The uses of language in the portrayal of character in Mansfield Park

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THE USES OF LANGUAGE IN THE PORTRAYAL OF
CHARACTER IN MANSFIELD PARK.

By

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USE OF THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

My study of characterisation in Mansfield Park seeks to advance the field and scope of current literary criticism. Recent developments in narrative criticism have included other fields of study in order to elucidate the assertions and observations proposed by literary studies. The findings of traditional literary criticism will be validated and extended in my examination of Mansfield Park, through the application of linguistic theories. My investigation of characterisation intends to assert the significance of linguistic theories in the study of literature.

Jane Austen's works have been the focus of critical analysis since the time of their publication. Of all her novels, Mansfield Park gives rise to the greatest diversity of critical opinion. The reactions to Mansfield Park are as varied among her contemporary readers as among modern audiences. B.C. Southam details early opinions of Mansfield Park, as collated by Austen from family, correspondence and hearsay. These responses establish the tradition of critical commentary on the novel that remains current today. The public perception of Mansfield Park is divided into two distinct areas: on one side stand those who herald it as Austen's finest work, while on the other side, are those who class it as uncharacteristic and unworthy of the accolades bestowed upon Pride and Prejudice and Emma.

Dislike of Mansfield Park is usually founded in the character of Fanny Price. Fanny is not the physically active, lively or verbose heroine like Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse. Nonetheless, Fanny's influence upon the character's is profound. The timid "creepmouse" develops into an empowered member of society. Yet critics reject Fanny as a morally righteous and priggish character. Kingsley Amis despaired at Austen's hero and heroine, stating that "to invite Mr
and Mrs Edmund Bertram round for the evening, would not be lightly undertaken" (1963:141). Austen's characterisation of the Crawford siblings liven the debate. The appearance, confidence and wit of Mary and Henry Crawford position them as more physically appealing than Fanny and Edmund. Physical appearance, however, is examined and questioned within the narrative as an indication of moral failings. G.B. Stern fails to realise the moral threat posed by the selfish and contriving Crawfords. She believes that Fanny should have "been allowed to marry Henry Crawford, and Edmund, Mary Crawford, instead of the cousins tamely pairing off together, with the Crawfords left desolate" (1950: 15). Stern is expecting the passion and vitality of a Elizabeth-Darcy marriage, in a novel where liveliness and out-spoken characters are morally deficient. Unlike Austen's other vivacious heroes and heroines, the Crawfords never realise the selfishness and impropriety of their actions; they remain fixed within their roles, until acted upon by societal forces. Avrom Fleishman states that Fanny and Edmund's "capacity to change becomes their source of harmony" (1967:55).

Mary Lascelles examines Mansfield Park as offering more than a clash of personalities. She explores Austen's structuring of the text, in particular her use of complex character relations and different rhythms within the narrative. Lascelles believes Mansfield Park has "deeper, more elusive implications" (1939:155) than any other Austen novel. The techniques employed in Austen's earlier works have been enhanced, with the:

sympathies and apathies ... adroitly complicated by misunderstandings: but such misunderstanding of the character and conduct of other people is simple compared with the Bertrams' and Crawfords' misunderstanding of the nature of their relationships, one to each other and each to himself (1939:164).
Lionel Trilling offers a widely acclaimed and influential reading of *Mansfield Park*. Trilling believes that *Mansfield Park* "scandalises the modern assumptions about social relations, about virtue, about religion, sex, and art" (1955:210). Trilling’s essay proved to be a significant addition to the critical debate concerning *Mansfield Park*; his efforts contributed to the re-reading of the novel as a complex and meaningful text. Trilling’s essay has become the standard secondary reference source for students of *Mansfield Park*. It is surprising, therefore, that recent critics, such as Paul Pickrel, have identified the discrepancies in Trilling’s argument. Of particular interest is Trilling’s assertion that the novel’s "praise is not for social freedom but for social stasis" (1955:211). Recent linguistic theories identify Austen’s notion of social and moral transformation and development. Her irony is evident in the capacity of the physically weak Fanny to influence and motivate change within the novel’s social representative, Sir Thomas.

Criticism has begun to move away from the solely literary analysis to incorporate linguistic theories. Some of the first linguistic approaches to *Mansfield Park* have analysed Austen’s lexical choice, tracing her application of certain words throughout the narrative. Alistair Duckworth explored Austen’s use of "improvements" in the portrayal of characters and social settings. Although his discussion does not include Portsmouth, it provides a useful insight into the significance of location and social values. My thesis will explore the importance of *Mansfield Park*’s three locations in the formulation of character. Alan McKenzie examines the derivations of "consequence" in its definition of "holdings of land ... development through marriage, the accelerated development of it in the various professions, and ... its strictly psychological component" (1985:283). Norman
Page identifies seventy or eighty references to "comfort", asserting that it is applied "where moral issues and moral values become most emphatic" (1972:39). Page affirms the relevance of such a limited analytical focus, as he believes that "recurring forms ... afford an insight into the dominant attitudes and values of the novel" (1972:39). David Lodge proposes that "manners" and "duty" offer a significant reading of *Mansfield Park*. These qualities are essential:

in order to remain faithful to a code of conduct in which social and moral values are so delicately balanced, in order to preserve one's integrity in the face of ambiguous and sometimes conflicting notions of what is right (1966:104).

The identification and interpretation of recurring words provide a valid beginning for a linguistic analysis. The lexical patterns underlying the literary narrative correspond to the structure and patterns of linguistic theories.

The application of linguistic theories to narrative works is a natural transition in the development of literary criticism. The importance of linguistic theories to the analysis of narrative fiction has gained merit in the last decade. C. Knatchbull Bevan's analysis of role-play in *Mansfield Park* examines the syntactic and semantic structures of Mary Crawford's dialogue. By applying Halliday's theory of verbal processes Bevan concludes that Mary "uses language ... to manipulate truth and to falsify it, not, after the fashion of Fanny and Edmund, in order to discover it" (1987:599). Bevan's assertion, though important in defining Mary's character, does not comprehend the extent to which Halliday's theory portrays character in *Mansfield Park*. This thesis will apply Halliday's theories in order to explore Austen's process of characterisation.

M.A.K. Halliday's functional approach to language is relevant in the study of literary texts. Halliday defines his functional language theory as a method of
"trying to find out what are the purposes that language serves for us, and how are we able to achieve these purposes through speaking and listening, reading and writing" (1973:7). My thesis will demonstrate that Jane Austen confronted the same task in writing Mansfield Park. Austen’s structuring of her narratorial and characterological voices provides the arena for the expression of comments about the novel’s thematic issues. Similarly, the language provides the vehicle for communicating meaning to the reader.

Halliday’s theories provide an accessible approach to the world of linguistics. Although formal linguistic diagrams identify the relations between sentence components, the abstract and complex nature of the study is of little relevance or meaning to students of literary works. Halliday asserts that within the sentence:

meanings are woven together in a very dense fabric in such a way that, to understand them, we do not look separately at its different parts; rather, we look at the whole thing simultaneously from a number of different angles, each perspective contributing toward the total interpretation (1985:23).

The different perspectives offered by Halliday focus on the grammatical, syntactical, semantic and semiotic levels of language. The thesis will draw on Halliday’s theories to show that the different areas of the narrative structure are significant in contributing to the portrayal of character. Austen is able to draw upon these levels of language to produce a multi-dimensional, complex and coherent text. By tracing the narrative use of particular linguistic components, I intend to illustrate how the reader gains access to information about the characters not readily or explicitly available in the narrative.

Language in Mansfield Park plays an important role in the lives of the characters. Language is examined within the fictional world as an indication of the
moral and social structures of the individual characters. Not only does language convey meaning, but it becomes a criterion for assessing the characters' successful operation within society. Austen's characters are aware of the role language plays in their community; their application of the language system places them within the social structure. The Crawford siblings have an extensive knowledge of linguistic conventions and are aware of language's potential to manipulate and exploit other characters. The threat to Mansfield is directed through the contriving and well-structured utterances of the Crawfords. By contrast, Fanny Price must find her place within society by learning to vocalise her thoughts and beliefs.

My field of inquiry calls into practice another branch of linguistic theory. J.L. Austin's speech act theory focuses on the structure and meaning of the utterance. Austin's notion of the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts defines the different functions operating simultaneously within the utterance. J.R. Searle states that "the performance of any speech act involves at least the observance or exploitation of some linguistic conventions" (1971:25). Searle and M.L. Pratt have adopted Austin's initial framework in their exploration of speech acts. Searle identified the different categories of illocutionary acts: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives. Pratt extends the theory even further by suggesting a connection between speech act theory and literary texts. Speech act theory facilitates the exploration of character utterances. Of particular interest in Mansfield Park, for this thesis, are the conditions and rules which govern the delivery of the utterance. According to speech act theory, every utterance must comply with sincerity and appropriate conditions. A character's violation of these conventions is a sign of their moral
Many literary critics are turning to linguistic theories to elucidate and qualify their arguments. N.F. Blake advocates the potential of a linguistic approach to literature. He states that the "different facets of stylistic analysis yield some profit ... [and] offer unexpected insights through their application" (1990:144).

The contention surrounding *Mansfield Park* promotes it as one of Austen's most intriguing and interesting. *Mansfield Park* is unique in its juxtaposition of a passive heroine operating within a lively and morally corrupt world. The complex relationships between the characters offer the reader a variety of social and moral perspectives. Added to its appeal is its temporal framework. Austen presents her heroine as a child, and the reader witnesses her development and education in the Bertram household.

The significance of this thesis is that it combines linguistic and literary analyses. Although my exploration of Austen's narrative structure will not resolve the debate surrounding *Mansfield Park*'s characters, it will seek to explore and explain the motivating principles which govern their behaviour, thoughts and utterances. My analysis of the spoken word, education and location in *Mansfield Park*, aims to provide an glance into the complexities of Austen's narrative structure, as well as to reveal the extensive significance of language in defining, evaluating and judging the characters' moral and social qualities.
THE POWER OF THE SPOKEN WORD

(i) The Narrator

Any analysis of the spoken word in Mansfield Park must begin with the narrator. The narrator provides the reader with the opportunity to engage with the characters and narrative events. L.M. York believes that Mansfield Park's narrator is "multi-faceted ... sometimes openly critical, sometimes coyly suggestive or ironic, but always contriving to perfect the art which conceals art - implicit commentary" (1987:161). A study of Austen's implicit commentary provides a useful insight into the role of the narrator. The distance and omniscience of the narrator enable her to encroach unobtrusively upon the narrative events in order to comment or pass judgement. The subtle manipulation of the narrative can be identified in the lexical and grammatical structure.

N.F. Blake states that "the noun group is one of the most important building blocks available to the writer" (1990:35). Austen chooses to write most of her narrative in nominal syntax. The grammatical structure of the nominal phrase creates the appearance of fact and narratorial absence, as well as providing a tool for characterisation. Fowler describes nominalisation as a device which "reduces a whole clause to its verb, and turns that into a noun" (1981:30). Fanny Price's narrative is saturated with nominal phrases which are primarily concerned with her observations and judgements. For example, Edmund's neglect prompts her to lean:

on the sofa, to which she had retreated that she might not be seen, the pain of her mind had been much beyond that in her head; and the sudden change which Edmund's kindness had then occasioned, made her hardly know how to support herself (MP:104).

The absence of verbs directs attention toward the noun as the centre for structure
and meaning within the phrase. M.A.K. Halliday asserts that the grammatical structure of the nominal phrase "adds a semantic component of exclusiveness" (1982:70). That is, the nouns become the dominant feature of the phrase and, untainted by the specifying qualities of the verb, appear as facts.

The validity of the nominal phrase is enhanced by the frequency of definite, indefinite and demonstrative articles. The definite article, ‘the’, functions as a homophoric deictic, directing the reader’s attention to a shared social and cultural knowledge. Durey states that homophoric deictics involve a "framework of reference" with which the interlocutor/reader is familiar, either through cultural continuity or through links established in the fictional world" (1987:247). The homophoric references within this passage are ‘the pain of her mind’ and ‘the sudden change’. Even though these phrases exist in the linguistic system outside the text, they are not free from narratorial modality, for it is the narrator who draws upon these universal truths, in order to highlight the validity of Fanny’s emotions. By engaging directly with the reader, the narrator is encouraging a sympathetic response toward Fanny.

Nominal syntax conveys Fanny’s thoughts in almost every situation, implying that her judgement is well-formed and credible. During the rehearsals of Lover’s Vows, Fanny observes the behaviour of all the characters:

She knew that Mr Yates was in general thought to rant dreadfully, that Mr Yates was disappointed in Henry Crawford. That Tom Bertram spoke so quick he would be unintelligible, that Mrs Grant spoilt everything by laughing, that Edmund was behind-hand with his part, and that it was a misery to have anything to do with Mr Rushworth, who was wanting a prompter through every speech (MP:184).

Fanny’s observations are related through a series of noun clauses. Within the noun clause, the noun assumes a prominent grammatical and semantic
function. In the above example, Mr Yates, Tom Bertram, Mrs Grant, Edmund and Mr Rushworth are the subjects of the noun clauses. Halliday asserts that "it is difficult to find in the grammatical tradition a definitive account of what the role of the subject means" (1982:53). The nouns occupy the thematic position within each clause. Austen's noun clauses contain multi-functional subjects, which seek to define "that which is the concern of the message ... that on which rests the truth of the argument ... [and] the doer of the action" (ibid:53). Again, the demonstrative articles serve to cast the phrases as facts. The presence of the narrator is felt in the italicised 'she', but this intrusion does not undermine the power of Fanny's observations. Rather it separates Fanny from the other characters, emphasising that she is the only one who can recognise the disruption and problems caused by the play.

The narrator appears to be absent from the nominal clause, therefore suggesting a lack of overt modality. Fowler claims that "nominalisation ... makes it extremely difficult to infer the persons associated with the underlying verb .... nominalisation can depersonalise, depopulate" (1981:31-32). Such passages are presented as containing information that is to be accepted as an insight into a character's inner self. The narrator's absence avoids drawing attention to the phrase as an overt narratorial comment or judgement, therefore limiting reader analysis and scrutiny. Fanny's judgement and observations in all areas of life are presented through nominal syntax, as a credible and reliable source of information.

