



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

DOMESTIC DISRUPTIONS: STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE IN JANE
AUSTEN'S MANSFIELD PARK AND FAY WELDON'S
THE HEART OF THE COUNTRY.

by

Karen Jane Cowan

B.A. (Honours) University of Guelph, 1989.

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the department of
ENGLISH

© Karen Jane Cowan 1993

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

August 1993

All rights reserved. This work may not be
reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without permission of the author.



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-91286-3

APPROVAL

NAME: Karen Jane Cowan
DEGREE: Master of Arts (English)
TITLE OF THESIS: Domestic Disruptions:
Strategies of Resistance in
Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*
and Fay Weldon's *The Heart
of the Country*.

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

CHAIR: PAUL BUDRA

KATHY MEZZI
SENIOR SUPERVISOR
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

JUNE STURROCK
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

SUSANNA EGAN
EXTERNAL EXAMINER
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

DATE APPROVED:

August 31, 1993

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant to Simon Fraser University the right to lend my thesis, project or extended essay (the title of which is shown below) to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay

DOMESTIC DISRUPTIONS: STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE
IN JANE AUSTEN'S MANSFIELD PARK AND FAY WELDON'S
THE HEART OF THE COUNTRY

Author:

(signature)

KAREN J. COWAN

(name)

September 9, 1993.

(date)

ABSTRACT

My thesis explores the ways in which Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Fay Weldon's *The Heart of the Country* might be seen to subvert and disrupt the conventions of the domestic novel. Although Austen's novels are viewed as exemplifying the conventions of the genre, while Weldon's is obviously anti-conventional, both these writers erect the structures of the form in order to dismantle them from within. As we might expect, Austen's strategies of disruption are discreet and muted in comparison to the overt and flamboyant devices employed by her literary descendant. However, the means by which each of these writers inscribes her resistance to convention are remarkably similar.

Beginning with Nancy Armstrong's assertion that domestic fiction is both "agent and product of a cultural change that attached gender to certain kinds of writing," my thesis argues that the primary "act" of domestic fiction is the inscription and prescription of gender roles-- specifically women's roles. In disrupting the conventions of the genre, these writers therefore resist the containment of these prescriptions.

I chose to write on these two novels in particular, not only because Weldon frankly acknowledges her debt to Austen, but also because both texts incorporate a "theatrical" element which functions dialogically in relation to the

private domestic realm (and indeed, to the boundaries of the genre itself). Weldon drives a carnivalesque parade through *The Heart of the Country*, while the domestic sanctity of *Mansfield Park* is threatened by the entrance into its circle of "amateur theatricals." Since Weldon explicitly infuses her text with "the ancient spirit of carnival," I consider *The Heart of the Country* in relation to Bakhtin's discussion of carnival in *Rabelais and His World*. Austen's use of the theatrical device is less overtly carnivalesque; nevertheless, my thesis explores the way in which this device allows her to challenge the authority of the dominant order, and the apparent tranquility of the text itself. The "theatrical" element is one of many subversive discourses in each of the novels which allow Austen and Weldon to "write beyond the ending" of domestic fiction itself.

For Ally.

*Housed everywhere but nowhere shut in,
this is the motto of the dreamer of dwellings.*

Gaston Bachelard.
The Poetics of Space

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisors, Kathy Mezei and June Sturrock, for their help, advice, encouragement and patience.

My family--as always--have been both supportive and inspirational. Ally, who provided a long-distance shoulder to lean on while she was experiencing her own upheavals, deserves a special thank-you.

Thanks to Maria Stanborough for reading and re-reading this thesis in all its various forms.

Thanks also to Ceile for making a great many dinners out of turn and Stuart for lending me his car and Colin for reminding me to look at the moon.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Introduction	1
I Resisting the Angel: Theatrical Licence and the House of the Father	18
II Angel into Arsonist: Carnavalesque Inversion and the House Turned Inside Out	70
Conclusion	102
Works Cited	107

INTRODUCTION

In Fay Weldon's *Letters to Alice On First Reading Jane Austen*, Aunt Fay writes to her niece "I look at the small round table in the house at Chawton at which [Jane Austen] wrote *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Persuasion*, and am told that when people came into the room she covered her work and put it aside."¹ This image of Jane Austen discreetly penning her novels in the common sitting room has become emblematic of the situation of the woman writer. We return to this image again and again because of the peculiar fascination it exerts upon our imagination. We are drawn to it because it reveals much about the status of the nineteenth-century woman writer, but also because it evokes the dynamics of containment and division which have historically been so much a part of women's experience.

Mary Wollstonecraft articulated her frustration with this dynamic in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. She wrote,

I do earnestly wish to see the distinction of sex confounded in society. . . . For this distinction is, I am firmly persuaded, the foundation of the weakness of character ascribed to women. (63)

Almost two centuries later, women such as Weldon are still trying to overturn this distinction,

to destabilize narrative relations between dominant and subordinate, container and contained, [so as] to destabilize the social and cultural relations of dominance and containment by which the conventionally

¹ *Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen* 82. Future citations to this text will be abbreviated to *LTA*.

masculine subsumes and envelops the conventionally feminine. (Hite 16)

The domestic novel, which encloses within the limits of its form the restricted realm of experience traditionally allotted to women, provides an ideal vehicle in which to explore and disrupt these dynamics of containment.

I first became interested in exploring domestic fiction when I began to consider the parameters of the genre as analogous to the walls of the home (the private domestic sphere). If women were historically both granted limited authority within the home, yet relegated to the confines of the private sphere, did the genre of the domestic novel function similarly? Was it a realm in which women gained the freedom to write for the first time, yet one which simultaneously reinforced the division of society according to gender which relegated them to the home in the first place?

Certainly, Nancy Armstrong's definition of "domestic fiction" would seem to support this supposition. For Armstrong, domestic fiction is

gender-inflected writing . . . [which] comes to us as women's writing. In designating certain forms as feminine, it designates other writing as masculine. The enclosure that marks a Jane Austen novel does not simply distinguish her "world" from that [of her male counterparts]. The boundaries it constructs . . . mark the difference between the world over which women novelists have authority--the domain of the personal--and that which is ruled by men and their politics ("Some Call It Fiction." 62)²

² Armstrong's extended exploration of the domestic novel, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, explores the reciprocal

Armstrong is not the first critic to describe Austen's writing in terms of its "enclosure." As Gilbert and Gubar note, "spatial images of boundary and enclosure seem to proliferate whenever we find writers coming to terms with Jane Austen" (*Madwoman* 109). Certainly it was a critical commonplace to condemn her novels for their limited scope, for their failure to address or include within their boundaries the social problems and historical happenings of her era--in other words, their failure to enter the public political realm.³ But Austen's position as a woman writer was a precarious one. Not only was she transgressing traditional gender boundaries in the very act of writing,⁴ but she was participating in what at the time was the least valued and most reviled of literary discourses--the novel.

relationship between the developing genre and both the construction of gender roles (male and female) and the emergence of the new middle class. My focus differs from Armstrong's in that my main emphasis is on the ways in which the genre constructs and prescribes models of femininity.

³ See for example Charlotte Brontë's infamous description of *Pride and Prejudice* in a letter to G. H. Lewes in 1848 in which she describes the text as "a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden . . . but no open country, no fresh air" (*Casebook* 55), or Richard Simpson's assertion in a review of 1870 that Austen "had no interest for the great political and social problems" of her day, and that in any case these problems "were above her powers" (*Casebook* 68).

⁴ This is a point which has been well explored by critics. See for example Poovey's *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, and Claudia Johnson's *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*. Margaret Kirkham's "The Austen Portraits and the Received Biography" is also illuminating in its focus on the Austen family's efforts to minimize the effects of this transgression after her death.

Austen takes aim at her society's attitudes towards novels (and novelists) in *Northanger Abbey* in a long authorial insert:

I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel writers, of degrading by their common censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves adding--joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally takes up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. Alas! if the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard?⁵

Perhaps the lowly status of the novel in part results from the predominance of women writers in the genre. Austen certainly seems to suggest this when she laments the fact that

the abilities of the nine-hundredth abridger of the History of England, or of the man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope and Prior, with a paper from the *Spectator*, and a chapter from Sterne, are eulogized by a thousand pens [while] there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist. (NA, 37)

Aware of the censure to which women novelists were subject, Austen's response was to set limits to her art which correspond "exactly [to] the limits she perceived as imposed on female experience" (Gilbert & Gubar, *Norton* 208). She refrained from situating her writing in the public masculine realm, and restricted it to topics suitable for a female--indeed a ladylike--readership, which meant those subjects

⁵ *Northanger Abbey* 37. Future citations to this text will be abbreviated to NA.

pertaining to the private domain.⁶ In doing so, she gave shape to the form of the domestic novel as we know it.

This thesis explores the ways in which Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Fay Weldon's *In the Heart of the Country* respond to the conventions of domestic fiction. I realize that the pairing of Austen and Weldon seems an unlikely--and even an uncomfortable--marriage. Weldon, often considered a "post-modernist,"⁷ may at first appear a strange candidate for inclusion in the domestic canon. In defence of this choice, however, I offer Weldon's frank acknowledgement of her debt to her literary foremother: *Letters to Alice On First Reading Jane Austen*, (which is, as its title suggests, a series of letters of literary advice written after the model of Austen's own letters to her nieces Anna Austen and Fanny Knight). Moreover, Weldon herself invites this comparison by situating her novel, to use Bakhtin's terms, in dialogic relation to "the background of normal literary language, the expected literary horizon" ("Discourse in the Novel" 314), which in this case is the genre of domestic fiction, and by extension, the writing of Austen herself.

⁶ Austen's awareness of her own constraint may be inferred from her infamous (and no doubt ironic) description of her own writing as "the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a brush, as produces little effect after much labour" (Letter to J. Edward Austen, 16 Dec. 1816, letter 134 of *Jane Austen's Letters to her sister Cassandra and others*, 467-470). Future citations to this text will be abbreviated as *Letters*.

⁷ Molly Hite and David Lodge both argue for Weldon's status as a post-modern writer.

Furthermore, as my thesis will show, there is a marked similarity in the strategies used by each of these writers to inscribe their resistance to the containment of the form.

