

# *Mansfield Park* and Scandal

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“Yet *Mansfield Park* is a great novel, its greatness being commensurate with its power to offend.”

Lionel Trilling(1)

## **The “Proper Study of Mankind” is *Mansfield***

Of Jane Austen’s six canonical masterpieces,(2) *Mansfield Park* is the most scandalous, and it scandalized in such a way that its canonical status is almost tenuously granted, as if it were ever in danger of being bumped off the top shelf and consigned to the limbo of “problem novel.” Oddly, *Mansfield Park* scandalizes much more for its presentation of *virtue* (as embodied in Edmund Bertram and most particularly Fanny Price) than for the actual scandal in the novel: an adulterous affair, scooped in the gossip sheets, that ruins at least one life and shatters relations among four families. Indeed, that such a dire outcome should follow from an affair no doubt contributes to many readers’ discomfort; in an age when flaming liaisons, tabloid splashes and untidy splits are routine matters, the harsher consequences that follow from them in *Mansfield Park* really do seem to pose a problem of historical adjustment.

This largely unspoken objection sums up in many ways the curious and contradictory effect of *Mansfield Park*. It is so close to us, insofar as its scandals are very much like our own, yet so far; few Austen fans could propose that the proper penalty for infidelity today should be (as with Maria Rushworth) to cast the female party out from her family forever and exile her to a remote region. Kingsley Amis found Maria’s expulsion an offense against Christian charity.(3) Many readers find it scandalous that *any* of the scandals in *Mansfield Park*—the theatricals, the irreverent parlor talk, the flirtations, the seductions, the affair—should be so scandalous. Even allowing for the normative standards of her time, this adverse reaction today may indeed indicate a serious miscalculation on Austen’s part—or, in other words, an artistic failure.

Lionel Trilling argued otherwise, namely, that Austen’s scandal to readers is deliberate, and that the extent of this scandal (c.f. the epigram above) is “commensurate” with the novel’s

greatness.(4) Trilling's observation is, arguably, the single best critical assessment of *Mansfield Park* ever made, though it was lost in his subsequent conjectures about Austen's conflicted Evangelical conscience. Trilling saw the novel's moral and creative greatness as the inadvertent byproduct of that religious tension: Austen waging guilty war on Austenian delight. Yet Austen is far more in control of her complex plot than this scenario would imply, and her "offense" is much too thorough and premeditated for *Mansfield Park* to be great, as it were, by accident.

We might do well to put aside Trilling's elaboration but retain his initial insight, which can and should be explored further. Scandal, whether *within Mansfield Park* (among the characters) or *about* it (the multiple offences Austen commits against readers) is indeed central to the novel, deeply entwined in all its overriding concerns. In fact, the scandalized reactions that Austen constantly provokes indicate how deeply readers are drawn into Mansfield's fraught community, for reader objections almost invariably echo reactions of characters. As we unwittingly mimic reactions from within the narrative, Austen makes us party to its increasingly tangled moral dilemmas; *we become enmeshed with characters in the same scandals*.

This scandalizing dynamic continues to operate, often at nearly visceral levels, upon a large plurality of *Mansfield Park*'s readers (many of whom are otherwise devoted Austen fans). One need only note the tenor of the "Fanny wars" that have erupted on online discussion forums to confirm this.(5) However, recent decades of criticism have given the novel possibly its most appreciative, most level-headed, most *un-scandalized* treatment to date. That *Mansfield* criticism has matured past the disgruntled rants of Kinglsey Amis is undoubtedly a welcome development, yet we should not forget what got Amis so "riled up" in the first place, and what continues to outrage many readers, lest we miss what the novel is about. Scandalized readings of *Mansfield Park* are mis-readings, but they are *orchestrated* mis-readings. If Austen expected and indeed provoked such reactions (which I think *must* be the case), then a de-scandalized reading of *Mansfield Park* may be correspondingly further from Austen's intent.(6) Since scandal is at the heart of *Mansfield Park*, it should not be downplayed at the price of being understood.

Nearly every connotation of the word "scandal" applies to *Mansfield Park*: leading another into sin, grave wrongdoing, setting a bad example, gossip, social embarrassment, risqué titillation, voyeuristic prurience, public disgrace, tawdry celebrity debacle, moral or aesthetic affront. René Girard's gloss on "scandal" (from the Gospel *skandalon*) is also particularly relevant, because it focuses on the interpersonal obstacle, or "double bind" that gives rise to scandal in these more conventional senses.(7) Such interpersonal struggles pervade the world of *Mansfield Park* and contribute in manifold ways to the catastrophic social scandal that erupts later in the novel. Jeremiah Alberg's comparison of Rousseau and Girard neatly captures the way Austen portrays scandal (among characters) and incites it (among readers):

Rousseau's analysis of *amour-propre* as that which excites without satisfying, seduces without delivering, and promises without fulfilling, parallels Girard's analysis of mimetic desire as the doomed-to-be frustrated reaching for the *scandalon*.[\(8\)](#)

Finally, the "sacrificial" and "prophetic" dimensions of scandal elaborated by Girard are crucially relevant, since the social dynamics in *Mansfield Park* continually threaten to converge toward a sacrificial resolution.[\(9\)](#) (Kingsley Amis was not wrong to see Maria's expulsion as problematic, only wrong in supposing that Austen must have applauded it.)

The scope of *Mansfield Park* is thus as wide as the etymology of "scandal" suggested above. The multiple, degraded, and in some cases wildly antithetical derivations of the same word (e.g. grave sin, prophetic indictment, risqué tease) tell a story. They reflect an extended cultural development that is, remarkably, encapsulated in *Mansfield Park* itself, confined though the novel is to its particular historical moment. Because that moment is a crucially transitional one, involving the disintegration of a particular social order, *Mansfield Park* reaches both backward (toward what has been dissolved) and forward (to what is coming to fill its place). But in doing so, the novel comes to enact what is in effect an abbreviated history of the human race: from the primal scandal at the origin of culture, through the proliferating scandals of an exhausted traditional order, and finally on to the propagation and *commodification* of scandal in a desacralized ethos. *Mansfield Park* enacts the beginning, middle and end of culture. It is at once the story of a human community, and *the* human community—and the essence of that story is the ongoing scandal of collective existence.

