ABSTRACT

There is the truism according to which bad books render good movies. We can easily understand that good books end up as bad movies. This acknowledged truth is challenged by the good books that have turned out to be good movies. The assumption is that a revered book scares the movie director and thus prevents any creative turn, needed in some measure to translate the content of the book into another media. But quite the opposite is also possible: a revered book can also be well translated, and on the other hand, a book not so acclaimed by the literary critics can be turned into something very different from what it was, when translated into a movie. *Mansfield Park*, by Jane Austen, is possibly such a case. Where does the frailty of *Mansfield Park* reside, then?

KEY WORDS: gender studies, literature, movies.

MANSFIELD PARK, OR FANNY'S TEMPTATION

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RESUMO

Já é um truísmo afirmar que maus livros se transformam em bons filmes. Podemos concluir que bons livros se tornam maus filmes. Essa idéia é desmentida pelos bons livros dos quais foram feitas boas adaptações cinematográficas. A causa a que se atribui o fracasso da adaptação de bons livros é a de que a aclamação que ele recebe acaba por assustar o diretor, impedindo qualquer lance criativo, necessário, em alguma medida, para transportar narrativas para outro meio de comunicação. Mas pode-se dar justamente o oposto: bons livros podem ganhar boas adaptações cinematográficas, e por outro lado, um livro que não seja tão bem situado dentro do cânone literário pode ser transformado em algo bem diferente do original, quando adaptado para o cinema. Esse parece ser o caso de *Mansfield Park*, de Jane Austen. Onde reside, então, a fragilidade desse romance?

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Making a movie out of a book is always a risky, adventurous task. There is the truism according to which bad books render good movies – enough said. We can easily understand that good books end up as bad movies. This acknowledged truth is challenged by the good books that have turned out to be good movies, as all the movies based on E. M. Foster's novels can prove. The assumption is that a revered book scares the movie director and thus prevents any creative turn, needed in some measure to translate the content of the book into another media.

But quite the opposite is also possible: a revered book can also be well translated, and on the other hand, a book not so acclaimed by the literary critics can be turned into something very different from what it was, when translated into a movie. *Mansfield Park*, by Jane Austen, is possibly such a case.

Jane Austen's novels had long been struggling for a better reception in literary criticism. Considered for a while to be good reading for girls, they had to wait almost a century until their accomplishments were recognized, and, even before that, critics could be harsh on them. Their plots are impeccable, there is no melodrama in these novels, and even so, Anthony Burguess, in his *English Literature*, recognizing these, nevertheless says that Austen's novels lack masculine vigor. Interestingly enough, he does not make the same remark regarding Virginia Woolf, acclaimed as she is, and as lacking in this quality as Jane Austen.

The wake of feminist criticism gave Jane Austen's novels a fair shot: they started to be studied in the academic world not only as "what girls used to read during the Victorian Age", but as well written novels. But even this more accurate reading did not contemplate all her *oeuvre*: at least one of her novels is still quite out of favor with the critics. It is *Mansfield Park*, a novel that has had an ambiguous reception: not much is said about it, and regardless being considered the novel in which Austen best displayed her talents of writing and managing plot and characters, its heroine, Fanny Price, is the least popular among Austen's heroines.

Mansfield Park is a female *Bildungsroman*, but no essay has been written accounting this generic affiliation of the novel, in spite of some essays contemplating other novels by Jane Austen. In her *Female Imagination*, Patricia Meyer Spacks reads *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice* as female *Bildungsromane*. She says both allow their heroines some measure of growth – which may be more unusual than first expected. Eve K. Sedgwick, in "Jane Austen and the masturbating girl", provides an instigating reading, crossing the novel and some data about Austen's life. *Sense and sensibility* is read as the story of the love of one sister for another – Austen's attachment to her sister Cassandra being the model of the love between sisters that pervades

the novel. Cicely Palser Havely works with *Emma* as a domestic *Bildungsroman*, in which the heroine does not need to undergo travel and sometimes not even a formal education – a genre much used for the rendering of female characters formation, once it would not affront the idea of property and the concept of womanhood held by Victorian societies. Denise Kohn reads the same novel as a *Künstleroman*, once Emma, though not an artist in the usual sense of the word, tries to understand, and act upon, her own and other people's lives according to literary rules. Susan Fraiman, in *Unbecoming Women*, works with some female *Bildungsromane*, *Pride and Prejudice* among them. Even Gilbert and Gubar, in their comprehensive *The Madwoman in the Attic*, don't say much about this novel.