When I first embarked upon this project, I naively envisioned that my exploration of Austen's writing would provide me with a neat paradigm of the domestic novel, and that--armed with this paradigm--I could then proceed to catalogue the various ways in which Weldon subverts the conventions of the form. But despite my intentions, I found this approach disintegrating at my fingertips. For the process of trying to establish the conventions of domestic fiction through the vehicle of Jane Austen's writing is (to use a suitably domestic metaphor) not unlike knitting a sweater as it unravels itself from the other end.

In part, this problem is inherent to any study of the novel. For when we attempt to define a novelistic genre by studying its conventions, we are soon reminded that genres are dynamic, not static. As Bakhtin tells us, it is the nature of "the novel to criticize itself" ("Epic and Novel" 6), and indeed this ability is the defining characteristic of the genre. Any study of novelistic convention therefore inevitably unearths a corresponding anti-conventional tendency. As Joseph Boone found in his own study of domestic fiction (in particular the marriage plot),

the very act of deciphering the many plots by which social ideologies of love and sexuality have given shape to a novelistic tradition uncovers a simultaneous counter-narrative: the persistent 'undoing' of the dominant tradition by the contradictions concealed

within the specific forms that its representations of 'life' and 'love' have assumed. (2)

Moreover, because the novel is dialogic by nature, it allows writers to appropriate genres in order to engage their forms in dialogue. "The novelistic discourse dominating a given epoch is itself turned into an object and itself becomes a means for refracting new authorial intentions" (Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel" 309). Jane Austen does this in both *Northanger Abbey* and *Love and Friendship*. *Northanger Abbey* inverts "both the conventions of the sentimental novel and the conventions of traditional romance that were beginning to reinvade it through the contemporary cult of the Gothic" (Lodge 119). In contrast to the angelic pictures of perfection cast as protagonists in sentimental novels, Catherine Morland is a naive, ignorant girl whom "[n]o one who had ever seen in her infancy, would have supposed . . . born to be a heroine" (NA 13), but a heroine she is, in search of a Gothic mystery. The characters of Laura and Sophia in *Love and Friendship* are similar parodic inversions of the sentimental heroine. At the end of the tale, Sophia expires after swooning too many times upon wet grass. Her last words to Laura warn her of the dangers of constructing oneself according to literary convention (since a tendency to swoon is a pleasing trait in a sentimental heroine):

beware of fainting-fits . . . Though at the time they may be refreshing & Agreeable yet believe me they will in the end, if too often repeated . . . prove destructive to your Constitution. . . . A frenzy fit is not one quarter so pernicious. . . .

Run mad as often as you choose, but do not faint."
(*Volume the Second* 52)

Austen's delight in playing with the conventions of fiction is evident in her early work, and throughout the body of her writing she appropriates various literary genres to her own purposes. The domestic novel as exemplified by Austen is in itself an amalgamation of genres. David Lodge describes the novel in her hands as a fusion of

the sentimental novel and the comedy of manners with an unprecedented effect of realism. . . . All her novels have the basic structure of the didactic love story that derived from Richardson, albeit with much variation, modification, displacement and even inversion of its basic components. (116-117)

And if Austen ingests the novelistic discourses of her predecessors and refracts them into new forms for her own purposes, so too is her writing in turn appropriated. "For books continue each other, in spite of our habit of judging them separately," as Virginia Woolf reminds us (79).

Austen's later novels are more subtle in their manipulation of convention than *Northanger Abbey* and the juvenilia, but her resistance to the containment of the form can still be deciphered; they simultaneously exemplify the conventions and dismantle from within. This is one of the reasons why Fay Weldon fondly refers to Austen as a "secret subversive" (Introduction to *Discipline* vii).

Since the study of convention as a means to define genre is inherently problematic (convention always giving rise to anti-convention), Carolyn Miller's approach is

particularly useful: "a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance and form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish" (151).

Nancy Armstrong defines domestic fiction as both

agent and product of a cultural change that attached gender to certain kinds of writing. Female writing--writing that was considered appropriate for or could be written by women--in fact designated itself as feminine, which meant that other writing, by implication, was understood as male. (*Desire and Domestic Fiction* 28)

Therefore, the primary "act" of domestic fiction appears to be the construction and inscription of gender. Since domestic fiction is "female writing--writing written for women," the act of erecting many of the conventions of the genre allows Weldon (and, indeed, Austen) to engage in a dialogue with the assumptions about gender inscribed therein. As Aunt Fay tells her niece, "[t]he writer must write out of a tradition--if only to break away from it" (*LTA* 31-32).

One of the most persistent inscriptions of femininity in our culture is that ideal of Victorian Womanhood--the Angel in the House. And domestic fiction has played a large part in this inscription. Armstrong asserts that "the domestic novel antedated--was indeed necessarily antecedent to--the way of life it represented" (*Desire and Domestic Fiction* 9), and that the idealized image of the middle-class woman delineated in the conduct manuals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rewrote "the entire surface of social experience" so that society came "to mirror those

kinds of writing--the novel among them--which represented the existing fields of social information as contrasting masculine and feminine spheres" (*Desire and Domestic Fiction* 9). She goes on to note that

[b]y the end of the eighteenth century, conduct books had settled on one kind of fiction as truly safe for young women to read [and, we might add, to write]. This was a non-aristocratic kind of writing that was both polite and particularly suitable for a female readership. It also had the virtue of dramatizing the same principles sketched out in the conduct books. (*Desire and Domestic Fiction* 97)

If this inscription of gender has its genesis in the conduct manual, it comes down to Austen via Samuel Richardson, who may be considered the father of the domestic novel for a number of reasons. In his depiction of Pamela, a young woman who not only retains her virtue but domesticates the baser instincts of Mr. B., Richardson inscribes the ideal of femininity as she is represented in the conduct manuals of the period. According to writers like Hannah More, "the well-being of [civilized] . . . states, and the virtue and happiness . . . perhaps the very existence of . . . society" (I: 5) depends upon the success of "female influence." As the story of *Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded* illustrates, the proper role of women is to use their "female influence" as a stabilizing force in society.⁸

Armstrong argues that "written representations of the self allowed the modern individual to become an economic and

⁸ Armstrong argues that in fact "female influence" transforms society.

psychological reality; and . . . that the modern individual was first and foremost a woman" (*Desire and Domestic Fiction* 8). Novels such as *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1747-48), *Evelina* (1778), and *Emma* (1816), mark a shift to "individual characters' who change, grow, and develop in the course of the narrative. Rather than the 'generic characters of prior fiction,' the novel begins with Richardson to trace the life of an 'individual'" (Brothers and Bowers 3).⁹ And as the titles of these novels reveal, the individual was most often a woman. This is what prompts Aunt Fay to note, in *Letters to Alice*, that "it is observable in Jane Austen's novels that it is the women who have moral struggles, rather than the men" (100).

The growth and development undergone by these individuals is usually in response to the dictates of the marriage plot upon which the genre of domestic fiction rests. Again, we can identify Richardson as the father of the genre, since it is in his writing that the marriage plot first took its familiar shape. "The 'happy ending' of the didactic love story rewards the heroine, who copes with various emotional, social, economic and ethical obstacles to union with the man she loves, without losing her integrity" (Lodge 117). Such is the story of *Pamela*.

⁹ Bowers and Brothers' study of "the novel of manners" is only one of many texts which explore "domestic fiction" but which label the genre differently. (See for instance note ¹⁰ below).

When E. M. Forster wrote that "[n]early all novels are feeble at the end. . . . If it were not for death and marriage I do not know how the average novelist would conclude" (93-94), he identified the stranglehold that the marriage plot has exerted upon novelistic form. But in its containment of women's roles it is perhaps even more suffocating. Rachel Blau DuPlessis makes this point when she asserts that in the traditional romance or marriage plot, "the rightful end of women was social--successful courtship, marriage--or judgmental of her sexual and social failure--death" (1). Indeed, Carolyn Heilbrun sees the marriage plot as so basic to our cultural representations of gender that she has deemed it "the heterosexual plot on which the class system and patriarchy rest" (qtd. in Bowers and Brothers 15).

Boone identifies three "common trajectories ascribed to the course of love [which] whether or not marriage is actually attained . . . uniformly uphold the concept of romantic wedlock as their symbolic center and ideal end." For my purposes, the most important of these patterns are

the courtship plot whose comedic ending follows upon the systematic removal of those obstacles previously impeding union. . . . A dark inversion of the courtship format, the seduction plot generally transforms the would-be lovers into sexual antagonists and division replaces union as the end point toward which the metonymic flow of the narrative sequence is directed. The almost invariably tragic denouement that closes the seduction tale or subplot . . . ultimately works to uphold social norms--in particular, by mourning the abuse of virtue or by indicting those erring

protagonists who have betrayed the higher dictates of morality and ideal love. (10)

Within these variations on the same basic theme, women's roles are endlessly inscribed according to those social doctrines which represent them as the rightful inhabitants of the private domestic realm.¹⁰

Like many women after her, Austen learned how to inscribe her resistance to patriarchal constructs (such as the marriage plot) while at the same time living within their constraints. Mary Jacobus argues that this is a common experience for women writers. She therefore calls for a feminist approach to language that would see

writing, the production of meaning . . . [as] the site both of challenge and otherness; rather than (as in more traditional approaches) simply yielding the themes and representation of female oppression. *Difference* . . . becomes a traversal of . . . boundaries . . . that exposes these very boundaries for what they are--the product of phallogentric discourse and of women's relation to patriarchal culture. Though necessarily working within 'male' discourse, women's writing (in this scheme) would work ceaselessly to deconstruct it: to write what cannot be written. (52)

Since the marriage plot "derives from the constructions of gender that are present in cultural representations of the sexes as polar opposites" (Boone 10), domestic fiction becomes one of the structures of phallogentric discourse which Jacobus describes.

¹⁰ For other useful discussions of the marriage/courtship plot, see Katherine Green's *The Courtship Novel 1740-1820*, Patricia Spacks' *Desire and Truth*, Ruth Yeazell's *Fictions of Modesty*, and Evelyn Hinz' "Hierogamy versus Wedlock: Types of Marriage Plots and Their Relationship to Genres of Prose Fiction."