These may seem oversized claims for *Mansfield Park*, particularly given the self-proclaimed modesty of the author, who famously limited herself to "bits of ivory."[\(10\)](#) However, ivory miniatures are constrained by practical limits, not thematic ones, and the breadth of Austen's ambition in *Mansfield Park* is certainly not hard to discern thematically. *Mansfield Park* is Austen's most "anthropological" novel. The title itself suggests a microcosm of humanity, both as a "field" or setting for the human drama, and a "field" of investigation—as in Alexander Pope's "The proper study of mankind is man."[\(11\)](#) "Park" further suggests an Edenic element—a scene of origin.[\(12\)](#) Yet the best way to demonstrate the scope of Austen's ambition in the novel may be to start near the end, where the most conspicuous scandal breaks upon the world a few chapters shy of its conclusion.

### **. . . Not in a State of Utter Barbarism**

Like other culminating crises in Austen's novels, notably the scandal with Wickham and Lydia Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*'s prominent scandal takes place far offstage. We see it through second or third hand accounts and reactions, both as the scandal

unfolds and in its aftermath. First news of the scandal reaches Fanny Price at Portsmouth through Mary Crawford's tense and cryptic letter, a hapless attempt at "damage control":

"A most scandalous, ill-natured rumour has just reached me, and I write, dear Fanny, to warn you against giving the least credit to it, should it spread into the country . . . . Say not a word of it-hear nothing, surmise nothing, whisper nothing, till I write again. I am sure it will all be hushed up . . . ." (297).[\(13\)](#)

Agitated and puzzled, Fanny learns the relevant details the next day from a second hand newspaper that her father gets from a neighbor, after Mr. Price "humphs" over the following item:

". . . it was with infinite concern the newspaper had to announce to the world, a matrimonial *fracas* in the family of Mrs. R. of Wimpole Street; the beautiful Mrs. R. whose name had not long been enrolled in the lists of hymen, and who had promised to become so brilliant a leader in the fashionable world, having quitted her husband's roof in company with the well-known and captivating Mr. C. the intimate friend and associate of Mr. R. and it was not known, even to the editor of this newspaper, whither they were gone." (298-299)

Here we have the precursor to every well thumbed tabloid reporting the latest celebrity meltdown: the leering voyeurism couched in the thinnest pretence of "infinite concern," and the thorough itemization of the *truly* relevant points of interest: "beautiful," "brilliant leader in the fashionable word," "well-known and captivating"-in other words, glamour, beauty, trend-setting, fashion, fame, charisma. The envious adulation is inseparable from the barely-contained glee at the celebrities' downfall, effected through the act of reportage itself.

Fanny's reaction to the scandal is undoubtedly the most significant. Geographically distant from events, she is close enough to those concerned to comprehend the damage that has been done. Fanny suffers something like primal terror:

Fanny seemed to herself never to have been shocked before. There was no possibility of rest. The evening passed, without pause of misery, the night was totally sleepless. She passed only from feelings of sickness to shudderings of horror; and from hot fits of fever to cold. The event was so shocking, that there were moments even when her heart revolted from it as impossible-when she thought it could not be. A woman married only six months ago, a man professing himself *devoted*, even engaged, to another-that other her near relation-the whole family, both families connected as they were by tie upon tie, all friends, all intimate together!-it was too horrible a confusion of guilt, too gross a

complication of evil, for human nature, not in a state of utter barbarism, to be capable of! . . . (299)

Shortly after, Fanny helplessly concludes, “. . . as far as the world alone was concerned, the greatest blessing to every one of kindred with Mrs. Rushworth would be instant annihilation” (300).

Fanny's horror is almost pre-linguistic (sleeplessness, sickness, shudderings, hot fits, fever, cold) and evokes a Hobbesian nightmare. Her linguistic capacities seem to unravel in tandem with social differentiation (friendship, kinship, betrothal, marriage). In her fevered imagination, the fundamental components of communal life are pressed past the threshold of sustainability and into “utter barbarism.” A satisfactory resolution can only be conceived in apocalyptic terms: it would be best for everyone concerned if they just ceased to exist. Time shoots backward and forward; it is both the end (“annihilation”) and the beginning (“barbarism,” Fanny's own instinctual, pre-linguistic shudderings). But of course, it is neither; it is Fanny conceiving the end in terms of the beginning, thereby inadvertently conceiving the beginning in terms of the end; the present crisis triggers in undiluted form what Eric Gans calls the scenic imagination: this scandal evokes for Fanny the *first* scandal, the first scene.[\(14\)](#)

Yet Fanny's acute, “primitive” sensitivity to the scandal (as much the result of her being vulnerably situated at Mansfield for so many years as of her nervous disposition) stands in stark contrast to the jaded newspaper account that broadcasts it; it is *not* the end of the world, after all, merely a juicy celebrity debacle in a second-hand scandal sheet. The scandal is, in this reckoning, a titillating commodity that boosts circulation. In the present day, it could even be a welcome boost to a celebrity's sagging career. Austen's genius in *Mansfield Park* is that she can use the same scandal both to telescope backward—using Fanny's distressed imagination to capture the most primal sort of crisis in communal life—and to highlight what was already becoming the trademark of advanced secular culture: the market for never-ending scandal as foci of attention, the ongoing distraction of media, where scandal no longer constitutes a mortal threat but rather a perpetual source of cultural sustenance.

Fanny's father (commenting that he'd have given both man and woman a good *whuppin'* if he'd had anything to do with it) expresses the sterile, transient affront of a public fed a steady diet of outrage, whilst her mother cannot hold the scandalous events regarding her estranged sister's family in her head more than a moment or two. In other words, no sooner has the scandal appeared than it has already passed through the “news cycle.” For the observing public, either some new development in this scandal will be needed, or some new scandal altogether. Yet the shallowness and crass prurience of this process (and what maltreated celebrity has not protested it?) should not blind us to its genuine power.

Whereas in *Pride and Prejudice* Darcy is able to salvage the situation with Lydia and Wickham and contain scandal, in *Mansfield Park* Austen presents us with a situation in which scandal can no longer be so contained. Now putatively minor players—scandalized onlookers, a maid-servant with “exposure in her power” (306), newspapers—determine the pace and outcome of events.