Even today the situation does not seem to have changed much. The Internet is a varied source in all matters, literature included, and there are some sites on Jane Austen, open or otherwise. One of them, www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/janewrit.html, displays, among other topics, the comments Jane Austen collected about *Mansfield Park*, made by her family and friends. Mostly, they praise the novel, but it looses in brilliance when compared to *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility*. Some turns of the plot are criticized, but mainly the critical content falls on Fanny. The site also displays a page on *Mansfield Park* where readers can voice their opinions on the novel. First of all, we are admonished not to use words such as "insignificant", "dull" or "feeble", when writing about Fanny, "not because these are necessarily objectively wrong", but because "the US Supreme court has termed [them] as 'fighting words'". That is to say, indirectly, that such words are quite right, and should not be used for the sake of politeness alone.

Besides, there is a link of suggestions on "what Fanny Price would have to do for some people not to find her 'insipid'". One of the suggestions, the mildest, is that she should drown her aunt's pet dog in the fountain. One of the readers making these suggestions even says this is not literature, but it is "therapeutic". Of course, this must be one of the reasons why people go to a site on a novel they allegedly hate: if this is not a renowned text, they can quite easily criticize it, re-write it (even if this is not literature), toy with it.

In another site, http://www.austen.com/mans/, we can find an article worthy to be quoted because it discusses the novel in more literary terms, and also because it defends it, which is quite rare on the Internet:

> The major problem for most of the novel's detractors is the lead character, Fanny Price. She is shy, timid, lacking in self-confidence, physically weak, and seemingly—to some, annoyingly—always right. Austen's own mother called her "insipid", and many have used the word "priggish". She is certainly not like the lively and witty Elizabeth Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice*. But *Mansfield Park* also has many supporters, whose admiration and loyalty

> can be attributed to the depth and complexity of the themes in the book and to the main character—a young woman who is unlike most heroines found in literature.

So, we can conclude that, mostly, what is considered the weak point in the novel is its heroine: whereas other Austen heroines display some rebellions attitudes in the novels, Fanny, according to Tony Tunner, "just endures". There is no rebellion in her manners, in her words, and scarcely in her feelings. Fanny is way too much the picture of the ideal Victorian woman to arouse sympathy in the reading public. This is why, most probably, when it came to making a movie out of the book, there came also a resolution to correct Austen's mistake.

At the beginning of the movie, there is an interview with its director, Patricia Rozema, who states that Jane Austen is a great writer without explaining what makes Austen great, and says a movie cannot be a strict reproduction of a book because there are significant differences between the two media. So, in order to make *Mansfield Park* manageable as a movie, the director adapted it, inserting lines from Austen's *Diaries*, from notes to some of her novels, and from other novels. This would not be a problem if it maintained, as the director wishes, the spirit of the book. But the changes do not concern only translating the content of the novel to another media; they have to do mainly with making marked changes in the characters of the novel, in order, presumably, to render them more "real", or more interesting, or both.

Another site on the novel that praises it is http://www.bartleby.com.222/1005.htm/, which presents the text of *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, vol. XII: The Romantic Revival. Here, again, the idea that, in this novel, Austen best displays her ability for building a plot is presented. What is interesting to mention is that formal texts defend the novel, while informal ones can alow themselves the luxury of attacking it. Equally curious is the fact that the "villainess" of the novel, Mrs. Norris, is the favorite character of the detractors of *Mansfield Park*, which is a way of stating that the novel failed in its proposal, because what it presents as virtue is considered dull, and this is why what is presented as error (not quite as vice) is praised by modern readers. But even the defense acknowledges there is an attack on the novel, thus giving it some measure of importance. The movie, most probably, finds a place in this informal space.

