sisters," we read, "handsome, clever, and encouraging, were an amusement to his sated mind; and finding nothing in Norfolk to equal the social pleasures of Mansfield, he gladly returned to it at the time appointed, and was welcomed thither quite as gladly by those whom he came to trifle with farther" (115). Several chapters later again, this remains his approach to Fanny. "My plan," he announces to his sister, "is to make Fanny Price in love with me." His sister tells him, "You ought to be satisfied with her two cousins." But he replies: "I cannot be satisfied without Fanny Price, without making a small hole in Fanny Price's heart (229) . . . It can be but for a fortnight" (231). Fanny, however, is protected by "all the security which love of another and disesteem of [Henry] could give" to her peace of mind (231).

When he proposes to Fanny, therefore, "she was exceedingly distressed. . . She considered it all as nonsense, as mere trifling and gallantry, which meant only to deceive for the hour; . . . but it was like himself, and entirely of a piece with what she had seen before (301) . . . such were his habits, that he could do nothing without a mixture of evil" (302). He is too self-confident, cocksure; we are told of "his sanguine

and pre-assured mind" (302). Presently again we are told that "He had vanity, which strongly inclined him . . . to think she did love him (326) . . . A little difficulty to be overcome, was no evil to Henry Crawford. He rather derived spirits from it. He had been apt to gain hearts too easily. His situation was new and animating" (327).

Then again, while Sir Thomas maintains a discreet silence about Henry's proposal and Fanny's rejection of it, Henry "had no idea of concealment" (331). He talks freely on the subject at the Parsonage, for "it would be rather gratifying to him to have enlightened witnesses of the progress of his success" (332). In short, he has none of Fanny's delicacy of sensibility. She has already told him that "in her opinion their dispositions were so totally dissimilar, as to make mutual affection incompatible; and that they were unfitted for each other by nature, education, and habit." She therefore does not, cannot, and never will love him, and she tells him so "with the earnestness of sincerity" (327).

Now sincerity is the quality which Jane Austen consistently denies Henry. She denies it by associating him with one of the play's central symbols, that of acting. At the beginning of the episode of the theatricals he says: "I really believe . . . I could be fool enough at this moment to undertake any character that ever was written, from Shylock or Richard III down to the singing hero of a farce in his scarlet coat and cocked hat. I feel as if I could be any thing or every thing" (123). But this means that he could be nothing permanently, that he is constantly assuming new roles. Then when Fanny watches the rehearsals, we are told that "As far as she could judge, Mr. Crawford was considerably the best actor of all" (165). We recall these words later, when Henry reads from Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. Fanny finds in his reading "a variety of excellence beyond what she had ever met with . . . whatever were to be expressed, he could do it with equal beauty. — It was truly dramatic. — His acting had first taught Fanny what pleasure a play might give, and his reading brought all his acting before her again" (337). But the number of parts he successfully plays indicates his versatility in role-playing or insincerity, and though Fanny justly admires his skill as an actor, she has no illusions about him as a man.¹

The same response is evoked by the episode of the card-game Speculation. Fanny is very quickly mistress of the rules of the game, but Henry has to "inspire her play, sharpen her avarice, and harden her heart". "He was in high spirits, doing every thing with happy ease, and pre-eminent in all the lively turns, quick resources, and playful impudence that could do honour to the game" (240). The aim is to win the

¹As George Wilson Knight has said, "Sincerity rejects play-acting" (*The Wheel of Fire*, 1930, repr. 1962, p. 161).

highest trump and hence scoop the pool, and this is Henry's aim in relation to Fanny. To him love and marriage are no more than a spirited and resourceful game.

Henry's next major episode is his visit to Fanny at Portsmouth. Some critics have taken this visit as final evidence of his complete change of heart, and have condemned Fanny for continuing to hold him off. But Henry's visit lasts for only two chapters (41-42), and we must therefore keep it in proper perspective. He pleases Fanny by describing how he has been attending to his estate and to his tenants in Norfolk. "She began to feel the possibility of his turning out well at last; but he was and must ever be completely unsuited to her, and ought not to think of her" (405). He tells her that "his only business in Portsmouth was to see her," yet he rejects her father's invitation to dinner on the plea that "he had met with some acquaintance at the Crown who would not be denied" (406). On his second night, too, he self-indulgently goes off to "the best dinner that a capital inn afforded" (412). He shows concern for Fanny's poor state of health, and offers to take her back to Mansfield if she becomes unwell. She is dejected when he departs, but derives comfort from fancying a wonderful improvement in him. As the author promptly says, however, she does not consider "in how different a circle she had been just seeing him, nor how much might be owing to contrast". And even though "she was quite persuaded of his being astonishingly more gentle, and regardful of others, than formerly . . . might not it be fairly supposed, that he would not much longer persevere in a suit so distressing to her?" (413-14).