The narrator's description of Edmund is limited to situations which expose the corruption of his moral principles. Edmund's relationship with Fanny following her introduction into the Bertram house was as comforter and mentor.
and "his intentions were ... of the highest importance in assisting the improvement of her mind and extending its pleasures" (MP:57). Edmund’s insights and judgements at this stage of the narrative indicate his "strong good sense and uprightness of mind" (MP:56). The narrator is keen to present Fanny and Edmund’s relationship as desirable and natural. Their interactions are often conveyed in nominal syntax. Fanny’s affections for Edmund provide her with:

the pleasure of seeing him continue at the window with her, in spite of the expected glee; and of having his eyes soon turned like her’s towards the scene without, where all that was solemn and soothing, and lovely, appeared in the brilliancy of an unclouded night, and the contrast of the deep shade of the woods (MP:139).

The abundance of nominal phrases and homophoric deictics, in this excerpt, implies that Fanny and Edmund have an exclusive, special relationship. The references to nature’s harmony invite a comparison with the cousins’ ease and affinity. However, Edmund is easily swayed by the animation and liveliness of Mary Crawford. As his interest escalates, the narrator begins to adopt other methods for reporting his discourse. Edmund’s infatuation with Mary clouds his perceptions. His adamant opposition to the play is diffused by the news that Mary is an eager participant and he is

obliged to acknowledge that the charm of acting might well carry fascination to the mind of genius; and with the ingenuity of love, to dwell more on the obliging, accommodating purport of the message than on anything else (MP:154).

Edmund’s corruption is suggested on the syntactic level. As his nominal phrases decrease, adverbial phrases increase. For example, Edmund claims that he was "driven to ... [participation] by the force of selfish inclinations only" (MP:179). The nominal phrase is immediately followed by an adverb. The adverb "only" is ambiguous, thus deflating the absoluteness of the phrase. Halliday asserts that
"modal adjuncts are those which express the speaker’s judgement regarding the relevance of the message" (1982:80). Adverbs are often accompanied by ironic overtones. The ironic strength of the adverb lies in the fact that "the point of view of the manner, emphasis or amplification may be less clear so that the reader can select from among various possibilities" (Blake 1990:58). The narrator sees the adverb as important in the overall meaning of the phrase. The adverb draws the reader's attention to the utterance and invites a judgement of Edmund’s intentions. The knowledge that Mary is to act opposite Edmund in the play must be seen as a factor in his submission. Edmund’s observations can no longer be considered as reliable, as he is allowing his personal feelings to interfere with his moral beliefs.

Edmund’s moral blindness reaches its peak when he tries to detect Fanny’s motives for refusing Henry’s suit. Deceived by Henry’s linguistic abilities, he considers the match suitable, and claims to be "perfectly acquainted with all that Fanny could tell" (MP:352). Again, the adverb is open to interpretation. Edmund has, in fact, gained little knowledge of Fanny’s sentiments. Edmund, who was initially presented as representing all that is good, kind and righteous, has fallen prey to the manipulative powers of the Crawford siblings. Mary and Henry Crawford are seen as a real threat to the Mansfield household, as they are capable of corrupting strongly principled characters.

Halliday’s theories of functional grammar provide a broader field for characterisation within the sentence and the phrase. Blake states that "verbs are essential to clauses and are much more closely related to the form and function of a clause than are nouns" (1990:39). Verbal processes are concerned with the clause in "its experiential function, its role as a means of representing patterns of
experience" (Halliday 1982:156).

All verbs can be categorised as belonging to three groups: material, mental and relational. Material processes are verbs which involve some sort of action, mental processes are associated with verbs of thinking, feeling and sensing, while relational processes are concerned with being or having. These categories describe the way in which clausal action occurs. Verbal processes are an important aspect of language’s semantic function. As Halliday states, the verb contained within the clause "enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality" (ibid:156). Within a single sentence or clause, the verbal processes define a certain event. Within a literary text, verbal processes can be analysed as a means for enhancing characterisation. The development of character through verbal processes is usually achieved by the recurrent use of a particular verbal group. Austen continually uses mental and material verbs to define her four principal characters. Yet, mental and material processes define more than character action, and imply moral depth and complexity or superficiality.

Fanny Price is portrayed almost entirely by mental processes. These processes are of particular importance in the creation of her character. Her reluctance to speak directs the reader's attention toward the narrative to seek for information. The range of Fanny's emotions and thoughts provides an adequate base for defining her character. Mental processes describe Fanny's skills of observation. For example, the journey to Sotherton sees Fanny "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" (MP:122).
Trilling asserts that the most troubling aspect of Mansfield Park "is its preference for rest over motion" (1955:210-211). Although it is true that Fanny lacks physical exuberance, she is far from a motionless heroine. The narrator portrays Fanny in a variety of emotional states. Although Fanny classes herself as "judge and critic" (MP:189), the narrator's choice of mental process clauses spans the emotional spectrum. Even within the same passage, Fanny is shown to experience a range of senses. For instance, Henry's proposal emotionally bombards her and "she was feeling, thinking, trembling, about everything; - agitated, happy, miserable, infinitely obliged, absolutely angry" (MP:305). The contrasting emotional states reveal Fanny's depth of character. Although physically passive, Fanny is mentally energetic. Her conscience is never at rest, casting her as the most active member of the Mansfield characters. Not only is she observing and evaluating the present, but she is also continually revising and analysing past events, as well as scrutinising her own thoughts and actions. This continuous mental process exposes her insecurities, jealousies, hopes and fears. Physical appearance belies mental and moral capacity.

For the most part, Fanny's mental struggle remains hidden beneath her solemn exterior, but at times of emotional pressure, her thoughts are seen to be manifested physically. The amateur theatricals provide Fanny with "uncomfortable, anxious, apprehensive feelings" (MP:186). Her main concern is that the play is "totally improper for home representation" (MP:161). Edmund's participation, however, inflates her concerns to such an extent that she physically acts out her mental agitation. Fanny:

walked down [to the East room] to try its influence on an agitated, doubting spirit - to see if by looking at Edmund's profile she could catch
any of his counsel, or by giving air to her geraniums she might inhale a 

breeze of mental strength herself ... as she walked around the room her 
doubts were increasing (MP:174).  

The narrator emphasises Fanny’s physical inactivity and weakness, therefore any 
reference to movement is an important indication of character development. 

Fanny’s departure for Portsmouth strips her of all the qualities which 
define her character. While saying good-bye to Edmund, she “could neither speak, 
nor look, nor think” (MP:368). This signals a peripeteia in Fanny’s growth, for at 
Portsmouth she learns to act and take responsibility for herself and for others. The 
inactivity of her Portsmouth family forces her out of her own passivity to take on 
an active role in the organisation and guidance of both her adopted and biological 
families. Fanny’s own lack of physical assertion refines her perception of the 
others’ restlessness. Moral status seems to manifest itself in physical actions.  

Established in moral opposition to Fanny, the Crawford siblings have all 
the qualities she lacks. Mary and Henry are seen as independent and capable 
beings who manipulate others in order to satisfy their desires. Their confidence 
and liveliness highlight Fanny’s timidity and social uneasiness. The narrator 
enhances the contrast by describing the Crawfords in material processes. Although 
the Crawford siblings are gifted and fluent language speakers, the narrator chooses 
to describe them through a restricted verbal lexis. The reduced vocabulary 
indicates a deficiency in their characters, in that their façade of confidence and 
experience limits them to certain types of social interaction.  

Mary Crawford is often described in material verbs which relate to her 
‘liveliness’. She speaks with "renewed animation" and a visit from Fanny sees her 
"all alive again directly, and among the most active in being useful" (MP:220). 

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Material verbal processes cast Mary as physically strong, active and independent. Yet she lacks Fanny's sincerity, for any discussion of a theoretical or intellectual nature leaves her "untouched and inattentive" (MP:222).

Henry is also seen to possess physical confidence. His lexical register is limited to aggressive and arrogant verbal phrases. Even his emotional states are presented through material verbs of action. His love for Fanny operates "on an active, sanguine spirit" (MP:325) and his attempts to court her are described as 'attacks'. The narrator's focus on Mary and Henry's physical actions exposes their contrived appearance. Mary and Henry Crawford cultivate their external appearances at the expense of moral development. For example, Henry's communicative skills include physical actions. In the game of Speculation, Henry "was in high spirits, doing everything with happy ease, and pre-eminent in all lively turns, quick resources, and playful impudence that could do honour to the game" (MP:249). Yet he lacks the emotional structure to win Fanny's affections.

The limited range of verbal processes undermines the confident and witty speech of the brother and sister. By the end of the novel, Mary and Henry have failed to learn by their mistakes, whereas Fanny has been guided by her convictions.

The narrator's commentary constructs and highlights different characterological attributes. This unobtrusive structuring of the narrative manipulates the reader's sympathies or dislikes of the characters. The assertions and implications about the characters proposed by the narrator find expression and confirmation within the other major section of the narrative: the characters' speech.
(ii) The Principal Characters

The power of the narratorial point of view lies in the structuring and reporting of the narrative events. As evidenced, the control over the narrative is extended to include an indirect control over the reader's perceptions. The characters' direct speech in *Mansfield Park* becomes a gauge for assessing the individual's social and moral worth.

The four principal characters are positioned according to their linguistic competence. Language is transformed from its role as a communicative and expressive medium to a criterion for assessing morality and sincerity. In this role, language has the ability to empower or enslave its participants. The influence of language is expressed in *Mansfield Park* through the characters' private and public interactions. The hesitations, confusions and desires of Fanny, Edmund, Henry and Mary provide numerous occasions for private and public encounters. It is important to identify the distinguishing characteristics of *Mansfield Park*'s private and public life. Public interaction is characterised by activities which occur within a social group. These activities could be among family members or acquaintances and the emphasis is on entertainment and social interaction, rather than on intimate encounters. Private interaction, on the other hand, seems to be represented in two ways: by conversations between two or three characters or by the private thoughts of an individual. The characters' existence within society is defined by public and private interactions. Every aspect of life is governed by social and behavioural standards. The different types of interaction require specific uses of language. Three distinct language systems can be identified in *Mansfield Park*, all of which operate according to different rules of content and manner of delivery. Speech
modes provide a useful guide for identifying these language systems.

Public interactions are conveyed entirely in direct discourse. Direct discourse appears as direct character quotes, tagged by the markers "he said", "she said". Public speech is governed by the expectations of society. As Graham Hough asserts, all of Jane Austen's "characters are such as could be met (though not necessarily approved) in the drawing room of a gentleman's house" (1970:215). Fanny's interactions within the public sphere are desirable for a young lady in the community. Her behaviour towards Henry Crawford prompts Sir Thomas's admiring observation:

There was no want of respect in the young man's address; and Fanny's reception of it was so proper and modest, so calm and uninviting, that he had nothing to censure in her. She said little, assented only here and there, and betrayed no inclination either of appropriating any part of the compliment to herself or of strengthening his views (MF:254).

Fanny sets the standards by which all other characters are compared.

Private exchanges utilise both direct discourse and letter writing. The private conversations between Fanny and Edmund centre around their observations of the other characters. Concerns about the proposed theatricals are vented in these discussions:

They have chosen almost as bad a play as they could; and now, to complete the business, are going to ask the help of a young man very, lightly known to any of us. This is the end of all the privacy and propriety which was talked about first (MF:175).

Such personal emotions are considered by society as inappropriate for public display. Private exchanges are extremely important in portraying Fanny's beliefs; only when she is with Edmund does she venture to comment upon the actions of her social superiors. Suspicions about a character's moral worth remain unvocalised.
Free indirect discourse enables these emotions to be expressed. Louise Flavin asserts that free indirect discourse contributes to a "greater psychological depth of character" (1987:137). Free indirect discourse's lack of graphological markers prevents it from being directly attributed to a character and suggests narratorial intrusion. However, the syntax indicates a departure from the narratorial utterance and the passage is found to be saturated with characterological modality. For example, Edmund's decision to take part in the play causes Fanny so much anxiety that:

she could think of nothing else. To be acting! After all his objections - objections so just and so public! After all that she had heard him say, and seen him look, and known him to be feeling. Could it be possible? Edmund so inconsistent. Was he not deceiving himself? Was he not wrong? Alas! it was all Miss Crawford's doing (MP:177).

Fanny's private thoughts and emotions are especially important in defining her character. Her opinions and accusations about Edmund's lack of insight and Mary's manipulative behaviour have no other vehicle than in free indirect discourse. Such strong personal suspicions, compounded by her social position, are deemed unsuitable for discussion with any other individual.

Fanny, above all Mansfield Park's characters, is best able to define the invisible barriers between the three linguistic systems. Fanny's affections for her cousin are well hidden in the narrative. Her love for Edmund is only briefly mentioned and any expansion of these feelings is delayed until the final chapter. It is the narrator who informs the reader that "had not her affection been engaged elsewhere" (MP:241), Henry may have succeeded in winning her hand. By contrast, Mary Crawford's feelings for Edmund are openly expressed. Confident of marrying Edmund, Mary receives Henry's plans to settle his bride in
Northamptonshire with pleasure as then "we shall all be together" (MP:298). Within the society of Mansfield Park, the vocalisation of such strong personal emotions is classed as unacceptable.

The ability to distinguish between the different linguistic systems affects a character’s position not only in society but also in the reader’s response. Jane Austen is careful to present comparisons within the narrative, so that the reader "is not in fact comparing the speech of the characters to a standard outside of the work, but to a standard set or implied within the work itself" (Hough 1970:215).