Austen and Weldon employ in common a number of overlapping strategies with which they disrupt the authority of patriarchal discourses--among them the genre of domestic fiction itself (and within the domestic fiction, the marriage plot). As we would expect, we need not venture far into *The Heart of the Country* to stumble upon Weldon's subversions. Austen's resistance is more muted, but no less insistent, nevertheless.

I chose to write on *Mansfield Park* and *The Heart of the Country* in particular because both novels incorporate a "theatrical" element which functions in dialogical relation to the private domestic realm. Weldon drives a carnivalesque parade through *The Heart of the Country* while the domestic sanctity of *Mansfield Park* is threatened by "Good Heavens, Amateur Theatricals!" (LTA 135). The introduction of these "theatricals" constitutes an insertion of genres which centrifugally disrupts the conventions of the domestic form, thereby forming a site of resistance within the text. The genre itself is placed in dialogue with another genre. But the theatrical element in each novel also serves to bring the public and private realms into dialogic alignment, thereby allowing each writer to explore questions of gender construction in relation to this traditional dynamic of division. As we might expect, the private realm appears to be protected in *Mansfield Park* when Sir Thomas returns and removes the disreputable elements

from his home. In *The Heart of the Country*, order is not so easily restored.

Weldon explicitly infuses her novel with "the ancient spirit of carnival" (187), and indeed, her invocation of this sign system is the central technique she employs to laugh at the "official" structures of the dominant order in the novel. *The Heart of the Country* therefore merits analysis in relation to Bakhtin's discussion of carnival in *Rabelais and His World*. Mary Russo points out that Bakhtin's work on carnival has some interesting ramifications for feminists:

the discourse of carnival moves away from modes of critique that would begin from some Archimedean point of authority without, to models of transformation and counterproduction situated within the social system and symbolically at its margins. (214)

Carnival therefore provides a means by which women writers can work from the inside out, rather than from a position that is separate and other. It is one device which enables them to "write what cannot be written." Austen's invocation of the theatricals (which Terry Castle has identified as a distant descendant of the fictional carnival) is used to far less blatant ends than is the carnivalesque in Weldon's novel, but the difference is one of degree rather than intent. For true to the carnivalesque spirit, the theatricals in *Mansfield Park* prove more difficult to contain than we might expect from so apparently docile a novel.

I draw on Bakhtin's corresponding theories of dialogism to unravel further subversive threads in these two novels, although my method might more correctly be termed a "feminist dialogics." Dale M. Bauer and Susan McKinstry explain the relevance of this approach for feminists:

what is crucial to a feminist dialogics is that resistance can begin as private when women negotiate, manipulate, and often subvert systems of domination they encounter. . . . For feminists, Bakhtin's theories of the social nature of the utterance--of both the inner and outer words--provide a critical language that allows us to pinpoint and foreground the moments when the patriarchal work and the persuasive resistance to it come into conflict. By highlighting these contradictions, a feminist dialogics produces occasions for the disruption and critique of dominant and oppressive ideologies. The conflict of discourses in a novel, the inevitable polyvocality of a genre that reproduces language as a web of communications . . . [reveals] the dominant discourse. (3-4)

A dialogic approach is particularly helpful in uncovering and identifying the resistances in Austen's writing because it acknowledges that "[r]esistance is not always voiced in authoritative or public ways" (Bauer and McKinstry 3).

Gilbert and Gubar describe Austen's writing as "fiction that proclaims its docility and restraint, even as it uncovers the delights of assertion and rebellion" (*Madwoman* 169). It is in this "double-voiced discourse" (most often manifested as irony) that Austen's subversiveness is to be found. But it can be deciphered, too, in the dialogic tension that reverberates between the various discourses of her text. Weldon also incorporates a multiplicity of

discourses--ranging from the language of conduct manuals and women's magazines, to the jargon of real estate dealers--to disrupt the monologic seamlessness of the domestic genre, and to hold up to the light of criticism those structures and discourses which contain and delineate women.

The final consideration of this paper is the way in which both these women might be said to "write beyond the ending" of the conventional marriage plot. Rachel DuPlessis defines writing beyond the ending as

the transgressive invention of narrative strategies . . . that express critical dissent from the dominant narrative. These tactics . . . take issue with the mainstays of the social and ideological organizations of gender as they appear in fiction. (5)

The romance or marriage plot is yet another manifestation of "the expected literary horizon," and the resistance offered to this plot becomes another means by which each of these authors contributes her own voice to the ongoing dialogue that is the genre of the novel itself.

This thesis originated as an exploration of the domestic novel, and Austen and Weldon's participation in the genre. As it has progressed, I have discovered that in many ways it is only by identifying the anti-conventional strategies employed by these two writers that I am able to decipher the shape of the house of convention in which they reside, however uneasily. For the house of convention is also a site of resistance, as Austen and Weldon reveal.

CHAPTER I
RESISTING THE ANGEL: THEATRICAL LICENCE
AND THE HOUSE OF THE FATHER

In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland laments that "history tells [her] nothing that does not either vex or weary [her] . . . the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women" (308). And in *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot remarks to Captain Harville, "Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands" (234). It seems difficult to deny the awareness of women's marginality which informs such statements. But although feminist criticism has begun to open up a space for a reading of Jane Austen which focuses on the resistances to the patriarchal status quo inscribed in her writing, a large contingent of the canon of Austen critics still insists that the yoking of "Austen" and "feminism" in the same sentence is an act of extremism, leaving the feminist critic to feel that she should modify her stridency to a more hushed and lady-like tone before entering the common sitting room in which tradition dictates that Austen reside.¹

¹ The two staunchest (and most authoritative) defenders of the conservative view of Austen are Alistair Duckworth, in *The Improvement of the Estate*, and Marilyn Butler, in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*.

In his Introduction to *Jane Austen in a Social Context*, David Monaghan attempts to reconcile feminist and conservative readings of Austen's writing by calling for a "structure large enough to accommodate an affirmative text with a subversive subtext" (7), so long as subtext remain secondary to "the essentially conservative truth" (6). But since, as feminist critics know, those speaking from the margins of society must often restrict their critical discourses to the "subtext," to contain their "subversions" within an "affirmative text" which is palatable to those in the dominant order, to insist on the primacy of the affirmative text is to deny women authority over their own voices. It is to deny that the conjunction of affirmative text and subversive subtext in itself is a means by which women writers such as Austen inscribe their resistance to authority and convention, often times by challenging the authority of the affirmative text itself.

Mansfield Park has long been Austen's "problem novel." Critics are sharply divided over its status in relation to the rest of her oeuvre.² Partly, this results from the bleak and censorious tone of the work, which marks it as different from the other novels. Austen wrote of her fourth novel that "it shall be a complete change of subject--

² For example, Marvin Mudrick's view of the novel as flawed by its "inflexible and deadening moral dogma" (180) is obviously not shared by P. J. M. Scott in "A Flawless Masterpiece: *Mansfield Park*, (in *Jane Austen: A Reassessment*).

ordination,"³ and that she found *Mansfield Park's* predecessor, *Pride and Prejudice*, "rather too light and bright and sparkling, it wants shade, it wants stretched out here and there, with a long chapter of sense."⁴ Whether or not she achieved her aim of writing upon the topic of ordination, no one could mistake *Mansfield Park* for a "light and sparkling" novel. Indeed, its apparent didacticism, its uncharitable delineation of characters such as Mrs. Norris, and the seeming absence of Austen's characteristic irony,⁵ all contribute to the heavy "shade" of *Mansfield Park*.

Moreover, the question of why Jane Austen would choose to censor the private theatrical parties which she herself enjoyed with her family has posed a problem for critics. To this we might add some of the inconsistencies which make *Mansfield Park* such an unsettling text. For example, the novel promotes as its theme the education of daughters yet has as its heroine a woman who experiences almost no growth. The narrative itself is similarly unsettling, as it

³ Letter to Cassandra Austen, 29 Jan. 1813, letter 76 of *Letters*. 296-99.

⁴ Letter to Cassandra Austen, 4 Feb. 1813, letter 77 of *Letters*. 299-301.

⁵ Lionel Trilling and Marvin Mudrick are among those who assert that *Mansfield Park* is without irony. In contrast, recent feminist critics like Margaret Kirkham and Claudia Johnson see the novel as Austen's most deeply ironic work. (See in particular Kirkham's essay "Feminist Irony and the Priceless Heroine of *Mansfield Park*").

repeatedly contradicts itself, and directs its readers into blind alleys, in the process of unraveling Fanny's story.

And of course, it is Fanny herself who has proved the most perplexing puzzle in the novel. When one compares her to her sister heroines, all of whom betray more gumption than the insipid protagonist of *Mansfield Park*, one finds oneself asking just what Austen was doing when she created "[her] Fanny."⁶ She herself asserted in a letter to Fanny Knight in 1817 that "pictures of perfection . . . make me sick and wicked,"⁷ yet Fanny seems as close to the proverbial angel in the house as any character in fiction.⁸ For feminist critics the problem is even more profound, as Janet Todd revealed when she aptly labelled Fanny "the largest lump in the feminist throat" ("*Jane Austen, Politics and Sensibility*" 73).

⁶ A brief scan of the *Casebook* reveals Fanny's unpopularity with critics: Reginald Farrer thought that Henry Crawford "had a very lucky miss of Fanny. How he could ever have wanted to marry her . . . [is] a puzzle for she is the most terrible incarnation we have of the female prig-pharisee" (211). Lionel Trilling believed "nobody . . . has ever found it possible to like the heroine of *Mansfield Park*" (220), D.W. Harding sees her as "the least interesting of all the heroines" (213), while Kingsley Amis would not lightly ask Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Bertram round for the evening, as both "are morally detestable" (244).

⁷ Letter of 23 Mar. 1817, letter 142 of *Letters*. 486-89.

⁸ Fanny's weakness and frailty as well as her lack of "any . . . striking beauty" (49) may suggest to some readers that she is not entirely "perfect," but Fanny is a bit like Cinderella in her progression from "poor relation" to "lady of the house." (She grows more beautiful as her status rises). Moreover, as Marian Fowler argues, Fanny's weakness is entirely in keeping with her role as exemplar of courtesy book femininity.