The prestige players, by contrast, are overwhelmed, and their frustrated impotence is everywhere evident, e.g. in Mary Crawford’s letter above. For Henry, the erstwhile seducer, the affair is unexpected, unwelcome, and quickly and completely out of control. Maria hardly even owns her decision to cast herself into Henry’s arms; she is acting on a complex stew of mimetic imperatives that Henry has been thoughtlessly stirring through much of the novel. By the time the affair winds down, Maria is a knot of hissing rage (314), not unlike the incapacitated, nearly psychotic Mrs. Norris who will be her companion in exile: “. . . an altered creature, quieted, stupified, indifferent to every thing that passed” (304). Needless to say, these characters (Mary, Henry, Maria, Mrs. Norris) made much of their decisiveness and active vigor in earlier chapters. In the newer regime, power has passed to cultural forces—at once intrusively intimate and callously indifferent—that monitor the lives of the rich and famous, lives that spin reliably, desperately, and fascinatingly out of control.

### **“Every Age Has Its Improvements”**

The question “What’s the world coming to?” comes up frequently in *Mansfield Park*, and when it does a less obvious partner question, “What did the world come *from*?” is often not far behind. That is, cultural degeneration and cultural origins are closely related subtexts in the novel. *Scandal* is the connecting thread, the common element that forces both into the foreground of plot. This is dramatically so with the examples above, where we see the scandal-mongering newspaper excerpt followed almost immediately by Fanny’s distressed Hobbesian reverie. A number of issues in *Mansfield Park* are treated in a similar way. As “modernizing” attitudes encroach inexorably upon the social scene, they are placed in strikingly primal contexts.

“Every age has its improvements” is Mary Crawford’s arch quip in the retired chapel at Sotherton, when she hears that household devotions there were discontinued a generation ago. The debate between Mary and Edmund Bertram begins here and continues with greater or lesser intensity until the penultimate chapter. Mary could be called the voice of desacralization, and Edmund the apologist of the sacred. Or, to put it more mildly—since neither are fanatics and consider their arguments rational and pragmatic—Edmund argues rather defensively that religion be taken somewhat seriously, while Mary rather aggressively insists that it not be. Austen disarms us by depicting this debate as enticing banter in the context of a powerful romantic attraction, but the disagreement is—to use Edmund’s own editorial understatement later—“of some moment” (310). It is about whose world view will prevail, and more broadly, whose world.

We know that it is Edmund's world that finally prevails in the *novel*-or more precisely the restored order of Sir Thomas, under the tender reign of Fanny, with all the placidity and moral stasis this implies. However, back in the *real world*, we know that it belongs to Mary Crawford-a Pandoran free-for-all of relaxed mores, toughened hides, satiric irreverence, proliferating vanity and open self-aggrandizement. It is a world where religion-for goodness' sake-is a "private matter" (62) and people (Mary already notes the trend) are becoming more relaxed about infidelity and marital breaches (310). Here again we see the jarring disjunction of *Mansfield Park* noted in the introduction; the novel manages to be both uncannily contemporary and disconcertingly retro at the same time. But, as also noted, when modernizing trends encroach upon failing tradition in *Mansfield Park*, we are likely to be launched back further still-back to the scene of origin, back to the garden.

No sooner do Edmund and Mary initiate their long debate in the chapel at Sotherton then they find themselves in a suggestively Edenic scene in its woods. As they wander its "serpentine" paths, Mary tempts Edmund with worldly ambition (through which he might ultimately gain access to herself in marriage) and away from his religious vocation (65-68). Just in case we miss these Edenic overtones, Austen doubles and augments them in the scene that follows, where Henry entices Maria to climb over the gate and commit symbolic adultery (70-71).<sup>(15)</sup> These scenes are certainly not *morally* equivalent; Mary and Edmund are as yet negotiating in a fairly open and honorable way about their potential as a couple. However, the structural equivalence of the two scenes points to other, structurally similar scandals percolating in the vicinity, to an "ecology" of scandal.

Henry Crawford does not *just* tempt Maria; he trips up Julia in competition for himself, he trips up Julia and Maria in competition with each other, and he trips up Rushworth in competition for Maria (and intends ultimately to trip up Maria in competition with himself). Julia and Maria trip up each other in competition for Henry, and Mary (unknowingly) aggravates a growing jealousy in Fanny about Edmund. Fanny is the most conventionally "scandalized" in these scenes (shocked by Maria and Henry's exchanges) yet, precisely because her "naive" sensitivity to scandal immunizes her, ultimately the least undone by interpersonal treachery.

Temptation is the "minimal configuration" of scandal. In traditional Christian morality, scandal means leading another into sin, a sin substantially more grave than the sin enticed (c.f. Matthew 18: 6-9).<sup>(16)</sup> But this definition is evaluative rather than descriptive. Girard's Gospel exegesis is more direct, or at least more to the point of Austen's narrative: *skandalon* is the inter-personal obstruction, the "double bind" with its contradictory imperative: "Imitate me; don't imitate me."<sup>(17)</sup> Julia and Maria, for instance, do not simply "want" Henry: in the Sotherton scenes they are driven to visible agitation by each others' potential victory. At the same time, they are conscious of the other's agitation and wish to rub their respective noses in it, to "sweeten the pot." Thus, they simultaneously model and obstruct each others' desires. Henry plays the sisters off against one another, but more habitually

operates as a classically Girardian “psuedo-narcissist”: he coaxes women to “fall in love” with him—that is, he models admiration for himself and artfully induces women to imitate it—then dumps them.(18) In the parlance of contemporary pick-up artists, Henry practices an advanced level of “game”—“game” simply being a conscious manipulation of the dynamics of mimesis that both feed and *feed on* scandal.

Though not without a comic side in the early chapters, Julia and Maria’s romantic entanglements become less and less “funny.” Austen, without relaxing her critique of them, elicits much more sympathy than one would expect for selfishly callous Austenian characters; they suffer intensely. The very real damage and psychic torment caused by interpersonal scandal confirms Austen’s vision in *Mansfield Park* as being genuinely moral and not (as has often been objected) stuffily moralistic.