The novel presents us several female characters. Excluding Fanny, each one of them fails to some extent in embodying the Victorian ideal of womanhood. First of all we have Lady Bertram. She is not mean, nor does she lack common goodness, good manners or a gentle character. Nevertheless,

all these good qualities find no application, for she is too indolent to bother. She doesn't manage her own house, nor she educates her offspring and, though well disposed toward Fanny, this good disposition never expresses itself in any way. As she "spends her days in sitting nicely dressed on a sofa, doing some long piece of needlework, of little use and no beauty" (p. 55),[1] she fails as a mother and as a member of a little countryside community, as she does no charity other than receiving her niece, the daughter of a poor sister, and even this idea was not hers, but Mrs. Norris'. But here end her grievances. The phrase quoted here, conveyed by the narrator in the novel, comes in Fanny's voice in the movie, followed by the affirmation of Lady Bertram's addiction to opium. No doubt opium was the fashionable drug in the Victorian Age, but it flouts verosimilitude that a middle-aged lady living in the countryside would have access to it. The scene that actually appears in the movie is more likely: Fanny gives her aunt a glass of some drink, alcoholic presumably. But, undoubtedly more likely as it is, this scene connters the conception of both characters all the same, as there is no hint about Lady Bertram's addiction to alcohol in the novel whatsoever. More than that, making Fanny take part in her aunt's bad behavior goes against the grain of the character.

There is no narrative trend to pursue this hint, but in two scenes where Fanny and Mary Crawford stay together in the same room, we can detect a lesbian flirtation. Much has been written about the sensual attachments between women friends during the Victorian Age, but there is nothing in the novel to authorize such a reading. Mary Crawford has her share of imperfections regarding the Victorian ideal of womanhood, such as loose principles and greediness, but throughout the novel, although she does not know it, she and Fanny compete for the love of the same man. She even shows signs of regard for Fanny and her virtues, and approves without restriction when her brother plans to propose to Fanny, but there is no indication of any sensual overtone in their relationship.

Fanny stands even more as the ideal woman because all the other female characters fail to accomplish what is expected of them: Mrs. Price lacks property; Lady Bertram does not, but is guilty of indolence. Mrs. Norris is not indolent, but has a bad temper. She flatters her nieces Maria and Julia too much, and as a consequence, both of them lack modesty. She is also too eager to command the household, which means, to exert the power available to her, and she can do this just because her sister is too indolent to take any trouble, leaving all the decisions to her. Maria, moreover, also has a bad temper

1 All the quotations refer to the Penguin edition of *Mansfield Park* dated 1983, which was used in this essay.

she never learnt to subdue, and most probably this is why she is her aunt's favorite, which harms her justas much, once Mrs. Norris is indulgent toward her flaws. Mary Crawford is tender and considerate in her relations, but had learnt "the ways of the world" in London and thus values money and appearance more than moral principles.

In general, all of them lack the proper moral principles, in different degrees. This is no coincidence. On the contrary, it is one of the expedients used in gothic novels: contrasting the protagonist with the errors of other female characters, the narrative brings the benefit of the reflection on their faults, while the protagonist remains blameless. Although she, personally, disliked gothic novels, it seems Jane Austen may have learnt a trick or two from them.

This would not be the first time certain traits of the Gothic novel would contribute to a female novel of apprenticeship. If, as Annis Pratt says, what the heroine learns in such novels is that she has no access to subjectivity, and, having to serve others as her main task, receives lessons in minority, the underlying violence present in Gothic novels can be a good didactic tool. The problem is that, as a rule, heroines demonstrate some degree of discomfort, or even try to rebel against such an education, and Fanny does not. The character was built to fit in even more perfectly than Mrs. Ann Radcliff's.

