Henry Crawford as Master Betty: Jane Austen on the "Disabling" of Shakespeare.

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Abstract:

This paper argues that Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park* with its direct quotes from Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* and its underlying plot reference to *King Lear* may be read as a *crie de coeur* from Austen at the poor state of the British Theatre in the early nineteenth century. At the time when Shakespeare's plays were performed in altered versions to please audiences, known to many only in fragments, and children such as Master William Betty were lionised equally by the same audience for playing Hamlet and sentimental roles in the clap-trap comedy *Lovers Vows*, *Mansfield Park* calls for the nation to return to the *Complete Works of Shakespeare* to rediscover pride in itself, its heroes and heroines and to know Fanny Price as the proper subject for a novel.

Introduction - disabling Jane Austen

John Wiltshire's *Jane Austen and the Body: The Picture of Health*[1] is one of the very few readings of Jane Austen which considers a character in terms that might fall under the banner of what has recently begun to be called 'Disability Studies.' Wiltshire writes:

[1] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

> Fanny Price is the only one of Jane Austen's heroines whose body is frail, 'debilitated' or 'enfeebled' and, partly because of this, the character is notoriously an obstacle to the appreciation of *Mansfield Park*, and not only among those readers naive perhaps who seek a heroine to identify or to flirt with.[2]

In this statement it is hard to know whether Wiltshire is suggesting that it is the novel or Fanny Price herself that is 'debilitated' or 'enfeebled', although as he goes on to suggest, there is a link between the two:

> Hers, as so many critics have noted, is by and large a non-speaking part. Her true emotions are displayed to the reader less through her words than through the implications of [her] bodily signs …. A rationalist reader will disregard this information as useless; for Marilyn Butler, for instance, Fanny's 'feebleness' is 'quite incidental' to Austen's main argument, a failed 'device' for securing the reader's sympathy.[3]

On the contrary for Wiltshire, Fanny's 'feebleness' is the way her body speaks, and it is up to the critic to be attentive to it. He writes:

> To disregard the communications of the body is a consequence of the western rationalist tradition which elevates the soul or consciousness, and relegates the body as inferior and uncultured. Such dualism identifies subjectivity and personhood with

[2] Wiltshire, *Jane Austen and the Body*, 63.
[3] Wiltshire, *Jane Austen and the Body*, 75.

> the ideational or conceptual side of the opposition (mind/body) while relegating the body to the status of an object outside of or distinct from consciousness.[4]

What is striking about Wiltshire's reading of *Mansfield Park* is that it understands Fanny Price's body as a communication from her unconscious and reads her bodily actions as empirical evidence for the unspoken words of the novel's heroine. What this essay will suggest is that rather than acting as latent content gesturing towards the real meaning of the text, the motive for the plot of *Mansfield Park* derives from two 'enfeebled' bodies, and that throughout the novel Austen reads bodies empirically as bodies. Fanny comes to Mansfield Park because of one:

> A large and still increasing family, an husband disabled for active service, but not the less equal to company and good liquor, and a very small income to supply their wants, made [Mrs Price] eager to regain the friends she had so carelessly sacrificed; and she addressed Lady Bertram in a letter which spoke so much contrition and despondence, such a superfluity of children, and such a want of almost everything else, as could not but dispose them all to a reconciliation.[5]

For a writer who knew the navy well, since she had two brothers serving in it, it is impossible to believe that Jane Austen did not know that many of its able-seamen and

[4] Wiltshire, *Jane Austen and the Body*, 75.
[5] Jane Austen, "Mansfield Park," iBooks edition. https://itun.es/gb/rp2Kx.l All further quotes from the novel are made to this edition without citation, since quotes may be located by searching the iBook.

ratings worked on after serious injuries.[6] Lord Nelson was not alone in continuing to serve after losing an eye and an arm. The irony in the quote relies on a common knowledge that Fanny's father is a wastrel whose impairment is not consequential on his continuing to serve in the navy, but whose desire for 'company and good liquor' is, and whose poverty is therefore his own choice.

Likewise, Henry and Mary Crawford come to stay with Mrs Grant due to another 'enfeebled' body from the navy:

> Admiral Crawford was a man of vicious conduct, who chose, instead of retaining his niece, to bring his mistress under his own roof; … .

It might appear that Admiral Crawford is impaired only in his morality. However, it must be remembered that Lord Nelson also lived openly with his mistress, another fact which the Austen family, along with every contemporary reader would have known. The irony in this quote therefore subtends from the uncomfortable fact that the nation's greatest war hero with the blind eye and absent arm had questionable morals, and that another war hero's poor morals are the reason for poor morals being brought to the haven of Mansfield Park.

If Nelson, his impaired body and his dubious morality can be accepted as one motivation of a contemporary understanding of *Mansfield Park*, the message of the novel in its context becomes clearer and Fanny Price more easily acceptable as its heroine.[7] For Nelson, despite his

[6] Teresa Michals, "Smart-Money, Pain, and Promotion," American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Philadelphia, PA, April 1, 2016. Lecture.
[7] For a similar and more detailed argument about Nelson as the motivation of *Persuasion*, which also mentions Nelson and the navy in *Mansfield Park*, see Jocelyn Harris, "Domestic Virtues and

impairments did continue to serve in the navy, unlike Fanny's father. And Nelson, despite what Austen no doubt thought to be squalid living arrangements was a national hero, unlike the pure and chaste Fanny.

This essay will argue that in *Mansfield Park* Jane Austen addresses these two opposing aspects of Nelson in her choice of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare's most famous and least performed plays,[8] in the ways they function in the novel. *King Lear* is used as a plot driver worthy of its message, and *Henry VIII* in Henry Crawford's reading, as a demonstration of the perils of believing that actors are channeling genuine sentiment when they are only parroting an authors' words with no understanding.

Austen's Shakespeare, will be read against the novel's foiled production of Elizabeth Inchbald's translation of August Kotzebue's *Lovers' Vows*, a play which was briefly but hugely successful in the professional theatre although it was deemed unsuitable for production by Sir Thomas Bertram in *Mansfield Park*. John Wiltshire writes:

> Readers can only gaze into the mirror Fanny sees if they are familiar with *Lovers' Vows*, (though perhaps Jane Austen assumes her readers would be, as Chapman asserts).[9]

National Importance": Lord Nelson, Captain Wentworth, and the English Napoleonic War Hero," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 19, No. 1&2, (Fall 2006), 181-205.

