Jane, Judith, and Gender Performance:
A Butlerian Approach to Feminine Identity in *Mansfield Park*

By
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To Mom – a true Janeite.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of my advisors: to Professor Suzanne Benack for helping me decode Judith Butler; to Annette LeClair for her constant enthusiasm and encouragement; to Professor Judith Lewin for driving me crazy; and, of course, to Professor Kara Doyle for keeping me sane.

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Learning the rules that govern intelligible speech is an inculcation into normalized language, where the price of not conforming is the loss of intelligibility itself.

– Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*

'We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be.'

– Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*

Abstract

In this thesis, I take two complex works, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, and read them together to gain a deeper understanding of both. My cutting-edge psychoanalytic approach to understanding Jane Austen provides a profound insight into the impact of socially-constructed expectations on performances of femininity. Butler's work exposes interesting insights into the psychology and feminine identity of both Fanny Price and Mary Crawford while Austen's work exposes limits in Butler's theory of gender performativity. Although Butler claims that gender is a body's constant performance, I add that there is a relationship between gender performance and the external forces that dictate its terms. Consequently, despite Mary being the more charming character in Austen's novel, she struggles to maintain a stable sense of identity due to her over-eager adaptability to new environments and directions. On the contrary, Fanny, the heroine critics love to hate, has the more successful performance of femininity and is rewarded with marriage by the novel's conclusion. Fanny is Austen's true heroine as a result of her constancy in her identity performance despite issues of class and alternative directions. My analysis of Austen expands the parameters of Butler's theory to illustrate the ability women have to reject attempts to change their feminine identity, allowing them to preserve distinct senses of self.

Introduction

Traditionally, Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* is the least appreciated work of her six novels. In fact, it is not difficult to find scholars ready to criticize not only the novel itself but its leading lady Fanny Price. Take for example Marian E. Fowler who, despite arguing a defense for Fanny, still calls the novel "the ugly duckling of the Austen canon" and goes on to say of the novel's heroine: "in our own time we have little admiration for young women like Fanny, whom one critic has described as 'a sort of human sea anemone'" (Fowler 32-33). Instead, many critics prefer to champion Mary Crawford for retaining attributes distinctly unlike Fanny's as well as being "full of witty sallies" (37). It is quite curious that so many should support Mary over Fanny when Austen herself seems to advocate for the "human sea anemone." After all, Fanny is the one who achieves the highest symbol of feminine identity – marriage – while Mary is left unwed by the end of the novel. In this thesis, I bring justice to misunderstood Fanny Price as well as reveal the flaws in Mary Crawford's charm by examining each woman's individual expressions of feminine identity through a psychological lens.

In recent research linking human behavior with the study of literature, few critics talk about the psychological impact of Austen's novels on the expression of feminine identity. For example, in *Character and Conflict in Jane Austen's Novels: A Psychological Approach,* Bernard J. Paris argues that Austen's novels are "beset by tensions between form, theme, and mimesis," which lead Austen characters to "have parallels to real people so we must not just understand their formal and thematic terms but also in motivational terms, just like real human beings" (Paris 9). Paris uses what he calls a "third force" psychological approach, which today is understood as a "humanistic approach", to comprehend Fanny's psychology. Humanism focuses on the subjective individual experience as well as personal growth through self-awareness.

Unlike humanism, the cognitive perspective relies on the internal processing of the mind and how behavior derives from mental processes. Other critics, such as those included in Beth Lau's edited collection *Jane Austen and the Sciences of the Mind*, use this cognitive approach to understand Austen's work. In this revolutionary book, Lau indicates that "the field of cognitive literary studies has rapidly developed in the last few decades and achieved the status of an established (if still evolving) critical approach" (Lau 1). Each author within Lau's text uses a slightly different cognitive approach to understand a different aspect of Austen's characters. For example, Wendy S. Jones uses the theory of attachment to explain issues of incest between Fanny and Edmund; Bethany Wong applies research done on the psychology of play to tackle negative ideas about Fanny's personality; and Natalie M. Phillips and colleagues look at the effects on the brain while reading *Mansfield Park* in an fMRI machine. Yet none of this research deals with issues of gender and identity within Austen's work. I use a psychoanalytic approach first proposed by Judith Butler to reveal how Austen treats issues of gender and identity within *Mansfield Park*. While several other critics also use psychoanalysis to look at Jane Austen, none use it as I do in this thesis[1].

In her 1990 book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler introduces innovative ideas about sex, gender, and desire within the context of the heteronormative matrix. Butler focuses on how culturally-constructed ideas of gender stem from and also inform the cultural construction of both sex and desire. Interestingly, Butler claims that gender, and specifically, femininity, is a persistent impersonation that eventually passes as what she calls "real." This concept of impersonation destabilizes the distinction between what is "real" and what is "artificial" with regard to a subject's gender. Ultimately, the impersonation of feminine gender that Butler

[1] A quick search on the MLA International Bibliography of "Jane Austen" and "psychoanalysis" yields a collective four results. The majority of these works are dated and were published between 1975 and 1997. A search for "Jane Austen" and "Judith Butler" yields no results at all.

critiques leads her to claim that "gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence" (Butler 24). Butler proposes the notion that gender is a performance created and normalized as a result of a collective cultural drive to reinforce fixed, binary notions of biological sex, gender, and desire. This culturally-enforced binary, which Adrienne Rich first called "compulsory heterosexuality," becomes so deeply ingrained in the minds of individuals that expressions of femininity or masculinity (by female and male bodies respectively) become subconscious, automatic, and feel completely instinctive and "natural" to the performing subjects. Butler argues, however, that these performances and perceptions of gender are grounded in cultural constructions which makes them inherently artificial. Instead, subjects merely *feel* a sense of naturalness when they match body positioning, dress, language, etc. to their biological sex as society deems appropriate or, at the very least, normal. Butler's theory extends mostly to the subject, the individual and their experiences within a strict world of binaries where heteronormativity reigns supreme. She hypothesizes about the origin of sex and gender identities and how desires are formed. Butler essentially attempts to bring to consciousness the various subjective phenomena upon which each individual unconsciously builds their identity through imitations of gender. In doing so, Butler exposes the impact that socially-constructed gender norms have on individual subjects.

One scholar who has applied Butler's theory of gender performance to a work of literature is Molly Livingstone. Livingstone takes her own Butlerian approach to Elizabeth Gaskell's 1865 novel *Wives and Daughters*. She argues that a woman could express her feminine identity through the act of affectionately touching her fellow female friends. Nevertheless, Livingstone misuses Butler's theory in several ways. Most troublesome is how Livingstone argues that, "A woman must show her inner characteristics, and thereby build and communicate

her identity, through actions. Dress cannot fully signify a woman's emotional capacity, nor can the rank of her connections, or the possession of accomplishments like the ability to draw, paint, or speak French" (Livingstone 60). Livingstone seems to rely on physical displays of touch to demonstrate the performance of femininity and argues that external markers do not fully represent one's performance. As I will demonstrate later on, Butler's theory rests upon the idea that gender requires constant performance. That means that dress, social status, and accomplishments are precisely the external markers that help to create a subject's identity. While Livingstone makes a compelling argument for feminine touch creating feminine identity, this action does not outweigh the power of dress, status, or accomplishments to express feminine identity. Furthermore, Livingstone admits to another flaw in her analysis. She attests that a character "enacts the expected gender norms of femininity only until she attains her objective – to marry"; yet, Livingstone also acknowledges that part of Butler's theory involves the continuous reenactment of the gender performance and marriage implies an ending to that performance (65). My analysis of Austen using Judith Butler's theory accommodates both of these issues.

I apply Butler's theory of gender performativity to a work of fiction by Jane Austen in order to observe the actual ways in which members of society use the concept of compulsory heteronormativity to reinforce performances of gender. A lot can be gained from evaluating literature with psychological theories which is a notion Paris highlights in his work using the humanistic approach in psychology: "Authors' works amplify theories which helps us to perceive them and give them phenomenological grasp of experience which cannot be gained from theory alone" (Paris 11). Therefore applying Butler's theory of gender performativity to "mimetic" works, such as the novels by Jane Austen, can help us to better understand how her

theory operates in the real world. In the process of investigating this hypothesis, I found Austen's work exposes limits to Butler's theory. By scrutinizing the actions of the specific society in which ideas of gender are generated and maintained, Butler's theory becomes an instrument with which a deeper understanding of Austen and her characters can be ascertained. Conversely, Austen's work enhances the theory Butler proposes in such a way that her philosophical abstractions become not only more concrete, but also more accessible.

In the process of studying Austen's novel closely, I discovered that, while Butler discusses at length the culturally-constructed ideas of gender that inform subjects about how to act on a subconscious level, she does not describe how this habituation occurs in practice, nor does she outline the ways in which habituated performances by others affect the performance of a subject. In light of Butler's missing terminology, I developed a system of terms to describe this habituation process. I use the term "performer" to indicate the female subject receiving habituation. I also use the terms "audience" and "spectators" to denote the members of the performers' lives who make judgements about the performers' actions and decide whether or not the performer is acting in accordance with or against the appropriate, socially-constructed ideas of gender. Moreover, sometimes spectators take an active role in the life of a performer. In that case, the spectator becomes a "director" and influences the performer's future actions either by reinforcing the performance or giving instructions, that the performer either can accept or reject, to change their performance. By observing the director-performer relationship within *Mansfield Park*, I highlight two different types of performance. One is the "naturalized" performance: when the performer acts in a way that aligns with their habituated performance. This can be understood as what *feels* natural to the performer. The second type of performance I call an "idealized" performance, which arises from a performer's unwillingness to accept a naturalized performance.

Idealized performances are very deliberate on the part of the performer and often appear forced and artificial.

As mentioned earlier, this thesis focuses on the performances by Fanny Price and Mary Crawford, who provide two very different examples of performances of femininity. The first chapter focuses on Mary's performance. I show that Mary struggles with questions of adapting her performance to the different surroundings in which she finds herself. Mary has a naturalized urban performance of femininity, which indicates that her directors in London possess different expectations than her new directors in Mansfield. Mary mistakenly becomes too adaptable to both environments, however, and ends up habituating to a new country performance. This change in performance causes confusion and distress for Mary and she must find a way to justify her actions. Mary eases her cognitive dissonance by taking on an idealized performance. The consequence of the idealized performance, as Mary's case shows, destabilizes her identity as her idealized performance corrodes what had been naturalized. Mary loses her sense of self and becomes unintelligible to her audience.

Fanny, in my second chapter, does not struggle with issues of environment or idealized performances. The main factor that complicates Fanny's performance is class. At several points in the novel, Fanny's directors push her towards a performance of high-class femininity that she resists. At times, Fanny is unable to fully resist direction towards a high-class performance and therefore justifies the new behavior as being a matter of honor and duty. In doing this, Fanny is able to accommodate her original naturalized performance as continuous. Other times, however, the price of accomodation is too great and Fanny cannot risk concessions that would lead to a new naturalized performance. Therefore, Fanny displays constancy, which is an attribute that Austen seems to advocate for over the adaptability that Mary portrays. Fanny receives two

marriage proposals and eventually marries while Mary's final outcome leaves her without a proposal or a husband.

