Romanticisms, Nation and Empire
Jane Austen

Mansfield Park 3:

A Day at Sotherton

(Volume I, Chapters VIII-X)
Such was the state of affairs in the month of July; and Fanny had just reached her eighteenth year, when the society of the village received an addition in the brother and sister of Mrs. Grant, a Mr. and Miss Crawford, the children of her mother by a second marriage. They were young people of fortune. The son had a good estate in Norfolk, the daughter twenty thousand pounds. As children, their sister had been always very fond of them; but, as her own marriage had been soon followed by the death of their common parent, which left them to the care of a brother of their father, of whom Mrs. Grant knew nothing, she had scarcely seen them since. 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, to whom they showed the greatest fondness of the two. The Admiral delighted in the boy, Mrs. Crawford doted on the girl; and it was the lady’s death which now obliged her protegee, after some months’ further trial at her uncle’s house, to find another home.

Volume I, Chapter IV, p. 32
The meeting was very satisfactory on each side. Miss Crawford found a sister without preciseness or rusticity, a sister’s husband who looked the gentleman, and a house commodious and well fitted up; and Mrs. Grant received in those whom she hoped to love better than ever a young man and woman of very prepossessing appearance. Mary Crawford was remarkably pretty; Henry, though not handsome, had air and countenance; the manners of both were lively and pleasant, and Mrs. Grant immediately gave them credit for everything else. She was delighted with each, but Mary was her dearest object; and having never been able to glory in beauty of her own, she thoroughly enjoyed the power of being proud of her sister’s. She had not waited her arrival to look out for a suitable match for her: she had fixed on Tom Bertram; the eldest son of a baronet was not too good for a girl of twenty thousand pounds, with all the elegance and accomplishments which Mrs. Grant foresaw in her; and being a warm–hearted, unreserved woman, Mary had not been three hours in the house before she told her what she had planned. Miss Crawford was glad to find a family of such consequence so very near them, and not at all displeased either at her sister’s early care, or the choice it had fallen on. Matrimony was her object, provided she could marry well: and having seen Mr. Bertram in town, she knew that objection could no more be made to his person than to his situation in life. While she treated it as a joke, therefore, she did not forget to think of it seriously. The scheme was soon repeated to Henry.
The young people were pleased with each other from the first. On each side there was much to attract, and their acquaintance soon promised as early an intimacy as good manners would warrant. Miss Crawford’s beauty did her no disservice with the Miss Bertrams. They were too handsome themselves to dislike any woman for being so too, and were almost as much charmed as their brothers with her lively dark eye, clear brown complexion, and general prettiness. Had she been tall, full formed, and fair, it might have been more of a trial: but as it was, there could be no comparison; and she was most allowably a sweet, pretty girl, while they were the finest young women in the country.

Her brother was not handsome: no, when they first saw him he was absolutely plain, black and plain; but still he was the gentleman, with a pleasing address. The second meeting proved him not so very plain: he was plain, to be sure, but then he had so much countenance, and his teeth were so good, and he was so well made, that one soon forgot he was plain; and after a third interview, after dining in company with him at the Parsonage, he was no longer allowed to be called so by anybody.