For example, jealousy is a recurring issue within Mansfield Park, and provides a basis for revealing different character types. The character’s ability to cope with such a delicate subject reflects their social competence and moral strength. Edmund’s infatuation with Mary Crawford greatly distresses Fanny and sees her "full of jealousy and agitation" (MP:180). Despite this, Fanny never considers verbalising her concerns or anxieties. Rather she internalises her concerns, promoting self examination. Fanny is aware that her passivity classes her as "sad and insignificant" and she temporarily covets Mary’s attractiveness, gaiety and wit. What she does not realise is that external vitality can conceal a moral weakness. Fanny’s ability to control her emotions suggests her capacity to withstand the emotional onslaught of Henry’s proposal. By contrast, Mary Crawford’s ability to control and manipulate language proves of little assistance in the need to suppress her emotions. Mary’s jealousy of the Miss Owens propels her to question Fanny about Edmund’s affections:

Suppose you were to have one of the Miss Owens settled at Thornton Lacey; how should you like it? Stranger things have happened. I dare say they are trying for it. And they are quite in the right, for it would be a very pretty establishment for them. I do not at all wonder or blame them. -
It is every body’s duty to do as well for themselves as they can. ... He is their lawful property, he fairly belongs to them (MP:293).

Although she tries to "appear gay and unconcerned", the impersonal references to "everybody's duty" are undercut by the short phrases which expose her 'agitation'. Her powers of speech are not so convincing when they involve deep personal affections. Mary's comments are deemed unsuitable for discussion with Fanny, for, although Edmund has expressed interest, there has been no discussion or preparation for an engagement. Jealousy is at the centre of the novel's most unrestrained display of private emotions. The emotional struggles of the Bertram sisters are expressed openly. Henry's insistent demands that Maria Bertram play opposite him in the play produce a violent outburst from Julia:

"I am not to be Agatha, and I am sure I will do nothing else; and as to Amelia, it is of all parts in the world that is most disgusting to me. I quite detest her. An odious, little, pert, unnatural, impudent girl. I have always protested against comedy, and this is comedy in its worst form." And so saying, she walked hastily out of the room (MP:160).

The Bertram sisters are the most socially incompetent members of the party. Julia and Maria do not possess the moral and linguistic skills required to restrain their actions or speech, and thus find themselves trapped in unsuitable circumstances.

Acceptable subject matter and content for the three systems are best explained in the terminology of speech act theory. The focus of the study is on the process of communication. Searle states that speech act theory begins with "an assumption that the minimal unit of human communication is not a sentence ... but the performance of certain kinds of acts" (1980:vii). Since Austin's classification of the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, theorists have refined the study and identified the different types of acts. However, regardless of the function of the act, every utterance is dependent upon a system of conditions. In
the process of speaking:

it is always necessary that the circumstances in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways, appropriate; and it is commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or the other person should also perform certain other acts (Austin 1962:8).

These conditions are applicable to Mansfield Park's linguistic systems. When participating in the public and private arenas, the individual's utterance must be guided by the appropriate "set of conditions that are necessary for the successful and felicitous performance of the act" (Searle 1979:44). Within the non-fictional world of the reader, a rejection or ignorance of the conditions results in illogical and incomprehensible utterances, but, within the fictional world, the consequences are of dire importance. For example, Mary Crawford's rejection of the appropriateness conditions indirectly leads to her downfall and loss of power.

The liveliness and vitality which class Mary as a socially attractive person are the products of her confident and witty communicative skills, but this same happy animation exposes her shallow character. Mary Crawford's problems are seen to stem from her linguistic abilities. Laura Mooneyham confirms the notion by asserting that "Austen always holds glib and easy language suspect" (1988:75). The ease with which Mary converses with other characters reveals her disdain for the rules of social interaction. This is most obvious in her opinions of the clergy and attitudes toward her uncle. During the tour of the chapel at Sotherton, Mary remarks that "every generation has its improvements" (MP:115) in the discontinuation of religious services. Her error in uttering such a flippant remark lies not in a judgement of Edmund’s pending ordination, as she has no way of knowing his profession, but in her lack of respect for the chapel as a symbol of religion's spiritual and moral authority. Her spiritual shallowness is confirmed
when she learns of Edmund’s career, claiming “if I had known this before, I would have spoken of the cloth with more respect” (MP:117). Her apology is prompted by the possibility of offending and alienating Edmund, instead of by a genuine regret at her attack on the Church’s reverence. The circumstances surrounding her utterance are inappropriate as they are uttered within the walls of the chapel. Mary shows a similar lack of decorum when discussing her uncle. Much like Fanny, Mary and Henry Crawford were raised by an uncle. Whereas Fanny is indebted to her uncle’s generosity, Mary sees nothing disrespectful or inappropriate in discussing all the “dirt and confusion” (MP:88) of her uncle’s activities. Mary has fallen victim to Norman Page’s notion of “acceptable verbal behaviour”, which may “reveal lack of taste or discretion, a brash modishness, or a more serious indifference to right conduct and sound principles” (1972:150). Mary has broken one of the rules of public conversation, which relates to the role of the listener. Speech act theories state that information must be related in response to the listener’s desire for such knowledge. Edmund and Fanny are the unwilling recipients of Mary’s gossip, which they consider as indiscreet and unnecessary. Edmund, in particular, was “sorry to hear Miss Crawford, whom he was much disposed to admire, speak so freely of her uncle. It did not suit his sense of propriety” (MP:88). Information relating to the private activities of the family is not for public discussion.

Henry Crawford is knowledgeable in all the processes of communication. Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism states that communication relies upon the speaker’s:

consciousness of the actual or potential response of an interlocutor, orientation towards a second act of speech ... [and that] all language usage shapes itself toward an image of the other to whom it is addressed (in Fowler 1981:143).

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Thus, in every utterance there is an implied interaction between speaker and listener. Henry's utterances anticipate and entice a response from either the Bertram sisters or Fanny. The Bertram sisters prove to be willing participants, vying for the position as sole recipient of his utterances. Fanny only responds when social etiquette demands her participation. Aware of Fanny's prejudices, Henry seeks to converse with her by structuring his utterance "without any touch of that spirit of banter or air of levity" and introduces topics with "sentiment and feeling and seriousness on serious subjects" (MP:337). Previous attempts of direct interaction failed to elicit a detailed response, so Henry addresses his conversations to Edmund in the belief that Fanny will be willing to enter into the discussion. On the other hand, Fanny is also aware of the rules of verbal interaction, and can remain silent without fear of breaking social conventions. She must speak, however, when Henry interrupts his delivery to ask:

Did you speak? ... Are you sure you did not speak? I saw your lips move.
I fancied you might be going to tell me I ought to be more attentive, and not allow my thoughts to wander. Are not you going to tell me so? (MP:338).

The style of Henry's direct questioning demands answers and Fanny is forced to speak against her will.

Mary Crawford also actively manipulates language. Just as she ignores the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, she seeks to interfere with the semantics of speech by redefining her own meaning. Such changes are for the purpose of increasing her attraction in the eyes of Edmund by disguising her true opinions. In relation to the clergy as a profession, Edmund surmises that Mary believes the "church itself [is] never chosen" (MP:120) willingly as a career. Not wishing to lose Edmund's favour, Mary quickly responds: "Never is a black word. But yes,
in the never of conversation which means not very often, I do think it. For what is to be done in the church?" (MP:120).

Although Edmund is presented as a character of moral strength, his faults lie in his failure to recognise the immorality and impropriety of the Crawfords' speech. Leroy W. Smith believes that:

Edmund reveals two deficiencies in moral development: his powers of moral discrimination are not as fine as Fanny's and his adherence to what he believes is right is less firm (1981:153).

Edmund dismisses Mary Crawford's utterances as being the result of her London education but not as directly applicable to her moral status. Edmund sees Mary's description of her uncle as the result of:

warmth of her respect for her aunt's memory which misleads her here... with such feelings and lively spirits it must be difficult to do justice to her affection for Mrs. Crawford ... I do not censure her opinions; but there certainly is impropriety in making them public (MP:94).

Mary Crawford's attraction and powers of persuasion are so intoxicating that Edmund is able to overlook personal qualities which he initially abhorred. The most serious side effect of Mary's charms is the corruption of Edmund's relationship with Fanny. Although he sees no change in their roles as confidants, he gradually loses the ability to interpret her utterances correctly. Mary's open and vibrant personality overshadows the significance of Fanny's plain and quiet utterances. A large part of Fanny's speech conveys meaning paralinguistically, through word stress, intonation and body movement. Norman Page believes that paralinguistic qualities seek to "draw attention to themselves by direct comment ... [and] throw the major burden of reconstructing a particular variety of speech upon the reader"(1978:28). Edmund is also a reader of these signs. As Edmund's fascination with Mary escalates, so, too, does the frequency of Fanny's
paralinguistic qualities. These function as signs of Fanny's restraint in voicing her opinions of Mary.

During Fanny and Edmund's discussion of Henry's proposal, Fanny's narrative abounds in paralinguistic examples. She blushes, speaks in a "shrinking accent" (MP:347) and looks "oppressed and wearied" (MP:351). Edmund is no longer able to interpret these signs. Even though he "saw weariness and distress in her face" (MP:350), he does not realise that the Crawfords are the source of her anxiety. Edmund has been blinded to Fanny's apprehensions of the Crawford siblings, believing her to be very fond of Mary and capable of loving Henry.

The spoken word in Mansfield Park defines a character's moral status. Despite Edmund's attempts to justify the behaviour and speech of the Crawfords, no amount of information can reverse the impression created by their utterances. Although Mary and Henry use language to increase their social attractiveness, they are ultimately destroyed by it. The brother and sister are condemned through different applications of language. Mary's fault lies in her disregard for the rules governing propriety and suitability in social interaction. Henry Crawford is trapped by his overly confident use of language to manipulate emotions, his insincerity sees him trapped in a very public affair with the newly-wed Maria Bertram. On the other hand, Fanny's reluctance to speak denies her a position of power within society. Silence is not an alternative to the speech of the Crawford siblings. Mary, Henry and Fanny are all experts at concealing their true feelings and motivations. Mary and Henry use language to conceal their immorality, while Fanny adopts the opposite barrier: silence.

In order to overcome her lack of power and misrepresentation, Fanny must
learn to speak for herself. Marilyn Butler believes that Fanny's:

silences are the appropriate social demeanour of the Christian heroine, who is humble and unassertive ... [but] they also imply the strength of someone who neither needs to seek advice nor to vindicate herself (1979:240).

Before Fanny had known Henry Crawford's attentions, she had been able to remain silent and in the background of all activities. Henry's proposal signals a peripeteia in her development, no longer can she remain in the position of "judge and critic" but she must actively participate in social activities. The transition for Fanny is slow and painful and she "tried to get the better of it, tried very hard as the dinner hour approached, to feel and appear as usual; but it was quite impossible for her not to look most shy and uncomfortable" (MP:306). Fanny can no longer rely upon the security of her former social position. With the Bertram sisters in London, Fanny is raised in importance at Mansfield and this elevates her social status. Thus, in the face of a Crawford attack, she must adopt new methods for defence. Yet Fanny persists in sheltering behind a silent exterior. Her first rejection of Henry expresses a desire to move out of the foreground and back into the distance:

I can hear no more of this. Your kindness to William makes me more obliged to you than words can express; but I do not want, I cannot bear, I must not listen to such - No, no, don't think of me (MP:305).

Henry's determination forces Fanny to burst dramatically from her silent shell. Pressures from Edmund, Henry and Sir Thomas are unable to persuade Fanny into an economic and socially convenient marriage, rather she responds with a defiance that propels her towards becoming a morally strong and empowered member of society. Fanny finds her voice in refusing Sir Thomas' demands that she accept Henry's suit. Despite Sir Thomas' accusation that her reasons are "self-willed,
obstinate, selfish, and ungrateful" (MP:319), Fanny remains "perfectly convinced that I could never make him happy, and that I should be miserable myself" (MP:315). She shows the moral strength and independence which is lacking in all other Mansfield inhabitants, who fall prey to the charms of Henry and accept Sir Thomas' authority. Fanny's challenge of Sir Thomas' power proves the strength of her convictions and it is an essential stage in her development, for it enables her to experience exercising authority over others.

The characters' actions and utterances are guided by social standards and expectations. Austen places her characters within a social context to reveal the extent to which individuals conform to or deviate from the social norm, as well as to highlight the weaknesses within the system itself.
(iii) The Voice of Society.

The behaviour and speech of Mansfield Park's characters is controlled by stringent social codes. Austen includes, throughout the utterances of the narrator and characters, statements and references to social activities and values. These references construct a social context in which the characters operate. Fowler believes that "language, transcending the individual, imprints the text with the community's values" (1977:80). Austen utilises her minor characters for the expression of social conventions. The ineffectual, but nonetheless parental figures of Sir Thomas, Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris function primarily as symbols of the community's social expectations. They are representative of the generation raised by the values and beliefs which they espouse. However, Austen is not presenting these characters as ideal examples; she is offering them as a basis for generational comparisons. According to Spacks, Austen's:

fictional mothers and aunts seldom offer much to admire [as] ... they bear a comfortable relation to the society they inhabit, supporting that society's assumption that young women exist to marry and young men to be married (1981:162).

Utterances which contain statements or truths about social customs are not directly attributive to either narrator or character. Such utterances, according to Morson, are "timeless, anonymous, and above all, categorical ... [t] heir stylistic features imply that they are not falsifiable and that they are open to no qualification" (1986:9). Austen's absolute utterances are often accompanied by ironical overtones. The novel's opening paragraph contains a statement which can be interpreted as ironical in relation to the events which occupy a large part of the narrative. The narrator states that "there certainly are not so many men of large fortune in the world, as there are pretty women to deserve them" (MP:41). The
courtship of Henry Crawford and Fanny is a reversal of the situation proposed. Henry's large fortune will not guarantee him Fanny's love, as his improper behaviour deems him as an unworthy suitor.

Timeless social truths filter through Mrs Norris' speech. Mrs Norris is established as the novel's advocate of social law. Almost all of her speeches are concerned with dictating her opinions on the rules of social behaviour. She states that a "fine lady in a country parsonage was quite out of place" (MP:65) and Mrs Grant should not expect the same privileges enjoyed at Mansfield. Mrs Norris' assertions do not carry any authority, as the universal quality of her statements are undermined by trivial and petty details. Her apprehensions about Mrs Grant's social position are raised by the "quantity of butter and eggs that were regularly consumed in the house" (MP:65). Mrs Norris' knowledge of social behaviour is limited to areas of surface appearance and materiality. Like the Crawfords and the Bertram sisters, her notion of social worth neglects the spiritual and moral dimension.