While this interpretation clearly shows that Austen favors Fanny's performance of femininity over Mary's, much of the literature on *Mansfield Park* focuses on how much more charming Mary is than Fanny and how it seems to be a 'truth universally acknowledged' that Fanny is the most detested Austen heroine. I too am fascinated by the complexity with which Austen presents Mary's performance but I reject the assumption that Fanny is created to be hated and instead propose to come to her defense. Austen indicates, through Mary, how damaging an adaptable performance can be and highlights the dangers of adjusting a performance to please the naturalized direction of changing audiences. Meanwhile, Austen also shows through Fanny the initial necessity of naturalizing a performance and emphasizes the importance of reifying that performance so that one may maintain a sense of stable identity later in life. In short, Austen offers textual support for what would later become Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and shows how necessary it is in order to maintain a distinct sense of self to protest against those who challenge a naturalized performance of femininity.

Chapter I

The Price of Mary Crawford's Idealized Performance

The key to understanding the psychology behind Mary Crawford is that, in her pre-Mansfield Park life, she becomes naturalized to an urban performance of femininity. In this context, a naturalized performance is the habituation that occurs from taking direction from directors. This naturalization becomes so ingrained in the performer's actions, mannerisms, dress, and way of speaking that it feels entirely natural to the performer to behave in a certain way when in fact it is the result of social modeling. Mary's naturalized urban performance is characterized by her emphasis on the importance of wealth, her excessively charming way of speaking, and her attention to appearances. We can best understand Mary's naturalized performance by viewing her actions in the latter half of Austen's novel when she returns to London. Critics such as Eileen Gillooly argue that we cannot fairly judge Mary in these later scenes since her behavior is recounted through the eyes of Fanny and Edmund, who are "two of the least impartial of character witnesses" (331). On the contrary, I argue, Edmund and Fanny are the perfect spectators to judge Mary's behavior because their country perspectives provide a clear distinction between Mary's urban and country performances. Consequently, it is precisely their job to pick apart Mary's city performance.

As an urban performer, Mary is highly social and ambitious, but most of all, she is a people pleaser. City directors habituated her to all of these attributes through constant direction, which allowed Mary to accept them as feeling natural for her. Several other critics articulate this idea of a performance that becomes naturalized over time through direction. In his article, "Habit and Reimagining Female Identity in *Mansfield Park*," Daniel Mangiavellano, for example, insists that female identity is under constant surveillance in the novel and that Edmund attempts

to reframe Mary's (and Fanny's) habits in order to invent an alternative meaning behind identity and behavior. As Mangiavellano explains, habit formation arises from "years of repetition, routine, education, and socialization" (94). If what Mangiavellano terms "habit" means the repetition, routine, education, and socialization that leads to what I call, through Butler's work, a naturalized gender performance, he then correctly concludes that "habit" and identity are fundamentally inseparable. While I agree in essence with Mangiavellano's argument, the lack of a stable identity existing beneath one's "habits" is not an altogether new concept, especially within the context of Judith Butler's theory of performativity. For that reason, it is important to go beyond the mere implication that "habit," or naturalized performance, and identity are linked so that we can discover how this naturalized performance as an identity impacts Mary's outcome in the novel. Her London-naturalized performance suggests that Mary's sole aim is to marry a man of wealth and consequence. Her performance is driven first and foremost towards how she can be this version of successful in her future marriage but her extreme adaptability does not allow Mary the conclusion she craves.

Other critics do note the ways in which Mary's performance impacts her final outcome. Although she does not say so directly, Lynda A. Hall, author of *Women and 'Value' in Jane Austen's Novels: Settling, Speculating, and Superfluity*, assumes that Mary's naturalized city performance leads to Mary's failure by the novel's end. Hall declares that Austen sets Mary up to be the "lively character" who destabilizes Fanny as the heroine, but Mary's "moral compass is faulty" and she is consequently expelled from the novel for being "unable to reject her London-nurtured mercenary values" (138). While Hall recognizes the "urban tastes" that Mary is accustomed to and how those tastes are misaligned with a country lifestyle, Hall is unable to account for the "contradictions of [Mary's] own preferences" when it comes to her desire for

Edmund (139-140). Meanwhile, Peter Graham, in "Falling for the Crawfords: Character, Contingency, and Narrative," makes a similar argument about Mary's performance. Graham implies that the reader will adore the worldly and witty Mary over the true heroine of the novel, Fanny. Graham supports his argument by insisting that Mary achieves her loveable charm through her mobility, which "involves staying true to one's self by keeping faith with one's ever-changing nature" (869). His claim that Mary "stay[s] true to... [her] ever-changing nature" rests upon the questionable assumption that Mary has a malleable and identifiable "nature" upon which to rely. In Butler's view, there is no "nature" or identity beyond the performances of a body; therefore, what Graham views as mobility in Mary's identity, is merely her inconstant shift between naturalized and idealized performances. Contrary to Hall and Graham, I argue that it is not Mary's inability to reject her naturalized city upbringing that leads to her failure to secure a husband in the novel, nor is she more favorable for possessing an ever-changing disposition. Rather, Mary's adaptability to any environment destabilizes her identity to the point that it creates unsustainable conflict within her perceptions of herself and renders her disagreeable to her spectators and suitors.

In the first part of her stay at Mansfield, Mary attempts to adapt her performance to a new environment as well as a new audience. Changes in direction and spectatorship bring changes in expectations, desires, and values, all of which differ from those of Mary's city audience. Mary initially successfully tailors her performance at Mansfield and begins to express what becomes a new naturalized country performance. Although Mary initially allows her performance to be redirected towards a country naturalization, she later feels torn between competing rural and urban naturalized performances and begins to deliberately defy her newly habituated country performance in favor of what I call an "idealized performance." An idealized performance is not

based on direction and habituation, but on the deliberate choice of the performer to act in opposition to what feels natural. For Mary, this means a conscious return to many of the same behaviors that characterized her unconscious city performance. Kathleen Urda codes what I call idealized performance as surface-level theatricality that differs from "real" character. In fact, in her "Why the Show Must Not Go On: 'Real Character' and the Absence of Theatrical Performances in *Mansfield Park*," Urda asserts that Austen does not depict actual theatrical scenes in the novel so that she can distinguish between "real" character and the performance of it. This is problematic in a Butlerian context since there is no "real" character – there is only the performance of character. Although Urda may confuse her terms, she is accurate about the phenomena she describes. What she calls "real" or "true" character, as related to Fanny, can be defined as a "continuous and deep moral subjectivity or personality" as opposed to the flexible theatrical performance she applies to Mary (283). Urda labels theatrical performance as "the performed and surface nature of character" (ibid.). Despite asserting that the only kind of character that exists for these women is their performance of femininity, Urda points toward an idealized performance that resides not deep within the unconsciousness of a performer, but deliberately on the surface. Mary's idealized performance is analogous to Urda's "theatrical performance" because there are moments within the novel when Mary deliberately uses performance to manipulate other characters in a way that resembles intentional, surface-level action and behavior.

By choosing an idealized performance and straying away from a naturalized performance, Mary becomes her own director. This disrupts not only the integral subconscious connection between director and performer, but also Mary's connection with her spectatorship, which in turn destabilizes her gender performance. Throughout *Mansfield Park*, as Austen offers

support for Butler's concept of gender performativity, she shows how the dynamic between performers and directors that creates naturalized performances is necessary for characters to remain intelligible to their audiences. The consequence of being too adaptable to various environments is that adaptation may overwhelm a performer's psyche and the ensuing conflict between naturalized and idealized performances renders performers unintelligible.

In this chapter, I begin by examining Mary's London origins and how her city directors lead her to a city naturalized performance. Subsequently, I highlight Mary's extreme adaptability to the country environment at Mansfield and the manner in which she takes on a new urban naturalized performance. Finally, I investigate Mary establishes an idealized performance, how it creates conflict within her identity, and how it ultimately leaves Mary with a failed and unintelligible performance.

Naturalized Performances: Everything Old is New Again

Unlike with Fanny, Austen does not give the reader much insight into Mary's life as a child or before she arrives at Mansfield. Since Mary's background is largely omitted from the novel, we have to rely on accounts of Mary's initial scenes after she moves to Mansfield at the beginning of the book to understand her habituated urban performance of femininity. Through her relationship with her sister Mrs. Grant, we learn that Mary's urban naturalization is deeply ingrained into her sense of self. Mary achieves naturalization through mimicry of her London directors. Early in her transition to the country, Mary's urban performance is compared to Fanny's country performance and it becomes obvious that, while Fanny is concerned with introspection and an appreciation for nature, Mary is much more concerned with sociability and light entertainment. Mary's urban performance, therefore, conflicts with the expectations of

country spectators – a point that comes to the fore in chapter six, when Mary tries to hire a cart to bring her harp to Mansfield. Mary struggles to overcome the distress caused by her urban performance. Edmund steps forward in this episode to offer Mary new naturalized direction for the country environment. While Mary initially rejects this direction in favor of her urban naturalized performance, Edmund clearly has influence since Mary begins to accept country naturalization shortly after this episode. Edmund then becomes Mary's main country director and, sure enough, she begins to have the same successful interactions she had with her urban audience but through country direction and country performance. In chapter seven, Mary quickly becomes proficient at a skill championed by country audiences: horseback riding. These initial scenes from the first half of the novel introduce the two competing performances Mary fights against in the second half of the novel.

Austen exhibits the way that Mary adapts her performances of urban femininity to country performances through Mary's relationships with her directors. To understand the journey Mary takes from urban to country performance, it is important to evaluate sequentially the relationship with her directors at Mansfield. Mary is introduced within the novel through the lens of one of her city spectators and directors, her sister Mrs. Grant. The elder sister claims that "Mary was her dearest object; and having never been able to glory in beauty of her own, she thoroughly enjoyed the power of being proud of her sister's. She had not waited her arrival to look out for a suitable match for her: she had fixed on Tom Bertram." Mrs. Grant determines this is suitable match for Mary because Mary is "a girl of twenty thousand pounds" who also possess a great deal of "elegance and accomplishments" (Austen 33). As a city director, Mrs. Grant directs Mary to Tom which is a suggestion that is consistent with urban ideals. In this episode, then, Mrs. Grant attempts to aid Mary in bringing her urban naturalized performance into the

country. As a city director, Mrs. Grant determines that what is most suitable for Mary is determined by her wealth, manners, and abilities. Mrs. Grant reinforces the urban naturalized behavior Mary experienced when she was in London and Mrs. Grant's instruction compels Mary to consider a courtship between herself and Tom. Mary subsequently accepts this direction when she indicates that she would "not forget to think ... seriously" of attracting Tom (ibid.). Between Mrs. Grant trying to set Mary up with a wealthy, eligible bachelor and Mary's sentiments that she desires to marry into wealth, the two women demonstrate that a major signifier for an urban feminine identity is a woman's ability to marry well. Austen not only exposes this phenomenon but exposes Mary's naturalized belief that to achieve such a goal requires validation and instruction for her performance through the urban direction that Mrs. Grant provides, despite the fact that Mary no longer operates within an urban environment while at Mansfield.