It is agreed among scholars that the female novel of apprenticeship differs from the male counterpart in significant ways. James Hardin even suggests that another term should be coined to indicate such novels, as they are utterly different from the apprenticeship novel with a male protagonist. For instance, when the main character is a boy, he will have access to a lengthy formal education, to travel to a larger city, where he will also undergo an informal education in "the ways of the world", to a mentor who will explain such ways to him, to a conflict of generations on the grounds that he is to decide his destiny even if it is not what his parents planned for him, and he is to have two love affairs, that may or may not involve sex, but one is debasing and the other is successful, so that he can learn to differentiate good women from bad ones and choose properly when time to get married comes. So, all the necessary knowledge is available to such a character, and the process of gathering it is the core of the narrative.

When the character is a girl, on the other hand, this scheme must undergo a deep transformation. As Susan Fraiman pointed out, girls could not travel alone, their formal education was restricted, and the ways of the world they should learn were restricted to of etiquete rules. Finding a mentor would also be troublesome, as other women are not prepared to assume this role, and the mentorship of a man would be ruinous to her, as a source of

scandal. This is why Esther K. Labovitz says there is no female *Bildungsroman* until the beginning of the twentieth century, when, by entering the labour market, women started to have access to all the steps of an education until then restricted to men. But some other ways of narrating female development were, nevertheless, developed, before women had access to another kind of inscription in the world, and Fraiman also points this out.

Of course, a novel of apprenticeship prior to the twentieth century would not concern itself with matters such as finding a talent, or professional choice, since women's talents and their profession were already established: they must take care of others, tend for them, and they should be polite, meek and selfless. Departing from such a narrow space, women writers managed to present narratives of development of female characters where even some measure of experimenting could be allowed without being inappropriate, as Eve Kornfeld and Susan Jackson pointed out regarding female apprenticeship novels in American literature of the nineteenth century. Such novels can parallel the male experience without flouting what would be acceptable to a young girl. This kind of novel is called a "domestic *Bildungsroman*" because it equates *Bildung* (apprenticeship) with domesticity: girls undergo an apprenticeship process, even though it is not the same as for boys. What seems to be the problem with Fanny is that even this tiny space for affirmation of the self seems to be absent.

A character that may be studied at more length is Fanny's mother, Mrs. Price. As a rule, mothers in a female apprenticeship novel are failed models for their daughters, not serving as mentors. She is no different, but her task in the novel is also to reveal what Fanny must not be. Mrs. Price has only two servants and even so she is unable to make them perform their duties. So, dishes, forks and knifes are never quite clean, tea is never ready on time, the food is awfully cooked and other domestic tasks are never performed in due time. But the description of the house is far from the worms and cockroaches the movie displays. Her lack of property is made apparent in the novel when Fanny, looking to Betsy, the sister born after her departure, remembers Mary, the other sister, her favorite, who died from a fever shortly after her departure, but she would never speak of her, lest it arouse painful memories for Mrs. Price. Nevertheless, immediately Susan, another of the sisters, starts to complain because Betsy is toying with a silver knife that "sister Mary left to me" (p. 379). Fanny is shocked at Susan's lack of property, but even more because the mother, instead of reproaching Betsy for taking something that belongs to Susan, says she shouldn't take the knife "because Susan is so cross about it" (p. 379), and goes on speaking of the death of her daughter as a plain subject. So, not only she did she fail to educate her daughters properly, but she herself lacks property.

The sequence of Mr. Crawford's visit is also different in the movie and in the novel. In the first, he displays his knowledge of Fanny being in love with Edmond, which, in the novel, remains a secret until the end, when it is properly revealed to Edmond alone. Also, in the novel, Mr. Crawford believes Fanny's modesty is the reason of her refusal, and he is self-confident enough, even because he never failed to conquer a woman's heart, to believe himself loved. Also, as a part of Sir Thomas property, Mr. Crawford's proposal remains unknown to Fanny's family, and he appears as William's friend. William, Fanny's older brother, does not appear in the movie.