He was, in fact, the most agreeable young man the sisters had ever known, and they were equally delighted with him. Miss Bertram’s engagement made him in equity the property of Julia, of which Julia was fully aware; and before he had been at Mansfield a week, she was quite ready to be fallen in love with.
[Miss Crawford] must try to find amusement […] in observing Mr. Rushworth, who was now making his appearance at Mansfield for the first time since the Crawfords’ arrival. He had been visiting a friend in the neighbouring county, and that friend having recently had his grounds laid out by an improver, Mr. Rushworth was returned with his head full of the subject, and very eager to be improving his own place in the same way; and though not saying much to the purpose, could talk of nothing else. The subject had been already handled in the drawing–room; it was revived in the dining–parlour. Miss Bertram’s attention and opinion was evidently his chief aim; and though her deportment showed rather conscious superiority than any solicitude to oblige him, the mention of Sotherton Court, and the ideas attached to it, gave her a feeling of complacency, which prevented her from being very ungracious.
Wednesday was fine, and soon after breakfast the barouche arrived, Mr. Crawford driving his sisters; and as everybody was ready, there was nothing to be done but for Mrs. Grant to alight and the others to take their places. The place of all places, the envied seat, the post of honour, was unappropriated. To whose happy lot was it to fall? While each of the Miss Bertrams were meditating how best, and with the most appearance of obliging the others, to secure it, the matter was settled by Mrs. Grant’s saying, as she stepped from the carriage, “As there are five of you, it will be better that one should sit with Henry; and as you were saying lately that you wished you could drive, Julia, I think this will be a good opportunity for you to take a lesson.”

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

Volume I, Chapter VIII, p. 64
Their road was through a pleasant country; and Fanny, whose rides had never been extensive, was soon beyond her knowledge, and was very happy in observing all that was new, and admiring all that was pretty. She was not often invited to join in the conversation of the others, nor did she desire it. Her own thoughts and reflections were habitually her best companions; and, in observing the appearance of the country, the bearings of the roads, the difference of soil, the state of the harvest, the cottages, the cattle, the children, she found entertainment that could only have been heightened by having Edmund to speak to of what she felt. That was the only point of resemblance between her and the lady who sat by her: in everything 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 observation; her attention was all for men and women, her talents for the light and lively. In looking back after Edmund, however, when there was any stretch of road behind them, or when he gained on them in ascending a considerable hill, they were united, and a “there he is” broke at the same moment from them both, more than once.

Volume I, Chapter VIII, p. 64
For the first seven miles Miss Bertram had very little real comfort: her prospect always ended in Mr. Crawford and her sister sitting side by side, full of conversation and merriment; and to see only his expressive profile as he turned with a smile to Julia, or to catch the laugh of the other, was a perpetual source of irritation, which her own sense of propriety could but just smooth over. When Julia looked back, it was with a countenance of delight, and whenever she spoke to them, it was in the highest spirits: “her view of the country was charming, she wished they could all see it,” etc.; but her only offer of exchange was addressed to Miss Crawford, as they gained the summit of a long hill, and was not more inviting than this: “Here is a fine burst of country. I wish you had my seat, but I dare say you will not take it, let me press you ever so much;” and Miss Crawford could hardly answer before they were moving again at a good pace.

When they came within the influence of Sotherton associations, it was better for Miss Bertram, who might be said to have two strings to her bow. She had Rushworth feelings, and Crawford feelings, and in the vicinity of Sotherton the former had considerable effect. Mr. Rushworth’s consequence was hers. She could not tell Miss Crawford that “those woods belonged to Sotherton,” she could not carelessly observe that “she believed that it was now all Mr. Rushworth’s property on each side of the road,” without elation of heart [...].

Volume I, Chapter VIII, pp. 64-65
The whole party rose accordingly, and under Mrs. Rushworth’s guidance were shewn through a number of rooms, all lofty, and many large, and amply furnished in the taste of fifty years back, with shining floors, solid mahogany, rich damask, marble, gilding, and carving, each handsome in its way. Of pictures there were abundance, and some few good, but the larger part were family portraits, no longer anything to anybody but Mrs. Rushworth, who had been at great pains to learn all that the housekeeper could teach, and was now almost equally well qualified to shew the house. On the present occasion she addressed herself chiefly to Miss Crawford and Fanny, but there was no comparison in the willingness of their attention; for Miss Crawford, who had seen scores of great houses, and cared for none of them, had only the appearance of civilly listening, while Fanny, to whom everything 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 anything with history already known, or warm her imagination with scenes of the past.