Austen complicates Mary's gender performance by showing the conflict Mary encounters as she tries to bring her naturalized urban performance into the country. Mary's move to the parsonage at Mansfield transports her from the urban life of London to country life with the Grants. Her urban naturalized expectations and directions include an emphasis on musical accomplishments, on the individual, and on wealth above all. Immediately upon her arrival at Mansfield, Mary encounters a conflict between her naturalized city habits and her country audience's own expectations for her behavior. In trying to hire a horse and cart to transport her harp to the estate, Mary describes her frustration to Edmund and Fanny: "'Guess my surprise, when I found that I had been asking the most unreasonable, most impossible thing in the world; had offended all the farmers, all the labourers, all the hay in the parish!'" (Austen 46). With Edmund and Fanny acting in this moment as country spectators, Mary shows her hyperbolic irony – an urban naturalized behavior. She also displays how ill-informed she is about social

expectations in the country. This scene demonstrates Mary's struggle to adjust her city performance to a country audience: in trying to bring her harp to the country, Mary is also trying to shift her feminine gender performance to the country as well, but encounters unforeseen difficulty. Mary confusedly believes her request to be simple. Austen indicates that a city performance in a country environment leads to disjunction between the audience and the performer. This disconnect ultimately causes friction between what Mary assumes to be true and new expectations that actually exist for her in the country.

In light of this friction, Austen provides Mary with a choice between maintaining her sense of self in terms of urban performance or shifting her performance to match the new expectations explained by Edmund in this episode. Edmund, taking the role of country director, indicates to Mary how she should adjust her performance to fit a country environment. He explains, "'you could not be expected to have thought on the subject before; but when you *do* think of it, you must see the importance of getting in the grass'" (Austen 47). While Edmund does not blame Mary for her ignorance, he challenges her to think more about the lives of the people with which she is now living. Edmund affirms that it really is quite unreasonable to ask the farmers to loan her a cart and a horse when they have a great need for the carts and horses just now themselves. He proposes Mary empathize with others as he directs her away from the entitlement she is accustomed to in the city. Mary may choose to incorporate this new thoughtfulness into her own performance moving forward, which she eventually does, to acclimate to a naturalized country performance. Yet in this episode Mary retains her naturalized urban performance. Mary, who is still trying to attract Tom, tells Edmund, "'if you write to your brother, I entreat you to tell him that my harp is come: he heard so much of my misery about it. And you may say, if you please, that I shall prepare my most plaintive airs against his return'"

(ibid.). Despite Edmund's clear country directions, Mary tries to maintain an urban performance – in this case, through her accomplishments at the harp – in a country environment. Austen shows the disconnect between Mary's habituated urban naturalization and the new environment that demands a different performance.

As Mary adjusts to life in the countryside, Austen presents Fanny as the example for a country performance that Mary eventually mimics in the latter half of the novel. As a country spectator, Fanny distinguishes her own country performance from Mary's urban ideals. Through the narrator's free indirect discourse, Fanny explains that "in observing the appearance of the country, the bearings of the roads, the difference of soil, the state of the harvest, the cottages, the cattle, the children, she found entertainment that could only have been heightened by having Edmund to speak to of what she felt" (Austen 64). As a country performer, Fanny takes great joy in observing and ruminating on nature and her surroundings. This experience is reinforced as appropriate through Edmund's shared joy of nature. In relation to Mary's performance, however, Fanny finds only opposition: "Miss Crawford was very unlike her. She had none of Fanny's delicacy of taste, of mind, of feeling; she saw Nature, inanimate Nature, with little observation; her attention was all for men and women, her talents for the light and lively" (ibid.). The free indirect discourse in this episode retains Fanny's point of view because it relies on the kind of introspection Fanny exhibits but that Mary does not. As Fanny points out, the women have little in common. Mary, originally naturalized to city ways, is a social creature who does not have the thoughtfulness that characters such as Fanny and Edmund possess. Fanny sees that Mary's naturalized urban performance dispenses with the self-awareness and connection with nature compulsory for a country performance. Mary is accustomed to social entertainment instead of finding it in thought or nature. Austen comments on the different practices between urban

performances and country performances. While country performances of femininity focus on appreciating the beauty of nature as well as that of emotional depth, city performers have a higher interest in wit and interactive pleasures. Mary displays an ability to adapt to a country performance by mimicking the country performance that Fanny represents in this episode.

Austen displays through Mary's ability to ride a horse, however, that it does not take Mary very long to naturalize to her country audience's new demands. Mary easily mimics the cues of her directors which allows her to quickly learn behaviors. Mary gains great skill in horseback riding according to several spectators at Mansfield. For example, the coachman says to Fanny regarding Mary's riding, "'It is a pleasure to see a lady with such a good heart for riding!... I never see *[sic]* one sit a horse better. She did not seem to have a thought of fear. Very different from you, miss, when you first began, six years ago come next Easter'" (Austen 55). The coachman's words indicate that horseback riding is a skill that came easily to Mary. Even the Miss Bertrams agree with the coachman. This is indicated by the narrator's description: "In the drawing-room Miss Crawford was also celebrated. Her merit in being gifted by Nature with strength and courage was fully appreciated by the Miss Bertrams; her delight in riding was like their own; her early excellence in it was like their own, and they had great pleasure in praising it" (ibid.). Mary's ability to sit so well upon her horse and her affinity for the activity itself suggests a successful performance of country expectations. Riding a horse well was not something expected of Mary while in the city. The Bertram girls, on the other hand, who have naturalized country performances, succeed in this signifier of country performance. The way that Mary is compared with the Bertram girls in this episode indicates that she is now replicating a performance similar to their country habituation. Mary accepts more country direction now than she did earlier. This is evident in the way that "Edmund was close to her" while teaching her to

ride. Furthermore, “he was speaking to her; he was evidently directing her management of the bridle” (54). Mary accepts Edmund’s direction and consequently displays her adaptability to a naturalized country performance. Austen depicts the ease with which Mary is able to accept new direction in a new environment from new directors. While in this episode the adaptation is not necessarily problematic and in fact is coded as positive by her audience, the more concessions Mary makes to a new country naturalized performance, the more conflict she encounters with her sense of self.

Over-Responsiveness to Change: Mary’s Adaptability

To understand the events that lead Mary to adapt a country performance and adapt back to an urban performance, it is important to observe Mary’s progression from perpetuating urban habituations, to eventually accepting Edmund’s country instruction, and then accepting her London directors again. As Mary tries to parse out these conflicting performances, she becomes more confused by conflicting directions from Tom and Edmund. While Tom reinforces Mary’s urban performance, Edmund challenges her performance and suggests she embrace a country performance. Mary’s adaptability begins to show in chapter five when Mary gives hesitant and confused reaction to both of her directors. Her country environment proves to be too much of an influence on her performance to completely ignore, however, and Mary indicates a new attraction to Edmund that stems from her acceptance of his direction. Mary embraces a new country naturalization as a result of Edmund’s direction, but as soon as she leaves the country, she again embraces directions from her London friends – demonstrating her extreme adaptability.

As Mary acclimates to life at Mansfield, Austen presents Mary with opposing expectations than what she accustomed to in the city. Mary expresses confusion at the contrast between urban performances of femininity, which Mary views as being the "right" (that is, naturalized) way to act, and country performances of femininity. This phenomenon manifests in Mary's discussion of whether or not Fanny is "out." Mary initiates the conversation between the Bertram brothers: "'I begin now to understand you all, except Miss Price… Pray, is she out, or is she not? I am puzzled. She dined at the Parsonage, with the rest of you, which seemed like being out; and yet she says so little, that I can hardly suppose she is'" (Austen 39). Mary's commentary on Fanny's behavior is intriguing as it articulates rules that silently communicate something about the rule-observant individual. In other words, Mary has a conscious understanding of gender performance from the perspective of an urban spectator. Mary explains these rules that differentiate between women who have been introduced into society and those who have not: "'The distinction is so broad. Manners as well as appearance are, generally speaking, so totally different. Till now, I could not have supposed it possible to be mistaken as to a girl's being out or not'" (ibid.). Fanny's country naturalized performance conflicts with urban naturalized expectations that Mary considers proper. Austen contrasts two distinct sets of feminine performances in this scene and, through Mary, establishes the conflict that exists between the two.

Austen gives Mary the opportunity to justify and validate her notions of urban naturalized performance and in the process, Mary exposes the character of performance. As Mary's discourse on women introduced to society continues, she adds several details to determine how free to participate in society any particular woman appears to be. Mary explains that, "'A girl not out has always the same sort of dress: a close bonnet, for instance; looks very demure, and never

says a word. You may smile, but it is so, I assure you; and except that it is sometimes carried a little too far, it is all very proper. Girls should be quiet and modest'" (39). Mary describes a preordained list of guidelines for girls who have not been introduced to society. Along with presenting the expectations for how to act, Mary also includes what women who are introduced to society should wear or do:

> 'The most objectionable part is, that the alteration of manners on being introduced into company is frequently too sudden. They sometimes pass in such very little time from reserve to quite the opposite—to confidence! That is the faulty part of the present system. One does not like to see a girl of eighteen or nineteen so immediately up to every thing—and perhaps when one has seen her hardly able to speak the year before.' (ibid.)

Mary describes a "system" to which she ascribes as an urban naturalized woman. She highlights the artificial character of performance by describing a struggle for women who must operate within a system with so many rules. The naturalized urban performance that spectators and directors expect does not just simply occur in society but is learned behavior. Just with any learned skill, to some women it will come more easily than to others. What determines the success of the skill, however, depends upon the expectations from audiences. Mary, a very confident woman, implies her mastery of social minutia with her naturalized performance. Consequently Mary mistakes this city naturalized performance for a universal gender expression.

Austen depicts the conflict between city and country directors in Mary's interactions with Tom and Edmund Bertram. Mary's pre-existing understanding regarding city performances is reinforced by Tom Bertram but challenged by Edmund. After hearing Tom Bertram's story about a girl who, once out, became the kind of overly-confident girl that Mary describes, Mary comments that, "'Mothers certainly have not yet got quite the right way of managing their daughters. I do not know where the error lies. I do not pretend to set people right, but I do see that they are often wrong'" (Austen 40). Meanwhile, Tom "gallantly" replies, "'Those who are

showing the world what female manners should be… are doing a great deal to set them right'" (ibid.). As an urban spectator that Mary wants to impress, Tom becomes a director from whom Mary accepts cues. Therefore, when Tom compliments Mary on her ability to show women the right way to perform, Tom reinforces the idea that the city naturalized manner in which women are expected to act is not only the strictly correct method of performing, but that the correct performance correlates to the feminine performer's morality. According to Tom, Mary is highly moral in that she offers to show the world the "right" way to act as a woman. Austen includes Tom in this episode to provide an example of a director to whom Mary assents so that, in the following paragraph, Austen may complicate Mary's performance and expectations.

Edmund Bertram, as a country director, highlights the flaws in city naturalized directions. Unlike his "gallant" brother, Edmund is described as being "less courteous" when he indicates, "'The error is plain enough… such girls are ill brought up. They are given wrong notions from the beginning. They are always acting upon motives of vanity, and there is no more real modesty in their behaviour before they appear in public than afterwards'" (Austen 40). Edmund suggests that there is a difference between "real modesty,"or country naturalized behavior, and "vanity," or city naturalized behavior. From Edmund's point of view, the "real," rural naturalized performance of feminine identity is more successful than an urban performance. This would indicate that a woman adhering to a socially-accepted urban gender performance in a country environment would perform unsuccessfully for rural spectators in her attempt to marry. Austen includes both Tom and Edmund's opinions in this episode to display the conflict between urban and country performances – even at Mansfield – that Mary then attempts to navigate.