[8] I can find only one notice of a performance of *Henry VIII* in the *Bath Chronicle* while Jane Austen lived in that city, which recalls Mrs Siddons playing Katharine in London: *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* - Thursday 02 October 1806. There are thirty two advertisements and notices about performances of *King Lear*.

[9] Wiltshire, *Jane Austen and the Body*, 75.

As we shall find, most if not all Austen's contemporary audience had seen *Lovers' Vows* performed in a local theatre, with the part of Frederick, the heroine's natural son, played by one of the popular child actors whose every lisp and breathy sob were reported over and over again in the newspapers. And it is the contemporary sentimental attitude to both acting and theatre which Austen ironizes in *Mansfield Park*, offering instead Shakespeare's tale of Lear in a less sentimental and so more believable version to guide our morals.

Austen's moral message is focused through Fanny Price's enfeebled body, as it stands in for Cordelia's, which suffers for refusing to say the words expected of her (when Fanny refuses to join the players), and Katherine of Aragon's, which is condemned by people with false motives (when Fanny refuses Henry Crawford's proposal). And it is this strength and determination in her moral courage despite her enfeebled body that makes Fanny Price a heroine fit for a novel.

Reading Fanny Price's enfeebled body empirically

Since 1992, Lennard J. Davis' *Disability Studies Reader* has been the most influential collection of essays that enshrines what is currently understood as the cultural model of disability, which underlies the theory of "Disability Studies." However, two of its founding principles become problematic when one attempts to apply them to *Mansfield Park*. First, Davis claims that "the 'problem' is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way normalcy is constructed

to create the ‘problem’ of the disabled person.”[10] The difficulty in applying this aspect of Disability Theory to Fanny Price is that she is never perceived as a problem because of her enfeebled body, and even when she refuses to act in the play, or refuses Henry Crawford’s proposal of marriage, her difference from what might be expected of a normal young woman is demonstrated by the outcome of the novel, her marriage to Edmund Bertram, to be a model of virtue. For this reason, it is not out of the question that a disability theorist might claim that the Fanny Price’s enfeeblement is “quite incidental” to the novel, in the same way as Marilyn Butler, or even that she is not disabled.

Second, Davis tells us that “The word ‘normal’ [by which disability is defined] as ‘constituting, conforming to, not deviating or different from, the common standard, regular, usual’ only enters the English language around 1840,”[11] which is twenty-six years later than *Mansfield Park.* Furthermore, the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that the definition of “disabled” as “having a physical or mental condition which limits action … came to be used as the standard term in this sense in the second half of the twentieth century.”[12] Austen would have understood the word “disabled” to describe people who temporarily could not work. Thus, a newspaper article contemporary with *Mansfield Park* about soldiers returning from Spain and Portugal, describes them using the term “disabled … in their present weak and debilitated state, occasioned by the

[10] Lennard J. Davis, ed. *The Disability Studies Reader*, 5th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2017). Kindle edition.
[11] Davis, *Disability Studies Reader*, 5th ed.
[12] "disabled, adj. and n.". OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.winchester.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/53385?redirectedFrom=disabled (accessed October 03, 2016).

fatigue and privations they have lately undergone, in fighting their country's battles … ."[13] The newspaper asks the people of Exeter for donations of clothes to keep the soldiers warm while they stay in their temporary encampment, to help them regain their strength.

With neither a "norm" to "create the problem of the disabled person", nor even a sense that there might be a problem with having an enfeebled body, it would therefore seem anachronistic to read Austen using disability theory, and thus I would argue it is not appropriate to read bodies in Austen as a sign of "the Master Trope of Human disqualification," as David T. Mitchell and Sharon Snyder suggest that Disability Studies predicts.[14] It is therefore from Austen's empirical understanding of her enfeebled heroine that I take the starting point of the empirical methodology of this essay: just as the one eyed and one armed Nelson was capable of leading the navy to victory, so the physically debilitated Fanny Price is capable of being the heroine in a moral tale due to her stoic adherence to what she thinks is right. For both bodies, their external manifestations of weakness give little or no indication of their internal strength and determination.

In the same way, my own research technique is to work empirically with my own impaired body, and the argument of this essay is based on research done by searching databases rather than what might hitherto have been thought of as academic study by close reading of all the

[13] ***Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*** (Exeter, England), Thursday, February 23, 1809; Issue 2338.

[14] In terms of 'Disability Studies' the impaired body is understood by Mitchell and Snyder as 'the Master Trope of Human disqualification.' *Narrative Prosthesis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 3.

available sources. This means that the studies to which I refer in this essay are mostly journal articles, and where books are referenced they were available in electronic form. Sadly, most book references are taken from reviews or fragments available on Googlebooks or other databases, or as free samples from Kindle, so I am not writing from as complete a literature survey as I would have liked. I have followed this practice as a statement of intent since, as a partially sighted scholar, I cannot easily work with texts that cannot be translated into my language of understanding by text to voice. Where I have used whole books, they have been freely and legally made available to me as unencrypted electronic text. I have made a policy of not signing disclaimers stating that I will not put such texts online as a hurdle to access since this demand expects me to be a criminal first and a partially sighted scholar second. Nor will I read freely given texts by publishers whom I have had to threaten with legal action before a book was sent to me, to which every sighted scholar in the west gets free access through the copyright deposit system. When will these deposits be made in an accessible form? My practice also means that some of the page numbers I give are inaccurate or missing as they come from (legal) online sources or from pre-publication copies. I have already noted above that I use iBooks and Kindle versions of texts, where available, and, although both have good search functions, neither makes continuous electronic reading out loud easy, and both have room for improvement in terms of the voice inflection.

If this glimpse into my work practices gives a sighted reader some idea of what it is like to be a blind academic, imagine yourself blind and only able to listen to readings of

Shakespeare (try reading this text with the text-to-voice software on your computer) rather than moving your eyes over the words you cannot see. That is what Fanny does when she hears Henry read, and it leads to a different but equally valid way of understanding. To some extent anyone who has been to a performance of a play knows what changes in this way of understanding text: meaning is mediated by the actor in a way that can come into conflict with the intention of the reader. Furthermore, meaning becomes obviously multiple as the actor's meaning diverges from that of the reader. It is the same with the numerous annotated versions of Shakespeare's texts that began to be published at the end of the eighteenth century: another intention re-animates the play and makes it say other things than the reader expects. And in many respects, *Mansfield Park* is an annotated play text.