Volume I, Chapter IX, p. 67
Mrs. Rushworth began her relation. “This chapel was fitted up as you see it, in James the Second’s time. Before that period, as I understand, the pews were only wainscot; and there is some reason to think that the linings and cushions of the pulpit and family seat were only purple cloth; but this is not quite certain. It is a handsome chapel, and was formerly in constant use both morning and evening. Prayers were always read in it by the domestic chaplain, within the memory of many; but the late Mr. Rushworth left it off.”

“Every generation has its improvements,” said Miss Crawford, with a smile, to Edmund.

Mrs. Rushworth was gone to repeat her lesson to Mr. Crawford; and Edmund, Fanny, and Miss Crawford remained in a cluster together.

“It is a pity,” cried Fanny, “that the custom should have been discontinued. It was a valuable part of former times. There is something in a chapel and chaplain so much in character with a great house, with one’s ideas of what such a household should be! A whole family assembling regularly for the purpose of prayer is fine!”

“Very fine indeed,” said Miss Crawford, laughing. “It must do the heads of the family a great deal of good to force all the poor housemaids and footmen to leave business and pleasure, and say their prayers here twice a day, while they are inventing excuses themselves for staying away.”

“That is hardly Fanny’s idea of a family assembling,” said Edmund. “If the master and mistress do not attend themselves, there must be more harm than good in the custom.”
"At any rate, it is safer to leave people to their own devices on such subjects. Everybody likes to go their own way—to chuse their own time and manner of devotion. The obligation of attendance, the formality, the restraint, the length of time—altogether it is a formidable thing, and what nobody likes; and if the good people who used to kneel and gape in that gallery could have foreseen that the time would ever come when men and women might lie another ten minutes in bed, when they woke with a headache, without danger of reprobation, because chapel was missed, they would have jumped with joy and envy. Cannot you imagine with what unwilling feelings the former belles of the house of Rushworth did many a time repair to this chapel? The young Mrs. Eleanors and Mrs. Bridgets—starched up into seeming piety, but with heads full of something very different—especially if the poor chaplain were not worth looking at—and, in those days, I fancy parsons were very inferior even to what they are now."

For a few moments she was unanswered. Fanny coloured and looked at Edmund, but felt too angry for speech; and he needed a little recollection before he could say, "Your lively mind can hardly be serious even on serious subjects. You have given us an amusing sketch, and human nature cannot say it was not so. […]

*Volume I, Chapter IX, p. 69*
While this was passing, the rest of the party being scattered about the chapel, Julia called Mr. Crawford’s attention to her sister, by saying, “Do look at Mr. Rushworth and Maria, standing side by side, exactly as if the ceremony were going to be performed. Have not they completely the air of it?”

Mr. Crawford smiled his acquiescence, and stepping forward to Maria, said, in a voice which she only could hear, “I do not like to see Miss Bertram so near the altar.”

Starting, the lady instinctively moved a step or two, but recovering herself in a moment, affected to laugh, and asked him, in a tone not much louder, “If he would give her away?”

“I am afraid I should do it very awkwardly,” was his reply, with a look of meaning.

Julia, joining them at the moment, carried on the joke.

Volume I, Chapter IX, pp. 69-70
“Upon my word, it is really a pity that it should not take place directly, if we had but a proper licence, for here we are altogether, and nothing in the world could be more snug and pleasant.” And she talked and laughed about it with so little caution as to catch the comprehension of Mr. Rushworth and his mother, and expose her sister to the whispered gallantries of her lover, while Mrs. Rushworth spoke with proper smiles and dignity of its being a most happy event to her whenever it took place.

“If Edmund were but in orders!” cried Julia, and running to where he stood with Miss Crawford and Fanny: “My dear Edmund, if you were but in orders now, you might perform the ceremony directly. How unlucky that you are not ordained; Mr. Rushworth and Maria are quite ready.”

Miss Crawford’s countenance, as Julia spoke, might have amused a disinterested observer. She looked almost aghast under the new idea she was receiving. Fanny pitied her. “How distressed she will be at what she said just now,” passed across her mind.