The uneasiness generated by *Mansfield Park* seems to lie behind Reginald Farrer's assertion that "alone of all her novels, *Mansfield Park* is vitiated throughout by a radical dishonesty, that was certainly not in its author's own nature" (*Casebook* 208). Farrer attributes this "dishonesty" to the influence of Austen's clerical relations upon her choice of subject matter--their insistence that she turn her pen to the cause of righteousness.⁹ But since Austen's life was effectively closed to us by her sister Cassandra, we have little access to what she was thinking when she wrote *Mansfield Park*. Certainly there is no evidence in the surviving letters that she was displeased with the finished novel. But it seems telling that of all her books, it was only *Mansfield Park* for which Austen felt the need to keep a written record listing her family and friends' responses to it.¹⁰

I must place myself with those critics for whom *Mansfield Park* proves unsettling. This chapter grew out of my efforts to appease my own uneasiness with this shifting and elusive text. And so I began my exploration, convinced that I could unravel, and thus explain, the various threads

⁹ Q.D. Leavis, on the other hand, attributes the sombre tone of *Mansfield Park* to events in Austen's life. In 1813 she was thirty seven, had lost her father, had been forced to move from her home, and had resigned herself to spinsterhood and dependency after her father's death (*Casebook* 236-42).

¹⁰ Her record is transcribed in Southam's *Jane Austen: the Critical Heritage* 48-51.

of resistance in the novel. For it seemed to me that *Mansfield Park* is discomfiting precisely because it resists and subverts our expectations. But I was soon reminded that Austen is not a writer to be so easily pinned down. Although we can identify and foreground several points of disruption within the text, the novel resists the containment of straightforward analysis. It remains an ambiguous and shifting text, and it is in this ambiguity that Austen's resistance must be seen to lie. This chapter therefore explores, and sometimes unravels, the tensions and ambiguities that lie at the heart of *Mansfield Park*. My particular focus is an exploration of those seeming inconsistencies which appear to arise from the insistence of Austen's inscription of a subversive subtext within an orthodox "affirmative text." The uneasiness generated in readers and critics alike lies somewhere in this schism between the two competing impulses of the novel. In no other work does Austen so elaborately construct and so meticulously abide by novelistic and social convention. At the same time, in no other novel does she so vigorously inscribe her resistance to these conventions.

In many ways, *Mansfield Park* proclaims itself a conventional domestic novel. It concerns the day to day activities of "3 or 4 Families"¹¹ within the immediate environs of Mansfield Park, the seat of Sir Thomas Bertram,

¹¹ Letter to Anna Austen, 9 Sept. 1814, letter 100 of *Letters*. 400-03.

Baronet. It is at once more limited and more expansive in its scope than most of Austen's other novels. The focus of the narrative is upon the immediate inmates of Sir Thomas' "own domestic circle,"¹² namely, his indolent wife, Lady Bertram; his officious sister-in-law, Mrs. Norris; and his four children, Tom, Edmund, Maria and Julia. The satellite establishment of Mansfield Parsonage provides the remainder of the main characters--the Reverend and Mrs. Grant, and her siblings, Mary and Henry Crawford. There are fewer neighbours in *Mansfield Park* than we have come to expect when we enter the world of an Austen novel, but the narrative extends not only to Portsmouth, but also to Sir Thomas' estate in Antigua.¹³ The exemplary protagonist, Fanny Price, is brought to Mansfield Park at the age of ten, there to be raised with her cousins. Despite her uncle's objections to the notion of "cousins in love, &c." (43), Fanny falls for Edmund from the start.

As we would expect from a domestic novel, *Mansfield Park* is structured upon the marriage plot--the foregrounded plot being the events leading up to the novel's closure upon the nuptials of Fanny and Edmund. Interwoven with the

¹² *Mansfield Park* 211. Future citations to this text will be abbreviated to *MP* when necessary for clarity.

¹³ Kirkham discusses Austen's reference to Antigua as a possible allusion to the slave trade. See her argument on the Mansfield Judgement in *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction*, 116-117. Johnson also makes this point. For a reading of the colonial implications of the Antigua reference see Said's chapter on Austen in *Culture and Imperialism*.

central plot are several subplots, including the seduction plot in which first Fanny and then Maria is embroiled.

The theme of marriage is announced on the opening page in an account of the marriages of the three Ward sisters:

About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park . . . and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady. . . . All Huntingdon exclaimed on the greatness of the match She had two sisters to be benefited by her elevation. . . . But there are certainly not so many men of large fortune in the world, as there are pretty women to deserve them. Miss Ward, at the end of half a dozen years, found herself obliged to be attached to the Rev. Mr. Norris, a friend of her brother-in-law, with scarcely any private fortune, and Miss Frances fared yet worse. . . . Miss Frances married, in the common phrase, to disoblige her family, and by fixing on a Lieutenant of the Marines, without education, fortune, or connections, did it very thoroughly. . . . an absolute breach between the sisters . . . [took] place. It was the natural result of the conduct of each party, and such as a very imprudent marriage almost always produces. (41-42)

The stage seems set for an exploration of prudent and imprudent marriages, just as we expect when we enter the realm of domestic fiction.

The novel also purports from the outset to be about the education of daughters. Mrs. Norris introduces the subject: "[g]ive a girl an education, and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well" (44). In taking the education of daughters as her theme, Austen places her novel directly in alignment with such treatises as Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, and Thomas Gisborne's *An Enquiry*

into the *Duties of the Female Sex*.¹⁴ And in doing so, she in turn situates *Mansfield Park* firmly within the tradition of domestic fiction. For as Aunt Fay reminds us in *Letters to Alice*, women novelists "were expected to take great care not to offend, to set a good moral tone, in general to encourage the reader towards virtue and good behaviour" (103). In other words, they were to follow the aims and example of the conduct manuals.

If the novel invokes as its literary horizon both the conduct manual and the genre of novels which take conduct manuals as their model, the casting of Fanny as protagonist is entirely appropriate. Marian E. Fowler has shown the extent to which

Fanny embodies the ideals prominent in courtesy books throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth: she is modest and timid, blushes frequently, eschews wit, never flirts, and is properly delicate in body and mind. She is, in short, a courtesy-book girl par excellence. (41)

But if Fanny exemplifies the ideals inscribed in the conduct manuals, she is also, as Fowler notes, one of a long line of "fictional courtesy-book girls" (32). Indeed, there is much to Fanny's situation that marks her as Clarissa Harlowe's literary sister. Not only does Sir Thomas bear a marked resemblance to Mr. Harlowe, but Henry Crawford is Austen's Lovelace, albeit suitably cleaned up. Although Henry does

¹⁴ Of course, Austen also places her text in alignment with Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*. For a discussion of Austen's relation to Wollstonecraft, see Lloyd W. Brown, "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition."

not attempt to rape Fanny, his determination to penetrate her defences, to "[make] a small hole in [her] heart" (239), seems a violation of her emotional integrity akin to Lovelace's violation of Clarissa. And of course, Fanny herself is as angelic (346) and heroic in response to the pressures of both the seduction plot and parental interference as is Clarissa. She is "exactly such a woman as [Henry's uncle] thinks does not exist in the world. She is the very impossibility that he would describe" (296).¹⁵

In all these ways, then, *Mansfield Park* conforms to the conventions of domestic fiction. But one need not venture far into this apparently familiar domain before discovering that this particular house of fiction is not quite what it seems. Below the surface, cracks and crevices can be deciphered, and in these schisms lies Austen's critique of the roles and spaces assigned to women.

"*Mansfield Park* throbs with the notion that what women need is the moral care and protection of men" (135). So writes Aunt Fay in *Letters to Alicé*. But this is what I would identify as the affirmative text which is the subject of Austen's critique. Jan Fergus points out that

Imprisonment, deliverance, liberty, protection: terms like these and many others that imply the exercise of power--authority, consequence, government, dominion, submission, independence--are continually applied in *Mansfield Park* to the

¹⁵ R. F. Brissenden is one of several critics to connect Fanny and Clarissa ("*Mansfield Park*: freedom and the family"). Trilling sees the "shade of Pamela hover[ing] over [Fanny's] career (*Casebook* 221).

details of domestic life, particularly courtship and marriage. (*A Literary Life* 145)

Fergus reads Austen's last three novels in particular as constituting her exploration of "the complex power relationships between women and a social world that reduces their options and makes them marginal" (*A Literary Life* 145). In *Mansfield Park* it is not only social structures which imprison, but also the roles for women encoded within the master narratives of domestic fiction. Austen's challenge to authority is played out on many interconnected levels in this novel. Her resistance to the authority of patriarchal discourses is decipherable not only within the confines of the narrative, but also in her highlighting of the limitations of fictional convention.

Her invocation of the theatrical escapade is the central device with which Austen is able to challenge the overlapping discourses of authority within the text. The significance of this episode in *Mansfield Park* has generated much critical debate. As one of the central problem areas of the text, it provides an obvious starting point at which to begin unraveling the competing discourses of the novel. Depending upon their agendas, critics have variously read Austen's choice of *Lovers' Vows* as her play-within-the-novel, as signalling the pernicious influence of the Jacobin infection, as representative of Gisborne and More's contentions of the impropriety of acting, or as illustrative of Austen's ideas about propriety and women.¹⁶ But these

readings depend upon an affirmative view of Mansfield and its inhabitants, in which "the elegance, propriety, regularity, harmony--and perhaps, above all--the peace and tranquility of Mansfield" (384) are accepted at face value. To read *Mansfield Park* affirmatively seems particularly difficult, given the general nastiness and incompetence of most of its inhabitants.¹⁷ And the other side of the coin of Mansfield's "domestic tranquility" is its stultifying sense of confinement.

The central dialogic tension in the text is this tension between the constraint (indeed, the confinement) of Mansfield, and the licence and disruption of the theatricals, which ruffle the apparently tranquil surface of the text in a multitude of ways. Joseph Litvak identifies the theatricals as the source of much of the uneasiness generated by the novel:

the theatrical episode disturbs us . . . precisely because it is the crux of the book--because, that is, it has the power to become more than just a local structure, to spread perplexingly throughout the novel, just as the "theater" at Mansfield Park

¹⁶ For example, Marilyn Butler is a proponent of the first view; Marian Fowler argues for the Gisborne/More angle. Almost all conservative readings of *Mansfield Park* make the last point somewhere within their discussions.