Society's emphasis on external appearance results in clashes between the pensive Fanny and her vocal aunt. Fanny often comes under Mrs Norris' critical eye. Fanny's first social engagement elicits a barrage of advice from Mrs Norris. She reminds Fanny that "people are never respected when they step out of their proper sphere" (MP:232). The authoritative power of the statement is deflated, as Mrs Norris explains her assertion in terms of the appropriate number of people to be seated at the table. Page believes that "she is preoccupied by petty domestic and practical details ... [which] spring from a wish to inflate her own importance and, often, from avarice" (1972:144).
Fanny’s physical passivity is considered by Mrs Norris to be a “shocking trick for a young person” (MP:101) and places her outside Mrs. Norris’ social norm. The absence of vitality and liveliness is seen by Mrs Norris as re-affirming Fanny’s social deficiency and inferiority. Mrs. Norris’ didactic conversations with Fanny are indicative of society’s pressure for uniform acceptance of dominant social codes. Fanny’s lack of interest in learning the traditional feminine accomplishments of music or drawing is claimed to be “very stupid indeed, and shows a great want of genius and emulation” (MP:55). Fanny refuses to embrace society’s limited definition of the self; rather she searches within herself, assessing and evaluating her own experiences. Stewart believes that:

when a fiction ... presents two domains of reality as a set of voices in conflict with one another, irony results. ... [I]rony emphasises the textual, the interpreted, and the cultural, rather than the natural, status of social interaction (1978:20).

Fanny Price’s notion of social behaviour and interaction becomes stabilised through her experience and the refinement of her observations. By contrast, Mrs Norris professes an inflexible doctrine of standards.

Austen casts Mrs Norris in a doubly ironic perspective. First, her utterances provide an inadequate manual for social behaviour; the outcome of such attitudes can be seen in Lady Bertram’s idleness and her nieces’ immorality. Despite all the signs of impropriety, she fails to notice the dangerous flirtation developing between Henry and Maria. Even the newly returned Sir Thomas is able to recognise the volatile nature of Maria and Henry’s relationship in Lover’s Vows. Yet Aunt Norris pays no heed to her nieces’ emotional states, as she is too busy:

with economical expedient, for which nobody thanked her, and saving,
with delighted integrity, half-a-crown here and there to the absent Sir Thomas, to have leisure for watching the behaviour, or guarding the happiness of his daughters (MP:183).

There is little continuity in her character, as she sporadically adopts different social roles. She abandons her earlier role of assisting "to form her nieces' minds" (MP:55) to focus on marital and economic opportunities. Mrs Norris believes that manners and social conditioning function according to a limited temporal framework. Thus by the time the sisters are "fully established among the belles of the neighbourhood" (MP:68), they have acquired all the necessary knowledge and no longer need Mrs Norris's guidance.

Second, her utterances claim to contain directions for desirable virtues, all of which she openly violates. The reader is unable to accept Mrs. Norris' speech as credible, as she is inconsistent in her use of speech acts. Mrs Norris has no trouble in verbalising her beliefs and demands that Fanny behave according to her rules; she therefore abides by the sincerity conditions of directive illocutionary acts which state that "a speaker who orders, expresses his desire that the hearer carry out a certain ... action" (Vanderveken 1980:256).

Yet the rules and conditions applied to others are never directed at herself. Mrs Norris lacks the sincerity needed in commissive illocutionary acts. Commissive illocutionary acts "commit the speaker to doing something" (Pratt 1977:81). Mrs Norris' utterances are hollow and meaningless and expose the superficiality of 'feminine' accomplishments. The circumstances surrounding Fanny's induction into the Mansfield community provide a prime example of Mrs. Norris' insincerity. Her seemingly honourable and gracious offer to "undertake the care of ... [the] eldest daughter"(MP:43) is little more than a verbal statement, as
she has no intention of accepting responsibility. According to Searle's theory, Mrs Norris' utterances are insincere. That is, the speaker "lacks the intention to perform the act promised, ... [and] it is because he purports to have intentions which he does not have that we describe his act as insincere" (1970:62). Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram are forced to assume the economic and familial support as "Mr Norris' indifferent state of health made it an impossibility" (MP:46) for Fanny to live at the Parsonage. These initial actions are indicative of Aunt Norris' behaviour, since she sets a superficial standard for behaviour and distances herself from the events and refuses to accept responsibility. The purely physical social attributes are exposed as shallow, providing neither the tools for proper behaviour nor the strength to stand by beliefs. This flaw classes Mrs. Norris with the Crawfords as a threat to the moral structure of Mansfield. Tony Tanner asserts that Austen believed her society was threatened from the inside "by the failures and derelictions of those very figures who should be responsibly upholding, renewing and regenerating that social order" (1986:18). Mrs Norris' direction of the Bertram sisters' behaviour left them ill-equipped for life within society. It is no coincidence that Mrs Norris acted as chaperone during the two main instances of impropriety: at Sotherton and during the Mansfield theatricals. Her lack of moral strength allowed her charges to behave without restraint.

Mrs Norris' speech reveals authorial intrusion. Austen's use of speech is "not simply to exploit idiosyncrasies ... but to enlist speech in the cause of more refined character-portrayal" (Page 1972:139-140). Her elevated sense of self importance is evident in the style and structure of her utterances. Indulging in self analysis, Norris believes that "with all my faults I have a warm heart; and poor as
I am, I would rather deny myself the necessities of life, than do an ungenerous thing" (MP:45). The pompous structure of her speech opens up her utterance for intrusion and analysis by the narrator, author and reader. Gooneratne claims that:

Mrs Norris is presented in an ironic rather than comic spirit; her nature is shot through with such venomous and authentic malice that the reader can be amused by nothing connected with her except her discomfiture (1970:115).

By her own definitions, Mrs. Norris is a socially undesirable and unattractive person. The disparity between her words and actions attracts the reader’s attention. Her utterances provide the means for the analysis of her own character. Thus, when she states that "you should learn to think of other people" (MP:101), it is her own selfishness, not Fanny’s, that is implied. Mrs Norris’ self-centred nature is validated immediately after this statement when it is revealed that she had Fanny "stepping down to my house for me, it is not much above a quarter of a mile" (MP:103). Similarly, her statement that she would not be able to "bear to see ... [Fanny] want; while I had a bit of bread to give her" (MP:45) strives to create a dramatic and caring impression. Yet she goes out of her way to ensure that Fanny is deprived of many necessities. Mrs Norris’ lexis indicates narratorial irony. Despite attempts to appear socially superior, her choice of language exposes her self-promotion. Colloquial references filter through her dialogue; such as "awkwardest" and her assertion that Mr. Norris could "no more bear the noise of a child than he could fly" (MP:46). Mrs Norris’ speech contains cliches, which McLuhan defines as "a worn out commonplace, a phrase, a short sentence that has become so hackneyed that careful speakers and scrupulous writers shrink from it" (1970:53). Austen uses well-worn phrases in order to deflate the illocutionary and perlocutionary force of Mrs Norris’ utterances.

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Although Mrs Norris is the object of the narrator’s irony, it becomes evident that she is merely a product of the social system. Her faults and misguided opinions are representative of society’s failings. References to society exist outside characterological utterances. Kress and Hodge believe that if linguistics is to be used to study culture then "it must be able to analyse both modes of language, spoken language, where contradiction and conflict lie on the surface, and written language, where contradictions are no less potent for being less easy to see" (1979:13). The references contained within the narrator’s discourse serve to communicate directly with the reader. Pratt states that they function as "acknowledgments of the peer relation which holds between author and reader, of the sense of obligation the author feels as a result of that relation, and of his awareness of being in jeopardy" (1977:114). References to the society’s activities broaden the reader’s field of knowledge and enhance interpretation. Communication between reader and writer has been identified on the grammatical level of language. The process of nominalisation often employs definite, indefinite and demonstrative articles to cast the nominal phrases as facts. These articles also function as homophoric deictics, directing the reader’s attention to a shared cultural and social knowledge.

Aphorisms provide an insight into society’s dominant value system. Mrs Norris’ role within the narrative events is to secure the union of Mr Rushworth and Maria Bertram. The economic benefits of their union prompted Mrs Norris to promote the match "by every suggestion and contrivance, likely to enhance its desirability to either party” (MP:72). Marriage is an important event within Mansfield Park, as it is the only event that allows the public expression of private
emotions. The marriage of Maria and Mr Rushworth does not possess any emotional or personal commitment. The marriage is met with "the satisfaction of their respective families, and of the general on-lookers of the neighbourhood, who had, for many weeks past, felt the expediency of Mr Rushworth's marrying Miss Bertram" (MP:72). Their engagement and marriage are related in terms of society's expectations. The engagement was secured after "a proper number of balls" and the ceremony "was a very proper wedding". The repetition of 'proper' suggests a standard for such social occasions. The narrator defines the criteria for a "proper wedding":

the bride was elegantly dressed - the two bridesmaids were duly inferior - her father gave her away - her mother stood with salts in her hand, expecting to be agitated - her aunt tried to cry - and the service was impressively read by Dr Grant (MP:217).

The description of the wedding focuses on its physical structure, rather than any emotional union. The impersonal nature of the marriage is expressed through Mrs Norris and Lady Bertram's attempts to show emotion. The fact that these feelings are not natural indicates the hypocrisy of the hollow marriage between Maria and Mr Rushworth.

All of the characters' movements within the social world of Mansfield Park are the result of learned behaviours. The ability of the individual to understand and successfully apply society's expectations is seen to be directly linked to his or her learning and educational background.
EDUCATION

(i) Educational Systems

The education of women during the nineteenth century was restricted to refining their behaviour and social accomplishments with the aim of securing a wealthy husband. Jane Austen's own education was guided towards improving her marriage prospects. As Park Honan states:

the higher ... [a girl’s] class the more likely she was to marry a man with money, prestige, land-holdings and either leisure or a reputable career. Her ‘class’ was thus related to her chances of happiness and well-being; and as a keen and devoted father, Mr Austen was well aware that ladylike accomplishments and good schooling would enhance ... Jane’s chances in marriage (1987:30).

Fanny Price's education at Mansfield intends to introduce her "into the society of the country under such favourable conditions as, in all human probability, would get her a credible establishment" (MP:44). The sole purpose of education for women is to prepare them for marriage. Boys, on the other hand, are educated either as the heir to the estate or trained in a profession. The education of the girls occurred within the home, directed by female family members and governesses. Boys received the greater part of their education in an institution. For instance, the narrator informs the reader that Edmund left "Eton for Oxford" (MP:57).

Austen creates three educational systems within Mansfield Park. The educational systems in Mansfield Park can be identified by Halliday's notion of the "context of situation" (Halliday and Hasan 1985:29). This area of study focuses on the semiotic level of language, that is, the system of signs and symbols created by language in order to construct meaning. Education is one of the central themes of Mansfield Park. The ability to speak and behave within society depends on the
conduct, manners and guidelines taught by education. The novel raises concerns about the different types of education and their appropriate principles for developing intellectual and moral faculties. Thus the author sees education as a term applicable not only to formal training but also to all areas of existence which require a certain level of personal, moral, social and spiritual knowledge. Austen offers the reader a variety of educational systems which allow for comparisons and contrasts. Yet these systems do not operate by the same standards, as certain characteristics are promoted above others. As with all the decisions made by the characters, the choice of an educational system is accompanied by consequences.

Education is not only a prerequisite for ensuring growth and development, it is also a moral choice.

The issue of education is first introduced by the narrator in relation to Frances Ward’s marriage to a man “without education” (MP:41). This educational system suggests a direct connection between education, social success and happiness. Education is seen to provide the tools for an individual to function properly within society. Mr Price’s lack of education implies that he is a dysfunctional character. Fanny’s trip to Portsmouth reveals her father's disregard for the rules of propriety or decorum. Language is seen as evidence of the character’s beliefs, principles, and knowledge. Mr Price’s numerous profanities ignore the conditions which determine acceptable behaviour. Similarly, he appears ignorant of the rules of conversation. In this respect, he is the complete opposite of Henry Crawford, whose expertise in conversational skills enables him to control and manipulate the situation. Halliday’s field of discourse is applicable to the socially based educational system. The field of discourse "refers to what is
happening, to the nature of the social interaction that is taking place" (Halliday and Hasan 1985:12). The actions and the participants dominate this semiotic level, with language providing the means for describing their activities.

Maria and Julia Bertram are raised by the same methods of schooling as their parents. The three Ward sisters were brought up to believe that an education consisting of feminine accomplishments would provide them with a marriage "with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income" (MP:41). Generation after generation has been taught that appearance and marriage are important for social success. With Mrs. Norris as their teacher, Maria and Julia:

continued to exercise their memories, practise their duets, and grow tall and womanly; and their father saw them becoming in person, manner, and accomplishments, every thing that could satisfy his anxiety (MP:56).

The aims of this educational process are to construct an individual who fulfils social requirements. Thus the attention is directed at the participant and his or her actions. Halliday asserts that the field of discourse can be identified semantically through the "types of process that are being talked about" (1985:30). The Bertram sisters are seen to perform processes which involve action: 'exercise', 'practise', 'grow', 'become'. The abundance of physical processes highlights the surface or external motivation of their lessons. Mrs Norris is the product of these principles. Her insistence that feminine accomplishments are the only qualities needed in a young woman sees her:

promoting gaieties for her nieces, assisting their toilettes, displaying their accomplishments, and looking about for their future husbands, had so much to do as ... left her very little occasion to be occupied even in fears for the absent (MP:68).

The promotion of the external neglects the importance of mental knowledge and
development. The Bertram sisters are seen to be in need of spiritual and moral strength, as they are easily attracted and corrupted by Henry Crawford's charms. Although they have physical and social appeal, the cultivation of feminine qualities proves to be a characteristic as futile as "repeating the chronological order of the Kings of England, with the dates of their accession, and most of the principal events of their reigns" (MP:54). The field of discourse seeks to maintain belief in these institutions. Survival of social customs and accompanying power is dependent upon the community's undertaking to comply with and maintain the guidelines. The relationship seems symbiotic, that is, each component depends on the other for existence. The field of discourse uses language only to relate the actions and experiences of the participants.