“Ordained!” said Miss Crawford; “what, are you to be a clergyman?”

“Yes; I shall take orders soon after my father’s return—probably at Christmas.”

Miss Crawford, rallying her spirits, and recovering her complexion, replied only, “If I had known this before, I would have spoken of the cloth with more respect,” and turned the subject.

*Volume I, Chapter IX, p. 70*
The chapel was soon afterwards left to the silence and stillness which reigned in it, with few interruptions, throughout the year. Miss Bertram, displeased with her sister, led the way, and all seemed to feel that they had been there long enough.

The lower part of the house had been now entirely shewn, and Mrs. Rushworth, never weary in the cause, would have proceeded towards the principal staircase, and taken them through all the rooms above, if her son had not interposed with a doubt of there being time enough. “For if,” said he, with the sort of self–evident proposition which many a clearer head does not always avoid, “we are too long going over the house, we shall not have time for what is to be done out of doors. It is past two, and we are to dine at five.”

Mrs. Rushworth submitted; and the question of surveying the grounds, with the who and the how, was likely to be more fully agitated, and Mrs. Norris was beginning to arrange by what junction of carriages and horses most could be done, when the young people, meeting with an outward door, temptingly open on a flight of steps which led immediately to turf and shrubs, and all the sweets of pleasure–grounds, as by one impulse, one wish for air and liberty, all walked out.

Chapter IX, p. 71
“James,” said Mrs. Rushworth to her son, “I believe the wilderness will be new to all the party. The Miss Bertrams have never seen the wilderness yet.”

No objection was made, but for some time there seemed no inclination to move in any plan, or to any distance. All were attracted at first by the plants or the pheasants, and all dispersed about in happy independence. Mr. Crawford was the first to move forward to examine the capabilities of that end of the house. The lawn, bounded on each side by a high wall, contained beyond the first planted area a bowling-green, and beyond the bowling-green a long terrace walk, backed by iron palisades, and commanding a view over them into the tops of the trees of the wilderness immediately adjoining. It was a good spot for fault-finding. Mr. Crawford was soon followed by Miss Bertram and Mr. Rushworth; and when, after a little time, the others began to form into parties, these three were found in busy consultation on the terrace by Edmund, Miss Crawford, and Fanny, who seemed as naturally to unite, and who, after a short participation of their regrets and difficulties, left them and walked on.

Chapter IX, pp. 71-72
The remaining three, Mrs. Rushworth, Mrs. Norris, and Julia, were still far behind; for Julia, whose happy star no longer prevailed, was obliged to keep by the side of Mrs. Rushworth, and restrain her impatient feet to that lady’s slow pace, while her aunt, having fallen in with the housekeeper, who was come out to feed the pheasants, was lingering behind in gossip with her. Poor Julia, the only one out of the nine not tolerably satisfied with their lot, was now in a state of complete penance, and as different from the Julia of the barouche–box as could well be imagined. 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.

Chapter IX, p. 72
“This is insufferably hot,” said Miss Crawford, when they had taken one turn on the terrace, and were drawing a second time to the door in the middle which opened to the wilderness. “Shall any of us object to being comfortable? Here is a nice little wood, if one can but get into it. What happiness if the door should not be locked! but of course it is; for in these great places the gardeners are the only people who can go where they like.”

The door, however, proved not to be locked, and they were all agreed in turning joyfully through it, and leaving the unmitigated glare of day behind. A considerable flight of steps landed them in the wilderness, which was a planted wood of about two acres, and though chiefly of larch and laurel, and beech cut down, and though laid out with too much regularity, was darkness and shade, and natural beauty, compared with the bowling–green and the terrace. They all felt the refreshment of it, and for some time could only walk and admire. At length, after a short pause, Miss Crawford began with, “So you are to be a clergyman, Mr. Bertram. This is rather a surprise to me.”