The Edenic echoes in the Sotherton scenes extend beyond the temptations in the woods; they encompass the woods themselves. Sotherton is the focal point for the issue of “improvement,” wherein landholders strive to outdo one another in landscape design, recreating placid scenes with open prospects, scattered copses, and meandering approaches.(19) The pretext for the Sotherton outing is the assessment of Rushworth’s grounds for improvement. Rushworth has caught the mania from his friend Smith, who has stylishly rusticized his much smaller property and driven Rushworth to agitated envy (38-41). “Improvement” severs the symbiotic relation with the local farming community, which is literally shut out from view, either by the removal or by the judicious placement of greenery. Thus, tradition buckles once more under the advance of modernizing influences. “Improvement” is the most sustained depiction of mimetically driven market forces in Austen’s oeuvres. However, it concerns the most unlikely of hot commodities: *the placid Arcadian paradise, uncontaminated by desire!*(20)

Austen yet again underscores the Edenic note in the novel’s title, and yet again uses the encroachment of modernity upon failing tradition as an occasion to launch us back further still, to evoke the scenic imagination. Certainly, “improvement” is a perversely self-refuting “originary vision”; in the act of emptying a landscape of desire, one demonstrates the most advanced form of it. Yet the self-refutation is also self-revelatory and indicates an alternate vision which is being enacted by the young people in the woods: the garden spilling over with interpersonal scandal.

If the fad for “improvement” captures the encroachment of the market upon traditional rural life, the fad for private theatricals captures the corresponding encroachment of “loose” social mores upon the youth scene. The theatricals are introduced to Mansfield by Yates, an inconsequential parasite, after his own acting party has been precipitously broken up with a different social set.(21) In the masterfully developed theater episodes, Austen intensifies a number of scandalous elements, not least her own scandalizing alienation of many fans. Austen uncannily captures the texture of what will eventually become full blown youth



culture—its flamboyant revels in suburban homes when Mom and Dad are gone on trips, or reality TV with its jealous undercurrents, selfish squabbles, and Warholian spotlight grabbing. At the same time, and true to the pattern we have been observing, the theatricals bring out unsettlingly archaic elements. The social dynamics at Mansfield take on an increasingly sacrificial cast, and the unexpected return of Sir Thomas throws the young people into a strangely disproportionate panic, an echo of some ancient terror.

## School for Scandal

*School for Scandal* is one of the plays mentioned when the young people begin casting about for a suitable dramatic vehicle. Sheridan's racy Restoration comedy would be unthinkable for performance at Mansfield, even for this group of freshly liberated youth, but its inclusion on the list is significant. The sense of scandal evoked by Sheridan's title is actually a diluted one: connived naughtiness, risqué titillation. Closely related is its counterpart, that averse reaction without which the *risqué* could not *titillate*: scandal as "impropriety," as bad taste, as setting the wrong tone, or a bad example. Impropriety generalizes *temptation* to the level of *embarrassment*, indicating a corresponding shift from *guilt* to *shame*, and indicating in turn lapsed cultural standards: *appearing good* rather than *being good*. (This, of course, is a key moral theme of the novel, and also one extended from its treatment in *Pride and Prejudice*.) Both senses of scandal (titillation and impropriety) come strongly into play with the introduction of the theatricals to Mansfield, and both imply the diffusion of scandal to a larger community: an audience to be titillated, a family to be threatened with impropriety, a neighborhood to be ruffled with unpleasant murmurs.

When Edmund tries and fails to put a stop to the theatricals, he appeals to this sense of propriety. He fails no doubt because the tickle of naughtiness is mightier than the frown of diluted virtue; *scandal trumps scandal*. But it is also because, if scandal means little more than *embarrassment*, it is arguably more scandalous to make a scene about the theatricals than to let them proceed. Edmund's arguments, fairly compelling individually, are never completely explicable *in toto* and do not resonate well, even for sympathetic readers.<sup>(22)</sup> Even if we *don't* think Edmund is being a fussing Malvolio, we cannot escape the impression that he very much *appears* to be one. The impetus for the theatricals seems unstoppable and the social pressure mounting against Edmund becomes immense. Austen already disgruntles half of her fans by having Edmund make such a fuss.

Finally, with the casting of *Lover's Vows*, when it seems likely that Mary Crawford will play Amelia (a saucy tease) to someone else's Anhalt (a stiff but feeling pastor), Edmund himself "throws in the towel" and takes Anhalt's part. The mere introduction of a *rival* accomplishes in a moment what overt or covert temptation could not have accomplished in days or weeks. The last remnants of authority and restraint at Mansfield are thus removed. If Edmund cannot convince himself, how could he convince the rest of us?

That the characters Anhalt and Amelia so much resemble Edmund and Mary in real life is undoubtedly Austen's most blatant authorial joke in the novel. But the stage couple also models by extension the Darcy-Elizabeth romance from *Pride and Prejudice*, and (with reversed genders) the Henry-Fanny courtship that will develop later in *Mansfield Park*. This ought to alert us to Austen's authorial intent; the three "hottest" romantic interests in *Mansfield Park* (Anhalt-Amelia, Edmund-Mary, and finally Henry-Fanny) are stoked up very heavily in line with the expectations raised in *Pride and Prejudice*, but all three finally fail to launch (the first because of the abrupt cancellation of the theatricals).<sup>(23)</sup> Austen deliberately frustrates the basic premise of romantic comedy, the vicarious satisfaction of erotic expectations, and she does so with premeditated and systematic vengeance. The agony of Yates, constantly denied his glory on the stage, and each time so close to the moment of consummation, reproduces our own frustration with the novel. The long-running critical apologia for *Mansfield Park* notwithstanding (Trilling's included), Austen has "earned" the ire of disgruntled readers, at least in the sense of having deliberately provoked it.<sup>(24)</sup>

Yet this rift with readers is in fact a crack through which readers "fall into" the narrative, and become themselves players on the set, participants in Mansfield's intensifying scandals. Frustrated that Austen refuses to let us have a good time, we (at least, many readers and critics) begin to complain, but the complaints come increasingly to echo the more unguarded and unfair remarks in the novel (especially as they are directed at Fanny); we begin to sound like Maria and Julia, like Mary Crawford, like Tom, like Sir Thomas, like Mrs. Norris. As per Trilling's observation, the "offense" of *Mansfield Park* does indeed guarantee its greatness, yet Austen has engineered the offense not, finally, to estrange us, but to include us, to draw us in, to make us participants. In the pattern of Edmund, we may object to Austen's theater, but we find ourselves standing willy-nilly on the stage.