It has often been argued that *King Lear* is an underlying theme of *Mansfield Park*:[15] both are stories about a father with two bad daughters and one good one, and in which the drama lies in his inability to recognize which is which. Here, I shall argue that Austen is further motivated by the differences between Shakespeare's original and her contemporary performed version that was given a happy ending by Nahum Tate, with which she draws her readers' attention to the question of what audiences want from literature and what is morally desirable. In the opposition

[15] For example: Avrom Feishman, *A Reading of Mansfield Park: An Essay in Critical* Synthesis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967); David Kaufmann, "Closure in Mansfield Park and the Sanctity of the Family." *Philological Quarterly* 65.2 (1986): 211-29; Eileen Cleere, 'Reinvesting Nieces: "Mansfield Park" and the Economics of Endogomy', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 28, No.2 (Winter, 1995), 113-130; Susan Allen Ford, 'Intimate by Instinct Mansfield Park and the Comedy of King Lear',
Persuasions, 1 Jan 2002.
http://www.thefreelibrary.com/%22Intimate+by+instinct%22%3A+Mansfield+Park+and+the+comedy+of+King+Lear...-a0135180165 [Accessed 28 Aug 2016]

between the two *King Lear*s and *Lovers' Vows* Austen concludes that what audiences want is a romantic story in which everything turns out well and wealthy, while what she gives them in her novel is a marriage between a hero and heroine with human faults and bodily impairments who must, like the impaired Nelson, work for their living.

The scene in which Henry Crawford reads from *Henry VIII* is also much discussed by critics.[16] Henry's ability to read well comes as something of a surprise to Fanny, who is throughout the novel repelled by his and his sister Mary's fast talk and loose morals. In this essay I shall argue that in this scene, when Fanny remembers Henry acting in *Lovers' Vows* with Maria Bertram with whom he soon elopes, Austen urges her readers that they must get a thorough knowledge of Shakespeare in order to understand his complex morality, and that the ability to read or act well is not enough. Thus, I would disagree with Daniel Polack Pelzner, who argues that Henry's acting

> …turn[s] Fanny from a purely reflective being into a sensory organ that gets manipulated by the mesmerizing power of Crawford's performance. In the most intense sentence of this passage, those eyes become "fixed on Crawford, fixed on him for minutes, fixed on him," in a driving anaphora that has an almost ecstatic pulse.[17]

[16] For example: Susan Harlan, '"Talking" and Reading Shakespeare in Jane Austen's "Mansfield Park,"' *The Wordsworth Circle*, Vol. 39, No. 1/2 (Winter/Spring, 2008), 43-46; Linda Troost & Sayre Greenfield (2010) '"Strange mutations": Shakespeare, Austen and cultural success,' *Shakespeare*, 6:4, 431-445.

[17] Daniel Pollack-Pelzner, 'Jane Austen, the Prose Shakespeare,'*SEL* 53, 4 (Autumn 2013): 763–792, 777.

Against this I would argue that what we are drawn to in Fanny's fixed look is the fascination of knowing an actor is speaking with no understanding, whose meaning is so divergent from us while he recites the lines that he might as well be a nine-year-old boy, like Master Betty, whose performances of Shakespeare and Kotzebue were so fashionable in the first ten years of the nineteenth century.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly agree with Megan Taylor, that "This brief episode articulates Austen's concern with uses and misuses of Shakespeare and her awareness of his increasing 'banality' in popular culture."[18] Readers cannot be 'intimate' with Shakespeare 'by instinct' as Henry claims. For Shakespeare and his morality to become 'part of an Englishman's constitution' the scene suggests that his works must be studied carefully and thoroughly, and we do not fall 'into the flow of his meaning immediately,' but we need to know what enabled Henry to delude himself about Shakesepeare, and I shall argue it is from the very annotated text from which he is reading.

Following my empirical methodology, the essay will therefore not re-read the primary sources from a theoretical perspective, nor enter further into dialogue with the myriad secondary sources available, but will rather come to these conclusions about *Mansfield Park* with reference to contemporary sources of Shakespeare and Kotzebue, edited and annotated by Elizabeth Inchbald and Elizabeth Griffith, both of which present, without solutions, the moral problems Austen addresses in her novel. Thus, while this

[18] Megan Taylor, 'Jane Austen and "Banal Shakespeare,"' *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Fall 2014, 105-125, 110.

essay discusses Jane Austen's attitude towards Shakespeare and Kotzebue, and Horatio Lord Nelson's impaired body and Fanny Price's 'enfeebled' body remain somewhat in the background, it is their bodies which are central to the argument. What the essay seeks to learn from Austen is how to take bodies seriously as bodies, however impaired, as a subject fit for literature. Austen's novel argues that if the impaired body of Horatio Lord Nelson is deemed worthy of encasing a national hero despite being personally licentious, the more so is the enfeebled Fanny Price who requires the same strength of character and strategy to maintain her innocence in her battle against the amorous onslaughts of Henry Crawford, which the whole Bertram family assist, to force her into submission.

Reading Shakespeare and Kotzebue

Jane Austen's acquaintance with Elizabeth Inchbald did not end with her translation of *Lovers' Vows.* Inchbald's *The British Theatre,* was advertised throughout the nation as a serial publication to make up 25 volumes, and in the *Bath Chronicle* is described as "containing every play which keeps possession of the stage; … with biographical and critical Remarks by Mrs INCHBALD."[19] *Lovers' Vows* appeared in the second volume of *The British Theatre*, *King Lear* appeared in volume four, and *King Henry VIII* in volume three. Each play was "as performed at the Theatres

[19] *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* - Thursday 09 October 1806. Another Advertisement including King Lear and King Henry VIII in the list of plays published appeared in the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* - 5 January 1809. Another translation of *Lovers' Vows* was made by Benjamin Thompson (*The German Theatre*, 6 vols. London: Vernor and Hood, 1801), who is most famous for his translation of Kotzebue's play *The Stranger*, as it was performed by John Philip Kemble at Drury Lane in March 1798. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* states that only Thompson's translation of *The Stranger* was ever performed, and so we can be sure that Austen was working from Inchbald's version of *Lovers' Vows* not least because she names the female lead Agatha, whereas Thompson calls her Wilhelmina.