¹⁷ Indeed, efforts to account for the negativity of the portrayal of all the inhabitants of Mansfield (with the possible exception of Edmund) within an affirmative reading of Sir Thomas' estate as a model of conservative values seem singularly inadequate. For example, Tony Tanner's assertion that "Austen is conceivably making a class point" in showing Fanny, William and Susan as important to the continued health of Mansfield seems to me a desperate effort to counter his own observation of how "many of [Mansfield's] actual blood descendants go to the bad" (*Jane Austen* 148).

soon extends from the billiard room, encompassing, of all places, Sir Thomas's study. (2)

Indeed, in the same way that the theatricals spill out in an ever-widening spiral into Sir Thomas' "own domestic circle," this episode centrifugally disrupts the boundaries of the text itself.

In his discussion of the masquerade in eighteenth-century fiction, Terry Castle links the theatricals in *Mansfield Park*--by way of the masquerade--to earlier manifestations of carnival in fiction. Although the masquerade topos has largely disappeared from fiction by the end of the eighteenth century, Castle points out that *Mansfield Park* is one of many nineteenth-century novels in which

The scene of the transformation moves inward, in both a literal and a figurative sense and the transgression is figured in more psychological ways. In part this situation mirrored an actual shift in behaviour--what Bakhtin . . . referred to as the historic movement of carnival forms into "private life." The multiplicity of scenes in nineteenth century fiction depicting domestic theatricals, private games of charades and the like, are a literalized manifestation of this change. (341)

Jane Austen was certainly familiar with this device in fiction, as it figures prominently in Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*.¹⁸ And it seems that the theatricals

¹⁸ There is plenty of evidence of Austen's admiration for *Grandison* in the *Letters*, but B. C. Southam's transcription of the play, *Sir Charles Grandison or the Happy Man*, (which came to light in 1977 and which is imputed to be the work of Austen and her nieces) reinforces the point--and also makes an interesting aside. Jan Fergus' essay "Sex and Social Life in Jane Austen's Novels" also connects the theatricals at *Mansfield* with the masquerade in *Grandison*, and focuses

generate such uneasiness because they are infected with the ghost of the carnivalesque spirit (albeit somewhat muted).

Castle's discussion of masquerade goes a long way towards accounting for much of the ambiguity in *Mansfield Park*:

One might call the masquerade topos a master trope of destabilisation in contemporary fiction. Its role is never merely static or emblematic. . . . It is associated with the disruption, rather than the stabilization of meaning. Befitting its deeper link with the forces of transformation and mutability, the masquerade typically has a catalytic effect on plot. It is often connected with the working out of comic or providential narrative patterns. Yet this plot-engendering function almost invariably undermines whatever emblematic meaning the episode might otherwise be expected to carry. The scene prompts larger ideological and thematic inconsistencies. Almost invariably, the fictional masquerade escapes any kind of moral reducibility. (117-118)

I think the theatricals have proved problematic to critics precisely because they do resist moral reducibility and whatever emblematic meaning they carry in the affirmative narrative. Although Sir Thomas very decisively rids his house of the infection of the theatricals when he returns from Antigua, their influence is irrepressible, and the licence unleashed during the scheme proves impossible to contain. Similarly, although the narrative seems to contain the female licentiousness of Maria, Julia and Mary Crawford when each of them meets their rightful "end," and the virtuous Fanny becomes the mistress of Mansfield Park, this closure seems unconvincing. The licence of the theatricals particularly on the sexual licence these devices release (82).

opens up a dialogue with/in the affirmative narrative, which creates a dissonance that is not dispelled by the orthodox closure of the text, but which continues to reverberate.

This disruption occurs in a number of interconnected ways. The inclusion of the theatricals in the novel constitutes what Bakhtin has termed an "inserted genre" ("Discourse in the Novel" 273) which centrifugally disrupts the monologic seamlessness of the "master discourse" of the domestic novel genre. One manifestation of this subversion is the way in which the theatrical genre pervades and modifies the formal shape of *Mansfield Park*: "the three volumes correspond to the three acts of a play, and the final chapter, which is quite different in style from the rest, forms an author's epilogue" (Kirkham, *Jane Austen: Feminism and Fiction* 3).

The theatrical episode also serves to draw into focus the boundary between the public and private realms. Theatricals, in themselves part of the spectacle of the public realm, threaten the sanctity of the private domain because they are inherently public.¹⁹ They bring with them the dangers of "excessive intimacy" and exhibition. The care with which the language of the text draws attention to this division between the public and the private should alert us to Austen's interest in exploring the boundaries

¹⁹ For a discussion of domestic space, and its functions in Austen's writing, see Francis R. Hart, "The Spaces of Privacy: Jane Austen."

which circumscribe the female realm. For instance, Edmund talks himself into taking the role of Anhalt because of

the mischief that may, of the unpleasantness that must, arise from a young man's being . . . domesticated among us--authorized to come at all hours--and placed suddenly on a footing which must do away with all restraints. To think . . . of the licence which every rehearsal must tend to create If I can be the means of restraining the publicity of the business, of limiting the exhibition, of concentrating our folly, I shall be well repaid. . . . I am not without hopes of persuading them to confine the representation within a much smaller circle. . . . My object is to confine it to Mrs. Rushworth and the Grants. (175-76)

The repetition of words like *constraint*, *confine*, *restraint*, *licence*, *publicity* and *exhibition* reveal the central dialogic tension in the text but they also draw attention to the boundary between the private and the public realms. And if this boundary protects against folly and exhibition, it also imprisons and restricts. The enclosure of the domestic realm therefore cuts two ways. This is one of the central ambiguities at the heart of *Mansfield Park*, and one that Austen explores via the vehicle of the theatricals.

The threat offered to *Mansfield Park* by the theatricals is a threat to patriarchal structures, as Edmund makes clear when he states that the erection of the theatre at *Mansfield* "would be taking liberties with my father's house in his absence" (152). Although the home is traditionally "the sphere of domestic life, the sphere in which female exertion is chiefly occupied, and female excellence is best

displayed" (Gisborne 4), it is apparent that the domestic realm of Mansfield Park is the domain in which Sir Thomas exercises absolute authority. He is "Master at Mansfield Park" (365), and his advice is the "advice of absolute power" (285). The stultifying aura of restraint that is the overriding characteristic of Mansfield emanates particularly from Sir Thomas. Maria marries the oafish Mr. Rushworth because "she [is] less and less able to endure the restraint which her father imposed. The liberty which his absence had given was now become absolutely necessary. She must escape from him and Mansfield as soon as possible" (216). The female lawlessness exhibited by Julia and Maria during the theatricals constitutes a challenge to this authority that has a ripple effect throughout the text. The two sisters "[scrambling] across the fence" (128) into the infamous wilderness during the trip to Sotherton, and Maria's utterance of her notorious line, "I cannot get out as the starling said" (127) before she makes her dash for freedom, emphasize their lawlessness, but also the restrictions imposed upon them.

None of the "daughters" in the text--with the exception of Fanny--can abide by the restrictions of their father's house, and Maria in particular seizes the opportunity that the play provides to flout the law of the father.²⁰ The

²⁰ Leroy Smith discusses *Mansfield Park's* attack on the patriarchal social order in "*Mansfield Park: The Revolt of the Feminine Woman.*"

theatricals therefore bring patriarchal authority and female licence (in particular) into conjunction. Castle argues that

true to its traditional association with the power of women, the masquerade threatens patriarchal structures. Normative sexual relations in the fictional world may be overthrown, and female characters accede here to new kinds of sexual, moral or strategic control over male associates.
(125)²¹

The invocation of this device is therefore one means by which Austen "writes what cannot be written." In using the theatricals to present us with pictures of female lawlessness, she creates a kind of shadow text which disrupts the tranquility and the convention of the foregrounded narrative, and the dialogue which results becomes a site of resistance.

It is apparent that the "liberties taken with [Sir Thomas]' house" during the theatrical escapade are specifically female liberties. Maria is the most at risk during the episode because her unofficial engagement (because not yet publicly sanctioned by her father) makes her "situation . . . a very delicate one, considering everything" (151). And Fanny thinks *Lovers' Vows* is "totally improper for home presentation [because of] the situation of [Agatha] and the language of [Amelia], [which are] unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty" (160).

These are the words of the affirmative or orthodox text, but there are many things about *Lovers' Vows* which

²¹ Mary Russo discusses this point in "Female Grotesques."

suggest that *Mansfield Park's* presentation of the affirmative text is not entirely unambiguous. The most striking thing about Austen's choice of this play (and something which appears curiously overlooked by critics) is the extent to which it "provides a paradigm for the novel" (McMaster, *Jane Austen on Love* 55), and the parallels--inverted or not--between the two discourses must inform our reading of the novel.²² For example, Amelia's father, Baron Wildenhaim, appears an inverse model of the character of Sir Thomas Bertram. Her uncle's response to Fanny's refusal of Henry Crawford is one of outraged authority--he accuses her of "willfulness of temper, self conceit and every tendency to that independence of spirit . . . which in young women is offensive and disgusting beyond all common offence" (318). The Baron, on the other hand, "shall not command, neither persuade [Amelia] to . . . marriage--[he knows] too well the fatal influence of parents on such a subject."²³ The Baron's liberal attitude emphasizes Sir Thomas' authoritarian stance.

Mansfield Park also shares with *Lovers' Vows* the character of the fallen woman. In the former, this role is

²² It seems likely that many of Austen's contemporaries would have been familiar with the play. Park Honan notes that *Lover's Vows* "praise of feeling as against tradition aroused the *Anti-Jacobin*, but the *Lady's Magazine* admired the play for heartfelt correctness. It went into twelve editions by 1799, and had six productions at Bath while the Austens lived there" (341).