"Perseverance" is again the word for Henry's attack on Maria. Her initial coldness ought to have repelled him, but "he must exert himself to subdue so proud a display of resentment". He therefore "soon re-established the sort of familiar intercourse—of gallantry—of flirtation which bounded his views" (468). On her farewell visit to Fanny, Mary has admitted, as she did at the beginning, that Henry "has now and then been a sad flirt, and cared very little for the havoc he might be making in young ladies' affections" (363). Fanny reaches the same conclusion when she first hears of the scandal. She hopes that "a knowledge of his own disposition" may "convince him that he was not capable of being steadily attached to any one woman in the world" (438).

The other major character who is structurally related to the central characters is Henry's sister Mary. She is basically characterized by worldliness, and this quality is specifically and repeatedly set down to her being "a young woman who had been mostly used to London" (41). We are told that "Matrimony was her object, provided she could marry well" (42). Matrimony is also Fanny's object, but her idea of marrying well is to marry for love. Mary is also ready to air her cynical view that marriage is "a take in" (46). She is activated by "the true London

maxim, that every thing is to be got with money" (58), and so she cannot understand why transport for her harp cannot be arranged at harvest time.

She has a lively mind, but it runs to caustic comment. When Mrs Rushworth explains that family prayers are no longer read by any domestic chaplain at Sotherton, Mary's smiling comment to Edmund is that "Every generation has its improvements" (86). She expatiates on this sentiment by speaking of "The obligation of attendance, the formality, the restraint, the length of time—together it is a formidable thing, and what nobody likes . . . especially if the poor chaplain were not worth looking at" (87).

Then she learns that Edmund is to be ordained as a clergyman, and they launch into the first of their discussions about the worth of his vocation. Mary firmly maintains that "A clergyman is nothing" (92).

Jane Austen has already provided a formally specific character contrast between Mary and Fanny. As they drive to Sotherton, we are told that "in every thing but a value for Edmund, Miss Crawford was very unlike her. She had none of Fanny's delicacy of taste, of mind, of feeling; she saw nature, inanimate nature, with little observance; her attention was all for men and women, her talents for the light and lively" (81).

Like her brother, too, Mary is a restless person. "I must move," she says, "resting fatigues me" (96). So she and Edmund wander off into the wilderness, and follow such a sinuous course that even Fanny is finally stirred to go in search of them. This restlessness of Henry and Mary is a quality they share with Mrs Norris. She too has a spirit of activity; she is fond of officious bustle.

Mary does not establish intimacy with Fanny, however, until after Maria's wedding. The intimacy results principally from Mary's "desire of something new". But Fanny pays her visits "without loving her, without any sense of obligation for being sought after now when nobody else was to be had" (208). This is the occasion on which Fanny associates the name "Edmund" with romantic chivalry, while Mary wants it distinguished with "Lord" or "Sir". This is also the occasion on which Mary declares that "I see no wonder in this shrubbery equal to seeing myself in it" (209-10), and that "A large income is the best recipe for happiness I ever heard of". She goes on: "Be honest and poor, by all means—but I shall not envy you; I do not much think I shall even respect you. I have a much greater respect for those that are honest and rich . . . I must look down upon any thing contented with obscurity when it might rise to distinction" (213-14). Indeed, to Mary it soon becomes plain that Edmund "could have no serious views, no true attachment, by fixing himself in a situation which he must know she would never stoop to" (228).