Royal, Drury Lane and Covent Garden" and the text "Printed under the authority of the Managers from the Prompt book."[20] Thus, as Margaret Kirkham notes, the text of *King Lear* is, as would be expected, a version of Nahum Tate's rewrite of the play as a comedy:

> Between 1681 and 1823 Shakespeare's great tragedy of patriarchal error and mis-government was not performed on the English stage except in the form in which Tate had adapted it to the tastes of a politer age, leaving out the blinding of Gloucester, and leaving Cordelia alive to marry Edgar, his eldest son and legitimate heir.[21]

The regular performance of a play for so long a period, which is ostensibly not by Shakespeare, although it appeared under his name in a caricature of his original tragedy, was not an act of national forgetting but of national debate, which Inchbald summed up thus:

> It is curious and consolatory for a minor critic to observe, how the great commentators on Shakspeare [sic] differ in their opinions.
> Tate alters the Play of King Lear, and instead of offering the good Cordelia to die of grief, as Shakspeare had done, he rewards her with life, love and a throne. Addison, in his Spectator, condemns him for this; Dr Johnson commends him for it; both showing excellent reasons, Then comes Steevens,

[20] (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, n.d.)
[21] Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction*, 2nd ed. (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), 113.

> who gives better reasons than all, why they are all wrong.[22]

Inchbald makes political capital out of the comedy, and implies her approval of the tragic version directing her critical remarks to another English King whom she claims to have been badly treated by his daughters:

> Lear is not represented as much more affectionate to his daughters by Shakespeare, than James the Second is by Hume. James's daughters were, besides, in more than ordinary obligations to their king and father, for the tenderness he had evinced towards their mother, in raising her from an humble station to the elevation of his own; and thus preserving these two princesses from the probable disgrace of illegitimate birth.
>
> Even to such persons as hold it right to drive King James from the throne, it must be a subject of lamentation, that his beloved children were the chief instruments of those concerned. When the King was informed, that Princess Mary was landed and proceeding to the metropolis, in order to dethrone him, he called, as the historian relates, for the Princess Anne — and called her by the tender description of his "dear, his only remaining daughter." On the information given to his Majesty in return, that "she had forsook the palace, to join her sister," the king wept and tore his hair.[23]

[22] *The British Theatre*, vol.2, 5-6. (Each play is separately paginated).
[23] *The British Theatre*, vol.4, 4.

Whatever the political stance of her reader, Inchbald seems bent on reminding them that Shakespeare is a national poet, who may be read to understand and interpret contemporary events or recent history. How far this comment on King Lear is relevant to Inchbald's own radical politics goes beyond the remit of this essay, but here it serves to remind us how hotly Shakespeare was debated in his role as a national poet in Austen's own time, and in a preface to a version of the play which Austen had probably read. Thus, when we read in *Mansfield Park* of Admiral Crawford bringing his mistress to live with him, we might equally well understand Austen to be making a similar transformation to Inchbald, in order to comment on a nationally important admiral in a work of imaginative literature: the move was typical in contemporary criticism.

If Inchbald gives us a glimpse of the political importance of Shakespeare to Austen, Elizabeth Griffith's *The Morality of Shakespeare's Drama Illustrated*[24] gives us another glimpse of how poorly Shakespeare's works were treated by the nation his plays are claimed to represent so clearly. In *Mansfield Park* Henry Crawford, who has just read Shakespeare very well, spoils his performance with the asinine claim:

> I do not think I have had a volume of Shakespeare in my hand before since I was fifteen. I once saw Henry the Eighth acted, or I have heard of it from somebody who did, I am not certain which.

Henry quickly tries to cover up for his failure to have read Shakespeare, or even to see his plays at the theatre with

[24] (London: T. Cadell, 1775).

the suggestion that Shakespeare “is a part of an Englishman's constitution,” and being English one learns Shakespeare without trying, he opines:

> No man of any brain can open at a good part of one of his plays without falling into the flow of his meaning immediately.

Edmund’s response to Henry is guarded. He tries desperately to make up for Henry’s *faux pas*, but his support for the idea that every Englishman knows Shakespeare is equivocal:

> [Shakespeare’s] celebrated passages are quoted by everybody; they are in half the books we open, and we all talk Shakespeare, use his similes, and describe with his descriptions; … . To know him in bits and scraps is common enough; to know him pretty thoroughly is, perhaps, not uncommon; but to read him well aloud is no everyday talent.

Edmund’s “not” before his “uncommon” suggests a pause that highlights his “pretty” before his “thoroughly.” He knows the limitation of his own knowledge of Shakespeare, and though he has, with his brother Tom “…mourned over the dead body of Julius Caesar, and to be'd and not to be'd, in this very room, for [their father’s] amusement” his negative modifiers in this speech culminating in “no” before “everyday talent,” suggest that Edmund believes that Henry Crawford’s performance of a play without knowledge of its meaning is hollow: a moment typical of Austenian irony.

After such a demonstration of Henry's ignorance it is no wonder Fanny Price does not give him a "word of accordant praise". Edmund's dawning realization that Henry is a hollow man has rendered her suitor the more abject, and his own apparent praise in the clause which I removed in the quote above "but this is totally distinct from giving his sense as you gave it", suggests that Edmund is struggling with Henry's lack of knowledge of Shakespeare, and that being so poorly educated, he believes Crawford gave the reading no meaning at all. Likewise, although at first Fanny thought that Henry's reading of *Henry VIII* had "no such drawback as she had been used to suffer in seeing him on the stage with Miss Bertram", (playing Frederick in *Lovers'* Vows) her silence concurs with Edmund's horror at the vacuousness of Henry's performance.

And this is the problem with all acting, which this scene teaches the reader: since the meaning of a play is given to the lines by the author not the actor, an actor can speak the words well and completely misunderstand the intention. Parroting Shakespeare makes Henry seem intelligent, Parroting Kotzebue in *Lovers' Vows* makes Henry seem the real lover, but when he speaks for himself he proves he is ignorant and a deceiver.