Mr. Price, in the novel, is a naval lieutenant and being so would hardly be unemployed, as he is on Fanny's arrival in the movie.

All these changes, in the movie, respond to the need to present Fanny as rebellious. In the novel, Sir Thomas raises the possibility of Fanny's traveling to her parents' house as a break from the stressing events of Mr. Crawford's proposal and Fanny's refusal of it, and she understands it in this way, even being grateful to him, although he believes the taste of poverty would help her to come back to her senses. The alleged, reason is giving her the chance of seeing William's brand new lieutenant's uniform, since his promotion was due to Mr. Crawford's interference. In the movie, on the contrary, she is sent home as a punishment. Mr. Crawford proposes again on his visit, and her mother gives the final blow, saying: "I married for love" (look where love brought me, is the underlying idea). All this sequence, in the movie, depicts Fanny's rebelliousness. Frequently, for instance, Fanny appears in the movie with her hair loose – something Victorian women would do solely in their chambers and never in public, even to the household. One of the reasons why Lily (Elizabeth) Rossetti was considered so scandalous in Victorian London was that she would appear in public with her hair loose, a hint, or so it was considered, of loose sexual behavior.

Last but not least, the movie depicts an explicit sex scene between Maria, now Russworth, and Henry Crawford, caught by Fanny. Not only is she in Portsmouth and them in London by the time they get involved, but also the whole business of the elopement is very discretly dealt with in the novel. Showing an explicit sex scene does not seem very akin to the spirit of the novel.

Sir Thomas is not a protagonist in the novel, but he is one of the most important characters, as almost all the others hold him as a reference, and act according to his expectations, or according to what they expect of him. Edmond and Fanny don't agree with the idea of staging a play at Mansfield Park mostly because they think, rightly enough, that Sir Thomas would disagree with it. Lady Bertram plays the game he says she would enjoy best. Julia elopes because she expects her father to impose a stricter restraint on

her after her sister's running away. He is respected, even feared, though not loved, because, righteous as he is, he lacks the warmth that would provide attachment. The sad events of the end of the novel humanize him, and he can end his days loved as well as respected, as such a righteous gentleman should be.

In the movie, however, his first action coming home from Antigua, is to hit on Fanny. This Sir Thomas values just women's appearance, is arrogant, slating black slaves (which are not even mentioned in the novel, but for the fact that he travels and we can conclude that it was to solve some problems related to his properties in Antigua. A less attentive reader might completely miss the fact that he is a slave owner) and challenging Edmond's Christian convictions. In the novel, he approves his son's decision to become a clergyman. As the younger son, Edmund should be placed in a socially valued profession, once he most probably would not inherit the property, but should not, on the other hand, work as a lawyer or a merchant, which would be a declaration that the family was unable to place him well.

Moreover, in the movie, Sir Thomas is depicted in a notebook of sketches made by his eldest son, Tom, violating black women and beating black men. No doubt many an Englishman violated women and tortured men, or at least gave such orders, in their possessions in the West Indies. But there is no hint, in the novel, that Sir Thomas Bertram could be this kind of man. We should also consider that any hints about sex and/or violence were banished from conversation with honest women. For such subjects, men would go to the *fumoir*. So, it would be hardly possible that books addressing such subjects would be read, much less written, by women. Any mention of Tom's notebook is entirely absent from Austen's novel. It would be welcome as a means of translating the literary narrative into the language of film if it helped to construct the character depicted in the novel, but this does not happen. Sir Thomas, in the movie, is a catalog of Victorian aristocracy's wrongs, and certainly this is not how the character appears in the novel.