*Volume I, Chapter IX, p. 72*
“We have been exactly a quarter of an hour here,” said Edmund, taking out his watch. “Do you think we are walking four miles an hour?” “Oh! do not attack me with your watch. A watch is always too fast or too slow. I cannot be dictated to by a watch.”

A few steps farther brought them out at the bottom of the very walk they had been talking of; and standing back, well shaded and sheltered, and looking over a ha–ha into the park, was a comfortable–sized bench, on which they all sat down.

“I am afraid you are very tired, Fanny,” said Edmund, observing her; “why would not you speak sooner? This will be a bad day’s amusement for you if you are to be knocked up. Every sort of exercise fatigues her so soon, Miss Crawford, except riding.”

“How abominable in you, then, to let me engross her horse as I did all last week! I am ashamed of you and of myself, but it shall never happen again.”

“Your attentiveness and consideration makes me more sensible of my own neglect. Fanny’s interest seems in safer hands with you than with me.”

“That she should be tired now, however, gives me no surprise; for there is nothing in the course of one’s duties so fatiguing as what we have been doing this morning: seeing a great house, dawdling from one room to another, straining one’s eyes and one’s attention, hearing what one does not understand, admiring what one does not care for. It is generally allowed to be the greatest bore in the world, and Miss Price has found it so, though she did not know it.”

“I shall soon be rested,” said Fanny; “to sit in the shade on a fine day, and look upon verdure, is the most perfect refreshment.”

*Volume I, Chapter IX, pp. 75-76*
Ha-ha is a type of trench that was devised in 18th-century England. It was designed with two views in mind: one side would show no signs of a sudden drop in terrain so as not to disrupt the view of the land, and the other side would be visible enough for livestock and deer to realize they could not proceed any further. This type of land manipulation was essential when creating coveted natural landscapes while simultaneously keeping animals in a controlled area.

Adapted from: http://architessica.wordpress.com/2011/03/24/the-significance-of-the-ha-ha/
The ha-ha, a sunken wall and ditch, played a key role in the development of the naturalistic park. Built at the edge of a pleasure grounds surrounding a house, the ha-ha made a virtually invisible barrier that kept the cows and sheep in their pastures yet allowed uninterrupted views from house into park of from park into distant countryside. It meant that pleasure grounds, park and landscape could seamlessly become one. It is probably French in origin. Charles Bridgeman is generally credited with its introduction, but the first remnants of a ha-ha had already been installed at Levens Hall in Cumbria in 1689.

Adapted from: http://architessica.wordpress.com/2011/03/24/the-significance-of-the-ha-ha/
feet beneath the ground. Now, such a fence, quite round the premises, will be expensive; yet, without an effective fence, there can be no enjoyment of the place: I will, therefore, suppose, that much of the present fence may be repaired, and, where a new fence is necessary, it should be constructed according to the annexed section: thus—suppose the dotted line the present surface of the ground; then begin by digging out the earth at A [in fig. 193], five or six feet wide, and throw it up at B, to raise the walk on a terrace; then face the bottom of the bank, about three feet deep, with bricks, and put upon it a paling about three feet high: this will make a fence of six feet against the deer, while a person walking withinside will look over the pale, and enjoy the prospect of the forest.
‘Imperceptible from a distance, the ha-ha was a "sunk fence" that prevented livestock from crossing from the park into the garden, while also allowing the viewer to maintain the fiction that the grounds were seamlessly connected. The ha-ha was so named because viewers would react with both surprise and laughter when they realized they had been deceived by this earthy trompe l'oeil.’

Source: http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/73293
Ha ha in Farnley Park, Leeds
After sitting a little while Miss Crawford was up again. “I must move,” said she; “resting fatigues me. I have looked across the ha–ha till I am weary. I must go and look through that iron gate at the same view, without being able to see it so well.”