Elizabeth Griffith's *Morality of Shakespeare's Drama Illustrated*[25] is just the sort of *vade mecum* that served up the "bits and scraps" of Shakespeare which Henry Crawford claims to know by being born in England, but which we can be sure a character like his would have perused. Furthermore, it is one which might be suspected to have been dipped into by many other contemporary readers who

[25] London: T. Cadell, 1775.

pretended their “pretty thorough” knowledge of their national poet. In 600 pages an “Englishman” could read not only a few key passages of the bard, but is told by Griffith what she believes they mean: and it is a travesty.

I turn to Griffith[26] rather than the several other candidates for “Shakespeare for Dummies” that were published in the last quarter of the eighteenth century,[27] and to which Jane Austen I am convinced would have referred[28] in *Mansfield Park*, for three main reasons. First the book is dedicated to David Garrick whose acting, like Henry Crawford’s reading, is supposed by Griffith to be better than an understanding of the text:

> Your action has been a better comment on his Text, than all his Editors have been able to supply. You mark his beauties; They but clear his blots. You impress us with the living spirit; They only present the dead letter. [29]

It is true that my negative response to this comment, and at the same time my discussion of the scene between Edmund and Henry, are to be expected of a critic who works with text

[26] As noted above, my argument here owes a lot to Megan Taylor’s, ‘Jane Austen and “Banal Shakespeare”,’ *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Volume 27, Number 1, Fall 2014, 105-125.
[27] Other candidates for the accolade might be Edward Capell, *Notes and various readings to Shakespeare, Part the first; containing, … King Lear …* 3 vols., vol.1, (London: printed by Henry Hughs, for the author, 1779-80); Thomas Davies, *Dramatic miscellanies: consisting of critical observations on several plays of Shakespeare: ... as represented by Mr. Garrick, ... With anecdotes of dramatic poets, In three volumes.* Vol.2. (London : printed for the author, and sold at his shop, 1785); William Richardson, *Essays on Shakespeare's dramatic characters of … King Lear ….* (London: J. Murray, 1787). However, each of these is more of a scholarly project and less a work of popularisation.
[28] Austen had access to the book as a copy appears in the Catalogue of the sale of Burdon’s bookshop, the shop in Winchester at which the Austen family had an account when they lived at Chawton. See *A Catalogue of the Entiire and Valuable Stock in Trade of the Late Mr Burdon, Bookseller at Winchester … which will be sold by Leigh and Sotheby, Booksellers at their House, No. 145 Strand. On Thursday Feb. 5, 1807.* My thanks to Norbert Schürer for this reference.
[29] Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare*, iii.

rather than performance. And even though I can argue, since I have worked in professional theatre and have experience of working with actors, that a number of our greater actors are great because they simply say the lines well and have not a clue what they mean, the very fact that Griffith felt it necessary to gloss Shakespeare demonstrates the fact that hearing Shakespeare is not enough to understand his meaning. Shakespeare's plays need explaining to "Englishmen" so they understand what being English is, and Austen's account of Henry's failure to read Shakespeare or even go to productions demonstrates his failure to understand what it is to be an English man. With his sister Mary who does not understand the Church of England but can only banter about it,[30] the Crawford siblings represent all that Austen believes to be awful about a lack of education, probably because their preceptor Admiral himself was so uneducated in Englishness as to bring his mistress to live with him openly.

A second reason for turning to Griffith is that while her arrangement of the plays[31] follows the separation of the first folio into Comedies, Histories and Tragedies, it does not

[30] Mary Crawford says, for example: "We cannot prove to the contrary, to be sure; but I wish you a better fate, Miss Price, than to be the wife of a man whose amiableness depends upon his own sermons; for though he may preach himself into a good-humour every Sunday, it will be bad enough to have him quarrelling about green geese from Monday morning till Saturday night."
"I think the man who could often quarrel with Fanny," said Edmund affectionately, "must be beyond the reach of any sermons."
It would be to go far beyond the limits of the argument of this essay thoroughly to follow through with this point.

[31] The order of the plays in Griffith is: The TEMPEST; A Midsummer Night's Dream; THE Two Gentlemen of Verona; MEASURE for MEASURE; THE MERCHANT of VENICE; AS YOU LIKE IT; LOVE's LABOUR LOST; THE WINTER's TALE; Twelfth Night: or, What You Will; The Merry Wives of Windsor; The Taming of the Shrew; THE COMEDY of ERRORS; Much Ado About Nothing; All's Well That Ends Well; KING JOHN; RICHARD the SECOND; HENRY the FOURTH; HENRY the FOURTH; HENRY the FIFTH; HENRY the SIXTH; HENRY the SIXTH; HENRY the SIXTH; RICHARD the THIRD; HENRY the EIGHTH; LEAR; TIMON; TITUS ANDRONICUS; MACBETH; CORIOLANUS; JULIUS CÆSAR; ANTONY and CLEOPATRA; CYMBELINE; TROILUS and CRESSIDA; ROMEO and JULIET; HAMLET; OTHELLO.

follow the order of the first folio. Thus Henry VIII, which is chronologically the last history play, is followed in her text by "Lear" (not "King Lear"), the two plays which are uppermost in the writing of *Mansfield Park.*

Thirdly, while Griffith's treatment of the well-known plays comprises short quotes followed by long explanations of the morality of the lines, her approach to *Henry VIII* is to quote more and explain less. So much so, that there is a silent joke between Austen and her well-educated audience that Henry Crawford is reading the play to Lady Bertram, Edmund and Fanny in Griffith's cut-down version which includes all the best speeches of "The King, the Queen, Buckingham, Wolsey, Cromwell, all … given in turn;" and thus, Austen explains how Henry has

> … the happiest knack, the happiest power of jumping and guessing, he could always alight at will on the best scene, or the best speeches of each; … .

If this explains away Henry Crawford's "knack" the reason for Griffith helping him to cheat is more mundane. Griffith allocates twenty-five pages to each play,[32] and as she has much less to say about *Henry VIII* than other plays she allows Shakespeare to speak for himself, while she remains quiet. But this is not the whole of the joke that underlies Austen's choice. The benefits of Griffith's silence become more obvious in the juxtaposition of *Henry VIII* with "*Lear*" about which she makes some of her most ridiculous claims about Shakespeare's morality as well as his lack of it, and from which we can derive much of the motive for the plot of *Mansfield Park*.