Rehearsing the roles of Anhalt and Amelia is an intensely arousing experience for Edmund and Mary. It creates the irresistible impression that their differences are resolvable, and cements their attraction precisely at a time when they (and we) might have begun to understand their essential incompatibility. Maria in the meantime has taken the part of the "fallen woman" Agatha, and Henry that of Agatha's bastard son Frederick. *Their* arousal is, if anything, more intense. It is made putatively "safe" by Maria's engagement with Rushworth (which was supposed to put her off limits to Henry) and the roles themselves (since the mother-son relationship enables warmth but seems to rule out amorousness). Julia, in the meantime, has been pointedly edged out in the casting (bluntly signaling Henry's preference for Maria) and watches spitefully from the sidelines. She formulates a silent *curse* on Maria, hoping for some "public disturbance" that will bring scandal vengefully down upon Maria's head (113-14). This is an extraordinary and highly significant bit of oracular black magic, and it is self-fulfilling to the extent that it defines Julia's role later as a passive enabler in Maria's disgrace. Meanwhile, Rushworth fidgets helplessly as Henry makes ever more brazen love to his willing fiancée. Fanny is the only one to notice

anything objectively amiss in all this, yet, for this unspoken *thought crime*, Fanny continues to provoke howls of protest among readers.

For Austen, this is all according to plan: readers (as proposed above) are beginning to act like characters. Yet they mimic characters not only *individually*, but *collectively*; readers are being drawn into the dynamics of scapegoating, which come increasingly to dominate the narrative. This is the next level of scandal. The stumbling block becomes the stone the builders rejected, which in turn becomes the cornerstone (c.f. Matthew 21:42).<sup>(25)</sup> Scandal manifests itself both as collective victimization and as the prophetic indictment that undermines it (but, in *Mansfield Park*, almost never unambiguously one or the other).

Only in *Northanger Abbey* does Austen ever develop comparable scenes of crowd pressure, when Catherine Morland is cornered twice by her peers at Bath to join ill-conceived excursions. In *Mansfield Park*, alone among Austen's novels, the dynamics of this encircling crowd are developed in a sustained way. Collective victimization is tied finally not only to the tawdry frenzy of mass media in the case of Maria (discussed earlier), but even to the tortured psychology of "victim status" (e.g. the disturbing personal disintegration of Mrs. Norris, who in the last chapter feels—not unjustifiably—that everyone is excluding and persecuting her). Fanny's defining moments in the novel will be when she refuses Henry Crawford and single-handedly resists an encircling crowd that is (as in the theater episodes) both smotheringly solicitous and irrationally accusatory.

Exclusionary dynamics are present from the beginning of *Mansfield Park*, notably in Fanny's vulnerable isolation in the household since she was transplanted to Mansfield as a child. Exclusion begins to take a jagged edge in the form of "two against one" with the Sotherton scenes: Julia and Henry exclude Maria, Maria and Henry exclude Julia, Henry and Maria exclude Rushworth, Mary and Edmund exclude Fanny. In the theater episodes, however, exclusion begins to approach the level of "all against one," of genuine scapegoating. The needle designating the excluded one jumps swiftly and erratically in these scenes. Edmund's opposition to the theatricals, and the pushback from the group, make him odd man out for a time. Then Julia is excluded from *Lover's Vows* and becomes the sullen outsider, watching resentfully from the fringes. Very soon after, Fanny is conspicuously "ganged up on" in the theater episodes, then yet again later, both times pressured to take a part in the play against her will. The first time she is rescued by Edmund. The second time (Edmund, now compromised, is part of the circle of solicitation) she is rescued by the unexpected return of Sir Thomas.

The return of Sir Thomas instantly reverses the dynamics from all against one to *one against all*. The collective panic that ensues is strikingly similar in tone and syntax to Fanny's horrified reverie at Portsmouth:

How is the consternation of the party to be described? To the greater number it

was a moment of absolute horror. Sir Thomas in the house! . . . after the first starts and exclamations not a word was spoken for half a minute; each with an altered countenance was looking at some other, and almost each was feeling it as a stroke the most unwelcome, most ill-timed, most appalling! . . . every other heart [than Yates' and Rushworth's] was sinking under some degree of self-condemnation or undefined alarm, every heart was suggesting "What will become of us? what is to be done now?" it was a terrible pause; and terrible to every ear were the corroborating sounds of opening doors and passing footsteps. (121)

Austen heightens the sense of dread by splitting this scene down the middle, precisely at the division of the first and second volumes. As with Fanny's reverie, speech is reverse-engineered by horrified panic into a sub-linguistic state: "starts and exclamations" give way to a "a terrible pause," half a minute of intense silence. Collective attention ("each with altered countenance was looking at some other") draws together the sense of panic and "self-condemnation" but stalls at the point of articulation: "undefined alarm," and the unspoken stutter of uncertainty ("What will become of us?" "What is to be done now?"). It is-dynamically, though not perhaps in exact particulars-a very "Gansian" moment. At the peak of collective desire (a dress rehearsal, where even Fanny is at the point of giving in), interdiction intrudes, overwhelming, unchallengeable. A catastrophe cannot be avoided, yet its immediate effects must at all costs be deferred. A thick, tense, terrifying, pregnant gap opens up which needs to be filled with something, with speech, with shared signification.

## **The Dæmon of the Piece**

Sir Thomas is the *law*. He is Moses coming down from Mt. Sinai to find the Israelites engaged in a pagan orgy (Exodus 32).[\(26\)](#) He is the thief in the night. He is the only character with a sufficiently commanding presence to interdict, to *be* taboo. As the novel proves, this is not nearly enough, but order and restraint are restored to Mansfield for a period, and a highly interesting period it is.

In a radical overturning of literary convention, the typically overbearing Sir Thomas tries to talk his daughter Maria *out of* a loveless but advantageous marriage with the idiotic Rushworth. However, Maria *must* marry Rushworth; having been unceremoniously dumped by Henry after Sir Thomas' return, she now must demonstrate at all costs that she is not "pining away" for him. This is a stunning repudiation of the liberating desires that so consumed the young people in the preceding chapters: it is the tyrannical imperatives of mimetic desire, *not* the tyrannical father, which force Maria into a loveless marriage! Nonetheless, Sir Thomas (as if recollecting his conventional role) will soon try to pressure his meek little niece into a marriage with Henry.