Austen indicates through Mary's response to the two differing directions that she does not know whose direction to follow. Mary's confusion in this episode indicates that she is highly adaptable:

> 'I do not know,' replied Miss Crawford hesitatingly. 'Yes, I cannot agree with you there. It is certainly the modestest part of the business. It is much worse to have girls not out give themselves the same airs and take the same liberties as if they were, which I have seen done. That is worse than anything—quite disgusting!' (Austen 40)

Mary either hesitates because she is taken aback by Edmund's judgements or because his words create anxiety about her own performance; Edmund does not provide the reinforcement for an urban performance that Mrs. Grant or Tom give her. Mary's hesitant answer represents her confusion as to whether she should perform to the spectatorship of Edmund or Tom. With Tom as her spectator, she has a much easier time being naturalized in her city performance, whereas Edmund's views challenge her city performance in favor of a country performance. Austen indicates that Mary's adaptability allows her too much freedom to choose a conscious performance and that her competing environments create competing expectations for naturalized direction.

Austen affirms Mary's adaptability through integration of country direction into her performance to display affection for Edmund. When Mary's harp arrives in the country, Edmund, rather than Tom, listens to her play every day. As the narrator describes, "The harp arrived, and rather added to [Mary's] beauty, wit, and good-humour; for she played with the greatest obligingness, with an expression and taste which were peculiarly becoming, and there was something clever to be said at the close of every air" (Austen 51). Mary's siren song brings Edmund back to hear day after day. Mary observes Edmund's naturalized performance which subsequently directs Mary's own. Before Mary acknowledges her attraction to Edmund, the narrator notes that, "without studying the business… or knowing what he was about, Edmund

was beginning, at the end of a week of such intercourse, to be a good deal in love" (52). Edmund comes to love Mary in a very naturalized, unintentional way. Spending time with Edmund, however, has an interesting effect on Mary as well. After a week of playing the harp for him, it comes to light that "without his being a man of the world or an elder brother, without any of the arts of flattery or the gaieties of small talk, he began to be agreeable to [Mary]. She felt it to be so, though she had not foreseen, and could hardly understand it" (ibid.). Mary could not have anticipated her affections for Edmund because they arise from an unconscious naturalized performance. Since Edmund does not possess the consequence or appearance that she expects from a husband, attraction to Edmund also goes against her naturalized urban performance. Austen shows in Mary's attraction to Edmund that her adaptability impacts her naturalized performance, which changes it from an urban to a rural direction.

Austen displays Mary's extreme adaptability and internal conflict through the way that she accepts Edmund's direction, despite it going against Mrs. Grant's earlier direction to marry Tom Bertram. At this point in the novel, Mary claims to find Edmund agreeable. At the same time, Mary finds her attraction to Edmund "very vexatious, and she was heartily sorry for it" because Edmund "was not pleasant by any common rule," especially when compared to his older brother (Austen 90, 52). Tom, however, had "made it perfectly clear he did not care about [Mary]" and consequently, Mary "did not believe she could accept him" (91). Edmund does not pay compliments or act in the nonsensical way that city performers act, yet Mary adapts and feels attraction for Edmund. Meanwhile, Tom has everything that by "common rule" should make him attractive – money, an estate, a title, appearance – but he does not care about Mary and therefore, in an expression of adaptability, Mary no longer desires to attract him. In this moment, Mary must choose between a newly naturalized attraction to Edmund or an urban

performance towards Tom. She adjusts her naturalized performance in a country direction. Austen creates Mary as a conflicted character who wants to follow what feels natural and pleasurable for her, but what that is depends on her environment. Consequently, Mary displays a very adaptable performance that changes based on the environment she is in and the cues she receives from her directors.

Austen provides additional evidence of Mary's adaptability when she leaves Mansfield, after habituating a country performance, only to revert back to urban naturalization when she returns to London. Mary becomes a very different character when she is taken back to her city audience where she once again performs according to the naturalized directions to which she has become accustomed in the city. Austen presents this altered identity expression through the lens of Mary's country director, Edmund, as he describes Mary's behavior after her departure from Mansfield. Edmund writes in a letter to Fanny about how he contemplates leaving London (and Mary) because she no longer seems interested in taking direction from him. Edmund blames no one other than Mary's London directors themselves. He voices his disapproval of Mary's friends, two sisters named Mrs. Fraser and Lady Stornaway: "'[Mary] was in high spirits, and surrounded by those who were giving all the support of their own bad sense to her too lively mind…. I look upon her intimacy with those two sisters as the greatest misfortune of her life and mine. They have been leading her astray for years'" (Austen 330). Everything about Edmund's language in this passage highlights the power of direction that Mary's London directors exert over her. Edmund, for example, implies that Mary's "lively mind" needs to be checked. The two London sisters, instead of restraining Mary or directing her in a way that is congruent with Edmund's direction, support Mary in ways that are ill-matched with Edmund's country expectation. Edmund also openly states that the women have been "leading [Mary] astray," or in this case,

away from a country audience's expected performance. In this episode, Austen presents, through Edmund's country lens, Mary's adaptation back into an urban naturalized.

Mary's regression back into a city naturalized performance disagrees with her country directors since what is accepted in the city is not accepted in the country. While in conversation with Fanny about Maria Rushworth's affair with Henry Crawford, Edmund critiques Mary's reaction to the impropriety of the situation:

> 'No, [Mary's] is not a cruel nature. I do not consider her as meaning to wound my feelings. The evil lies yet deeper: in her total ignorance, unsuspiciousness of there being such feelings; in a perversion of mind which made it natural to her to treat the subject as she did…. [Mary] was speaking only as she had been used to hear others speak, as she imagined everybody else would speak. Hers are not faults of temper. She would not voluntarily give unnecessary pain to any one…. Hers are faults of principle, Fanny; of blunted delicacy and a corrupted, vitiated mind.' (Austen 358)

Edmund relates Mary's behaviors to their habituation from her city directors. Edmund's exoneration of Mary as unintentionally harmful and not cruel (as Fanny just prior to the speech indicates) suggests that Edmund believes there is something beneath Mary's actions that leads her to not react in that manner had she not been under the spell of her urban directors. Yet Edmund also notes the "natural" way in which Mary communicates her thoughts on the subject of affairs. His comment reminds one of the false sense of naturalness performers achieve through mimicry. Edmund intuits that Mary's behavior is in fact not a natural but rather a learned behavior that becomes naturalized over time. This naturalization is also supported by the remark Edmund makes on the "deeper" level of Mary's ignorance. The term "deeper" implies that the "perversion of Mary's mind" is not her fault and she cannot control it. She is not deliberately choosing her behaviors; rather, she is habituated to think and behave that way. Mary's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and even her values emulate those of her urban directors when in previous episodes at Mansfield, she mimics country directors. Edmund displays in this episode how

confusing it can be to understand one who constantly switches around their performance. In the latter half of the novel, the consequences of Mary's extreme adaptability become quite evident to her spectators.

The Idealized Performance: Conflict and Corrosion

As Mary's urban and country naturalized performances conflict more and more with each other, she attempts to resolve this conflict by taking on an "idealized" performance of femininity. That is to say, she rejects both naturalized performances and makes deliberate decisions in an effort to take charge of her own performance. Mary's idealized performance often takes on many of the same behaviors as her urban naturalized performance. Her idealized performance, however, has the distinction of being consciously driven where before it had been mostly unconscious and felt natural. While Mary resorts to this idealized performance to gain power over her audience, it also corrodes her naturalized self. The longer her idealized behavior persists, the less power Mary actually has over others; in the end the idealized performance confuses Mary's audience and renders her unintelligible.

The game of Speculation at the parsonage demonstrates how strongly Mary's naturalized city performance conflicts with her desire for Edmund; here, for the first time, we see her respond to this conflict by creating her own "idealized" performance of femininity. While speaking about his future home at Thornton Lacey, Edmund says, "'I think the house and premises may be made comfortable, and given the air of a gentleman's residence, without any very heavy expense, and that must suffice me; and, I hope, may suffice all who care about me'" (Austen 190). Edmund passive-aggressively directs Mary's performance away from her urban expectations. In response to his comment, Mary feels "a little suspicious and resentful" and plays

her cards "at an exorbitant rate." This comment suggests that Mary comprehends the snide remark from Edmund and reacts by making an aggressive move in the card game. She retorts, "'There, I will stake my last [card] like a woman of spirit. No cold prudence for me. I am not born to sit still and do nothing. If I lose the game, it shall not be from not striving for it'" (ibid.). Mary may be referring to the card game, but her aggressive action and language suggest she is referring to another sort of game altogether. Her new desire to marry Edmund conflicts with her former city performance. In this moment of friction, her idealized performance begins: she will take an active role in acquiring what she wants. Mary is not only reluctant to compromise, but also reluctant to accept Edmund's direction. Instead, she gives an awkward, self-aware, combined performance that leads to her overt speech and pushy card play. Her aggression is not an attractive quality and will inevitably cause her to lose power over her audience over time. In this episode, Austen exhibits the anger that arises from conflicting naturalized performances, which also explains the formation of Mary's idealized performance.

Through Mary's relationship with Fanny, Austen demonstrates the distressing effects of Mary's idealized performance on her spectators. After experiencing this incongruity of performances, "It became absolutely necessary for [Mary] to get to Fanny and try to learn something more" about Edmund. The narrator also adds that "[Mary] could not live any longer in such solitary wretchedness" and therefore she leaves for Mansfield with an agenda (Austen 225). Mary's "wretchedness" compels her to interrogate and manipulate Fanny. Mary uses "a voice as well regulated as she could" and she tries "to appear gay and unconcerned" (225, 226). Fanny mentions that Mary will be missed after she leaves Mansfield, but Mary teases that the opposite is true. Mary says, "'I am not fishing; don't compliment me. If I *am* missed, it will appear. I may be discovered by those who want to see me. I shall not be in any doubtful, or distant, or

unapproachable region'" (227). Yet when Fanny does not respond to this, Mary is "disappointed; for she had hoped to hear some pleasant assurance of her power from one who she thought must know, and her spirits were clouded again" (ibid.). Fanny does not quite know how to respond to Mary. Her idealized performance, created by the friction between her competing naturalized performances, induces disagreement within the spectator-performer relationship, and as a result Fanny becomes uncomfortable with Mary's performance. Austen indicates in this scene the unsuccessful aura created by Mary's idealized performance.