²³ *Lovers' Vows* 30. Future citations to this text will be abbreviated to *LV*.

played by Maria, who commits the unthinkable when she leaves her marriage to elope (unsuccessfully) with Henry Crawford. In the latter, Agatha, now an old woman, has been seduced in her youth by the Baron, and is the mother of his illegitimate son, Frederick. The situation of this character in the play creates a reverberation in *Mansfield Park*. At the end of *Lovers' Vows*, Agatha is saved from her role as outcast when the Baron pledges to compensate for his past transgressions by marrying her (LV 87). Interestingly, it is made clear in the text that he failed to make her an honourable woman in the first place because of parental influence. Were it not for the interference of his family, Agatha would not have found herself cast in this role (LV 21). In *Mansfield Park*, there is no redemption possible for Maria. Sir Thomas

would never have offered so great an insult to the neighbourhood, as to expect it to notice her
 . . . Maria had destroyed her own character, and he would not by a vain attempt to restore what could never be restored, . . . be anywise accessory to introducing such misery in another man's family, as he had known himself. (449-50)

It seems suspicious that the Jane Austen who allowed Lydia to be accepted back into the family bosom in *Pride and Prejudice* agrees with the fate she metes out to her character here. Indeed, the language she uses in this passage seems intended to condemn Sir Thomas, rather than Maria. For Sir Thomas' concern for his "neighbourhood" and "another man's family," reveals his desire to protect

patriarchal structures at the expense of his own daughter.²⁴ Despite accepting his own culpability for Maria's actions, he insists that she "had destroyed her own character." The narrative of *Mansfield Park* similarly exonerates Henry Crawford from much of the responsibility for Maria's fallen character.

Austen's use of *Lovers' Vows* as the play behind the novel allows her to "write what cannot be written." I do not mean to suggest here that she endorsed the political sentiments of *Lovers' Vows*, (the play was certainly perceived as Jacobin in its tendencies by her contemporaries) nor that she abandoned, in *Mansfield Park*, her stance on the importance of true propriety. Rather, I am proposing that Austen's allusion to the play enabled her to create a dynamic between patriarchal authority and female desire, and in doing so, to illustrate the confinement imposed upon women by social and literary convention.²⁵

This is particularly evident in the parallel between Fanny and Amelia. Like Fanny, Amelia receives a proposal of marriage from a man she does not love. Like Fanny,

²⁴ Sir Thomas' response to suggestions that Maria be allowed back into the family echoes Mr. Collins' attitude to Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice*--an attitude for which he is pilloried.

²⁵ *Lovers' Vows* is not a very good play, and smacks of the kind of sentimentality and melodrama that Austen mocks in the juvenilia. Her use of this play in particular is certainly ironic. The Thespians betray their poor taste in choosing it. But this does not nullify the area of resistance opened up in the text by its sympathetic portrait of female desire.

Amelia is in love with the man who educated her, her tutor, Anhalt. The scene in *Lovers' Vows* to which Austen specifically refers in *Mansfield Park* (187) is the one in which Amelia declares her love for Anhalt. In her introduction to her adaptation of Kotzebue's play, Elizabeth Inchbald wrote:

The part of Amelia has been a very particular object of my solicitude and alteration . . . the forward and unequivocal manner in which she announces her love, in the original, would have been revolting to an English audience. . . . Amelia's love, by Kotzebue, is indelicately blunt . . . I have endeavoured to attach the attention and sympathy of the audience by whimsical insinuations, rather than coarse abruptness.
(iii-iv)

Yet despite Inchbald's efforts to render Amelia's speech less indelicate, her words still articulate her desire outright, when (by a circuitous route too long to transcribe here) she asks Anhalt to instruct her in the subject of love: "Come, then, teach it me as you taught me geography, languages, and other important things" (41). This is the scene which Edmund and Mary rehearse in the East room. In effect, Fanny is forced to watch Mary Crawford articulate what Fanny herself feels for Edmund. And this has important repercussions in the rest of the text.

There is, of course, a clear distinction made between Mary Crawford and Fanny. While Fanny never says anything but what she ought to say, Mary repeatedly articulates what propriety dictates that she not say. Mary is obviously one of the representatives in the text of female licence. She

makes rude puns about "Rears and Vices" (91), and is forward enough to ask during the preparation for the play, "Who is to be Anhalt? What gentleman among you am I to have the pleasure of making love to?" (167). But if Mary's boldness is condemned by the affirmative narrative of the novel, the subtext suggests that Fanny needs a little of it herself. For it is clear that if she could articulate her desire for Edmund, she would free herself from the pressures of Sir Thomas' authoritative endeavours to persuade her into marrying Henry. There is only one reason which Sir Thomas would find acceptable for her refusal of such an offer. He

requires explanation. Young as [Fanny is], . . . it is hardly possible that [her] affections--. He paused and eyed her fixedly. He saw her lips formed in to a no, though the sound was inarticulate, but her face was like scarlet. That however, in so modest a girl might be . . . innocence; and chusing at least to appear satisfied, he quickly added, "No, no, I know that is quite out of the question." (316-317)

If Fanny could aver outright that her affections are indeed engaged elsewhere, she would be released. But this articulation is quite out of the question for a girl as properly modest as Fanny.²⁶ The conjunction of Mary's voicing of Amelia's speech to Anhalt, with Fanny's inability to articulate her feelings, therefore undercuts the

²⁶ Even Fanny's modesty is counter productive to her, as she receives Henry Crawford's attentions so "very properly" that no-one "perceive[s] them to be unpleasant to [her. Sir Thomas] is half inclined to think that she doesn't know her own feelings" (316), and therefore authorizes Henry's continued pressing of his suit. For further discussion of this point see Johnson 106.

integrity of the affirmative text, creating a discrete grey area which calls into question the apparently unambiguous distinction between modest and immodest female characters in the text.

Lloyd W. Brown's reading of this point is illuminating. He argues that in drawing attention to the convention that women should not articulate their desire, Austen attacks

the male's self-serving definition of sexual morality, especially Samuel Richardson's notorious views on female modesty. According to Richardson, it is 'an heterodoxy' that a woman should be in love with a man before he declares his love.
(334)²⁷

As Clarissa's literary sister, Fanny must follow the dictates of convention, and this particular script denies her the words that she appears to need.

The theatricals--and the allusion to the play itself--therefore draw the "affirmative" text into dialogue in several ways. They constitute a site of resistance at the heart of the novel, and this resistance reverberates throughout the text as a whole.

And if the articulation of female desire is the disruptive influence first given licence in the theatricals, it throws into relief the constrictive structures which (patriarchal) society erects precisely to contain and control this desire. This, I believe, is what Austen

²⁷ As Brown goes on to point out, Austen parodies this view in the famous passage from *Northanger Abbey*, when Catherine Morland betrays her impropriety by dreaming of Henry Tilney "before he should dream of her" (NA 30).

intends in her portrayal of Fanny. Fanny as conduct-manual-angel-in-the-house, and courtesy-book-fictional-heroine, is so bowed down by the weight and restriction of convention that she hardly seems to exist. She is the only young woman in the novel to abide by the restrictions imposed upon her. If the licence of Maria, Julia and Mary is condemned by the affirmative narrative of the novel, the subtext condemns the restrictions which render Fanny almost powerless.

Much of the troping in the text functions to highlight Fanny's confinement. Indeed, the lines are drawn around her from the opening pages of the text, when Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris agree that she and her Bertram cousins "cannot be equals. . . . [We must] choose exactly the right *line* of conduct" (47, my emphasis). Moreover, in casting Fanny as a female dependent of sorts, Austen reinforces the marginality of women in their father's house. Fanny's marginality in the Bertram household is figuratively signalled by her physical position within the confines of Mansfield Park. She is relegated "to the little white attic near [the governess], and not far from the girls, and close by the housemaids" (46). Thus situated between the servants and the rest of the family, Fanny's attic room delineates her peripheral status at Mansfield. Mary Wollstonecraft described the precariousness of the position of the female dependent in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*.

Above the servants, yet considered by them as a spy, and ever reminded of her inferiority when in conversation with her superiors. . . . She is

alone, shut out from equality and confidence, and the concealed anxiety impairs her constitution. . . . The being dependent on the caprice of a fellow creature, though certainly very necessary in this state of discipline, is yet a very bitter corrective, which we would fain shrink from. (70-71)²⁸

Fanny remains on the periphery of the house until Maria and Julia's absence in London render her "the only young woman in the drawing room" (219), at which time her improved status is indicated by the ball thrown for her and William by Sir Thomas (281), and her uncle's authorization of a fire in her room (313).

That Fanny is dependent on the caprice of a fellow creature is made all too evident in the narrative aside which occurs on the death of Mr. Norris when she is fifteen. Without any reference to Fanny's own desires, Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram assume that she will move from Mansfield to Mrs. Norris' new home. As Lady Bertram states, "it can make very little difference to you, whether you are in one house or the other" (60). Similarly, Fanny is shuffled off to Portsmouth at her uncle's whim, and finds herself helplessly confined there until it is "convenient" for him to retrieve her.

The text reiterates the confinement as well as the precariousness of the small social space in which Fanny as a woman must live. In the context of the tropes of confinement associated with Fanny, Mary Crawford's speech

²⁸ Austen herself experienced something of the difficulties of this state after her father died and she was forced to rely on the charity of her brothers.

when she tries to ascertain whether or not Fanny is "out" takes on a whole new resonance. "The point is clear," intones Mary. "Miss Price is not out" (83, Austen's emphasis). Indeed, Fanny is so decidedly not out that she has never been to a ball, has hardly ever been out to dinner, and when she visits Mr. Rushworth's estates at Sotherton, she, "whose rides had never been extensive, was soon beyond her knowledge" (109).

Fanny is not only confined, she is also rendered almost powerless by the narrative. During the wilderness scene when her cousins burst out of the circumscribed realm of the garden, Fanny "feel[s] all this to be wrong" (127), but she is left to her lonely vigil on the bench as much as a result of fatigue as of principle. Were it not for fatigue, "Fanny would have moved too" (124), and accompanied Edmund and Mary on their ramble (which also leads them into the wilderness, albeit by a vaguer, but more respectable route). However, "Edmund urged her remaining where she was with an earnestness which she could not resist" (124). In other words, it is not Fanny's "heroism of principle" (271) which restrains her actions here, so much as her physical weakness, and Edmund's exhortations. This would seem a minor point were it not for the number of other instances in the text in which her "heroism of principle" is undercut.

When Fanny is in the throes of her moral dilemma over the necklace which Henry and Mary have tricked her into accepting, she is saved by a stroke of narrative

intervention: "her good fortune seemed complete, for upon trial the one given her by Miss Crawford would by no means go through the cross" (276). She is thus able to wear Edmund's necklace with a clear conscience, but she adorns herself with the second necklace in any case, because Edmund talks her into "mak[ing] that sacrifice rather than give pain to [Mary]" (270). Edmund so succeeds in reminding Fanny of her "duty" that she abandons her own scruples. But we have to question the source of these scruples since it is clear that aesthetics play a role here too. "[Edmund's] chain will agree with William's cross beyond all comparison better than the necklace" (270). By undercutting, and indeed, calling into question the intricacies of Fanny's moral system, the text denies her the authority of her own convictions.