Henry's new scheme is to deploy his well-honed pseudo-narcissistic strategies to break Fanny Price's heart. Fanny's persistent resistance, stronger than anything Henry has yet encountered, is both an intense "turn on" and a novel challenge—a completely new level of "game."[\(27\)](#) However, under the imposing external mediation of Sir Thomas, Henry for the first time—like a planet wobbling under the influence of some new gravitational force—finds himself imitating what an upright man might be like. This process is never completed (a genuinely tragic element in *Mansfield Park*), but it is far from superficial; it actually begins to transform Henry. We get a glimpse of what "good" mimesis *could* be, mimesis *without* scandal: how the formation of a man like Henry might be directed by relatively good models rather than vicious ones like his uncle.[\(28\)](#) Henry's scheme steadily "morphs" into an honorable one under the watchful eye of Sir Thomas.

Observing Fanny's affection with her brother William also teaches Henry something about love and passion; he longs to elicit the same effusive warmth from Fanny. Here again, positive mimesis—conforming to the good seen in an other—stands in dramatic contrast to scandalous mimetic entanglement. This is indeed the core of Austen's positive moral vision in *Mansfield Park*—not the reactive puritanism decried by critics like Kingsley Amis (or uneasily defended by critics like Trilling). The antidote to scandal is not taboo, but love. Sir Thomas' indulgent coronation of Fanny, when he throws a coming out ball for her, further exalts Fanny in Henry's eyes (no doubt as Sir Thomas intends). Henry falls in love with Fanny and begins to openly court her.

In refusing Henry, Fanny must now resist an encircling "embrace that smothers," a nearly unanimous pressure to accept Henry's proposal. This intense circle of solicitation (distinctly recalling the converging group pressure during the theatricals) is also a circle of persecution (Fanny's exile to Portsmouth anticipates Maria's expulsion in the last chapter). And, as noted, the circle includes no small number of readers and critics.

Sir Thomas, Edmund, the Crawfords, and apparently every male attending the ball all insist on finding Fanny—contrary to the accumulated wisdom of so many angry readers—not only loveable, but, on increasing occasions, exceptionally lovely. When she is noticed, her company is sought out, not shunned. Mary Crawford—who knows a thing or two about attractive personalities—seems to find her charming, and certainly more interesting than her cousins. Nevertheless, the routine litany of Fanny's outrages is before us: she is unlikable, unlovable, a tedious bore, an intolerable prig, a sickening prude, a dour puritan, a dry hypocrite, a repulsive goody-goody.[\(29\)](#) The biggest scandal of *Mansfield Park* is undoubtedly Fanny Price herself, and the more intrepid of the scandalized critics press on for answers: *What went wrong? Why Fanny Price? What is she doing here?* However, an entirely different question may be in order: *Why is so much vitriol routinely heaped upon this shy, harried teenager, entirely out of proportion to anything she does or doesn't do?*

There are many answers to this. The scandal of Fanny Price is almost as large and

variegated as the scandal of *Mansfield Park* itself, and really merits a separate treatment. However, at least one part of the answer is straightforward enough, and has been touched upon earlier: it is because Fanny refuses Henry Crawford, and in so doing spoils the romantic denouement that Austen has been painstakingly preparing for us. We are denied *any* vicarious erotic satisfaction (for Fanny's refusal also prevents the Edmund-Mary match from falling into place). There is no doubt that the usual objections to Fanny would evaporate in an instant were the match with Henry to go forward.

Again, Austen provokes this response in order to get readers to reproduce the scapegoating taking place in the narrative. Though several of Austen's best critics have fallen into this trap, Nina Auerbach's brilliant and brilliantly wrong essay takes it to majestic extremes that merit particular attention. (30) Auerbach means to transcend the usual objections to Fanny and explore her seriously as Austen's *intentionally unpleasant creation*. Thus, Fanny is not *just* an unlovable stick-in-the-mud; no, Fanny is a dark, brooding, repellent figure. She casts a sickening cloud of resentful disapproval over the theatricals. (Here Auerbach performs a fascinating projection of Julia's experience onto Fanny.) However, though Fanny sullenly excludes herself from the theatricals, she also gains obsessive *control* over them (Auerbach now projects Mrs. Norris), both through her vampiric *enjoyment* of the rehearsals and her maniacal domination of the script (that is, her unobtrusively useful assistance as a prompt).

Thus, everything Fanny does—whether she escapes to the east-room to feel downcast, tries to have a good time, or tries to try to make herself useful—establishes her monstrosity. And Auerbach is quite insistent about the monstrosity: Fanny is a vampire; she is the undead; she is a cannibal; she is *Beowulf's* Grendel; she is Frankenstein's hideous, lumbering brute (of all the monstrous comparisons the most appropriate insofar as Frankenstein's creation is an explicitly scapegoated figure). Thus Auerbach not only projects onto Fanny the unhinged psyches of Maria and Mrs. Norris in the final chapters, but actually appropriates Mrs. Norris tortured characterization: Fanny is “the dæmon of the piece” (304).

However, unlike Mrs. Norris, Auerbach does not hate Fanny Price; she is in *awe* of her. The Girardian circle is thus complete; Auerbach carries the scapegoating of Fanny all the way to *deification*, to *myth*. Yet, much like Trilling, not to mention the present study, she is struggling to comprehend the *offense* of *Mansfield Park*. Auerbach inadvertently discovers it not by identifying it, but by *acting it out*. The real offense is not the monster (which must be imported from various Romantic texts) but the mimetic contagion that compels us to see one.

However, she is by no means entirely wrong—and perhaps more intuitively right than wrong. There *are* “monsters” in *Mansfield Park* (that is, scapegoated victims), and they do glower resentfully from outside the charmed circle and haunt the novel's bland ending. In projecting the resentment first of Julia and finally of Maria and Mrs. Norris onto Fanny, Auerbach indirectly identifies the real “dæmons of the piece,” who are none other than

Maria and Mrs. Norris themselves.