Despite the artificial essence of the idealized performance, Mary still attempts to use it with her audience to manipulate and gain power. This becomes evident as Mary endeavors to direct Fanny to marry Henry Crawford. After a long speech about her life in London, Mary interposes her manipulation: "'By the bye, Flora Ross was dying for Henry the first winter she came out. But were I to attempt to tell you of all the women whom I have known to be in love with him, I should never have done. It is you, only you, insensible Fanny, who can think of him with anything like indifference.'" Mary goes on to tall Fanny about what a "triumph" it would be to marry Henry when he has gained the love of so many other women whom he did not love (285). Mary imposes her idealized performance on Fanny by suggesting she marry Henry in this very forced manner. Mary first gives the implication that she habituated to a country performance that resonates with Fanny and presents herself as being non-threatening. This opens up the opportunity for Mary to penetrate and attack Fanny's own naturalized performance when her guard is down in the hopes that Fanny can be more easily directed to a city performance. Austen highlights in this episode that Mary can seamlessly alter her performance to an idealized position that matches what she most desires and then she uses this idealization to manipulate others.

While initially, Mary's idealized performance is useful to manipulate others, ultimately, it is not a sustainable relationship between the performer and the spectator/director and Mary actually loses power by resorting to it. In her letters to Fanny from London, Mary uses her idealized performance intending to gain power over Fanny. She accomplishes this by appealing to Fanny as her close companion, and then falsifying feelings of love between Fanny and Henry. Mary begins her letter with an idealized performance where she embellishes Henry's relationship with Fanny as more serious than it really is. Mary grossly mischaracterizes Henry's visit to Portsmouth when she writes that "'a fair sister of [Fanny's], a fine girl of fifteen, who was of the party on the ramparts, taking her first lesson, I presume, in love'" (Austen 326). The implication is that Henry and Fanny are in love. This displays Mary's idealized performance because she is attempting to manipulate Fanny. By the second half of the letter, however, Fanny's reading exposes the failure of Mary's idealized behavior. Fanny notes this in the way Mary depicts Edmund within her circle of friends. Fanny acknowledges that Mary has had "a return to London habits" and is disgusted that Edmund could be in love with "the woman who could speak of [him], and speak only of his appearance!" (327). Fanny is offended because Mary only focuses on Edmund's looks when there is much more that Fanny appreciates about Edmund. Mary's idealized performance no longer influences Fanny, especially when Fanny begins to detect the urban naturalization within the performance.

As Maria Bertram's scandal unfolds, Austen shows how Mary's idealized performance loses its power over Fanny as Fanny fully grasps its conflicted essence. Writing to Fanny in an attempt to preempt the rumors about Maria's behavior, Mary continues to maintain the fiction of a romance between Henry and Fanny: "'Henry is blameless, and in spite of a moment's *etourderie*, thinks of nobody but you. Say not a word of it; hear nothing, surmise nothing,

whisper nothing till I write again. I am sure it will be all hushed up, and nothing proved but Rushworth's folly'" (Austen 343). By still claiming Henry loves Fanny after he has run off with another woman, Mary exposes the manipulation behind her idealized performance. Mary's feeble attempt to gain power by directing her own as well as Fanny's country performance from the city backfires in the end. This becomes particularly evident when Fanny expresses feeling "disgust at the greater part of this letter" and she is not swayed to follow Mary's instructions (ibid.). Austen displays how Mary uses her idealized behavior to manipulate others into acting in a way she desires – and fails at it.

Concluding Thoughts

Throughout the novel, Mary displays a blend of naturalized city performance and country performance. The combination of these two desires leads Mary to become the director of her own idealized performance. It disrupts her connection with her directors and leaves Mary out of touch with her audience. Even by the novel's end, the impact of Mary's competing naturalized performances is inevitable. As the narrator explains: "Mary had had enough of her own friends, enough of vanity, ambition, love, and disappointment in the course of the last half-year, to be in need of the true kindness of her sister's heart, and the rational tranquillity of her ways" (Austen 369). The narrator makes it sound as if Mary no longer wants to use the idealized performance of manipulating for the sake of ambition and love. Having failed on her quest – neither engaged nor married – Mary resorts to her original city director: her sister, Mrs. Grant. Austen's final thoughts on Mary demonstrate that she has permanently corroded away both of her naturalized performances: "Mary, though perfectly resolved against ever attaching herself to a younger brother again, was long in finding among the dashing representatives, or idle heir-apparents, who

were at the command of her beauty, and her £20,000, any one who could satisfy the better taste she had acquired at Mansfield" (ibid.). Mary "acquires better taste" at Mansfield, which indicates that she remains naturalized to aspects of the country performance. She also is still looking for a "dashing representative," which is representative of her urban performance. Mary displays throughout this chapter that she cannot successfully have both aspects of a country and an urban naturalized performance. The friction caused by the two competing performances leads to her idealized performance, which immutably marrs her chances of success in the future.

Mary, despite being critics' favorite female character in *Mansfield Park*, does not marry by the end of the novel and therefore fails in her performance of femininity. Through a Butlerian approach, we learn that Mary is unsuccessful as a result of her extreme adaptability, which creates an idealized performance of gender. While Butler's theory exposes the performative essence of gender, through Mary, Austen exemplifies the importance of adhering to a naturalized performance. Although the concept of gender performativity indicates that gender is very fluid, a performer must find a way to overcome the malleability of gender expression – if for no other reason than for personal sanity. As we turn to chapter two, Fanny provides a compelling example of how to prevail over gender fluidity regardless of the conflict she encounters over her chosen direction of performance.

Chapter II

A Vindication of Fanny Price

Fanny Price was not born to be a favorite Austen heroine. In fact, many critics claim Fanny is so "ridiculously self-effacing" that the "reader resists" her (Haggerty 177). Others go further, labeling Fanny as "a model of passivity and inaction" and "a rule governed wet-blanket" (Jenkins 351). These critics try to figure out Austen's intentions with Fanny Price and why readers do not connect so easily with her as we do with, for example, Elizabeth Bennet. These assumptions about reader response are subjective in the first place. Instead, I argue that Fanny does not exist to fulfill the reader's expectations, just as she does not exist to fulfill her Mansfield spectators' expectations. Fanny is distinctly not a Mary Crawford – she does not aim to please – and for good reason.

Others critics still cannot imagine why Fanny does not want to emulate the charming Mary Crawford, who claims center stage when she appears. Anna Lott argues that Fanny struggles to maintain social order in Mansfield while simultaneously wanting to rebel against it. Fanny is caught between her "need to represent herself as a subject and her instinct to succumb to the familial and social constraints dictating her disappearance" (278). What is instinctual for Fanny may be interpreted as, in my terms, Fanny's naturalized performance. Lott is mistaken that Fanny desires anything more in life than her naturalized performance, for as we will discover, Fanny never fixes on an idealized performance. Nor does Fanny feel "constrained" by being herself. In fact, I argue that Fanny, rather than struggling to become more like Mary Crawford, pushes back against her spectators and directors in order *not* to end up like Mary.

Margaret Ann Fitzpatrick Hanly makes a provocative argument when she indicates that "Austen may not have invited a 'liking' for Fanny Price, but rather challenged the reader to

understand her character"; but Hanly errs, in my view, when she claims that Fanny uses "suffering and sacrifice for psychic survival in childhood," which slowly progresses to "a dramatic refusal to be used by Sir Thomas or seduced by Henry Crawford" (485-486). Fanny does not seek pleasure through pain as a child trying to survive at Mansfield. As I will show later, Fanny's suffering results from a fundamental disconnect between her new audience and her old naturalized performance. That said, Hanley gets right the claim that "liking" Fanny Price is not a requisite of the novel.

In fact, to judge whether or not Fanny is likeable, Haggerty and Jenkins become no better than the Mansfield directors, such as Henry Crawford and Sir Thomas, who try to force Fanny into a new naturalized performance. Fanny exists to please herself. She sticks to her naturalized performance and through her, Austen champions consistency. In this chapter, I first explore the naturalized performance Fanny learned as a child at Portsmouth and brings with her to Mansfield. I show how Edmund makes Fanny intelligible to her Mansfield audience by helping her adapt to a blend of old and new performances. From then on, Fanny stabilizes her performance as she grows into an adult. As her body matures, her spectators, namely Sir Thomas, decide Fanny must take on a new naturalized performance that Fanny cannot accept. Unlike Mary Crawford, the conflict Fanny encounters is not a result of shifting environments but class discrepancies between low and high class. Fanny struggles to maintain her naturalized sense of duty while resisting the new directions. Ultimately, Fanny succeeds in maintaining constancy in her performance, which allows her to remain internally stable. For this, Austen rewards her with a marriage to her beloved Edmund in the end.

Whether or not we like Fanny is not Austen's main concern in this novel. Ultimately, in *Mansfield Park*, Austen describes how society repeatedly asks women to reinvent themselves yet

gives us Fanny Price as the model of constancy to combat the frustrating double standards that foil women like Mary Crawford. In a world that expects women to bend to circumstance, Austen asserts that women should strive to maintain a stabilized performance of gender despite opposition from outside observers.

Fanny's Origins: Habituating a Naturalized Performance

As a child, Fanny arrives at Mansfield with a lower-class naturalized performance from her directors in Portsmouth. Her original naturalization does not align with the expectations of her higher-class directors at Mansfield. Fanny's new audience is unwilling to accept her original naturalized performance and they refuse to give her new directions that do align with Mansfield expectations. This rejection leaves Fanny in a state of uncertainty and suffering until she gains a new director in her cousin Edmund. He supports Fanny's former naturalized direction, and therefore successfully brings her into the performer-director relationship that lessens Fanny's suffering. While Edmund encourages Fanny to perform, he allows her to maintain the identity she formed in Portsmouth thereby elevating her performance to help her attain intelligibility at Mansfield. As Fanny grows into adulthood, her performance solidifies into a naturalized lower-class Mansfield performance. Her audience may challenge her naturalization, but Fanny refuses to give in to the fluidity of gender performance. Edmund supports Fanny in her desire to remain constant, consequently enabling her to retain a distinct sense of self.

Austen depicts Fanny as a child in order to show the malleability of gender performances. As a young girl, Fanny is brought to Mansfield and forced to make it her home. Immediately, Fanny's performance renders her unintelligible to her spectators because her low-class Portsmouth habituation does not align with high-class ideals at Mansfield. The description of

Fanny's arrival at Mansfield as a ten-year-old girl is evidence of the disagreement between her new directors and herself. Fanny has a very difficult transition to Mansfield: "Fanny, whether near or from her cousins, whether in the schoolroom, the drawing-room, or the shrubbery, was equally forlorn, finding something to fear in every person and place. She was disheartened by Lady Bertram's silence, awed by Sir Thomas's grave looks, and quite overcome by Mrs. Norris's admonitions" (Austen 12). No matter where Fanny is in her new environment, she feels out of place and fearful because the direction she gets from these spectators does not match her naturalized performance from Portsmouth. While these adults should be directing Fanny in her performance, they give Fanny only silence, grave looks, and admonitions. These are not helpful instructions for Fanny because she comes from a home where she knew she "had always been important as playfellow, instructress, and nurse," but those roles are assigned to other people at Mansfield (ibid.). Furthermore, this confusion over her new role at Mansfield is complicated by the way Sir Thomas declares that they must "'make [Fanny] remember that she is not a *Miss Bertram*'" (9). The consequence of this declaration is that Fanny has insufficient direction at Mansfield because no one will allow her either to maintain her Portsmouth identity or give her a Mansfield identity. Austen highlights in this early part of the text how Fanny does not understand the new expectations imposed by her Mansfield directors and she craves a new director to help her performance become intelligible moving forward.