This technique is most evident when, despite her protestations of horror at the impropriety of the theatricals, Fanny caves in to the perseverance of the Thespians and Edmund's "look of fond dependence on her good nature, and . . . [yields]" (191). She agrees to play the part of the Cottager's wife in *Lovers' Vows*. Fanny's integrity is saved when Sir Thomas makes his dramatic entrance like a *deus ex machina* and the theatrical escapade is brought to an abrupt end.

These three episodes are important in establishing Fanny's principle, yet in each case, her integrity is at least somewhat undercut by the machinations of the narrative

itself, which allow Fanny very little authority over either her own actions, or indeed, her ethics. Fanny's famous cry, "I cannot act" (168) reverberates throughout the text as a whole, for in almost every situation, she is denied the power to act under her own volition.

It is important too, that in each of these incidents, Fanny is swayed from her own moral position by Edmund's exhortations. It is clear that he is one manifestation of paternal authority in the text. He guides Fanny "with the kind authority of a privileged guardian" (351). And his contradictory and self-serving advice to her undercuts the idea that "what women need is the moral care and protection of men."²⁹

As Clarissa Harlowe's sister, as "courtesy book heroine," and as Sir Thomas' niece, Fanny has very few opportunities for action. Her peculiarly static character serves to emphasize that indeed, she "cannot act." There are only two instances in which Fanny is able to exercise even limited power, other than in her refusal of Henry Crawford. When she is at her father's house in Portsmouth, she alleviates domestic tension by buying her youngest sister Betsy a silver knife, thereby establishing Susan "in full possession of her own. . . . The deed

²⁹ Although Fanny is almost always portrayed as being in the right, which in itself undercuts the idea that "what women need is the moral care and protection of men," I am suspicious of the moral structure of the text as a whole, since it appears to me to be skewed to fit around Fanny as "moral centre" (which makes me question its validity).

thoroughly answered; a source of domestic altercation was thoroughly done away" (389). Shortly thereafter, Fanny becomes "a subscriber [to a lending library]--amazed at being anything in *propria persona*, amazed at her own doings in every way; to be a renter, a chuser of books!" (390). This act is again undertaken towards a suitably proper end, namely the edification of Susan. Although it is significant that Fanny does act out of her own volition, she acts just as she ought. In moving to restore domestic tranquility and to educate her sister, she uses her female influence to suitable ends. In other words, her actions remain within the limited sphere of power accorded to women by both social and literary convention. Moreover, her actions affect women, rather than men.

Fanny most obviously exerts power in the text when she maintains her right to choose her own husband, and denies her uncle's authority to dispose of her in marriage. Sir Thomas reveals his own interest in Fanny's marriage to Henry Crawford in the following passage:

you have . . . shewn me that you can be wilful and perverse, that you can and will decide for yourself, without any consideration or deference for those who have surely some right to guide you--without even asking their advice. You have shewn yourself very, very different from any thing that I had imagined. the advantage or disadvantage of your family--of your parents--your brothers and sisters--never seems to have had a moment's share in your thoughts on this occasion. How they might be benefited, how they must rejoice in such an establishment for you--is nothing to you. You think only of yourself. (318)

This is without doubt the voice of patriarchal authority in the text, and it is a voice which is undercut. As if to illustrate the precariousness of the position of women dependent upon paternal caprice, Sir Thomas is made to articulate a speech which is completely at odds with the attitude he takes towards his niece. When he begins to "feel grave on Maria's account," he resolves

to speak seriously to her. Advantageous as would be the alliance, and long standing and public as was the engagement, her happiness must not be sacrificed to it. . . . With solemn kindness [he] addressed her . . . and assured her that every inconvenience should be braved, and the connection entirely given up, if she felt herself unhappy in the prospect of it. He would act for her, and release her. (214-215)

This stands in such contrast to his attitude towards Fanny as to be impossible to overlook (and Fanny is not even "publicly" engaged to Henry). Either Austen intends Sir Thomas to be a complete hypocrite, or she means to illustrate the caprice to which daughters are subject if they attempt to abide by the law of the father.

But the law of the father laid down by Sir Thomas to Fanny must be read not only in conjunction with his own contradictory speech to Maria, but also in relation to the extratextual discourse of Mr. Harlowe.³⁰ As Clarissa's literary sister, Fanny has no option but the power of refusal, the power to say no. But like Clarissa, she finds

³⁰ Baron Wildenhaim's attitude to parental influence in marriage should also be remembered here, as it serves to contrast Sir Thomas' authoritarianism. (see my discussion of this point above, 35-36).

that her resistance is not heeded. Instead, Fanny is shipped off to Portsmouth by her uncle as

a medicinal project upon [her] understanding, which he must consider as diseased. A residence of eight or nine years in the abode of wealth and plenty had a little disordered her powers of comparing and judging. Her Father's house would, in all probability, teach her the value of a good income; and he trusted that she would be the wiser and happier woman all her life for the experiment which he had devised. (363-364)

And even Edmund, her alleged ally, provides no support. He urges her to

let [Crawford] succeed at last. You have proved yourself upright and disinterested, prove yourself grateful and tender-hearted; then you will be the perfect model of a woman, which I have always believed you born for. (344)

It is difficult, for this reader at least, to believe that the Austen who wrote *Love and Freindship* intended this speech to be taken literally. However, it points to Fanny's role as angel in the text. And this role apparently denies her authority over her own actions and desires, since Edmund assumes that as "the perfect model of a woman," she will submit at last to Henry (and to Edmund's exhortations). Once again, Fanny's actions are defined (by Edmund) according to conventional expectations.

Marian Fowler argues that in refusing Henry Crawford, Fanny acts according to the advice of the conduct manuals, which "are loud in refuting the common proverb that 'a reformed rake makes the best husband' and advise young ladies to shun all rakes, reformed or otherwise" (Fowler, 38). While Fanny may live by the values of the conduct

manual in refusing to marry a rake, this action simultaneously denies her the opportunity to exercise the limited power that the conduct manual concedes to be rightfully hers. The conduct manuals return again and again to the notion that women can legitimately wield power when they use their "female influence" to better those around them. Thomas Gisborne identified three particulars "of extreme and never-ceasing concern to the welfare of mankind [in which] the effect of the female character is most important." The second of these is "in forming and improving the general manners, disposition and conduct of the other sex, by society and example" (12-13).

Likewise, Hannah More

would call [women] to the best and most appropriate exertion of their power, to raise the depressed tone of public morals, to awaken the drowsy spirit of religious principle, and to re-animate the dormant powers of active piety. (1: 4)

This is the argument that Edmund uses to convince Fanny to marry Henry. He stresses that "[a] counteraction, gentle and continual, is the best safeguard of [Crawford's] manners and conduct" (345), and continues in the same vein:

a most fortunate man [Henry] is to attach himself to such a creature--to a woman, who firm as a rock in her own principles, has a gentleness of character so well adapted to recommend them. . . . He will make you happy, Fanny . . . but you will make him everything. (347)

But the narrative does not allow Fanny the power of domesticating Crawford's unruly impulses.

Again, this would seem a minor point (especially if we are suspicious of Edmund's perceptions) were it not for the fact that it is the text itself which causes us to question Fanny's failure to "improve" Henry Crawford. As readers, we are aware that he displays more genuine care for Fanny than any character other than William and Edmund. And her refusal to recognise this causes us to question her judgement. For example, Henry visits Fanny at Portsmouth, and perceiving her unhappiness, begs her to give his sister "only the slightest hint" (402), and he will come to Portsmouth with Mary to transport her back to Mansfield. This is more than any of the Bertrams offer Fanny in the same circumstance, as Edmund's letter--which arrives almost seven weeks after she is first banished to Portsmouth--makes clear. Fanny is not to be removed to Mansfield until after Easter, "when [her uncle] has business in town" (413).

Henry's sensitivity to Fanny's situation at Portsmouth, his delicacy in his meetings with the Price family (398), and his efforts to improve the conditions of the tenants on his estate (397), all point to the "improvement" he has undergone as a result of Fanny's female influence. But the most overt support for Henry's suit comes from the narrator herself, in the statement that

there would have been every probability of success and felicity for [Henry]. . . . Would he have persevered, and uprightly, Fanny must have been his reward--and a reward very voluntarily bestowed--within a reasonable period from Edmund's marrying Mary. (451)

What are we to make of this assertion? For it is certainly one of the "blind alleys" that we are propelled along in the process of following Fanny's story, and a point which generates uneasiness in this reader at least.³¹ We ourselves are made to feel the germ of truth in the accusation levelled at Fanny by Mary Crawford,

Why would she not have him? It is all her fault. Simple girl! --I shall never forgive her. Had she accepted him as she ought, they might now have been on the point of marriage, and Henry would have been too happy and busy to want any other object. (442)

One of the effects of these authorial machinations is to make us as readers feel that Fanny is without autonomy. We are so aware of Austen's refusal to allow her to decide to marry Henry that Fanny seems doubly confined, not only by the various authoritative structures in the text, but also by the machinations of her author. Margaret Kirkham has crisply asserted that "Fanny is not Henry Crawford's, she is Jane Austen's" (*Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction* 105). To this I would add that Fanny is so much Jane Austen's creature that she is not her own. We have little faith in her autonomy because we can perceive Jane Austen behind her manipulating the strings. And we are reminded again of the limitations imposed upon fictional heroines.

Fanny's character is undercut in other ways too.

Although she is the moral centre of the novel, this centre

³¹ Cassandra Austen was among those who felt that Austen should allow Fanny to marry Henry (Honan 343).

cannot hold. Despite the ill-treatment meted out to Fanny by everyone in her uncle's house, she still insists on idolizing both Mansfield and its inmates, as the following transcription of her thoughts reveals:

At Mansfield, no sounds of contention, no raised voice, . . . was ever heard; all proceeded in a regular course of cheerful orderliness; every body had their due importance; every body's feelings were consulted.
(384)

At least in relation to Fanny herself, this is just patently untrue. Much more objective is Henry Crawford's observation of Fanny's adopted home:

I know Mansfield, I know its way, I know its faults towards you. I know the danger of your being so far forgotten, as to have your comforts give way to the imaginary convenience of any single being in the family. (402)

Indeed, so much more objective is Henry's perspective in this particular instance that Fanny's much vaunted judgement must be questioned.