She has no active malice, however, so that when Henry proposes to flirt with Fanny, Mary warns him: "I do desire that you will not be making her really unhappy; a *little* love perhaps may animate and do her good, but I will not have you plunge her deep, for she is as good a little creature as ever lived, and has a great deal of feeling" (230-1). At the card game of Speculation, Mary paints a self-portrait which will turn out to be highly symbolic. "There," she says, "I will stake my last like a woman of spirit. No cold prudence for me. I am not born to sit still and do nothing. If I lose the game, it shall not be from not striving for it". As it turns out, "The game was her's, and only did not pay her for what she had given to secure it" (243). Ironically, by the end of the book the game is not hers, and she secures nothing. The same, of course, applies to Henry.

Presently, too, we read of "her acknowledged disinclination for privacy and retirement, her decided preference of a London life" (255). This statement stands in direct contrast to the outlook of Sir Thomas, for he draws back "from intimacies in general" (196). There is contrast, too, with Lady Bertram, who "in consequence of a little ill-health, and a great deal of indolence, gave up the house in town, which she had been used to occupy every spring, and remained wholly in the country" (20). We also read of Fanny's "favourite indulgence of being suffered to sit silent and unattended to" (223).

Fanny goes to consult Mary about what to wear to the ball, and comes away with a gold necklace which Henry had given Mary. Fanny discusses the gift with Edmund, who recommends wearing it to give Mary pleasure. He looks forward to "a perfect friendship . . . between the two dearest objects I have on earth." Fanny, however, feels convinced that Edmund will marry Mary, though she cannot believe that Mary deserves him: "he was deceived in her; he gave her merits which she had not; her faults were what they had ever been, but he saw them no longer" (264). Yet Edmund promptly reports to Fanny that Mary has said "She never has danced with a clergyman, . . . and she never *will*" (268). This is also the occasion on which he declares of Mary that "it appears as if the mind itself was tainted" (269). These words echo Fanny's conviction about Henry at the theatricals: "never happier than when behaving so dishonourably and unfeelingly! — Oh! what a corrupted mind!" (225). They also anticipate Edmund's ultimate conviction that Mary's faults are those "of blunted delicacy and a corrupted, vitiated mind" (456).

At the ball, Mary begins "in gay spirits" with Edmund, but presently "she had absolutely pained him by her manner of speaking of the profession to which he was now on the point of belonging . . . he had reasoned—she had ridiculed—and they had parted at last with mutual vexation" (279). Edmund promptly departs to visit some friends, and

extends his stay on purpose to avoid Mary (334). In his absence Mary acknowledges that, "Angry as she was with Edmund for adhering to his own notions and acting on them in defiance of her, . . . she had used some strong—some contemptuous expressions in speaking of the clergy . . . It was ill-bred—it was wrong" (286).

When Henry returns from London determined to marry Fanny, Mary's response is mercenary. She "was in a state of mind to rejoice in a connection with the Bertram family, and to be not displeased with her brother's marrying a little beneath him" (292). She also considers Fanny a lucky girl because it is an amazing match for her, and she is confident of Fanny's consent: "ask her to love you, and she will never have the heart to refuse" (293). But then she asks, "what will Mrs. Rushworth and Julia say?" Henry's unconsciously ironic reply is that "They will now see what sort of woman it is that can attach me, that can attach a man of sense" (297).

Mary's unquestioning conviction that Fanny will accept Henry prompts her to send a premature note of congratulation, consent, and approval, for "there can be no difficulties worth naming" (303). What bewilders Fanny is how she can have "excited serious attachment" in such a flirt as Henry, especially in view of all his sister's "high and worldly notions of matrimony" (305-6).

Mary's farewell visit to Fanny is of special significance. She speaks "with a playful smile" (359), a forerunner of that "saucy playful smile" with which she finally alienates Edmund in London (459). But the chief purport of her visit is to display once more her worldliness. "You should come to London," she urges Fanny, "to know how to estimate your conquest (360) . . . And then, Fanny, the glory of fixing one who has been shot at by so many . . . Oh! I am sure it is not in woman's nature to refuse such a triumph" (363). At the same time, however, she is telling Fanny about the wretched marriages of her friends Janet Fraser and Flora Stornaway, sisters who married for money, only to discover that their husbands are ill-tempered and horrid. Fanny's reply is simply that "I cannot think well of a man who sports with any woman's feelings; and there may often be a great deal more suffered than a stander-by can judge of" (363). Her resentment at the prospect of Edmund's marrying Mary reaches its bitterest climax when she receives his long letter in Portsmouth. He regrets that her London friends have been leading Mary astray for years, but Fanny's response is that "She is quite as likely to have led *them* astray" (424). Again, however, since Fanny has no one in whom to confide, her judgement must remain unexpressed.