By contrast, the tenor of discourse uses language to express the nature of complex relationships between participants. This process includes the "type of speech role that they are taking on in the dialogue and the whole cluster of socially significant relationships" (Halliday and Hasan 1985:12). Mansfield Park presents an educational system which has communication as its foundation. Fanny and Edmund were exposed to the same education as Maria and Julia, but found it to be deficient in developing the inner self. Even as a child Fanny showed no interest in acquiring the traditional accomplishments and was subsequently classed as "so odd and so stupid ... [because] she says she does not want to learn either music or drawing" (MP:55). Fanny's education is not determined by the trivial information of the "Heathen Mythology, and all the Metals, Semi-Metals, Planets, and distinguished philosophers" (MP:55). Rather it is derived from a personal knowledge and insight gained by interacting and communicating with other
members of the community. In particular, her relationship with Edmund provided the greatest area for personal and moral development. Edmund also benefited from their "eager affection in meeting, their exquisite delight in being together, their hours of happy mirth, and moments of serious conference" (MP:57). The tenor of discourse involves a relationship between two participants; a speaker and an addressee. Edmund's guidance of Fanny's thoughts meant that he had:

a good chance of her thinking like him; though at this period, and on this subject, there began now to be some danger of dissimilarity, for he was in line of admiration of Miss Crawford, which might lead him where Fanny could not follow (MP:95).

Halliday asserts that "interaction between [the participants] ... is most directly expressed in terms of the person selections in the grammar" (1985:31). Within the above passage, Fanny and Edmund are identified as participants by the personal pronouns: 'he', 'him', and 'her'. The contrasts between the tenor and the field of discourse are obvious in Maria Bertram's perspective. In "her twenty-first year, Maria Bertram was beginning to think matrimony a duty" (MP:72). This example illustrates Maria's use of language as a means of relating her experiences, not through communication with others, but in terms of a process or action. Marriage is seen as a process of possession, an accomplishment Maria must acquire. Maria Bertram is identified as the participant and Mr Rushworth as the object she must possess.

The second feature of the tenor of discourse is in the participant's role in "determining the course of action" (Halliday and Hasan 1985:31). The education of Fanny and Edmund is not determined by external forces, as they progress at their own pace with no time restrictions. Fanny's occupation of the East room illustrates her control over the content and pace of the educational process.
Originally the venue for the formal, socially structured lessons, Fanny has extended its parameters to include her own texts and aids for education. The formal education provided a starting point for the development of Fanny’s self-education and growth. She is able to retreat to the East room to:

find immediate consolation in some pursuit, or some train of thought at hand. - Her plants, her books - of which she had been a collector, from the first hour of her commanding a shilling - her writing desk, and her work of charity and ingenuity, were all within her reach (MP:173).

MacDonagh states that self education is necessary in the development of all Austen’s heroines, and those characters "who would not make the effort to train themselves must be both disciplined and set good examples if they are not to end .. [up as] frivolous and ill-formed" (1991:95). Self education was an important feature of Austen’s society. Her own formal education was supplemented by her private readings and interactions. Like Fanny Price, Austen’s brother, James, helped in "directing Jane’s reading and forming her taste - or at least he gave her books to read" (Honan 1987:37).

Finally, the choice of mood contributes to the tenor of discourse. Fanny and Edmund’s educational system allows for the expression of different speech roles. They are able to use language as a means of communicating, questioning, responding, and speculating. The individual’s development is propelled by the continual interaction of dialogue and monologue. The mood of the language is determined by the characters’ emotions and values. Thus an educational system, whose context of situation corresponds with the tenor of discourse, is seen to allow for individual and personal growth, rather than confining itself to a hollow, impersonal and inflexible syllabus.

The third educational system of Mansfield Park can be related to the mode
of discourse. Mary and Henry Crawford appear to belong to a system which gives priority to the "part language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting language to do for them" (Halliday and Hasan 1985:12). For the Crawfords, the main function of language is not to relate their experiences or communicate, but is to provide a means of manipulating and structuring their utterances. Mary Crawford's "early presentiment that she should like the eldest [Bertram] best" (MP:80) leads her to structure her utterances to appeal to Tom Bertram's interests. She is already aware that "her talents for the light and lively" are attractive, but she began "accordingly to interest herself a little about the horse which he had to run at the B-races" (MP:80). The motives behind Mary's structuring of her utterance are selfish, as she only intends it to attract Tom's attention. Her utterances are constructed to fulfil the demands of the situation. Mary's lexical range is limited to Tom's interest in horse racing. However, as the circumstances change, so do the ingredients of Mary's message. When her feelings are diverted toward Edmund, she adopts a different lexis. As soon as Edmund mentioned that "the harp ... [was] his favourite instrument", Mary uses it as a method for appealing to him. These techniques prove successful and see Edmund "turning his back on the window, and as ... [the glee] advanced, ... [Fanny] had the mortification of seeing him advance too, moving forward by gentle degrees toward the instrument" (MP:140). Much of the liveliness of the Crawfords derives from their spontaneous nature. They behave according to the present situation and their expertise in the processes of language provides them with the skills to operate in almost every aspect of society. Yet the lack of a steady or reliable educational structure has its downfalls.

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The range of educational systems in Mansfield Park provide a variety of situations for the interaction and expression of different ideas. The three systems provide their participants with a variety of social and communicative skills.
(ii) The Educators

The novel's educators embody the principles of the different educational systems.

The utterances of Sir Thomas and Mrs Norris are dominated by the ideational function of language. Halliday asserts that the ideational is "concerned with the content of language" (1973:66). The ideational directs attention toward the events, actions or processes of consciousness contained within the utterance. Although the interpersonal and textual functions exist within the speech event, they are backgrounded by the dominance of what is being said. Sir Thomas and Mrs Norris emphasise the content of their utterances. As authority figures, they are able to teach the next generation the rules and expectations of society. Therefore their utterances are seen as containing information about society and of how the individual should operate within that world. Sir Thomas and Mrs Norris exploit language's "ideational resources, its potential for expressing a content in terms of the speaker's experience and that of the speech community" (Halliday 1973:37). In undertaking the education of Fanny, Sir Thomas wishes the cousins to be:

very good friends, and would, on no account, authorise in my girls the smallest degree of arrogance toward their relation; but still they cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations will always be different (MP:47).

For Sir Thomas, acceptance into the social arena is related to economic and class issues. Over-emphasis of the social expectations resulted in the Bertram sisters being "admirably taught" in "every thing but disposition" (MP:55). The dominance of the ideational implies Sir Thomas' belief in set standards of behaviour above communicative, spiritual and moral qualities. The ideational function of language consists of two components: the experiential and the logical. The experiential sub-
function enables the speaker to embody "in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world, and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness" (Halliday 1973:106). Maria Bertram's marriage to Mr Rushworth is evaluated by Sir Thomas for its economic and social value. He was:

happy to escape the embarrassing evils of a rupture, the wonder, the reflections, the reproach that must attend it, happy to secure a marriage which would bring him such an addition of respectability and influence, and very happy to think any thing of his daughter's disposition that was most favourable for the purpose (MP:215).

The experiential function of language "lends structure to his experience and helps to determine his way of looking at things" (Halliday 1973:106). The focus on Sir Thomas' experiences is highlighted in the grammatical structure. The extract contains three infinitives: 'to escape', 'to secure', 'to think'. The infinitives describe Sir Thomas' actions and each infinitive is connected to society's values. A broken engagement would cause gossip and speculation, whereas the union would elevate the Bertram family's social integrity. Every event in the Bertram family is seen by Sir Thomas as affecting his operations within the wider community. Language provides the tool for the expression of these movements and actions.

Not all members of the household adopt language for the same use. The different language functions cause clashes between various members. This is most evident in the interaction between Sir Thomas and Fanny, following Henry Crawford's proposal. Sir Thomas has no trouble expressing that Fanny's refusal:

is something ... which my comprehension does not reach. Here is a young man wishing to pay you his addresses to you, with every thing to recommend him; not merely situation in life, fortune, and character, but with more than commonplace agreeableness, with address and conversation pleasing to every body (MP:316).

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Sir Thomas' summary of Henry's appeal is guided by the recurring principles of social status and prosperity. Fanny has a completely different perspective. Her notion of the self is not based on social standards but on moral and spiritual values. Compounded by her inferior social rank, she is unable to articulate her "ill opinion" of Henry, uttering monosyllabic answers to Sir Thomas' questions.

Fanny's dislike "of his [Henry] principles" is founded in the education system which cultivates the surface appearance and abandons the inner self.

The logical function of language is the "expression of certain fundamental logical relations which are encoded in language in the form of co-ordination, apposition, modification and the like" (Halliday 1973:106). Like Sir Thomas, Mrs Norris represents an educational system founded on economic and social relations. She uses language to encode her own experiences, in addition to guiding the behaviour of others. Mrs Norris’ utterances present logical language functions. She believes that to "give a girl an education, and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well" (MP:44).

There is a logical connection between an education, society and marriage. Halliday asserts that "the logical relationships that are built into natural languages are those that are expressed in the grammar as different forms of parataxis and hypotaxis" (1985:19). Mrs Norris' discourse makes use of paratactic links, in order to produce meaning from her utterances. The paratactic links within the statement are achieved by the co-ordinating conjunctions 'and', 'but'. Parataxis connects two clauses together and implies a relation between them. The links give equal weight to the different narrative units but do not explain the causal relationship. Paratactic links leave lacunae within the text, and it is the reader's task to fill in the gaps.
David Lodge believes that lacunae force the reader "to think for himself and constantly implicate him in the moral judgements being formulated" (1991:181). The reader can interpret the statement as an equation of Sir Thomas and Mrs Norris' notion of social success. Yet the formula is inflexible and impersonal, and allows for no expression of individual desires.

The ideational function of language acts as a background to the interpersonal aspects of the utterance. The ideational is limited in its outlook, as it deals only with the speaker's experiences. The interpersonal offers a wider perspective, as the primary interest of the language is in its "function in the process of communication" (Halliday and Hasan 1985:20). Fanny and Edmund are representative of an educational system in which the interpersonal language function is dominant. Edmund's preference for the interpersonal is expressed in his career choice. As a clergyman, his language will function as "the mediator of role, including ... the expression of our own personalities and personal feelings ..., and forms of interaction and social interplay with other participants in the communication system" (Halliday 1973:66). He feels that in preaching:

distinctiveness and energy may have weight in recommending the most solid truths; and, besides, there is more general observation and taste, a more critical knowledge diffused, than formerly (MP:337).

Edmund uses language as a way of expressing his beliefs and interacting with people. The emphasis on the communication process and the assumption of roles in the interpersonal function corresponds to the performance of certain illocutionary speech acts. As a clergyman, Edmund would frequently use representative and directive illocutionary acts. He believes it is his "duty to teach and recommend". The first of these responsibilities requires him to "undertake to
represent a state of affairs, whether past, present, future, or hypothetical", while the second is "designed to get the addressee to do something" (Pratt 1977:80). The interpersonal focuses on language's interactional qualities, the relationship between the speaker and the audience.

Edmund is naturally disposed toward the interpersonal aspects of life. His initial conversation with Fanny convinced him that she had "an affectionate heart and a strong sense of doing right" (MP:53). These qualities are essential foundations for a moral and spiritual education. Having recognised Fanny's potential, Edmund was committed to give her "more positive kindness, and ... to lessen her fears of them all, and gave her especially a great deal of good advice as to playing with Maria and Julia, and being as merry as possible" (MP:53). The interpersonal function of language provides Edmund with the vehicle for comforting, encouraging and persuading other members of the community.

The Crawford siblings are motivated primarily by their ability to manipulate language. They are representative of Halliday's third language function: the textual. The textual function of language "enables the speaker to organise what he is saying in such a way that it makes sense in the context and fulfils its function as a message" (Halliday 1973:66). The Crawfords' London education provided them with confidence and independence. They are allowed a certain degree of flexibility in their use of language. We can see Henry's tendency toward role playing in his performing of many dramatic roles, each accompanied by carefully constructed but hollow speeches. In the task of "making ... [the Bertram sisters] like him" he assumes different roles and panders to their weaknesses. He operates within the community by structuring his utterances in
order to produce a specific result. The emphasis of his speech acts is on the structure, shape and sound of the utterance. For example, William Price's maritime career fills him with awe:

The glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance, made his own habits of selfish indulgence appear in shameful contrast; and he wished he had been a William Price, distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour, instead of what he was! (MP:245).

Hasan states that the most important concept in texture is that of a tie: "the nature of this link is semantic: the two terms of any tie are tied together through some meaning relation" (1985:73). The prepositional phrases are connected through a similar meaning, of expressing Henry's desire to play the heroic marine. Durey states that textuality "is particularly obvious when the chosen lexis is mainly abstract and deictic demonstrative and adverbs proliferate" (1987:237). The epithets and nouns within the passage are lexically tied and all express a romanticised vision of William's career.

Mary Crawford is also acutely aware of the structure and shape of her utterances. Like Henry, she constructs her speech according to her listener's sympathies. She earns the respect of the Bertram household, not by her sincerity or values, but through her knowledge of their weaknesses and prejudices. For example, during the journey to Sotherton, Mary "pretty well guessed Miss Bertram's feelings and made it a point of honour to promote her enjoyment to the
utmost" (MP:111). Mary knows that Maria Bertram is proud of the material consequences of her engagement and she alters her speech in order to comply with the situation. She is also aware of Mrs Norris’ bias and did not:

think of gratifying her by commendation of Fanny; to her, it was as the occasion offered. - 'Ah! ma'am how much we want dear Mrs Rushworth and Julia to-night!' and Mrs Norris paid her with as many smiles and courteous words as she had time for (MP:282).

The textual function not only explains Mary’s use of language, but also defines her notion of the self. She seeks to organise her appearance, actions and speech into a coherent and perfect image. Her desire for shape and structure extends into her physical appearance:

A young woman, pretty, lively, with a harp as elegant as herself; and both placed near a window, cut down to the ground, and opening on a little lawn, surrounded by shrubs in the rich foliage of summer, was enough to catch any man’s heart (MP:95).

Mary’s beauty is linked with nature’s beauty.