Austen demonstrates how detrimental it is to Fanny's psyche to be out of touch with her audience. Fanny does not fare much better with the rest of her Mansfield audience: "her elder cousins mortified her by reflections on her size, and abashed her by noticing her shyness: Miss Lee wondered at her ignorance, and the maid-servants sneered at her clothes" (Austen 12). In every way, Fanny is set up for failure. The rest of the inhabitants at Mansfield harshly judge

Fanny's performance in ways she cannot control. Fanny's education and clothing do not match the expectations of her new audience in Mansfield because they represent what was naturalized in Portsmouth. Fanny also indicates her discomfort with how her spectators judge her size and personality. The relationship between Fanny and her new audience is one of disconnection and friction: Fanny does not know how to act nor does her audience know how to direct her and she suffers as a result. That is, nearly all of Fanny's spectators disregard her except for one spectator-turned-director in particular: Edmund.

Edmund first connects with Fanny by accepting her Portsmouth naturalized performance. He makes Fanny intelligible to her spectatorship by attempting to understand the naturalized performance she brought to Mansfield. After catching her crying, and inquiring into Fanny's life, Edmund begins to understand her grievances as well as her "affectionate heart" and "strong desire of doing right" (Austen 14). He helps her write to her brother, her former director, and effectively lessens the disconnection between Fanny and Mansfield. In fact, after this exchange, "Fanny grew more comfortable," and "[Mansfield] became less strange, and the people less formidable… she began at least to know their ways, and to catch the best manner of conforming to them" (ibid.). Edmund's ability to make Fanny's performance intelligible to himself as her spectator, allows Fanny to connect with her new audience and subsequently allows her to adapt to her new environment in a way that suits her. Since Edmund diminishes the discomfort Fanny encountered upon first arriving, Fanny now may observe the performances around her and deduce how she can best imitate performances in a way that connects her with her audience on her terms. This is the first step to Fanny's new naturalized performance.

Now that the conversation between Fanny and her audience can be interpreted by both audience and performer, Edmund establishes himself as a prominent director. Through

spectating, Edmund describes knowing Fanny to be "clever, to have a quick apprehension as well as good sense, and a fondness for reading" (Austen 18). Edmund takes on a new role within Fanny's life: as the narrator notes, Edmund knows Fanny can be "properly directed" and consequently educates her. Edmund "recommended the books which charmed [Fanny's] leisure hours, he encouraged her taste, and corrected her judgment: he made reading useful by talking to her of what she read, and heightened its attraction by judicious praise" (ibid.). Edmund asserts himself as a director in Fanny's life as he recommends, encourages, corrects, and praises her. In this way, Edmund teaches Fanny a new naturalized performance where he is the director and she is his performer. Austen displays in this episode how Fanny reaches naturalization at Mansfield by building on her performance at Portsmouth and making small changes to her performance at Mansfield to create a naturalized, low-class Mansfield performance that blends Portsmouth and Mansfield expectations successfully.

Austen indicates that, when Fanny ages, her naturalized performance becomes much more fixed than that of Mary Crawford. While Mary's performance retains a very malleable quality well into her adulthood, when Fanny becomes an adult, her naturalized performance is stabilized by the habituation she underwent first in Portsmouth and then with Edmund. Fanny clings to her naturalized performance, grounded in high morality, and it gives her a sense of identity that her Mansfield spectators challenge. They begin to assign acting roles in their play and Tom and the other Mansfield participants urge Fanny repeatedly to take part. Mrs. Norris even scolds Fanny for being "'obstinate'" and "'ungrateful'" for not acquiescing to her cousins (Austen 116). Mrs. Norris's words indicate how out of touch she is as a director for Fanny. Fanny apologizes, "'You must excuse me, indeed you must excuse me,'" while her complexion grows "more and more red from excessive agitation" (ibid.). Acting in a play is not something

that feels natural to Fanny. She becomes increasingly upset and agitated the more she is prodded to submit to what these spectators ask because it is incongruent with her naturalized identity. Unlike her spectators, Edmund as her director encourages Fanny to remain constant in her performance as she sees fit. Edmund tells Mrs. Norris, "'It is not fair to urge her in this manner. You see she does not like to act. Let her choose for herself, as well as the rest of us. Her judgment may be quite as safely trusted. Do not urge her any more'" (ibid.). Edmund helps fortify Fanny's naturalized performance by supporting her adherence to her own expression of gender. Fanny remains intelligible to her director and maintains a stabilized performance. In this episode, Austen invites readers to witness Fanny's constancy as it forms once she enters adulthood and exhibits how Edmund, as a director, enables Fanny to overcome challenges to her performance.

Overcoming Obstacles: Challenges to Fanny's Naturalization

Former spectators emerge as new directors in Fanny's performance and create a false perception of Fanny's naturalized performance. Edmund joins the side of these new directors and consequently complicates Fanny's stabilized sense of identity. These new directions involve suggesting Fanny incorporate signifiers of high-class femininity into her performance, such as the direction to wear a fancy necklace in chapter 26 or the prospect of opening the ball in chapter 28. Without help from Edmund, Fanny resists the initial instruction but eventually concedes. She justifies these concessions by reframing her behaviors as consistent with her naturalized performance. Despite her best intentions, however, Fanny's concessions strengthen her new directors' false perceptions and spectators begin to understand Fanny through a high-class performative lens.

Austen complicates Fanny's performance by introducing new directors who, along with Edmund, attempt to alter perceptions of Fanny's naturalization. Although Edmund is Fanny's main director, and chief supporter of her naturalized performance, there is a shift in the novel when Sir Thomas enters into the conversation with Fanny and directs her performance. After his return from the West Indies, Sir Thomas begins to appreciate Fanny as "very pretty" (Austen 154). Edmund notes to Fanny that "'the truth is, that your uncle [Sir Thomas] never did admire you till now—and now he does. Your complexion is so improved!—and you have gained so much countenance!'" (ibid.). Edmund repeats Sir Thomas's observations by directing Fanny – in this new light of improved appearance – toward an updated naturalized performance. Edmund advises Fanny, "'You must really begin to harden yourself to the idea of being worth looking at. You must try not to mind growing up into a pretty woman'" (155). Fanny's long-term naturalized performance, with Edmund's guidance and acceptance, now allows Sir Thomas to justify giving Fanny new directions. Now that Sir Thomas finds Fanny superficially comprehensible, he can view her in a way congruent to other young women (such as his daughters) and eradicate the distinction he created in her youth. Sir Thomas mistakes the change in Fanny's appearance for a change in her naturalized performance, despite the fact that performances of femininity exist beyond the physical plane. While Fanny is embarrassed by Edmund's words, an indication of her disagreement with this attempt to shift her performance no less, Fanny also cannot allow herself to become too adaptable to this new performance as Mary was between her city performance and her country performance. To become too amenable to adaptation would destabilize Fanny's sense of self as well as destabilize her relationship to her audience. Fanny already experienced a breakdown between herself and her audience after she first arrived at Mansfield and cannot risk returning to that anxious state. At the same time,

Austen displays that, after Sir Thomas's shift in perception, Fanny loses Edmund as the defender of her performance, which complicates things for Fanny as the novel progresses.

Austen also shows how Sir Thomas's judgement of Fanny influences other spectators to perceive Fanny differently. Fanny's brother William questions Sir Thomas about Fanny's dancing. Sir Thomas, possessing a clear idea of how he would like to direct Fanny, makes a claim suggestive of his ideals for her gender performance: "'I am sorry to say that I am unable to answer your question. I have never seen Fanny dance since she was a little girl; but I trust we shall both think she acquits herself like a gentlewoman when we do see her'" (Austen 196). This demonstrates that Sir Thomas has not paid much attention to Fanny's dancing since she was a child. He was out of touch with her performance and did not attempt to understand or direct it until now. Since he is involved now, he claims that Fanny will dance "like a gentlewoman," although it is unclear what exactly Sir Thomas means by that. It can be inferred, however, that he means Fanny will perform in a ladylike manner at a proper ball and not like a lower-class woman dancing, as William recalls, to a hand-organ in the street (ibid.).

Sir Thomas announces a new naturalized direction for Fanny in this scene and Henry follows suit, telling William he has seen her dance. Although, as the narrator highlights, Henry wishes he could have "answered for her gliding about with quiet, light elegance, and in admirable time," truthfully, he cannot, because "he could not for the life of him recall what her dancing had been, and rather took it for granted that she had been present than remembered anything about her" (Austen 196). Fanny goes unnoticed by Sir Thomas prior to her physical transformation as she ages. Now that Sir Thomas recognizes Fanny's potential to be a lady, Henry also sees her wealth as bound to how physically attractive she is as a potential wife and they attempt to change the direction of her performance. By deciding that Fanny is an

accomplished dancer without really knowing for sure, Henry directs Fanny towards a performance of femininity that might help her transcend her former class status but would also direct her away from the naturalized performance that currently stabilizes her. Austen highlights the phenomenon that occurs when Sir Thomas begins to change the perception of Fanny's performance.

Austen indicates how Sir Thomas attempts to change Fanny's performance and Fanny struggles against this new direction when she no longer has Edmund's full support. By throwing a fancy ball in her honor, Sir Thomas thrusts a new naturalized class performance onto Fanny. This causes conflict in Fanny's performance since she feels "the cares were sometimes almost beyond the happiness" that this ball might bring (Austen 199). The friction Fanny encounters revolves around a cross pendant given to her by her brother, William. This necklace symbolizes the intersection of femininity as well as class in terms of gender performance because jewelry used to dress a body is inherently performative and the ornateness of the jewelry makes a statement about class as well. In terms of the high-class ball, Fanny questions whether or not to wear the cross on a ribbon around her neck: "[W]ould it be allowable at such a time in the midst of all the rich ornaments which she supposed all the other young ladies would appear in?" (ibid.). Mary Crawford confuses Fanny even more by offering Fanny a very nice chain to wear. The stabilizing choice that allows Fanny to continue on with her naturalized lower-class Mansfield performance would be to wear the cross on a ribbon around her neck. Not only does she satisfy her brother's direction, but she does not need to alter her naturalized performance. Edmund, however, offers Fanny alternative instruction:

> 'Miss Crawford's attentions to you have been—not more than you were justly entitled to—I am the last person to think that *could be*, but they have been invariable; and to be returning them with what must have something the *air* of ingratitude, though I know it could never have the *meaning*, is not in your nature, I am sure. Wear the necklace, as you

> are engaged to do, to-morrow [sic] evening, and let the chain, which was not ordered with any reference to the ball, be kept for commoner occasions. This is my advice.' (206, emphasis original)

Edmund directs Fanny towards a new naturalized performance of upper-class femininity by exploiting Fanny's current naturalized performance. Wearing an ornate necklace, such as this gift from Mary, is, in fact, not consistent with Fanny's sense of self or she would not have an issue with wearing it. Edmund suggests that Fanny must avoid an "air of ingratitude" for it not being "in her nature," which is a direction initiated from Fanny's low-class habituation that Edmund then tries to turn in a high-class direction. She resists the initial implication that she should wear the necklace and wishes to send it back but, ultimately, Fanny embraces this direction from Edmund since listening to Edmund is habitual. She keeps Mary's necklace and "resolve[s] to wear it" in order "to oblige Edmund" (212). Therefore, Fanny only gives in to societal expectation and direction in order to support her director's (Edmund's) sense of identity. Austen uses this symbol of class to display Fanny's convoluted gender performance under new direction. Fanny struggles with class issues within her gender performance in her wish to remain stable and do what feels natural for her but she encounters conflict when her naturalized behavior differs from the new performance expectations coming from Edmund.