[32] The article on *Henry VIII* runs from 325-350, *Lear*, 351-375, and *Timon* 375-400.

Anyone using Griffith's *Morality of Shakespeare* as a reference book might think I am being unkind to this moderately successful writer of sentimental plays and novels, and it is true that she begins well in her article on *Lear*. Marking her out from the typical, she chooses to write about "the play as originally written by Shakespeare," and although she notes that:

> Some prefer the first, as a more general representation of human life, where fraud too often succeeds and innocence suffers: others prefer the latter, as a more moral description of what life should be.[33]

But she mitigates her choice with reference to a suggestion like Henry Crawford's that we know Shakespeare simply by being born English:

> … our feelings are often a surer guide than our reason; and by this criterion I may venture to pronounce, that the reader or spectator will always be better pleased with the happy, than the unfortunate, catastrophe of innocence and virtue.[34]

Furthermore, her choice of the tragic version is explained since:

> …, if pity and terror as the Critics say, are the principle objects of Tragedy, surely no Play that ever

[33] Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare*, 351.
[34] Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare*, 351.

> was written can possibly answer both these ends better than [Shakespeare's] performance, … .[35]

All this is judged against Horace's principle of *utile dulci,* which seems fair enough until we are faced with the extraordinarily silly moralizing in her explanation of Lear's choice between his daughters' professions of love, which is made with reference to *The Spectator*'s explanation of why people choose their lottery numbers. Griffith writes:

> The oft-disputed *free will* of man may be sufficiently proved from his innate self-determination, which his mind possesses. We must make a choice, even without being able to make a distinction. It must be an ass, indeed, that can remain in suspence [sic] even *between two bundles of hay*. But this involuntary election we are not answerable for in ethics; we are accountable only for our manner of acting towards our children; in which their moral merits alone can justify superior marks of preference or favour.[36]

The intelligent reader might go back to Steele's tart comments on the lotteries based in the same metaphor, but they could only be left wondering why a comparison of choosing between numbers and choosing between children might be valid. To quote Steele at length:

> Some ludicrous Schoolmen have put the Case, that if an Ass were placed between two Bundles of Hay, which affected his Senses equally on each Side, and

[35] Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare*, 351.
[36] Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare*, 352.

tempted him in the very same Degree, whether it would be possible for him to Eat of either. They generally determine this Question to the Disadvantage of the Ass, who they say would starve in the Midst of Plenty, as not having a single Grain of Freewill to determine him more to the one than to the other. The Bundle of Hay on either Side striking his Sight and Smell in the same Proportion, would keep him in a perpetual Suspence, like the two Magnets …. As for the Ass's Behaviour in such nice Circumstances, whether he would Starve sooner than violate his Neutrality to the two Bundles of Hay, I shall not presume to determine; but only take Notice of the Conduct of our own Species in the same Perplexity. When a Man has a mind to venture his Money in a Lottery, every Figure of it appears equally alluring, and as likely to succeed as any of its Fellows. … In this Case therefore Caprice very often acts in the Place of Reason, and forms to it self some Groundless Imaginary Motive, where real and substantial ones are wanting. I know a well-meaning Man that is very well pleased to risque his good Fortune upon the Number 1711, because it is the Year of our Lord. I am acquainted with a Tacker that would give a good deal for the Number 134. On the contrary I have been told of a certain Zealous Dissenter, who being a great Enemy to Popery, and believing that bad Men are the most fortunate in this World, will lay two to one on the Number 666 against any other Number, because, says he, it is the Number of the Beast. … .[37]

[37] *The Spectator*, No. 191, 6 October, 1711.

Things get no better in Griffith's comment on Cordelia's "Nothing, my Lord," in reply to her father:

> But indeed, what was there left for her to say after such hyperbolical professions as had been just made before her?[38]

However, Griffith's explanation of how the decision was made undermines her own argument:

> No passion can either bear or justify exaggeration, but love alone. There the extravagance of transport, and the enthusiasm of devotement, prove the *luxuriance* of the soil; but in every other instance betray the *sterility* of it.[39]

Does this mean that Regan and Goneril were unable to do anything else than to exaggerate their love for their father and Cordelia was wrong not to? At one level it is obvious that the two older sisters' words "betray the *sterility*" of their filial affection, and Griffith has just pronounced on the scene as a whole:

> … that any reader, who is at all acquainted with human nature, without looking any further into the story, beyond the present scene, must have already determined the point in his own mind, which of the daughter's duties or affections were most to be relied upon.[40]

[38] Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare*, 354.
[39] Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare*, 534-35.
[40] Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare*, 354.

But our “implicit” knowledge that Regan and Goneril are not to be trusted derives from irony (like the meaning in Austen’s novels) and thus in the very exaggeration of their love for their father: “Dearer than eye-sight, space and liberty,” which is clearly not true. And their “extravagance of transport,” …, disproves “the *luxuriance* of the soil” of their love for Lear. How, if this is true, is anyone to believe the transport of their own lover? Griffith’s drawing out of her moral from the scene makes a mockery of its complexity, and the complexity of love and the words used to describe it.