Austen is careful to suggest that these language functions are not permanent states of existence. Just because an individual was raised by certain principles does not mean that he or she is condemned to follow or adopt its value system. Sir Thomas, Henry and Edmund are seen to deviate from their original perspectives.

Through his interactions with Fanny, Sir Thomas gradually acquires the principles associated with the interpersonal function of language. Fanny’s persistent rejection of Henry provides Sir Thomas with an insight into her reasons for refusing him. The revelation of Fanny’s principles prompts a revision of Sir Thomas’ values. He comes to realise that Fanny is not ungrateful and he:

resolved to abstain from all farther importunity with his niece, and to shew no open interference. Upon her disposition he believed kindness might be the best way of working (MP:328).
This passage indicates his awareness of the role of language as a communicative medium. He uses language to interact with Fanny and reassure her of his sympathy, while leaving her with the right to choose. Sir Thomas' change in attitude is significant, as it represents an acknowledgment of other educational principles. The expectations of Sir Thomas' society have remained fixed and staid, with no revision for the demands of new generations. The values of society have lost their significance and exist only as hollow traditions. Sir Thomas' acceptance of Fanny's values suggests a movement away from the old socially determined notion of the self toward a new self-defined approach to education.

Henry Crawford is also influenced by Fanny's strong moral principles. In his efforts to please her, he abandons the textual function of language in favour of interpersonal characteristics. Henry is shown to express true feelings and begins to assume responsibility for his actions. Not only does he re-evaluate his own behaviour but he:

introduced himself to some tenants, whom he had never seen before; he had begun making acquaintance with cottages whose very existence, though on his own estate, had been hitherto unknown to him (MP:397).

Language comes to be used as a means of communicating. This change is essential if Fanny is ever to accept him as a possible partner. Until his interactions with Fanny, Henry approached all aspects of life with "the usual attack of gallantry and compliment". Yet his change in attitude sees him using language to be "astonishingly more gentle, and regardful of others" (MP:404). Henry's speech is no longer dominated by the shape of his utterances. In his dealings with Fanny he is more interested in constructing an emotional and considerate image and, thus, his utterances assume the function of "exchanging roles in rhetorical interaction"
His actions are not motivated by selfish concerns but by a genuine desire to do what is right. According to Fanny's standards, one of the most important righteous deeds is considering the needs of "the poor and oppressed" (MP:397). Henry is seen to be "performing a duty" and "acting as he ought to do" in relation to his Everingham estate. However, the temptations offered by his educational background overpower his genuine wish to win Fanny's affections. Even though he began to show signs of moral development, he lacked the internal structures to maintain a personal and emotional relationship.

Edmund also strays from his principles. Although he never completely abandons his role as communicator, his relationship with Fanny suffers as a result of Mary's attractive image. There is a displacement of Edmund's values. He is acutely aware of the importance of spiritual and moral qualities in order to be a complete individual, yet he ignores these notions in his interactions with Mary. Mary shows no concern for the inner self, as evidenced in her belief that Edmund is "fit for something better. Come, do change your mind. It is not too late. Go into the law" (MP:121). Mary represents temptation, and Edmund must free himself from his desires if he is to be a successful clergyman and husband to Fanny.

The educational process aims to prepare the characters for participation within the social sphere. The inadequacies and corrupt nature of the different learning systems is not only manifested in the speech and behaviour of the characters, but also finds expression in Austen's descriptions of social settings.
LOCATION

(i) Objects, Rooms and Estates

As the novel's title suggests, Jane Austen sees location as a central issue in the narrative of Mansfield Park. Ann Banfield believes that location:

interacts with and forms consciousness ... the novel moves from education to investigate the modern notion of the formative role of social environment. The influence of place is lived experience, the lived reality through which consciousness is developed and character formed (1981:35).

Location is important in all areas of the narrative structure and can be analysed as part of the structural dichotomy of literary texts. Pratt defines the literary work as consisting of "a fabula, or story line, made up of brute 'language material' which is then shaped and elaborated by means of literary devices into a sjuzhet, or plot" (1977:23). Within the fabula, location provides texture, making it possible for the different areas of the narrative to appear coherent and unified, while, as an aspect of sjuzhet, it functions as a symbol of the character's aspirations and moral qualities. Jane Austen provides her reader with three contrasting social environments: Mansfield, Sotherton and Portsmouth. Each setting is accompanied by distinct behavioural and social standards. The characters' movements within these worlds allow the narrator to expose and challenge certain moral principles. O'Toole states that:

while it is possible for background description only to function statically, as a mere locus for an episode, or a social definition of a character, it is likely to have a dynamic function as well, marking the progression from one episode to episode - or halting or changing the rhythm of that progression -, or else reflecting or making possible the development of a character (1982:184).

An analysis of location is directed at the semantic function of language. Austen uses location as a narrative device, which produces meaning through "syntagmatic
relations - the possibilities of combining items to form sequences" (Culler 1981:200). Location is not limited to generalised descriptions of houses but provides meaning through details of objects and rooms. It is the accumulation of these details that produces a unified image of location.

Jane Austen's description of objects and material possessions provides a glimpse into the semantic significance of location. Barbara Hardy believes that Austen's description of objects is "usually sunk below the surface, seldom loud or flaunted even when playing an important part as a personal or social symbol, or a dramatic property" (1975:181). Even though the descriptions occupy very little of the narrative, the ramifications span the entire novel. Location functions as "part of the text-forming component in the linguistic system" (Halliday and Hasan 1976:27). By comparing and contrasting the different qualities of each house, the reader is able to formulate the semantic relation between objects and characters. The contents of each estate act as cohesive devices. Blake defines cohesion as a "visible means of ... linking utterances together so that they can be seen to belong to a single text" (1990:104).

The description of Fanny's material possessions establishes the narrator's ideal relationship between owner and object. It is this standard by which all other details are compared. Fanny's possessions include "her plants, her books ... her writing desk, and her other works of charity and ingenuity" (MP:173). The different items are tied together by the repetition of the personal pronoun 'her'. Blake states that "personal reference is achieved through personal pronouns as well as through possessive adjectives and pronouns" (1990:105). The entire portrayal of the East room and Fanny's objects is saturated with personal references. The
repetition of the pronoun not only reflects the extent and range of Fanny's interests but also explains her strong personal connection with the objects. Every item in her collection has its place within her affections. The issue of ownership is important as Fanny is continually searching for and questioning her role and status within society.

Similarly, the pronouns cast Fanny's ownership as exclusive, each object having been selected according to her own personal criteria and not by any socially determined standards. Thus the items are seen as representative of her independence and distance from the community in general.

Austen suggests that ownership is not simply a state of physical possession, but is determined by personal and emotional connections. Fanny's objects are important because "she could scarcely see an object in that room which had not an interesting remembrance connected with it - [e]verything was a friend or bore her thoughts to a friend" (MP:173). The connection between the objects and Fanny's emotional responses is explained through metonymy. Jakobson states that "metonymical responses to the same stimulus ... combine and contrast the positional similarity with semantic contiguity" (1988:58). Thus metonymy acts as a cohesive tie, connecting the different areas of the narrative together to produce a specific meaning. Fanny's seemingly disparate collection of items become "so blended together, so harmonised" by metonymic connections. Among Fanny's greatest elegancies and ornaments were a faded footstool of Julia's work, too ill done for the drawing-room, three transparencies, made in a rage for transparencies ... a collection of family profiles thought unworthy of being anywhere else, over the mantle-piece, and by their side and pinned against the wall, a small sketch of a ship sent four years ago from the Mediterranean by William (MP:174).

Although these items represent a variety of styles and origins, they all function as
reminders of the past. Francis Yates states that irregular and unsymmetrical images "function ... solely to give an emotional impetus to memory by their personal idiosyncrasies or their strangeness" (1966:17). Austen uses metonymic connections to highlight a specific aspect of Fanny's character. These connections "involve the shift from one element in a sequence to another, or one element in a context to another" (Selden 1985:62).

Although the objects span a wide area of Fanny's life at Mansfield Park, each metonymic connection reduces and specifies the field of analysis. The first metonymic connection identifies the objects as representative of Fanny's 'thoughts'. These thoughts recall her life at Mansfield and are limited to interactions and relationships with family members. The past holds strong emotional attachments for Fanny and she encountered "the pains of tyranny, of ridicule, of neglect, yet almost every recurrence of either had led to something consolatory" (MP:173). The narrative attention shifts from the past and family relations to the present and the subject of the analysis is Fanny. The progression of ideas from the initial stimulus to the final connection is Fanny's "attempt to find her way to her duty" (MP:174). The strong and logical semantic relations reduce the possibility of ambiguity or hesitation in this process. Fanny has no misconceptions about her social status and gratitude to her family, but it is the extent and manner in which this gratitude should be expressed that causes her uncertainty and prompts self-analysis.

The metonymic connections which structure Fanny's narrative are accompanied by strong emotive ties. The East room is the only place where Fanny is able to vent her emotions freely, and it is the site for the expression of her
independence and authority. The room contains "nothing to oppress her" and she is able to select and organise its contents and determine their moral and personal significance.

Austen adopts a lexical register with an emotional connection. Ullmann believes that the "collocation of synonyms is a very common stylistic device ... [which] has an emotional motivation: we may give vent to our indignation, anger, excitement, or other strong feelings" (1971:147). The East room embodies emotions of comfort, security and identity. Even though the room is small and unheated, the "comfort of it in her hours of leisure was extreme" (MP:173).

The emphasis of the emotional is highlighted by Austen's coupling of emotional states with a lexis based upon economic value. This seemingly incongruous pairing implies the differences between Fanny's perspective and that of the society. The narrator states that Fanny's "value for the comforts of ... [the East room] increased", "her comprehension under-valued", "she owed the greatest complaisance" and she was "bewildered as the amount of debt which all the kind remembrances produced" (MP:174). The narrator adopts the lexis of one social group to emphasise the characteristics of another. Fanny's emotional and personal ties cannot be evaluated. Ullmann believes that "evocative overtones can also arise from linguistic differences in space ... and time" (1971:141). Austen's antonymic descriptions derive their meaning from spatial and temporal differences. Fanny's emotional and spiritual outlook is spatially distant from the society's economically based outlook, and while Fanny represents a new educational and personal order, the community maintains belief in the old, inflexible system.

The narrative of the East room reveals the society's value system. The
lexical collocation is limited to epithets with negative connotations. The East room had "become useless and for sometime was quite deserted", but, because "nobody else wanted" it, Fanny was allowed to make use of it. Both Fanny and the room have been neglected, ignored or rejected by the society. Fanny's "motives had been misunderstood, her feelings disregarded, and her comprehension under-valued" (MP:173). Society's disregard for Fanny's emotions is felt in the evaluation of the East room's contents. Many of the objects in the East room have been discarded, since they do not satisfy the aesthetic demands of society. The "elegancies and ornaments" are considered by society's standards to be "too ill done", or "made in a rage" which is no longer fashionable, or "unworthy of being anywhere else" (MP:174). This valuation of the objects ignores any family or historical significance.

The narrator's sympathetic portrayal of these possessions is based on Fanny's emotional attachment. Fanny's possessions are the result of her educational and personal development at Mansfield Park, for, when she entered the Bertram family, she "had not any paper" (MP:52) to write a letter. Fanny's possessions act as concrete manifestations of her emotional and moral beliefs. Her despair at not having the materials to write indicates her tendency toward objects with a practical function. The "paper and every other material" provided by Edmund are useful possessions as they enable her to communicate with her family. Similarly, the objects in the East room are practical for recalling relationships and memories. Maria and Julia Bertram aspire to different goals and they evaluate Fanny by their standards. Their interest in her "two sashes" belongs to a different social and personal realm from the one in which Fanny believes. Maria and Julia
operate in the world "below" where objects are coveted and displayed as signs of social and economic status. On the other hand, Maria and Julia Bertram acquire material possessions in order to define their characters. Since they lack moral structure, they cultivate an image based upon surface appearance and believe that personal and social success can be measured by material possessions. Hardy asserts that "Jane Austen is decidedly unaesthetic in her feeling for objects, and those characters who yearn for elegance, colour, dash and beauty are in danger" (1975:183).

Sotherton Court is first introduced into the narrative as one of the 'enjoyments' which marriage to a wealthy man would provide. Maria Bertram's interest lies solely in the economic and social benefits she would acquire as mistress of the estate. The contents of the estate are revealed in a formal tour. Both Mrs Rushworth and Maria are keen to "have its size displayed" (MP:113) and admired by the party. Maria and Mrs Rushworth, like Mary Crawford, believe that material possessions should be flaunted publicly. Mary is seen to possess only one object: her harp. The harp symbolises her attractive and desirable image and serves to capture Edmund's affections. Fanny's perspective is completely different. Her possessions remain part of her private life in the secluded East room. Her objects do not belong in the public, social sphere as they prompt memories which hold personal significance.

Mrs Rushworth's tour focuses on the physical attributes of the house. The narrator informs the reader that the house is furnished "with shining floors, solid mahogany, rich damask, marble, gilding and carving, each handsome in its way" (MP:113). The collocation of decorating features, which are suitable for a man
with "twelve thousand a year" (MP:73), is expected in such a 'noble' old home. Ullmann believes that "words ... have the ability to evoke those 'registers' to which they normally belong" (1971:141). The description of Sotherton's physical features evokes a register of opulence and extravagance. The epithets - 'solid', 'rich' - enhance the lavishness of Sotherton's interior. The narrator, however, seeks to undermine the visual impact of this description and attaches the comment: "each handsome in its way", on to the end of the sentence. Thus the narrator suggests that the features are too elaborate and overdone to be appealing or desirable. The difference between Sotherton and the East room is obvious, for the objects at Sotherton have no inherent significance, but are displayed purely for their physical appearance. Although the image presented is one of wealth and social stature, there appears to be little significance or substance behind the façade of elegance. The lack of familial and personal connections is reinforced in the depiction of the paintings, of which "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" (MP:113). The Rushworths have ignored the portraits as important historical and familial connections. Any details about "former times" are related as frivolous snippets to warm the imagination. By contrast, the portraits in Fanny's possession serve as reminders of her position within the family structure. Fanny has a strong personal attachment to these profiles and, at times of emotional turmoil, she glances at "Edmund's profile [to see if] she could catch any of his counsel" (MP:174). The metonymic connections which describe Sotherton are based upon a lack of personal significance. All aspects of the estate are personally and emotionally hollow. The Rushworths' lack
of personal attachments is also applied to the chapel. The narrative description of the chapel focuses on its "profusion of mahogany, and the crimson velvet cushions appearing over the ledge of the family gallery" (MP:115) but does not explain or celebrate its spiritual function. Mrs Rushworth adds that before "James the Second's time ... 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" (MP:115).