The character that undergoes the deepest transformation is Fanny, though, who happens to be the protagonist. First of all, she appears, at the opening of the movie, telling stories to her sister – as an imaginative child. She goes on writing throughout the movie, letters to her sister where she tells gothic tales, and essays under Edmond's supervision, where she pursues very original ideas. Edmond in the course of a conversation in the movie even says she has a mind as capable as that of any man, a remark made about Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, a quite different character. As Fanny in the movie speaks some remarks made by the narrator, it is not impossible that the aim of the movie is to merge Fanny the character with Jane the writer. Certain problems should be raised here. The narrator is frequently ironic

with some characters and shows very sharp knowledge of their motives and acts. Fanny, the character, is shy and her manners are "incurably gentle" (p. 326). It does not seem plausible that such a gentle character can be at the same ironical time. Fanny, in the movie, is lively, as Jane Austen is known to have been. In the novel, the character embodies the romantic ideal of the woman who is the bridge between this world and the spiritual world, by the romantic convention of having frail health that affords her access to this other, more elevated world: she does not completely belong to the material world. She has light eyes, which contrast with Miss Crawford's dark eyes, and reinforces the romantic stereotype that opposes dark, lively women to light, spiritual women (Frances O'Connor, the actress who plays Fanny in the movie, just for the record, has (brown) eyes and hair.

Most important of all, in the movie, though, Fanny defies her uncle, Sir Thomas, when she refuses to marry Mr. Crawford. Tom also defies his father in the movie, whereas in the book he is a spoilt heir and runs up debts that really bother Sir Thomas, but, in spite of thinking he did nothing his friends didn't do, he listens respectfully while his father lectures him. Fanny's defiance, however, is much more inplausible than his because it denies the core of the character, as Fanny, in the novel, embodies all the Victorian virtues. She even starts to be inclined to accept Mr. Crawford's proposal because she thinks Edmond is in love with Miss Crawford, thus inaccessible to her, and this would be a means of pleasing her uncle, even if not pleasing her so much. And as long as Mr. Crawford starts to show the proper manners, acting kindly and gently towards her and her family, her resistance starts to break because what was at the core of Fanny's refusal was not her desire, but her sense of propriety.

However, there is no need to turn Fanny Price into a defiant tomboy to make her more interesting. A careful reading of the novel can reveal other ways of doing the same. For instance, is it true that Fanny "only endures"? Wouldn't that turn her in a younger version of Lady Bertram, whose indolence is exactly what prevented her from embodying the Victorian ideal of womanhood? Fanny, indeed, does a lot of things. Lady Bertram says she cannot do without Fanny – she carries the tray and makes the tea, she does the difficult parts of her aunt's work, talks with her when she is awake, she takes the roses in the garden and is sent on errands. Fanny, in spite of her refusal to act, is very useful to everybody in the acting party, sewing, reading, acting as a prompter. But her actions are not confined to being useful to others; she also has her own pleasures, such as reading, writing letters to William, talking with Edmond, riding horses. It is significant that Edmond is linked to almost all her pleasures: he is the one who gives her paper to write to William, he gives her a horse, he guides her reading and discusses

the books with her. This is an important matter. Literature, in *Mansfield Park*, is presented not only as a means of entertainment, but also as a means of perfecting people morally. This is the key question: Fanny takes pleasure in the pursuit of moral perfection.

So it is not true that she only endures. Enduring, as a means of moral perfection, is part of her quest. Nevertheless, she can speak out when there are no crucial matters at stake. Let us consider two scenes in the novel: when Sir Thomas goes to her room and finds no fire in the fireplace, he says Lady Bertram must not be aware of that, which is a figure of speech: if she is aware, she is wrong. The absence of a fire is due to orders from Mrs. Norris, and Fanny could not leave her favorite aunt in a difficult position when it was not her fault. So she tells her uncle the truth. On the other hand, in a much more crucial scene, when Sir Thomas tells her about Mr. Crawford's proposal and she refuses, apparently because of a whim, she listens in awe when he says she is wrong and ungrateful, and even thinks what would be of her if Sir Thomas thought so poorly of her but, in spite of this, she does not reveal to him the facts that lead her to the refusal, because telling him the absolute lack of propriety of his behavior toward Maria and Julia (and their correspondence to it) would be disastrous. So, like the martyrs of the early Christian church, she takes the consequence of her beliefs without betraying others. She actively chooses what to do, and chooses what would hurt others least, although it would hurt her all the more.