Austen displays Fanny's resilience in the wake of directors who would destabilize her if she fully accepted their instructions. While she may not completely detach herself from Sir Thomas's desires, Fanny clearly resists his direction to open the ball at Mansfield. Fanny admits that "she could not help an exclamation of surprise, a hint of her unfitness, an entreaty even to be excused" after Sir Thomas tells her that she is to lead the way in opening the ball (Austen 216). Fanny even attempts to dissuade Sir Thomas. Fanny sticks to her naturalized performance by expressing in a moment of true courage that she cannot open the ball:

> To be urging her opinion against Sir Thomas's was a proof of the extremity of the case; but such was her horror at the first suggestion, that she could actually look him in the face and say that she hoped it might be settled otherwise; in vain, however: Sir Thomas smiled, tried to encourage her, and then looked too serious, and said too decidedly, 'It must be so, my dear.' (ibid.)

As the end of the passage indicates, Fanny unsuccessfully refuses. Since this ball represents Fanny's official invitation into high society, Sir Thomas forces Fanny in a new naturalized direction that involves the female performer engaging in this rite of passage to enter into society. Fanny admits that other girls, like her cousins, would delight in the opportunity to open a ball. Although Fanny makes this concession, she nevertheless shows strength in her protests against this new high-class naturalization being forced upon her.

While Fanny cannot completely escape the direction of Sir Thomas, she indicates that she has come to views her action as adhering to proper social conduct. These Fanny expresses the sentiments when she and Henry Crawford begin the dance: "it was rather honour than happiness to Fanny, for the first dance at least: her partner was in excellent spirits, and tried to impart them to her; but she was a great deal too much frightened to have any enjoyment till she could suppose herself no longer looked at" (Austen 216). Fanny does not derive enjoyment from acting in accordance with Sir Thomas's new directions as the narrator suggests Fanny ought. On the contrary, Fanny treats the occasion as a duty and feels discomfort and anxiety during the ordeal. She experiences distress at being watched by the other party-goers. Thus, Fanny not only tries to reject her director, but wishes also to evade the judgement of her spectators. These directions and judgements force Fanny to display an identity that she does not support. Fanny repudiates the expectations associated with an audience that does not truly understand her naturalized self.

Although Fanny makes concessions to justify her new directors' instructions, Austen demonstrates how these concessions can be troublesome for Fanny's future performance.

Fanny's accordance with Sir Thomas's wishes may be out of her naturalized performance to be honorable. The spectators at the party view Fanny's concession not as being a part of a low-class performance but as an adherence to a high-class performance. This is indicated during her first dance with Henry Crawford: "young, pretty, and gentle, however, [Fanny] had no awkwardnesses that were not as good as graces, and there were few persons present that were not disposed to praise her. She was attractive, she was modest, she was Sir Thomas's niece, and she was soon said to be admired by Mr. Crawford" (Austen 216). The simple act of watching Fanny dance with Henry Crawford facilitates judgements about Fanny's desires that lead to assumptions about her identity. Her audience views her as attractive and modest, less because they genuinely know Fanny, and more because she is taking the direction of her uncle and therefore, as his niece, represents an extension of Sir Thomas. Consequently, it favors Sir Thomas to have Fanny dancing with an eligible gentleman. Austen's heroine, therefore, is anxious because she is being forced to exhibit externally a performance that she does not identify with internally. Fanny may try to restabilize her performance after making these concessions by attributing them to her truly naturalized self, but to remedy the perception of her spectatorship, Fanny must reconcile her identity in another way and without Edmund's aid.

Fanny's Constancy: Stabilizing the Naturalized Performance

By the second half of the novel, Fanny makes so many concessions to her performance that her spectators accept the high-class perception her performance exudes. This is indicated in the way that Henry Crawford no longer jests with Fanny but truly thinks himself in love with her. At the risk of destabilizing her performance even more, Fanny can no longer make concessions in favor of a high-class performance and finds the strength on her own to stand up to Sir Thomas

and Edmund against their direction to marry Henry. Her directors persist in finding reasons for her to embrace Henry, but Fanny rejects these directions as well, and even gains a greater understanding of her own naturalized performance as a result.

Each time Fanny accepts a direction that leads to a new perception of her performance, she risks destabilizing her performance because she externally displays an identity that her audience mininterprets. Now that Fanny is interpreted as a certain type in the eyes of her Mansfield audience, they begin to interact with her as if she has taken on a new, high-class naturalized performance . This is evident in how, after the ball scene, Henry Crawford no longer jokes but claims to be in love with Fanny. He tells Mary, "'you must be aware that I am quite determined to marry Fanny Price,'" but when asked how he came to this conclusion, "nothing could be more impossible than to answer such a question, though nothing could be more agreeable than to have it asked. 'How the pleasing plague had stolen on him' he could not say" (Austen 228-229). Other spectators interpret a performance that does not exist and as a result, directors push Fanny towards a performance that she does not fully embrace. Since Fanny does concede to aspects of this performance, albeit through the justification of honor and duty, they still signify the same message to spectators: that Fanny is an available, upper-class woman looking for a comparable, upper-class husband. Fanny, however, does not internalize this performance being thrust upon her and does her best to stick to the naturalized performance stabilized since her childhood.

Austen demonstrates the way that Fanny evolves to re-enforce her stabilized performance against her high-class directors. Fanny, for example, cannot be persuaded to marry Henry Crawford. Sir Thomas interrogates her as to why she is so against the marriage. Unlike at the ball, nothing Sir Thomas says can sway Fanny's stance on the matter. Not even when he begins

to attack her character does Fanny yield in favor of a Crawford-Price union. "'You think only of yourself,'" Sir Thomas insults Fanny, "'and because you do not feel for Mr. Crawford exactly what a young heated fancy imagines to be necessary for happiness, you resolve to refuse him at once, without wishing even for a little time to consider of it, a little more time for cool consideration, and for really examining your own inclinations'" (Austen 249). Sir Thomas accuses Fanny of being selfish and blames her quick refusal on the foolishness of youth. The irony here is obvious, given that Fanny not only always thinks of others and how she impacts them through her actions, but also she overthinks everything and does not make snap judgements. Sir Thomas, in his frustration with Fanny, makes a heated judgement of her as he claims Fanny is "'in a wild fit of folly'" by throwing away "'such an opportunity of being settled in life, eligibly, honourably, nobly settled, as will, probably, never occur to [Fanny] again'" (ibid.). Sir Thomas continues to insult Fanny for what he views as an imprudent rejection, not only of Henry, but of himself as a director in Fanny's life. Sir Thomas codes Henry's proposal and potential marriage to Fanny as honorable. Fanny's rejection of it, though, clearly displays the fallacy of Sir Thomas's expectation because, were it a matter of honor, Fanny would be more inclined to do it, since honor and duty are part of her naturalized performance.

In fact, Sir Thomas's attempt to persuade Fanny backfires when he highlights the exact reasons she will not allow any more compromises to her performance. Fanny cannot fathom marrying a man whose principles she does not support. Henry Crawford's high moral standards and good principles are not something that Sir Thomas lists when he tells Fanny why she would be smart to accept him. Instead, Sir Thomas acknowledges other benefits, such as how good Fanny will look to society by having an eligible, honorable, and noble marriage. Sir Thomas also indicates several other advantages to marrying Henry Crawford:

> ‘Here is a young man of sense, of character, of temper, of manners, and of fortune, exceedingly attached to you, and seeking your hand in the most handsome and disinterested way; and let me tell you, Fanny, that you may live eighteen years longer in the world without being addressed by a man of half Mr. Crawford’s estate, or a tenth part of his merits.’ (Austen 249)

Sir Thomas highlights Henry’s interest in her and his standing in society as reasons to accept him but Fanny does not care for those qualities. A woman like Mary Crawford would be exceptionally happy with a man like her brother proposing to her, especially if he improved her social standing. This, of course, is related to the fact that Mary agrees and identifies with the societal expectation for her to desire such a marriage. Fanny, on the contrary, exhibits strength in her ability to refuse that lifestyle for herself because she wants something more appropriate to her identity expression. In fact, Sir Thomas’s arguments dissuade Fanny from following his direction even more by accentuating aspects of Henry’s performance that do not align with Fanny’s values.

Austen indicates that Fanny will not change her performance just to please her audience, by asserting that Fanny could never adapt herself to a life with Henry. After Henry makes an extravagant and heartfelt plea for Fanny’s hand, she refuses him because “she did not love him, could not love him, was sure she never should love him,” and most importantly, she felt “that such a change was quite impossible” (Austen 256). Despite all the direction Fanny receives pushing her towards Henry, she declines him because, as she indicates, “in her opinion their dispositions were so totally dissimilar as to make mutual affection incompatible; and that they were unfitted for each other by nature, education, and habit” (ibid.). When Fanny notes that they are too different in terms of nature, education, and habits, she is refusing a new naturalized performance in order to maintain her current naturalized performance. Her description of the whole event, via the narrator, depicts her refusal of Henry as consistent with her high sense of

duty and morals, just like opening the ball for Sir Thomas or wearing the necklace for Edmund. Austen displays growth in Fanny's character when she stands up for herself and asserts her naturalized performance to avoid the destabilization of competing naturalized performances.

Austen shows Fanny's true strength through her ability to reject her naturalized director, Edmund, who had formerly supported her and now tries to discourage her from following her naturalized performance. It is important to first note that Fanny's treatment of Henry and her directors is very different from the way Mary reacts in a similar situation. Mary comes to love Edmund when he projects a new country naturalized performance onto her. Sir Thomas, Edmund, and Henry similarly project a new high-class naturalized performance onto Fanny, but she refuses to change. This is evident when, after the refusals to Henry and Sir Thomas, Edmund directs Fanny in a very forthright manner. He insists that she "'let [Henry] succeed at last'" (Austen 272) He brings Fanny's character into it as he tells her, "'You have proved yourself upright and disinterested, prove yourself grateful and tender-hearted; and then you will be the perfect model of a woman which I have always believed you born for'" (ibid.). Edmund points to Fanny's performance and indicates that Fanny needs to change it toward the new naturalized direction suitable to Edmund and the rest of Fanny's spectatorship. Simply because Fanny is so consistent in the way she declares she does not want to marry Henry, Edmund's tone now takes a patronizing quality, as though Fanny needed to be told what's best. He wants to see Fanny become a "perfect model of a woman" that Fanny herself does not wish to become.