When Tom is brought home dangerously ill, Fanny is astonished that his sisters "could be satisfied with remaining in London at such a time" (432). She is therefore "disposed to think the influence of London very much at war with all respectable attachments" (433). Then

Mary's letter arrives, in which she hints that if Tom dies, Edmund will be wealthy. This is Mary's most inhumanely mercenary hint in the entire book. As the author says, "She had only learnt to think nothing of consequence but money" (436).

When Fanny is convinced that the newspaper report of the Rushworth scandal is true, she believes that Mary would be the only woman "who could treat as a trifle this sin of the first magnitude" (441). Fanny's view is presently confirmed by Edmund, who reports Mary's anger at the folly of Henry and Maria. "She saw it only as folly, and that folly stamped only by exposure . . . it was the detection, not the offence which she reprobated. It was the imprudence which had brought things to extremity" (455). And of course she lays the blame at Fanny's door: "Why would not she have him? It is all her fault. Simple girl!—I shall never forgive her" (455-6). Henry's relationship with Maria could then have become "a regular standing flirtation" (456)!

Even Mrs Rushworth has her minor part to play in illuminating the character of the heroine as against those of Mary and Maria. She is introduced as "a well-meaning, civil, prosing, pompous woman, who thought nothing of consequence, but as it related to her own and her son's concerns" (75). At Sotherton it is she who shows the visitors over the house. Mary has seen scores of great houses and cares for none of them; she therefore exhibits "only the appearance of civilly listening". She is the blase sophisticate. Simple, sincere Fanny, however, "to whom every thing was almost as interesting as it was new, attended with unaffected earnestness to all that Mrs. Rushworth could relate of the family in former times, its rise and grandeur, regal visits and loyal efforts, delighted to connect any thing with history already known, or warm her imagination with scenes of the past" (85).

As her son's marriage with Maria draws near, Mrs Rushworth moves, "with true dowager propriety, to Bath—there to parade over the wonders of Sotherton in her evening-parties" (202-3). We forget all about her, until Mary writes to Fanny at Portsmouth that Rushworth is "going dutifully down to Bath, to fetch his mother" up to London (435). Mary wonders how Maria and the dowager will agree in the same house. Presently we discover that they have disagreed, "and the bitterness of the elder [woman] against her daughter-in-law might, perhaps, arise almost as much from the personal disrespect with which she had herself been treated, as from sensibility for her son" (451). In any case, she remains obstinate to the point of becoming unmanageable, and it is she who ensures that the scandal of the elopement becomes public. So a quite minor character turns out to be something rather more than a mere supernumerary. With superb economy Jane Austen makes excellent use of her to further the narrative and to reveal character.

The final character who is closely related to the heroine is her younger sister Susan. In fact one of the structural triumphs of the book is the success with which this character is introduced and developed so late. Susan has an open temperament and a good understanding, and is fully inclined to seek Fanny's good opinion and refer to her judgement. She therefore responds to the sound advice that Fanny gives her mildly and considerately. Fanny's judgement in taking trouble with this sympathetic sister is again proved sound.

In these three lectures, then, I have tried to establish a number of points which are basic to a sympathetic understanding of Jane Austen's purpose and achievement in *Mansfield Park*. We must recognize that the book belongs in the tradition of literature which sets out to recommend a positive morality by means of an entertaining fable. The central figure is a physically delicate heroine who has nonetheless an inner moral strength which enables her to suffer and endure. Her severest test comes when she must stand firm against the uncle who is basically good and kind but nonetheless a figure of worldly authority, and who prefers social expediency to steadfast principle. The basic theme is diversified with a number of other characters. These characters embody the author's sensitive exploration of basic moral concepts which profoundly animate their social motivations and behaviour. And when the battle is won and the heroine is able to retire to the happiness of marriage with the man she loves, her place is taken by a sister who enjoys the advantages of a "more fearless disposition and happier nerves," "quickness in understanding" and "no natural timidity". The moral integrity of the world of Mansfield Park is ostensibly assured.