As a *Bildungsroman*, *Mansfield Park* is concerned with the establishing of an identity – here, the identity of middle class women during the Victorian Age (the novel was first published in 1814). This ideal is well expressed in Chapter 30, when Mr. Crawford explains to his sister why he decided to propose marriage to Fanny:

> As soon as her [Mary Crawford's] eagerness could rest in silence, he was happy to tell as she could to listen … though he had in fact nothing to relate but his own sensations, nothing to dwell on but Fanny's charms. – Fanny's beauty of face and figure, Fanny's graces of manner and goodness of heart were the exhaustless theme. The gentleness, modesty and sweetness of her character were warmly expatiated on, the sweetness which makes so essential a part of every woman's worth in the judgment of man that though he sometimes loves where it is not, he can never believe it absent. Her temper he had good reason to depend on and to praise. He had often seen it tried. Was there one of the family … who had not in some way or other continually exercised her patience and forbearance? Her affections were evidently strong. … Then, her understanding was beyond every suspicion, quick and clear; and her manners were the mirror of her own modest and elegant mind. … Henry Crawford had too much sense not to feel the worth of good principles in a wife … when he talked of her having

> such a steadiness and regularity of conduct, such a high notion of honor, and such an observance of decorum as might warrant any man in the fullest dependence of her faith and integrity, he expressed what was inspired by the knowledge of her being well principled and religious. (p. 297-298)

Moreover as a female *Bildungsroman*, the novel follows the process of formation of a young female character. She undergoes a formal education, an informal education represented by the books Edmond gives her to read and then discusses with her, makes a trip from the countryside property of Mansfield Park to the city of Portsmouth and has two love affairs, one undesired, which finishes when her supposed lover, Mr. Crawford, runs away with her married cousin, Maria, and the other, desired, leads her to marriage with Edmund, her beloved cousin. As in many domestic *Bildungsroman*, she finds a tutor who is, at the same time, the man she finally marries. This is, of course, part of her attractiveness in Edmund eyes: there are no diverging points of view between them, since he educated her. During the novel, Fanny manages to avoid an undesired marriage, marries the man she loves, protecting her beloved ones, and performs all these tasks without flouting the Victorian ideal of womanhood, which, as is made apparent in the quotation above, is no trifle. It is no small achievement. So, why did the movie try to correct a "mistake" by making out of Fanny a quite different character?

We can easily jump to the conclusion that novels written by women writers are in no position to be respected, since, for instance, E. M. Forster's books were so well translated into good movies. But this would be a simplistic conclusion because books such as *Sense and Sensibility*, or *Emma*, by the same Jane Austen, and beloved by the public, as well as *Little Women*, by Louisa May Alcott, and we could quote many others, have been respectfully translated into movies. Where does the frailty of *Mansfield Park* reside, then?

Most probably, it resides in the fact that this particular novel was ill received by the literary academy, as well as by the reading public. So it didn't have the symbolic capital that would guard it against less respectful translations into a movie. As this is not such an acclaimed novel, transformations of the core of main characters, in the plot itself, inclusions of scenes and so forth are considered admissible. If the idea was to include in this movie lines from Austen diaries and her other novels, it could have been done without changing the nature of the characters and without including extra (and extra hot) scenes. Rendering *Mansfield Park* into a movie should not turn the novel into something that is not there – or, if this were the idea, as so frequently happens to Shakespeare plays, with different degrees of success, it should be indicated that what was aimed at was a "free translation". As stated, changing Fanny may even be therapeutic, but it is not literature.

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