Jane Austen presents Sotherton Court through a lexis based upon physical attributes. One of the first descriptions of Sotherton relates its acreage as covering "a good seven hundred, without reckoning the water meadows" (MP:87). It is this emphasis on the physical and economic features that provides the narrative of Sotherton with texture and meaning. Maria Bertram is pleased with the spaciousness of Sotherton and it is the size of the estate that sends "her spirits ... in as happy a flutter as vanity and pride could furnish" (MP:112). The size and number of rooms represents the magnitude of the estate. The visiting party's first glimpse into Sotherton's interior is in the "appointed dining-parlour ... prepared with abundance and elegance" (MP:113). Page asserts that "elegance is a much richer and more meaningful term used by Jane Austen ...[and] like many words which she uses for the most part with entire seriousness, it often carries ... an overtone of humour or irony" (1972:66). All other aspects of the estate are connected through a similar extravagant narration. The tour of the house takes in "a number of rooms, all lofty, and many large, and amply furnished in the taste of fifty years back" (MP:113). Austen's narrative seems to comply with Riffaterre's notion of the descriptive system. According to Riffaterre:
each component of the system functions as a metonym of the nucleus ... and at any point in the text where the system is made implicit, the reader can fill in gaps in an orderly way and reconstitute the whole representation from that metonym (1978:40-41).

The nucleus of the Sotherton Court descriptive system is the image of an aristocratic residence, while its furnishings and contents gain meaning and radiate out from this centre. Sotherton Court, as a stately property, fulfills the reader’s expectations of extravagance and wealth. Yet Austen exposes this image as superficial; the narrator claims that the estate possesses “more rooms than could be supposed to be of any other use than to contribute to the window tax” (MP:114). The fact that “every room on the west front looked across ... tall iron palisades and gates” (MP:114) confirms the notion that Sotherton is “a prison - quite a dismal old prison” (MP:84). No ‘improvements’, according to Duckworth, can liberate Sotherton and its inhabitants from its “state of [moral] desuetude” (1971:36).

Fanny’s continual use of the East room refers anaphorically to the abandoned chapel at Sotherton. Even though the East room has “suffered all the ill-usage of children” (MP:174), it remains a purposeful and functional area of the estate. Although no longer used as a school room, it continues to be a site for communication, education and growth. It is within Fanny’s world that the novel sees worthwhile “improvements”. By contrast the “handsome chapel” has been stripped of its role as an educational and spiritual guide. The chapel, with its “profusion of mahogany” is just an extension of the house itself. The first description of the chapel, as nothing more than a “mere, spacious, oblong room”, (MP:114) connects it with the ‘lofty’ and ‘large’ rooms in the house. This connection is emphasised by the similarity in furnishings. Like all the other areas
of Sotherton, Banfield notes that "the chapel becomes a symbol of formality hiding moral emptiness, especially in the inappropriateness of its sumptuous physical appearance to its lack of function" (1971:8). Spiritual activities were once an integral part of daily life at Sotherton, and the chapel 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" (MP:115). Mr Rushworth is seen to reject the significance of spiritual, historical and familial connections. His idea of improvements seems to suggest a further disregard for the past. As Duckworth states, he is "well aware of the aesthetic deficiencies of his estate, [but] he is ignorant of far worse evils" (1971:36).

The dismissal of spiritual activities is shown to produce incompetent characters. Mr Rushworth's narrative is connected through references to his vanity and lack of memory. The narrator states that "Mr Rushworth liked the idea of his finery very well, though affecting to despise it, and was too much engaged with what his own appearance would be, to think of others" (MP:162). His pleasure at having to deliver "two and forty speeches" is based upon the notion that "abundance" is a more important quality than content. However, he does not possess the facilities to remember his lines and Fanny "was at great pains to teach him how to learn ... trying to make an artificial memory for him" (MP:185-6). The physical attributes of Sotherton Court become characterological traits. Similarly, Fanny's characteristics are identifiable in the familial and historical significance of the East room. Jane Austen's irony is evident in the portrayal of Mr Rushworth, as she cast him to appear as uninteresting as Sotherton Court.

The Portsmouth episode plays a significant role in the narrative of
Mansfield Park. Portsmouth is the site for many incidents which determine the narrative outcome. Furthermore, O'Toole believes "setting may certainly reflect the development of a character" (1982:190). It is an appropriate metonymic image for Portsmouth, as the centre for unrestrained behaviour, which signals the complete and final corruption of almost all the novel's characters. Portsmouth reveals the Prices' lax morals, Maria Bertram and Henry Crawford's unacceptable behaviour and Fanny's emerging role within society. The meaning of these revelations is produced through comparisons and connections with different areas of the text. Portsmouth is the final component in the metonymic connection which spans the entire novel, linking the three locations together.

Jane Austen's narrative of Portsmouth coheres antonymically with Sotherton. The spaciousness and lavishness of Mr Rushworth's estate is a stark contrast to the confined, crowded and chaotic existence at Portsmouth. Yet both Sotherton and Portsmouth cultivate improper and immoral individuals. Sotherton allows indecorous behaviour by adopting old-fashioned and hollow standards, while Portsmouth's impropriety results from an absence of discipline and guidelines. The physical characteristics of Portsmouth are guided by a similar lack of order. Banfield asserts that "the descriptions of the Price house explain the behaviour of those who live in it, just as the account of the formal gardens at Sotherton explains the feelings of restraint felt by the visitors there" (1981:36). The description of contents in the Prices' home suggests a lack of participation and interest by its inhabitants. Fanny's:

eyes could only wander from the walls marked by her father's head, to the table cut and notched by her brothers, where stood the tea-board never thoroughly cleaned, the cups wiped in streaks, the milk a mixture of motes floating in thin blue, and the bread and butter growing every minute more
greasy than even Rebecca's hands had first produced it (MP:428).

The physical disrepair of the house reflects the moral decay not only of the Prices, but of almost all the novel's characters. This description is followed by the news that Mrs Maria Rushworth had "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 ... whither they were gone" (MP:428). The metonymic connections proposed by this description relate to a large portion of the novel. Mr and Mrs Price's disregard for rules and principles is indicated by the condition of their house. The house's moral and physical decay makes Fanny "melancholy" while "her father read his newspaper, and her mother lamented over the ragged carpet as usual, while the tea was in preparation - and wished Rebecca would mend it" (MP:428).

The Prices' disregard for the rules of social behaviour cohere with the violation of acceptable behaviour committed by Maria and Henry. The combination of Maria, Henry and the Prices refer anaphorically to the beginning of the novel. The "imprudent marriage" of Frances Ward was viewed by her family as unacceptable, so much so that "an absolute breach between the sisters had taken place" (MP:41). The narrator is implying that Maria may suffer the same fate as her aunt, ostracised by both society and family.

While the contents of Portsmouth indicate its lack of restraint, Austen reveals that not all of its inhabitants have been corrupted. The object that is central to the Portsmouth episode is the silver knife. Susan and Betsey fight over possession of the knife. This struggle is indicative of Fanny's battle with an economic and appearance driven society. Susan's claim to the knife coheres with
Fanny's appreciation of her possessions. Susan wants the knife for purely personal and sentimental reasons. She states that "it was her own knife; little sister Mary had left it to her upon her death-bed" (MP:379). On the other hand, Betsey wants the knife to play with as it holds surface appeal. Fanny is able to recognise the different values of the sisters and remedy the situation. She exercised her economic independence and:

- a silver knife was bought for Betsey, and accepted with great delight, its newness giving it every advantage over the other that could be desired;
- Susan was established in the full possession of her own, Betsey handsomely declaring that now she had one so much prettier herself, she should never want that again (MP:389).

In the midst of poverty and indecorum, Susan possesses the moral and personal perspective lacking at Sotherton.

The rooms in the Portsmouth home are accompanied by moral characteristics. The large number of rooms at Sotherton expresses the Rushworths' and Maria's belief in physical appearance and abundance. By contrast, Portsmouth is defined by its lack of space and rooms. Fanny's first impression relates that it is "so small that her first conviction was of its being only a passage-room to something better" (MP:371). The restricted amount of space in the Price home is seen to oppress Fanny's thought processes. The East room is the place for Fanny to formulate and review her decisions, an area in which she "walked down to try its influence on an agitated, doubting spirit" (MP:174). On the other hand, the rooms and atmosphere at Portsmouth leave Fanny "fatigued" (MP:380). The rooms are so crowded that:

- the smallness of the house, and thinness of the walls, brought everything so close to her, that, added to the fatigue of her journey, and all her recent agitation, she hardly knew how to bear it (MP:375).
A comparison is drawn between these confined spaces and Fanny's "small white attic" and East room. The size of the room does not decide its moral worth, rather it is the personal attachments and use that determines its role in defining character. Hardy suggests that "the chief contrast of the novel is drawn between Fanny's two houses, Mansfield and Portsmouth, and depends on the moral significance of objects and the responses and uses of people" (1975:192). Fanny's influence enables the rooms to assume a different moral quality. Susan's appreciation of the personal significance of the silver knife implies a similar disposition to Fanny. Fanny and Susan adopt one of the rooms as a makeshift schoolroom in which Susan learns the moral lessons directed by Fanny. The rooms at the Prices' home allow improper and indecorous behaviour to flourish. Mr and Mrs Price are the culprits of the "noise, disorder and impropriety" (MP:381). Fanny expects them to exercise their authority and direct the behaviour of their children. Just as Sotherton Court operates in the absence of any spiritual or moral authority, Portsmouth's faults lie in the neglect of education and discipline, in favour of excessive and unruly freedom. Fanny judges Mr Price as "more negligent of his family, his habits were worse, and his manners coarser, than she had been prepared for" (MP:381). Mrs Price is also characterised as lacking order and discipline and "her days were spent in a kind of slow bustle: always busy without getting on, always behindhand and lamenting it, without altering her ways" (MP:382). Mrs Price's lack of movement does not correlate with Fanny's passivity; it is viewed instead as a sign of her family's moral inactivity. Tave states that "the traditional moral failure of idleness, a wrong in itself and a cause of other wrongs, is of particular interest to Jane Austen as it signifies a mind
utterly without direction, empty, making no use of time” (1973:168).

Although Austen does not exaggerate the importance of location in *Mansfield Park*, her descriptions enable the reader to identify important characterological information within the narrative.
Dramatic and Theatrical Locations

Theatrical episodes involve a narratorial evaluative commentary on the moral attributes of the characters. The narrator casts certain dramatic instances as morally corrupt and threatening to the stability of the Mansfield community. Austen's theme of role-playing is inextricably tied to location. The moral qualities of location, as revealed by the examination of Austen's objects, rooms and estates, are seen to provide the perfect environment for pretence. Within these environments, the characters readily adopt roles to disguise their emotions and intentions. Nonetheless, Austen's dramatic roles highlight and expose the improper desires of her characters. The absence of authority in the different social settings results in the unrestrained expression of emotions. Austen's narrator adopts an evaluative narrative to relate the unacceptable and dangerous qualities of role-playing. William Labov believes that narrators use evaluative commentary:

> to show that the events involved were truly dangerous and unusual, or that someone else broke the normal rules in an outrageous and reportable way. Evaluative devices say to us: ... that was strange, uncommon or unusual - that is, worth reporting (1972:371).

Austen constructs two distinct evaluative commentaries. The two dramatic strands running throughout the text belong to the Crawford-Bertram group and to Fanny. Fanny's theatrical narrative is well hidden within her discourse and is often overshadowed by the more vocal and dominant episodes of the other characters. The issue of role playing serves to define and express Fanny's role within society. By contrast, the Crawfords and the Bertrams assume roles which "deny ... important realities of the external world in which the self must exist, substituting for them forms, fictions, and material values" (Bevan 1987:595). This form of role play is deemed unacceptable as it ignores social and moral obligations.
Fanny's 'dramatic' narrative seeks to explain the natural and plausible development of her character. The role she assumes at the novel's closure is the final product of a long spiritual, moral and social process. Fanny's sense of identity is achieved through a theatrical bildungsroman. She changes from a silent and ignored observer to an active and powerful participant. The transformation occurs in three stages, and each one is revealed at a different location. Sotherton, Mansfield and Portsmouth each plays a role in the unfolding of Fanny's character. Austen adopts a theatrical register to describe the development of Fanny's social role. Her moral and spiritual qualities dominate the syntactic and semantic levels of her narrative, but the emotional characteristics disguise an under-developed social role. A balanced emotional and social perspective is proposed as the ideal characterological trait. Many of the novel's characters are condemned for possessing a dominant social perspective at the expense of moral concerns. In order for Fanny to be positioned as Mansfield Park's heroine and saviour she must be able to operate as effectively within the social sphere as within the East room. Fanny, therefore, must learn to participate in society and the novel traces her social education.

Fanny's return to Mansfield at the end of the novel signals the completion of her social education. Austen uses the register consisting of theatrical roles to suggest the stages in the learning process. Fanny is required to act; unlike her natural emotional and moral sympathies, acting is not an inherent quality but one which must be learned. Austen's theatrical register belongs to both the interpersonal and textual functions of language. The interpersonal function requires language "to serve in the establishment and maintenance of all human
relationships; it is the means whereby social groups are integrated and the individual is identified and reinforced" (Halliday 1973:107). The lexical register uses language to define Fanny's social role, as well as providing texture between the different areas of text.

Sotherton sees Fanny as socially naive and innocent. Kennedy believes that "Fanny is above all a passive character; she suffers but she does not act ... [w]hat she has to learn is not how to act properly, since she is proper enough; she must learn to act" (1979:59). The Sotherton episode places Fanny as a member of the audience. Mrs Rushworth's tour of the house represents a theatrical, contrived performance for it is a narrative learned from the housekeeper. Fanny "attended [the monologue] with affected earnestness to all that Mrs Rushworth could relate .... delighted to connect anything with history already known, or warm her imagination with scenes of the past" (MP:114). The final phrase - "scenes of the past" - classifies Mrs Rushworth's speech as an act performed solely for the entertainment of the guests. However, Mrs Rushworth's narrative is only a pretence and cannot be interpreted as a true or credible account of history.