If Griffith is guilty of confusing her readers at the start of the plot, her moralizing at its heart is trivializing and insulting. To Edgar’s heartfelt speech on Gloster’s blindness, in terms of what Keats called “negative capability,” she can bring no more than a trite proverb:

> *Edgar*. Yet better thus, and known to be contemn'd,
> Than still contemn'd and flatter'd. To be worst,
> The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,
> Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.
> The lamentable change is from the best;
> The worst returns to laughter.
>
> Shakespeare gives us here, a poetical paraphrase on the flattering old English proverb, that *when things are at the worst, they’ll mend*.[41]

Gloster’s blindness will never mend, his loss of his eyes are a predicament not a metaphor as Cornwall’s lines demonstrate: “Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot, …

[41] Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare*, 364

out vile jelly." Thus, Griffith's patronizing comment on Gloster's railing at being blind shows herself incapable of understanding the pain of an impairment, and the realization that one has to live with it forever:

> Gloster. As flies to wanton boys, are we to the Gods;
> They kill us, for their sport.
>
> This is a most impious and unphilosophic reflection. Poor Gloster seems, by this expression, to have been rather soured, than softened, by his misfortunes; which his attempted suicide afterwards proves still further. Such sentiment must certainly surprise us in Shakespeare … [and were] better not spoken at all.[42]

I, myself, who has felt just as Gloster, will remain silent on Griffith. But things get worse. On the same page, at the philosophical turn in Gloster's approach to his blinding, (and yes, one does shift from railing at God to learning to live with one's impairment) Griffith insults women and children:

> *Gloster*. I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;
> I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen
> Our means secure us, and our mere defects
> Prove our commodities.
>
> This is a truth often verified in life: but the most general instances are, that women and children are safer from harms, than men are — They hazard less, from being less able to achieve.[43]

[42] Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare*, 365,
[43] Griffith, *Morality of Shakespeare*, 365.

Without going further into Griffith's appalling commentary on *King Lear*, in these few examples we have motives for Austen writing a serious novel that represents a real dilemma, but with a comic ending, choosing an impaired, female protagonist who is neither softened nor soured by her enfeeblement, who hazards her life in an adventure outside her comfort zone, but who must be understood as the bravest of all the characters in *Mansfield Park* as she stands up to so much torment and bullying (albeit she does not have her eyes put out) and remains morally strong.

In this last point about moral strength in adversity, Griffith can therefore also help us to a way of understanding the immorality of the theatricals in the novel. If her own morals are skewed so badly in her explanation of *King Lear,* a play that is filled with moral purpose, it is perhaps no wonder that the children of Mansfield Park are unable to understand the ill-decision of their choosing to act *Lovers' Vows* which Jane Austen must have thought of as a grossly immoral play. This is not a judgment on the plot which concerns Frederick, an illegitimate child,[44] now twenty years old, but on the layers of sentimental claptrap that surround the reconciliation of his mother, Agatha and father, Count Wildenheim, and with the play's extraordinary reception and performance record.

Performing Shakespeare and Kotzebue

It was not only the Bertram children and their friends who thought Kotzebue's play was a worthy piece of theatre. It was often performed in London and local theatres

[44] It will be remembered that in *Emma* Jane Austen's next novel after *Mansfield Park, she* explores the life of the illegitimate child, Harriet Smith.

throughout Britain and Ireland between 1798 (the date of Inchbald's translation) and 1811 when *Mansfield Park* was written. The beginning of the popular run is described by Paul Baines and Edward Burns as "by some distance Covent Garden's most successful venture of the [1798] season."[45] However, audiences and even actors tired of it by 1805,[46] the last London performance for five years, when John Philip Kemble, who had just taken over management of Covent Garden, came forward after the season's final performance of *Lovers' Vows* and told the audience to have patience and that the repertoire would get better. *The Morning Chronicle* explained the event in a way that suggested Inchbald's Kotzebue was the best of a bad bunch:

> Mr Kemble retired amidst loud plaudits from all parts of the house. The season, we fear, has been a poor one, notwithstanding the exertions that were made; for several pieces brought forward failed entirely; and none of them proved eminently successful.[47]

That said, while it was in its heyday the newspapers reported an amateur performance of *Lovers' Vows* similar to that at Mansfield Park, "by ladies and gentlemen of the town." The play was performed in public rather than in a stately home, but it raised 220*l*. for Birmingham's "Soup Establishment."[48] Another performance of *Lovers' Vows* saw

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[45] Paul Baines and Edward Burns, Introduction, in *Five Romantic Plays, 1768-1821,* London: Oxford UP, 2000) xxv.
[46] The Morning Chronicle (London, England), Thursday, April 27, 1809; Issue 12468. An advertisement for a performance of Lovers' Vows at Theatre Royal Haymarket states the play has "not performed these 5 years."
[47] *The Morning Chronicle* (London, England), Monday, June 17, 1805; Issue 11257.
[48] *The Bury and Norwich Post Or, Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, and Cambridge Advertiser* (Bury Saint Edmunds, England), Wednesday, February 04, 1801.

Lady Margaret Jemima Perrott taking the part of Agatha[49] at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket in a benefit for herself "and her Orphan Family."[50] Her deceased husband, Sir Richard Perrott, was a rake, who is reported to have "befriended a rich widow, cheated her, and seduced and left pregnant both her and her daughter;"[51] much like Count Wildenheim in the play. Lady Perrott's account of herself on the title page of another benefit claims "these agonizing efforts to preserve Five helpless Children are made by a Woman born to all the delicate indulgences attended on rank and fashion, every species of apology would be deemed an insult to the most amiable attribute of human nature — a sympathizing Heart."[52] It is little wonder that she should choose *Lovers' Vows*, with all its sentimental hyperbole, for another such benefit.

I am not sure about Jane Austen's views on soup kitchens and their finances, but there is no suggestion that the Bertrams' performance was intended to make money for a charity. I am, though, sure that she never wrote a sentimental sentence. With such a view of literature, she cannot but have chosen *Lovers' Vows* with ironic intention, and I am equally certain that one "Master Betty" and the current fad for child actors was the target of her wit. The part of Frederick became the staple of William Betty in 1803 (though he was still a child of twelve, playing a young man of twenty) and he played it around the country and in Ireland

[49] A part which Elizabeth Inchbald had played herself at the Portsmouth Theatre. An event strangely reported in *The Derby Mercury* (Derby, England), Thursday, March 27, 1800;
[50] *The Morning Post and Gazetteer* (London, England), Tuesday, April 27, 1802.
[51] Roger T. Stearn, 'Perrott, Sir Richard, second baronet (1716–1796)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. [http://www.oxforddnb.com.winchester.idm.oclc.org/view/article/21989, accessed 6 Sept 2016]
[52] Lady Margaret Jemima Perrott, *By permission of the Lord Chamberlain. For the benefit of Lady Perrott, and her orphan family. Theatre Royal, Hay-market, Monday next, February 3rd. 1800, will be performed the comedy of The wonder; or, a woman keeps a secret,* ... [London], [1800].