Fanny asserts herself in this episode to rival Edmund's direction. In a very general yet powerful statement of why she should not have to face such outcry for her refusal of Henry, Fanny claims, "'I think it ought not to be set down as certain that a man must be acceptable to every woman he may happen to like himself'" (Austen 277). Although Fanny may compromise

in order to maintain honor in social situations, she rejects direction that steers her away from her sense of self. Fanny does not change her performance to accommodate the wishes of her directors, even if it makes them angry and they change the way they view her. Fanny challenges their condemnation in order to refute the notion that women must adapt to men's dictates. Had Mary been able to reject direction in order to maintain her sense of self, she would not have destabilized her performance of femininity. Fanny has the courage to stand up to the men trying to force her to perform differently. Austen displays how the challenge to her naturalized performance provides Fanny with the ability to grow and be able to defend herself against the one person who used to defend her.

Austen continues to threaten Fanny's stable sense of self through her male directors despite Fanny defying this new direction. After Fanny rejects Henry's advances, Henry makes a rejuvenated effort to sway Fanny's performance in his favor. Henry turns to reading, one of Fanny's favorite activities, in an attempt to make Fanny agree to another concession to her performance. While Henry begins to read aloud one of Shakespeare's plays, Fanny gives all her attention to her needle work and "seemed determined to be interested by nothing else," but this does not hold for long because "taste was too strong in her" (Austen 264). Fanny becomes enchanted by Henry's performance:

> She could not abstract her mind five minutes: she was forced to listen; his reading was capital, and her pleasure in good reading extreme. To good reading, however, she had been long used: her uncle read well, her cousins all, Edmund very well, but in Mr. Crawford's reading there was a variety of excellence beyond what she had ever met with. (ibid.)

Fanny is captivated by good reading and therefore cannot ignore Henry's. Not only can she not ignore it, she is "forced" to listen to it. Unlike the other times Fanny is made to do something she resists, no one is expressly telling her to do anything. Instead, Henry's implicit direction through

his performance of his own class and gender "force[s]" Fanny to listen. Fanny even acknowledges how good reading is a sign of masculine performance. While she mentions her cousins as good readers, Fanny specifically mentions two men, her uncle and Edmund, as being very good. Henry is able to convince Fanny of his performance so effectively that she rates Henry's reading as beyond excellent. Fanny, however, still rejects Henry in this episode. Both Edmund and Henry glance at Fanny at the conclusion of this reading "to see if a word of accordant praise could be extorted from [Fanny]; yet both feeling that it could not be" (ibid.). Austen show how Fanny's high-class directors get creative in their efforts to alter Fanny's naturalized direction but Fanny remains constant in her performance.

Henry is not the only new director who finds alternative ways to disrupt Fanny's performance. Sir Thomas purposely sends Fanny back to Portsmouth in an effort to compel Fanny to accept Henry. This lower-class environment that Fanny hails from and now revists no longer sustains the mixed performance Fanny develops at Mansfield. Her parents' home is loud, dirty, and cramped. Fanny is unable to hide away in her East room like she does at Mansfield. Fanny is shocked by her mother's house management skills, her siblings' behavior, and the terribly unhelpful maid. Fanny is even very judgemental of her Portsmouth audience to whom she feels she no longer can relate. Fanny finds that she cannot overlook the deficiencies within her home by looking to the Portsmouth society:

> There were none within the circle of [Fanny's] father's and mother's acquaintance to afford her the smallest satisfaction: she saw nobody in whose favour she could wish to overcome her own shyness and reserve. The men appeared to her all coarse, the women all pert, everybody underbred; and she gave as little contentment as she received from introductions either to old or new acquaintance. (Austen 310)

While Fanny is a new spectator in Portsmouth society, she also decidedly rejects anyone from this seaside village as her director, which is indicated by the way Fanny will not attempt to

change her shyness and reserve to accommodate the pretense of the women or the coarseness of the men. Fanny calls them all "underbred," which distinguishes between Fanny's breeding and the townspeople's. This suggests that Fanny deems herself superior to these people just as the majority at Mansfield feel superior to Fanny. Most importantly, however, is the idea that, even when returning to whence she came, Fanny maintains her naturalized performance reified at Mansfield.

Although Fanny rejects her potential directors as Portsmouth, she cannot evade the Portsmouth audience's judgements. In fact, the women of Portsmouth do judge Fanny: "The young ladies who approached [Fanny] at first with some respect, in consideration of her coming from a baronet's family, were soon offended by what they termed 'airs'; for, as she neither played on the pianoforte nor wore fine pelisses, they could, on further observation, admit no right of superiority" (Austen 310). What is described here is a dissonant performance because Fanny, the women of Portsmouth's society imagine, should present as an upper-class woman and, in turn, be treated with respect. Since Fanny's performance does not perfectly align with those of women like Mary Crawford or the Bertram sisters, her spectators perceive her as being like the lower-class folk. While Fanny hasn't the accomplishments or finery of an upper class-woman, she does have what the Portsmouth residents call "airs," which can be understood as Fanny's mindset. While Fanny struggles to fit in at Mansfield, she refuses to fit in at Portsmouth because, in both cases, she maintains a naturalized performance that suits her and not her spectators. Just as Fanny's behavior confuses Mary earlier on in the novel about whether or not Fanny was "out", Fanny confuses her Portsmouth audience about how to treat her – as a woman of high breeding or as one of them. While Fanny looks and acts in certain respects like them, she thinks like a finer woman than she looks, which leads her audience to reject her performance. Fanny

exists in some combination of Mansfield and Portsmouth and since she refuses to be directed one way or the other, her spectators struggle to interpret her performance and either become angry with her or ignore her altogether. Although Fanny's audience in Portsmouth dislikes her, Fanny displays a sense of constancy, which is the best possible thing Fanny can do to retain her sense of self given these changing audiences.

Sir Thomas's final manipulation of Fanny only makes her realize that she is not very adaptable in her performance. While Sir Thomas hopes sending her back to Portsmouth will make her favor Henry, in fact, it reveals that she wants what she already has from her performance. Eager to return to Mansfield, she claims, "could she have been at home, she might have been of service to every creature in the house. She felt that she must have been of use to all. To all she must have saved some trouble of head or hand" (Austen 339). This certainly is a change from how Fanny feels when she first arrives at Mansfield. Back then, she was more naturalized to Portsmouth than to Mansfield and she no longer filled the same roles within the social hierarchy at Mansfield as she did at Portsmouth. Fanny takes direction from Edmund to find her place within that society in a way that blends her performance with her new situation. Her longing to be back at "home" in Mansfield is a perfect example of this as she finds a way to become useful at Mansfield just as she had been as a child in Portsmouth, but in a different way. Fanny no longer belongs to Portsmouth, something that Sir Thomas was hoping she would discover by returning there, but she also will not be changing her performance any further. Sir Thomas did not foresee this decision when he sent her away. Fanny is a creature who is steady in her performance. She grows out of her youthful adaptability and into a naturalized performance that she adopts through direction and maintains for the rest of her life. Austen proves that Fanny

is in fact so constant in her performance that Sir Thomas's plots to change Fanny's naturalization fail in the end.

Concluding Thoughts

Fanny's constancy to her naturalized performance pays off when she not only redirects Edmund's expectations so that he may see her as the object of his love, but Sir Thomas too redirects his spectatorship in favor of Fanny's performance of femininity. As Edmund forgets Mary Crawford, he soon enough realizes that Fanny's "mind, disposition, opinions, and habits wanted no half-concealment, no self-deception on the present, no reliance on future improvement," and Edmund admits that, even while he was in love with Mary, "he had acknowledged Fanny's mental superiority" (Austen 370). Edmund resolves to think that "[Fanny] was of course only too good for him" (ibid.). Sir Thomas also has a change of heart about the union between his second son and his niece. In fact, Sir Thomas joyfully consents to their marriage because "the high sense of having realised a great acquisition in the promise of Fanny for a daughter, formed just such a contrast with his early opinion on the subject when the poor little girl's coming had been first agitated" that "Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted" (371). Both Edmund and Sir Thomas accept Fanny's naturalized performance in the end. While originally, Fanny struggled to be understood by Sir Thomas, and even at points in the novel after helping her obtain a naturalized performance, Edmund challenged it, by the novel's conclusion, they both meet Fanny where her naturalized performance starts and moving forward direct her in a way congruent with what feels natural to Fanny. Austen champions the stability of a performance over time and suggests this with Fanny's ultimate reward: obtaining acceptance from both Sir Thomas and Edmund.

As the critics love to point out, Fanny is no Mary Crawford in terms of charm or wit. Fanny, however, displays a much more successful gender performance throughout the novel and is subsequently rewarded in the end with marriage. Applying Butler's theory to Fanny's gender performance allows us to understand that, despite gender possessing a very fluid quality, it is imperative to stabilize one's gender repetition by the time one enters adulthood. Outside observers may disagree with one's performance. They may be dismissive or become angry when a performer strays from socially-acceptable expectations when adhering to the performer's sense of self. For the sake of personal sanity, Austen explains through Fanny, it is best to formulate a stable sense of self and then challenge all who insist that she change.

Conclusion

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, first proposed in *Gender Trouble*, emphasized the fluid essence of gender. While Butler's theory helps us to understand that gender is not fixed, and that it is created by a person's behavior, it is not until we apply Butler's theory to a mimetic work of literature that we understand this theory in concrete terms. Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* is a perfect example to use because her characters model the psychology of real people and Fanny Price as well as Mary Crawford provide a sample of two different types of gender performances.

Through Mary's relationship with her directors, spectators, and her environment, it is ascertained that Mary habituated to direction from her urban audience to form an urban naturalized performance. When Mary enters the country, she quickly adopts a country naturalized performance that ultimately destabilizes her sense of self and she elects an idealized performance to compensate. Mary's extreme adaptability to changing environments and new directions leads to her failure to marry at the novel's conclusion because her idealized performance corrodes her naturalized self to the point that she is unrecognizable to her audience. Austen therefore highlights the dangers of capitulating to the elasticity of gender performance.

Fanny's gender performance is malleable as a child but it stabilizes into adulthood. Edmund Bertram aided Fanny in stabilizing her low-class performance at Mansfield, but Sir Thomas induces a high-class perception of Fanny's performance. Fanny then must defend her performance against those who would force her to adopt a new naturalized performance. Fanny gains confidence in her stabilized performance and effectively maintains a sense of self. Austen champions the ability to establish an enduring gender performance so that the performer may retain a perception of personal sanity.

Austen's input on how to cope with the fluidity of gender performance has important implications within the fields of psychology and feminist theory. Lawrence Raw and Robert G. Dryden investigate Austen's modern relevance by citing her effect on individual psychologies. They assert that within her "limited sphere," Austen was a "student of human relation and interaction" and that "Austen appeals to a universal audience of women and a growing audience of men… [who] are sensitive to the plights and hardships of women in history; women from all cultural groups have experienced, and well understand and identify with, patriarchal histories of oppression" (Raw 2). They further suggest that "Austen novels are as relevant right now as they were when she wrote them," and that Austen's heroines are "precursors to modern-day feminists" (3).

A Butlerian interpretation of *Mansfield Park* illuminates Raw and Dryden's claim because, within this novel, Austen makes a liberating argument about the feminine condition. Fanny Price represents a modern-day feminist because no matter how much her masculine audience demands she change her identity, Fanny remains constant in her sense of self and defies their opposition. Austen therefore creates Fanny to be an exemplary woman whom all can look to and find empowerment. Jane Austen encourages women to embody femininity in a manner that suits their own senses of self above anyone elses and for that, Austen is a model feminist.

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