Fanny's position as an audience member and observer corresponds to her relationship with her companions. At this stage in the novel, Fanny is excluded from participation in their activities. Moler claims that:

one of the ways in which Austen emphasises Fanny's moral and psychological separation from the Mansfield world is by frequently placing her in situations of actual, physical distance from members of the Bertram-Crawford-Rushworth group (1985:189).

The Sotherton excursion is the first instance of Fanny's inclusion within their group. Outings usually "included all the young people but herself, and was much enjoyed at the time and doubly enjoyed again in the evening discussion"
Fanny can only observe the activities of the group from a distance.

This is exaggerated in Fanny’s view of Mary and Edmund horse riding in the parsonage meadow "gently rising beyond the village road". She uses her skills of perception to interpret their gestures and her "imagination supplied what the eye could not reach".

Fanny’s participation is limited to expressing her thoughts and observations. The revelation of Edmund’s pending ordination causes a dramatic change in Mary’s appearance. Her:

countenance ... might have amused a disinterested observer. She looked 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.

The acting at Mansfield sees a logical progression in the lexis which describes Fanny’s social education. Although morally distant, she is included in the activities of the other characters. Fanny’s closer involvement allows for an intense observation of the performers. Her observing and critical eye:

looked on and listened, not unamused to observe the selfishness which, more or less disguised, seemed to govern them all, and wondering how it would end. For her own gratification she could have wished that something might be acted, for she had never seen even half a play, but everything of higher consequence was against it.

Added to this already existing quality is a more active role in the procedures; Fanny "began to be their only audience, and - sometimes as prompter, sometimes as spectator". At this stage she has no desire to act and refuses to accept the role of the Cottager. Mary and Edmund force her into a more prominent and active role, as they want her "to prompt and observe them, she was invested, indeed, with the office of judge and critic".

The journey to Portsmouth sees the final change in Fanny’s character.
Fanny learns to take responsibility for herself and direct her own movements. The arrival of Henry Crawford temporally reminds her of her unwillingness to perform by his rules. Henry manipulates his language in order to captivate and communicate with other characters. Bevan believes that the Crawfords "are producers in that they aim to regulate the reactions of others to conform with the roles they envisage for them in their drama" (1987:603). Fanny's refusal of Henry's proposal, like her refusal to play the Cottager's wife, indicates her disapproval of roles motivated by selfish needs.

Henry's manipulative powers are so threatening that Fanny turns pale at the sound of his voice. Austen uses synecdoche to describe Henry, his voice representing his whole character. Synecdoche is a device "whereby a discourse infers qualities of the whole from qualities of a part or extracts an essence from an example" (Culler 1981:216). Austen's image is appropriate, as Henry uses his knowledge of the language and conversational skills to control his female audiences.

Fanny's horror at seeing Henry does not let her forget her social manners and conduct. Her educational process has provided her with the skills needed to operate in social situations. The narrator claims that "good sense, like hers, will always act when really called upon; and she found that she had been able to name him to her mother, and recall her remembrance of the name, as that of 'William's friend'" (MP:392). Fanny's 'act' in this scene is not a false or contrived one, but the result of her educational development. Her performance combines social, emotional and moral skills. The narrator identifies Fanny's performance as connected to "good sense" and "remembrance".
Fanny's long and gradual developmental process secures her role within society. The journey back to Mansfield signals the beginning of a new role in society. Having witnessed and survived the corrupting influences at Sotherton and Portsmouth, she is deemed worthy of her elevated social status.

Austen's portrayal of the Crawford-Bertram interludes are accompanied by negative, ironical overtones. The Crawford-Bertram theatrical system adopts different roles as a means of operating within the world. The immorality of this system lies in its disregard for authority and the expression of personal desires without any sense of social or moral responsibility. Austen uses theatrical episodes as a motif throughout the novel. Tomashevskij defines the motif as the "minimal dissection of the thematic material" (in Dolezhel 1971:96). The motif enables the narrator to comment unobtrusively upon the events; thus every incident of theatrical role-playing is accompanied by narratorial modality. Location provides a social and moral matrix for the interpretation and evaluation of the theatrical scenes.

The differences between Austen's two dramatic systems are exposed in the drawing-room interlude between Henry and Edmund. Henry and Edmund express their views on the role of the clergyman. The social setting of the drawing room dictates that the conversation is for the entertainment and enjoyment of the observers, rather than a serious debate, such as occurs in the East room. The conversation begins with Henry's recitation of Shakespeare's Henry VIII. Henry's reading is "truly dramatic" and indicates his powerful theatrical skills. Even Fanny, whose moral strengths guard her from many evils, is influenced by his delivery. She attempts to:
concentrate on her needle work; but taste was too strong in her. She could not abstract her mind five minutes; she was forced to listen; his reading was capital, and her pleasure in good reading extreme" (MP:334).

Despite Fanny's interest, Henry's convincing portrayal of different characters excludes him from ever winning her affections. Bevan believes that Fanny demonstrates "a state of being grounded in feeling, not role-play; in actual, not imagined experience" (1987:598). Fanny's 'role' is determined by an emotional and social development spanning the entire novel, whereas Henry is able to perform a variety of characters in rapid succession. The emotions of "dignity or pride, or tenderness or remorse" are related merely as different speech styles, which can be adopted and discarded as easily as the dramatis personae. Bevan asserts that "in theatre, what is required is effective rendition, not personal sincerity or feeling; fiction not fact; role not reality; form or effect, not truth" (1987:607). Even though Henry's acting ability is "no everyday talent", it is not to be admired. According to Morgan "spirited readings ... [including] Henry Crawford's of Shakespeare, do not prove sincerity of heart" (1980:144). Henry uses his skills to meddle with the emotions of Maria, Julia and Fanny. Edmund's promotion of Henry's skills confirms his clouded perception and inability to recognise the dangerous ramifications of insincere emotional interactions.

Austen guides the narrative discussion of role-play from a fictional incident to a social issue relevant to the characters. The manner in which a sermon is delivered has merit within the Church for "recommending the most solid truths" (MP:337). Edmund views dramatic speech styles as a tool available to the preacher. On the other hand, Henry believes that delivery should provide the basis for the sermon, as it is in the reading that the speech is significant and powerful.
The sole purpose of Henry's utterance is to appeal to Fanny's spiritual sensibilities, although his intention is undermined by the revelation of his belief in the dramatic potential of the pulpit. Henry's notion of the sermon as a "capital gratification" is entirely dependent upon its style and structure. Austen's irony is evident in the structuring of Henry's utterance. His speech begins with universal truths about the significance of sermons: "A sermon ... is no rare thing. ... A thoroughly good sermon ... is a capital gratification. ... There is something in the eloquence of the pulpit ... which is entitled to the highest praise and honour" (MP:338). Morson states that absolute utterances "have no particular human author; it is, indeed, because they are authorless, that they are authoritative" (1986:9). However, the power of these statements is deflated by adverbial phrases inserted into each sentence. The adverbial phrases qualify Henry's point of view: "well delivered", "thoroughly well delivered", "when it is really eloquence" (MP:338). According to Henry, the most significant feature of the sermon is its performative value. Henry's attempt to appeal to Fanny is rapidly losing credibility. He clarifies his perspective by stating that a preacher:

who can touch and affect such an heterogenous mass of hearers, on subjects limited, and long worn thread-bare in all common hands; who can say any thing new or striking, any thing that rouses the attention, without offending the taste, or wearing out the feelings of his hearers, is a man whom one could not (in his public capacity) honour enough (MP:338).

Henry believes that a preacher is a dramatic figure, whose role is to entertain the congregation, while spiritual concerns are "thread-bare". He ignores the moral principles of the clergy, which call for complete devotion, discipline and guidance of the parishioners, as her claims that he would only preach to "a London audience ... to the educated" and "once or twice in the spring after being
anxiously expected for half a dozen Sundays together; but not for constancy" (MP:339). The lexical choice belongs to the theatrical motif; the congregation is transformed into an "audience" and the sermon is a "composition". Tanner believes that "in his courtship of Fanny, Crawford is perhaps trying to play the most difficult role of all - the role of sincerity" (1986:169). This speech provides the reader with a clear insight into Henry's motivating principles; he lacks any moral or spiritual qualities and bases his actions upon physical appearance and impressions. He is representative of the hollow chapel at Sotherton, whose physical facade is devoid of any spiritual structures.

The immorality of the theatrical episodes stems from the characters' lack of spiritual and moral principles. The charade at Sotherton chapel's altar signals the beginning of the corruptive and destructive theatrical events. Maria and Mr Rushworth's "standing side by side" in the chapel acts out the marriage service which will take place as soon as Sir Thomas returns home. Henry's flirtation with Maria at the altar identifies the dangerous nature of role-playing. His statement not only implies the scandalous relationship that develops from this interaction, but threatens both the moral and social systems. Marriage is an important aspect of the novel's society, for it brings about the union of economic and social properties. Bevan states that "in these cases, formal expectation decrees that feeling be fabricated; there are no emotional realities, only ritual procedures" (1987:606). Nonetheless, the marriage is an important event for the family, as the "alliance" elevates the Bertram family's social profile.

Henry's flirtation with the bride violates the sacred nature of marriage. The threat to the sacred ritual of marriage occurs in the chapel where spiritual
activities have been suspended. The chapel no longer holds any spiritual significance and does not impose any formal restraints. Henry's arrogance sees him engage in a conversation and relationship which defy the moral principles embodied by the chapel. The absence of a spiritual authority in the chapel allows the indiscreet behaviour to proceed with "little caution". As a figure of social authority, Mr Rushworth fails to exert his power to extinguish the interaction. The impropriety of such behaviour receives neither reprimand nor condemnation; Mrs Rushworth simply "spoke with proper smiles and dignity of its being a most happy event to her whenever it took place" (MP:117). The faulty education of the Rushworths does not provide them with the skills to deflate the situation or recognise its potential for destruction.

The flirtation and comic banter at Sotherton expands beyond control at Mansfield. Henry's interactions with Maria Bertram appear to be dominated by an interpersonal language function. Maria asks him to participate in the marriage charade, to which he replies "I am afraid I should do it very awkwardly" (MP:117). Henry's response seems to convey his emotional state. His relationship with Maria is founded upon this use of language. The roles in the Lovers' Vows encourage an emotionally and personally based communication. Maria is captivated by Henry's charms and cannot distinguish between fiction and reality. It is the opposition between fiction and reality that exposes the purpose and function of Henry's utterances. His language appears to operate on an emotional, communicative level but this merely provides a context for the structuring of his dialogue, in order to produce a specific response. This characteristic of language belongs to the textual function, which is concerned with the form and shape of the
utterance. In the terminology of speech act theory, Henry’s utterances are insincere, as they do not fulfil the conditions that require each speech act to be sincere. Henry views his participation in the Lovers’ Vows in the same way. The "ranting" lines of Henry’s persona, Fredrick, allow him to manipulate Maria’s emotions without any fear of restraint. Henry holds the notion that an engaged woman’s "cares are over, and she feels that she may exert all her powers of pleasing without suspicion. ... [a]ll is safe with a lady engaged; no harm can be done" (MP: 78). Yet Henry is well aware of the harm that can be done and he derives pleasure from manipulating the Bertram sisters’ affections. Under the guise of a dramatic character, Henry expresses emotions he does not feel and raises false hopes in Maria. While Henry may be accustomed to role-playing and is able to abandon it unscathed, Maria and the other Mansfield performers are severely affected by it.

The proposed theatrical performance occurs during Sir Thomas’ trip to the Antiguas. Just as the charade occurred in the absence of a spiritual authority, the performance at Mansfield takes place during the absence of a social authority. The narrator’s disapproval of the play does not lie in public performance, but in the fact that the characters assume roles for expressing intimate and personal desires without fear of social recriminations.

Austen’s social settings provide the means for the exploration and development of her characters and thematic issues.
CONCLUSION

I have shown through my exploration of characterisation in Mansfield Park that linguistic theories constitute an important and meaningful role in literary analysis. Each chapter of the thesis demonstrates the way in which characterisation is achieved in the different areas of the text. The focus of each chapter draws upon a traditional analytical framework, which divides the text into the characters, themes and settings. By using this framework as a guide, my thesis highlights the validity of linguistic theories in exploring the narrative's construction of character. My thesis provides evidence that traditional literary studies of the narrative can be enhanced and revitalised by the examination of the syntactic, lexical, grammatical and semantic components. Many literary approaches to the process of characterisation have focused on the narrator's comments and the characters' speech and actions. This restricted outlook ignores the complex linguistic structures threaded throughout the text. Linguistic theories enable us to retrieve important characterological information from all areas of the narrative. My discussion of the different narrative components seeks to explain that characterisation is not a rigid literary device but an intricate, continuous and structuring process that can be interpreted through the author's application of linguistic techniques. This thesis has revealed that characterisation occurs on the grammatical and syntactic levels as well as on the semantic and semiotic levels.

Linguistic theories will play an ever increasingly important role in the future of literary criticism. My study of the different functions of language in Mansfield Park exposes the intricate and endless web of meaning contained within the narrative's linguistic structures. Students and critics of literature are turning to
linguistics to aid their exploration and interpretation of texts. This thesis has revealed that linguistics can provide a far richer interpretation of a literary work than previously realised. The emerging linguistic based approaches to literature predict a forum of literary analysis which will provide a greater diversity of critical opinion and understanding of the narrative structure.

Critics who condemned Mansfield Park for its stasis have failed to recognise the momentous emotional, moral, personal and social struggles which are staggered throughout the narrative. My thesis has provided linguistic evidence of Austen's battle between moral and social principles. The conflict in Mansfield Park is evident in the different levels and functions of language, rather than through physical actions. This thesis has demonstrated the potential of linguistic theories in identifying important characterological and thematic issues often overlooked by traditional literary approaches.
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