until the end of his career in 1808 (when he was seventeen). Whether or not Jane Austen saw him perform cannot be certain, but the build-up to his coming to Bath, which performance she might have seen, but certainly read of in the newspapers, suggests he was treated like some early day Elvis Presley. In 1804, the *Bath Chronicle* reported that in London:

> Violence and confusion, at the entrance, and in the Theatre, were very well guarded against every night, except Saturday, when fresh riots and disturbances arose, similar to those of the preceding Saturday. It would require a column to detail the accidents that happened, and particularly the misfortunes of the female world.[53]

When Master Betty did come to Bath in 1806, the *Bath Chronicle* reported that there were to be

> No orders or free admissions during Master Betty's Performances. None but *Subscribers* and Office Tickets can be admitted. — No places can be insured without taking Tickets for them at the same time.[54]

In the run of four nights, Betty played not only Frederick in *Lovers' Vows* on Saturday, but Norval in Edward Home's *Douglas* on Thursday, and *Hamlet* on Friday: three of the plays listed by Austen in *Mansfield Park* as possibilities for the family theatricals.

[53] *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* - Thursday 13 December 1804.
[54] *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* - Thursday 24 April 1806.

The Young Roscius, as Betty was known, spawned a fashion for other child stars, as the *Hampshire Telegraph* underwhelmingly reported in January 1805:

> Young Roscius the second has been very numerously and elegantly attended at his performances at Gosport Theatre — the house every night nearly an overflow.[55]

In March the same year, the *Lancaster Gazette* reported the performance at the Theatre Royal, Manchester by "Master Frederick Brown, the celebrated Ormskisk Roscius, [of] … the character of Frederick to Mrs. Ward's Agatha, in Lovers' Vows."[56] And in May, *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* reported the same Frederick (under a new epithet), this time "Frederick Brown (or as he is termed, the *younger Roscius*)," who this time played the same three parts as the elder Roscius.[57]

The *Hampshire Telegraph* continued its ironic approach by making fun of the fad for child actors, noting (in the same column, but separated from the report of Frederick Brown above) the arrival of:

> Mr Collins, with his *suite*, is arrived in this town, not attended by an assortment of *little Roscii*, but accompanied by a liberal resolution to present the

[55] *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc* (Portsmouth, England), Monday, January 14, 1805; Issue 275.
[56] *The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser, for Lancashire, Westmorland, &c.* (Lancaster, England), Saturday, March 09, 1805; Issue 195.
[57] *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* (Exeter, England), Thursday, May 9, 1805; Issue 2168.

> public with a varied alteration of *London performers*, assisted by his well-tried company![58]

Trewman's Exeter Flying Post, on the other hand took the fad seriously, and gave the greatest of accolades to Frederick Brown's performances:

> He trod the stage with the ease and dignity of a veteran, and his delivery was marked by judgment, energy, and feeling. In some soliloquies of *Hamlet* he pourtrayed [sic] beauties which have rarely been equalled, even by the first actors of the present day.[59]

When we read of the performance of *Lovers' Vows* in *Mansfield Park*, we might therefore understand it as falling somewhere between the Bertram children's belief they are playing as well as Master Betty, and the dreadful reality of amateur dramatics. They see themselves as "young Roscii," Fanny Price sees them as they really are, and they are nothing like a professional troop.

The Bertram children's self-delusion is magnified by the choice of text: when Henry Crawford performs the role of Frederick he is supposed to be flamboyantly sentimental, when he reads the roles of Katherine and Wolsey he is supposed to demonstrate real humanity. Does this ability make his performance of Frederick more real? When he elopes with Maria, which was foretold in his scenes with her playing his mother in *Lovers' Vows*, is he still acting or acting out of real love?

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[58] *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc* (Portsmouth, England), Monday, January 14, 1805; Issue 275

[59] *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* (Exeter, England), Thursday, May 9, 1805; Issue 2168.

Trewman's Exeter Flying Post makes a challenging point in its description of Frederick Brown's performance of *Hamlet* as "marked by judgment, energy, and feeling." Can a boy of twelve years old make judgments about how to perform *Hamlet* or do we need, as the *Hampshire Telegraph* suggests a "well-tried Company" to make a play? Likewise, can Henry Crawford ever be trusted to be his real self? Or is he only as good as the words he is repeating? In *Mansfield Park*, only Fanny knows him for the rake he is.

Conclusions

Here we can turn to Susan Harlan's argument:

> … that any … theatrical performance … is defined by its particularity and this particularity stands in opposition to the [mere] repetition of Shakespeare's language …. [60]

What Austen demonstrates in her juxtaposition of Kotzebue with Shakespeare is the difficulty of knowing the difference between real feeling derived from understanding, and as Lady Perrott parroted "a sympathising heart." The evidence Jane Austen presents us to help us to our conclusions in *Mansfield Park* are two types of text, and three types of acting. Shakespeare, which is supposed to give an understanding of real people but can also demonstrate that people like Henry are able to lie convincingly. Kotzebue which delivers only the sentimental, but can also demonstrate how people like Maria Bertram are so convinced by it that they believe its professions of love to be

[60] Susan Harlan: "Talking" and Reading Shakespeare in Jane Austen's "Mansfield Park," *The Wordsworth Circle*, Vol. 39, No. 1/2 (Winter/Spring, 2008), 43-46, 45.

real. The three types of acting are represented by William Betty, who speaks any lines well (be they Shakespeare or Kotzebue) but holds no understanding, John Philip Kemble, who demands good lines to be acted professionally, and Fanny Price, who refuses to act but has a real understanding that cannot be duped by either a bad text or good acting.

Added to the theatrical morality, *Mansfield Park* offers a more general moral lesson, and we learn that Horatio, Lord Nelson is not a worthy hero since he is like Baron Wildenheim who lived openly with a woman who was not morally his wife. And that Nelson is not a model to follow is demonstrated by the actions of his progeny, Henry and Mary Crawford, who end up in the same immoral relationships. But this is not to deny Lord Nelson's bravery in continuing to serve in the navy despite his impairments. Thus, Jane Austen shows us that Fanny's enfeeblement does not disable her either. Her passivity and inaction, her self-possession, is the only power she has throughout the novel, but at the end she does not inherit the estate and will become a clergy wife in which role she too will work for her living. Thus, she is a more worthy heroine than Lord Nelson.