The banishment of these two figures is certainly essential to the establishment of domestic felicity at Mansfield. Maria's expulsion is also necessitated by Sir Thomas' high-toned sense of honor and decorum: she must be removed to avoid *scandal*, to not set a bad example in the neighborhood that might corrupt the youth in his and other households (315). Yet, as is so often the case with *Mansfield Park*, scandal scandalizes itself. Maria's expulsion, the only nearly complete example of scapegoating in any of Austen's work, must be seen as extremely problematic.[\(31\)](#)

The problems with Maria's expulsion are manifold. We have already been given cause to question the collective condemnation of Maria in the form of the debasing media treatment—so ubiquitous in our age but never quite right even when the subject is guilty. Throughout the novel we have also witnessed the many individual and collective moral failures (of Sir Thomas, Mrs. Norris, Julia, Tom, Henry, Mary, even Edmund) that contribute to Maria's downfall. Austen carefully reviews this distribution of blame in the last chapter, and also explicitly notes the glaringly sexist dispensation of justice that exiles and disgraces Maria for life but lets Henry off with little more than his own moral hangover (318). It is indeed hard to see Maria's exile as much more than a matter of *expedience*. Most dubious of all, Maria's exile puts into effect the preposterous counsel of Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* regarding Lydia and Wickham: "You ought certainly to forgive them as christians, but never admit them in your sight, or allow their names to be mentioned in your hearing" (430). Though Mr. Bennett derides Mr. Collins' advice—"That is his notion of Christian forgiveness!" (430-431)—Sir Thomas enacts it almost to the letter.[\(32\)](#) This is certainly a clue that Austen is not "on board" with Sir Thomas, and if Kingsley Amis had noticed this point alone, he would undoubtedly have written a very different essay.[\(33\)](#)

## **Let Other Pens Dwell on Guilt and Misery**

Austen begins the last chapter with these words, then ironically proceeds to do just that, to itemize all the guilt and misery in the aftermath of the novel's scandalous implosion. Despite the placid epilogue of the very last pages, there is no moral "closure" in *Mansfield Park*. Taboo fails morally because (as Maria's case shows) enforcement can no longer be anything but arbitrary and sacrificial. There is a strong correspondence to the Gospel of John with its incident of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11), and Girard would refer us further to the Gospel Passion itself. This is not to say that all victims are innocent (Austen's kind of moral realism would not support such a facile "Girardianism") but that all scapegoaters are guilty. How indeed can we punish adultery any more without perpetrating a different injustice? As Mary Crawford says, "Every age has its improvements"; her conveniently desacralized world is gaining ground, yet it is not in spite of Christianity, but because of it.

In the current ethos, sacrificial operations must be handed over to the less reputable end of

the media (as Austen already understands). Either that, or accusations are phantasmagorically displaced onto someone else, like Fanny Price! With the collapse of the sacrificial order, scapegoating actually takes on more fierce, unstable, irrational forms, and nothing demonstrates this better than the reactions of readers themselves. Furthermore, the loosening of taboos liberates only relatively, before more insidious and penetrating forms of oppression—the imperatives of mimetic desire—arrive to take their place. (Is there any character less “liberated” than Maria Rushworth?) Scandal cannot be eliminated through relaxed social norms; it merely takes different and often parallel forms.

Scandal bubbles up in *Mansfield Park* at all levels: sin; temptations to sin; interpersonal obstructions; improprieties that shock, titillate, or send whispers of gossip through the community; public disgrace and public downfall; victimization and prophetic indictment; expulsion and the tawdry sacrificial machinery of the media. Scandal boils over and out, into the reading experience, irritating and outraging readers, and then further still, into the *community* of readers, who come unwittingly to reproduce the gestures of scapegoating manifested ever more intensely in the narrative. In many more ways than one, Austen’s story becomes our story, whether we like it or not, and especially if not.

The moral tensions implied by the contesting senses of “scandal” in *Mansfield Park* are the same moral tensions of our world: manners versus morals, guilt versus shame, liberty versus license, tolerance versus prurience, prophecy versus preachiness, justice versus mercy. Readers find these tensions exceedingly difficult to negotiate (especially as they are expecting a delightful Romantic comedy on the order of *Pride and Prejudice*), but there is no reason it should be otherwise. Austen herself does not really resolve any of these tensions, but rather presses them to the limit of their irresolvability. And this is the final but—because the resolution never arrives—perpetual and ingenious offense of *Mansfield Park*.

## Notes

1. “*Mansfield Park*,” in *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Ian Watt (Englewood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963), 124-140, 127. ([back](#))
2. Generally acknowledged to be (in approximate order of composition) *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*. ([back](#))
3. “What Became of Jane Austen? [*Mansfield Park*],” in *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Ian Watt (Englewood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963) 141-144, 142. ([back](#))
4. See note 1. ([back](#))
5. See for instance the amusing (and informative) notice about Fanny Price by Jaquelin Reid-Walsh for her AUSTEN-L discussion list, “WARNING: DANGER,” The AUSTEN-L Mailing



List (February, 1999), <http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/austen-l.html#X12>. ([back](#))

6. An example of this would Stuart Tave's painstaking explication of the improprieties involved in the Mansfield theatricals. See "Propriety and *Lover's Vows*," in *Jane Austen's Mansfield Park*, ed. Harold Bloom, (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 37-46. By explaining how the theatricals really *are* scandalous, Stave is attempting to defuse the scandal about the scandal—a reaction against Edmund's (and by extension Austen's) seeming puritanism. Valuable and informative as Stave's study is, as an attempt to "de-scandalize" readers' experience it misapprehends Austen's intent and (what amounts to the same thing) the social dynamics in those episodes. Austen does not intend to *refine* our moral judgment there, but to *cloud* it. As I will argue later, we are drawn into the production in the same way that the characters are; we begin to feel the same overpowering impetus for the theatricals that is finally even too much for Edmund to resist. Later, we feel the same guilty and inarticulate panic when Sir Thomas returns. We experience things the same way the characters do, and this is true even for critics like Kingsley Amis; he wonders what all the fuss is about, but in so doing ends up unwittingly mimicking the character Yates. ([back](#))

7. *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987 [1978]), 416-420, 426, 291-293, 311; *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2001), 16-17. ([back](#))

8. "The Scandal of Origins in Rousseau," *Contagion*, II (Spring 2004), 1-14, 2. ([back](#))

9. *Things Hidden*, *ibid.*, 420-431; *I See Satan*, *ibid.*, 23-24, 33-35; *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture*, with Pierpaolo Antonello and Joao Cezar de Castro Rocha (New York: Continuum, 2007), 223-224. ([back](#))