Edmund left the seat likewise. “Now, Miss Crawford, if you will look up the walk, you will convince yourself that it cannot be half a mile long, or half half a mile.” “It is an immense distance,” said she; “I see that with a glance.”

He still reasoned with her, but in vain. She would not calculate, she would not compare. She would only smile and assert. The greatest degree of rational consistency could not have been more engaging, and they talked with mutual satisfaction. At last it was agreed that they should endeavour to determine the dimensions of the wood by walking a little more about it. They would go to one end of it, in the line they were then in— for there was a straight green walk along the bottom by the side of the ha–ha—and perhaps turn a little way in some other direction, if it seemed likely to assist them, and be back in a few minutes. Fanny said she was rested, and would have moved too, but this was not suffered. Edmund urged her remaining where she was with an earnestness which she could not resist, and she was left on the bench to think with pleasure of her cousin’s care, but with great regret that she was not stronger. She watched them till they had turned the corner, and listened till all sound of them had ceased.

*Volume I, Chapter IX, p. 76*
After some minutes spent in this way, Miss Bertram, observing the iron gate, expressed a wish of passing through it into the park, that their views and their plans might be more comprehensive. It was the very thing of all others to be wished, it was the best, it was the only way of proceeding with any advantage, in Henry Crawford’s opinion; and he directly saw a knoll not half a mile off, which would give them exactly the requisite command of the house. Go therefore they must to that knoll, and through that gate; but the gate was locked. Mr. Rushworth wished he had brought the key; he had been very near thinking whether he should not bring the key; he was determined he would never come without the key again; but still this did not remove the present evil. They could not get through; and as Miss Bertram’s inclination for so doing did by no means lessen, it ended in Mr. Rushworth’s declaring outright that he would go and fetch the key. He set off accordingly.

Volume I, Chapter X, p. 77
"Naturally, I believe, I am as lively as Julia, but I have more to think of now."
"You have, undoubtedly; and there are situations in which very high spirits would denote insensibility. Your prospects, however, are too fair to justify want of spirits. You have a very smiling scene before you."

"Do you mean literally or figuratively? Literally, I conclude. Yes, certainly, the sun shines, and the park looks very cheerful. But unluckily that iron gate, that ha–ha, give me a feeling of restraint and hardship. ‘I cannot get out,’ as the starling said.” As she spoke, and it was with expression, she walked to the gate: he followed her. “Mr. Rushworth is so long fetching this key!”

“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.”

“Prohibited! nonsense! I certainly can get out that way, and I will. Mr. Rushworth will be here in a moment, you know; we shall not be out of sight.”

“Or if we are, Miss Price will be so good as to tell him that he will find us near that knoll: the grove of oak on the knoll.”

Volume I, Chapter X, pp. 78-79
Fanny, 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 certainly hurt yourself against those spikes; you will tear your gown; you will be in danger of slipping into the ha–ha. You had better not go.”

Her cousin was safe on the other side while these words were spoken, and, smiling with all the good–humour of success, she said, “Thank you, my dear Fanny, but I and my gown are alive and well, and so good–bye.”

Fanny was again left to her solitude, and with no increase of pleasant feelings, for she was sorry for almost all that she had seen and heard, astonished at Miss Bertram, and angry with Mr. Crawford. By taking a circuitous route, and, as it appeared to her, very unreasonable direction to the knoll, they were soon beyond her eye; and for some minutes longer she remained without sight or sound of any companion. She seemed to have the little wood all to herself. She could almost have thought that Edmund and Miss Crawford had left it, but that it was impossible for Edmund to forget her so entirely.

Volume I, Chapter X, p. 79
It was a beautiful evening, mild and still, and the drive was as pleasant as the serenity of Nature could make it; but when Mrs. Norris ceased speaking, it was altogether a silent drive to those within. Their spirits were in general exhausted; and to determine whether the day had afforded most pleasure or pain, might occupy the meditations of almost all.

Volume I, Chapter X, p. 84