10. In a letter to her brother Edward. See for instance Lloyd W. Brown, *Bits of Ivory: Narrative Techniques in Jane Austen's Fiction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 7. ([back](#))

11. *An Essay on Man*, Epistle II, I, 2, from the online Gutenberg Project edition at [www.gutenberg.org/etext/2428](http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2428), ed. Henry Morley, transcribed from the edition by Les Bowler (London: Cassell & Company, 1891 [1732-1734]). ([back](#))

12. For a treatment of the Edenic element in the Sotherton scenes, see my "Traipsing into the Forest: Landscapes and Rivalry in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*," *Anthropoetics* XIV, II (Fall/Winter 2009), [anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap1402/taylor.htm](http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap1402/taylor.htm). See also Peter J. Leithart, "Jane Austen, Public Theologian," *First Things* (January, 2004), <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0401/articles/leithart.html>, Avrom Fleishman, *A Reading of Mansfield Park: An Essay in Critical Synthesis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 66-68, and Juliet McMaster, "Love: Surface and Subsurface," in *Jane Austen's Mansfield Park*, ed. Harold Bloom, (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 47-56

(54). [\(back\)](#)

13. *Mansfield Park*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (New York: Norton, 1998). All quotations and page references are from this edition. [\(back\)](#)

14. *The Scenic Imagination: Originary Thinking from Hobbes to the Present Day* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008). [\(back\)](#)

15. See note 12. Leithart's essay (*ibid.*) first brought to my attention the Edenic themes and syntax (i.e. "serpentine") in the scene with Edmund and Mary. [\(back\)](#)

16. All biblical references are taken from *The Holy Bible*, The New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (Nashville, Tennessee: Catholic Bible Press, 1993). [\(back\)](#)

17. See note 7. [\(back\)](#)

18. For a basic description of "psuedo-narcissism" see Girard, *Things Hidden*, *ibid.*, 368-382. [\(back\)](#)

19. For a more extensive treatment of landscape design, see my essay in *Anthropoetics* (note 11). See also Alistair M. Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), particularly the chapter "Mansfield Park: Jane Austen's Grounds of Being," 35-80, and two illuminating excerpts by the landscape designer Humphry Repton (mentioned in *Mansfield Park*) in the Norton edition of *Mansfield Park* (*ibid.*), "From *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening*," and "From *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*," 382-387. [\(back\)](#)

20. See also Eric Gans on Rousseau in *The Scenic Imagination*, *ibid.*, 46-47. [\(back\)](#)

21. For excellent background on the Mansfield theatricals and contemporaneous issues, see Penny Gay, *Jane Austen and the Theater* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Paula Byrne's book of the same title (London: Hambleton & London, 2002). [\(back\)](#)

22. As noted (see note 6) Stuart Tave provides a painstaking and informative explanation of the impropriety issues. I think it demonstrates my point here that Tave even feels compelled to undertake such an effort. Yet, in my view, the "wrongness" of the theatricals is both *more* obvious (given their ultimate result) and *less* so, given that Edmund himself succumbs. [\(back\)](#)

23. One could possibly argue that Henry and Maria constitute a "hot" romantic interest, however-no doubt due to Henry's indifference-their flirtations and liaison come across overall as sterile and unappealing (perhaps surprising considering the "steaminess" involved). Edmund and Fanny are of course famously "un-hot" as a consummating couple-a

continual scandal to many readers, and an important issue that unfortunately cannot be explored here. ([back](#))

24. See again my previous essay on Mansfield Park in *Anthropoetics* (note 12) particularly the section on “oppositional” attraction. ([back](#))

25. See note 9. ([back](#))

26. See my previous essay in *Anthropoetics* (note 12) where I also note the parallel with the scene in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where Bottom bursts upon the amateur rehearsal with the head of an ass, scattering the players in terror. ([back](#))

27. Henry's sustained romantic attack on Fanny Price is in line with all of the “oppositional” attractions energizing the plot of *Mansfield Park*. See again my essay in *Anthropoetics* (note 12). Needless to say, Henry's romantic efforts toward Fanny are quintessentially mimetic at every stage. The oppositional romance in *Mansfield Park* in general, and the Fanny-Henry “romance” in particular, merit a much more detailed analysis than can be undertaken here. ([back](#))

28. A satisfactory exploration of “good mimesis” in *Mansfield Park* is beyond the scope of this study. The standard reference on “good mimesis” is the short interview of Girard by Rebecca Adams, “The Goodness of Mimetic Desire,” *The Girard Reader*, (James G. Williams ed., New York: Crossroad, 1996) 62-65. “Good mimesis”, which to my knowledge has not been much explored in mimetic theory outside of Adams' interview, is a very deep current in Austen's novels, especially in *Mansfield Park*. Further exploration here might offer a productive correction to Girard's assertion in the interview that literature must by definition be concerned (more or less exclusively) with scandalous, conflictual mimesis. ([back](#))

29. See for instance W. G. Harding, *Regulated Hatred and Other Essays on Jane Austen* (Highlands, N.J.: Athlone Press, 1998) , 121-122: “. . . Fanny is a dreary, debilitated, priggish, goody-goody. I take this to be the central failure in a potentially very fine novel.” ([back](#))

30. “Feeling as One Ought about Fanny Price,” in *Jane Austen's Mansfield Park*, ed. Harold Bloom, (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 103-116 . ([back](#))

31. Catherine Morland's banishment by General Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* could be considered a suggestive precursor. Maria's scapegoating should not perhaps be considered “complete” because she is not killed, and is well provided for in her exile. This ambivalently “weak” form of scapegoating indicates both a definite ethical advance and a regnant sacrificial gesture uneasy in its self-contradictions (see the ensuing discussion). ([back](#))

32. *Pride and Prejudice, The Complete Novels of Jane Austen* (London: Penguin, 1983),

223-445. I have developed these observations about Maria's expulsion in more detail in an appended sample essay in an academic writing textbook, under the fictional name Masahiko Terai: "Jane Austen's Ambivalence: The Expulsion of Maria in *Mansfield Park*," David E. Kluge and Matthew A. Taylor, *Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers* (Tokyo: Cengage Learning, 2007), 182-188. ([back](#))

33. See note 3. ([back](#))