The dynamic between Fanny's "silent" propriety and Mary's "noisy" impropriety is usually read as Austen's illustration of the necessity of true modesty and proper conduct in women. But again, this is a distinction made by the affirmative or orthodox master discourse in the text, and again, it is undercut by the subversive subtext. Fanny may never say anything but what she ought to say, but the language of convention often renders her inarticulate. This is particularly apparent in several instances in which language is foregrounded. For example, Fanny's speech about

the evergreen, while perfectly proper in language and sentiment, is not only stilted, but borders on the inane:

The evergreen!--How beautiful, how welcome, how wonderful the evergreen!--When one thinks of it, how astonishing a variety of nature!-- . . . You will think me rhapsodizing; but when I am sitting out of doors, I am very apt to get into this sort of wondering strain. (223)

The hyperbole of this speech is signalled by the preponderance of dashes and exclamation marks which impart a breathy effusiveness to Fanny's discourse. But this is hilariously deflated by Mary's blunt assertion: "To say the truth . . . I am like the famous Doge at the court of Lewis XIV; and may declare that I see no wonder in this shrubbery equal to seeing myself in it" (223). It is impossible not to feel in instances like these, that Austen is indeed of the devil's party.³²

Fanny's inarticulateness is also foregrounded when she must reply to Mary's letter endorsing Henry's proposal. She becomes agitated. She does not "[know] what in the world to say!" and scribbles a hasty note in which the "conclusion is scarcely intelligible," and which is "excessively ill-written," in "language [that] would disgrace a child" (310).

And when she attempts to rebuff Henry's advances, Fanny "knew her own meaning, but was no judge of her own manner. [It] was incurably gentle, and she was not aware how much it concealed the sternness of her purpose" (326). Even when

³² This is Lionel Trilling's appropriation of Blake (*Casebook* 221).

the moral structure of the (affirmative) text calls for Fanny to speak, she remains mute. At one point, Henry confesses that he does not listen as closely as he should to the liturgy. Thinking that Fanny has admonished him, he asks

[a]re you sure you did not speak? I saw your lips move. I fancied you might be going to tell me I ought to be more attentive and not allow my thoughts to wander. Are you not going to tell me? No, indeed, you know your duty too well for me to--even supposing--. (338)

This is somewhat ironic given that the context of the discussion is the liturgy, and Edmund has made many speeches on the importance of a clergyman's example upon his parishioners (with which Fanny entirely agrees). Yet she refuses to speak for the cause of religion. The effect of her silence is to undercut the presentation of Fanny as a "picture of perfection," as she begins to seem intractable rather than merely modest.

Fanny may never articulate what she ought not to say, but Austen reveals the schism between what she says and what she thinks through the vehicle of free indirect discourse. Fanny's censorious tone in the following passage is such that it almost approaches a sneer.

It astonished her that Tom's sisters could be satisfied with remaining in London at such a time . . . *They* might return to Mansfield when they chose; travelling could be no difficulty to *them*, and she could not comprehend how both could keep away. If Mrs. Rushworth could imagine any interfering obligations, Julia was certainly able to quit London whenever she chose.
(422)³³

Fanny would never venture to articulate these sentiments outright, and a good thing too, for the tone is self-righteous and even petulant. It is, in any case, difficult to take seriously her attitude towards her cousins' apparent lack of proper family feeling, when we are told that she herself is

without any particular affection for her eldest cousin, [although] her tenderness of heart made her feel that she could not spare him, and the purity of her principles added yet a keener solicitude, when she considered how little useful, how little self-denying his life had (apparently) been. (417)

Also, of course, since she has been desperate to escape Portsmouth for some time at this point in the narrative, her judgement of her cousins, who have access to travel denied to Fanny, sounds suspiciously like sour grapes. Aspects of her character like this make Reginald Farrer's label of "prig-pharisee" seem all too apt.³⁴

Since the affirmative text of *Mansfield Park* seems to condemn both Mary Crawford's bold speech and the articulation of female desire given licence during the theatrical episode, Fanny's "silence" (or inarticulateness) initially appears to be a quality of her properly modest nature. But if the text condemns bold speech, it does not uphold silence, for Fanny is confined and rendered powerless

³³ Austen's letters reveal that she herself was much preoccupied by the business of travel. Index IV of the *Letters* lists half a page of references specifically to coaches and carriages.

³⁴ For further discussion of speech and silence in *Mansfield Park*, see Marylea Meyersohn's "What Fanny Knew: A Quiet Auditor of the Whole."

by her inability to articulate. Austen thus inscribes her resistance to the conventions which regulate female speech (such as rules of conduct and modesty).³⁵

I turn now to the strange ambiguity that pervades the playing out of the theme of female education in the text, a theme so riddled with inconsistencies that it too becomes a source of the uneasiness generated by the novel. Marian Fowler--in an affirmative reading of the text--has argued that *Mansfield Park* represents Austen's condemnation of those educational systems whose primary focus is to render young women fit for the marriage market, and which "concentrated on superficial accomplishments rather than on character development" (41). It is not difficult to see that the characters of Maria and Julia demonstrate the detrimental effects of this kind of education. As Sir Thomas realizes at the end of the text, his daughters' education has been a complete failure:

principle, active principle, had been wanting . . . they had never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers, by that sense of duty which can alone suffice. They had been instructed theoretically in their religion, but never required to bring it into daily practice. To be distinguished for elegance and accomplishments--the authorized object of their youth--could have had no useful influence that way, no moral effect on the mind. (448)

The failings of the Bertram sisters are squarely blamed upon "the excessive indulgence and flattery of their aunt . . .

³⁵ And perhaps she also transcribes her resistance to the censorship she experienced as a woman writer.

continually contrasted with [their father's] . . . severity" (447), and the fact that "[t]o the education of her daughters, Lady Bertram paid not the smallest attention" (55).

Fanny, on the other hand,

exemplifies the qualities [emphasized] by . . . Gisborne and . . . More . . . [namely] that the inculcation of sound moral principles should be the primary objective in female education and the judgement should be developed as the instrument for achieving moral excellence. (Fowler 41)

But this is the point at which things become suspicious. For there is no overt source in the text for Fanny's much vaunted "active principle." Edmund, it is true, is credited with her education: "he recommended [her] books . . . he encouraged her taste, and corrected her judgement" (57). But Edmund himself is scarcely the moral paragon that he appears to be. He often fails to live up to his own moral standards--most noticeably when he agrees to participate in the theatricals, when he falls in love with Mary, and when (as discussed above) he repeatedly advises Fanny to act against her own scruples.

In any case, it is clear that Fanny is already possessed of her strong principles before she even reaches Mansfield Park, and that Edmund's influence upon her is fairly incidental. At the age of ten, she has "an affectionate heart, and a strong desire of doing right." She is of "an obliging, yielding temper" and "a tractable disposition" (53-54). And these qualities form the basis of

her character despite her inauspicious beginnings with a father "negligent of his family," who "swore and . . . drank, [who] was dirty and gross" (381-82), and a mother whose "daughters had never been much to her," and who is "naturally easy and indolent" (382). Indeed, despite their failings as parents, Mr. and Mrs. Price manage to raise the sterling Fanny and William, and the equally promising Susan.

If we trace this theme to its logical conclusion in the novel, we find--on the penultimate page--Sir Thomas pondering again the differences between his own wretched offspring and those paragons, William and Fanny Price. He is forced to "acknowledge the advantages of early hardship and discipline, and the consciousness of being born to struggle and endure" (456). And we must ask, is this really Austen's message? Does she really intend to advocate the benefits of hardship and ill-treatment in the development of "active principle"?

This seems to be the implication when Fanny's "education" at Mansfield Park is considered in relation to that of her female cousins. Before she is even brought to Mansfield, Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris are agreed that there must be a proper

distinction . . . made between the girls as they grow up. . . . [T]hey cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations, will always be different. It is a point of great delicacy, and [we must endeavour] to choose exactly the right line of conduct. (47)

Mrs. Norris interprets this directive as licence to pamper her dear Bertram nieces while being as nasty as possible to poor Fanny. However, it is not only Mrs. Norris who ill-treats her. With the exception of Edmund, Fanny is "[k]ept back . . . by every body" (57), and when he leaves to attend to his estates in Antigua, Sir Thomas' last words to his niece are as unnecessarily cruel as any directed to her by Mrs. Norris: he fears that William "must find his sister at sixteen in some respects too much like his sister at ten"--a reflection which causes Fanny, typically, to "[cry] bitterly . . . when her uncle had gone" (67).

It seems improbable that in her portrait of Fanny, Austen meant to illustrate the benefits of childhood abuse upon the instillation of "active principle." The other alternative (given the lack of any other explanation for Fanny's sterling qualities) is that Fanny was born a "picture of perfection." But in neither case does this account for Austen's belabouring of the theme in her novel.

It seems, to answer my own questions, that Austen inverts the theme of the education of daughters to her own ends--namely to critique male authority over women. Although Mary, Maria, and Julia learn lessons about propriety, the men seem to suffer the true education in the text. Edmund realizes at the end of the novel "how [he had] been deceived" (444) by the Crawfords. But Sir Thomas Bertram has the most to learn: He is left to

Bitterly . . . deplore a deficiency which now he could scarcely comprehend to have been possible. Wretchedly did he feel, that with all the cost and care of an anxious and expensive education, he had brought up his daughters, without their understanding their first duties. (448)

In so proving Sir Thomas wrong, Austen takes aim at patriarchal authority over women, and undercuts the notion that what women need is the moral care and protection of men.

Austen's attack on the authority of patriarchal structures is more overt when she turns to the topic of marriage. In *Letters to Alice*, Aunt Fay writes that Jane Austen "believed it was better not to marry at all than to marry without love. Such notions were quite new at the time" (33). This is, of course, Fanny's perspective, and the narrative--for once--upholds her in this. Her "heroism of principle" is finally affirmed in the text when she holds out against all odds for Edmund. But before this happens, we are presented with a variety of competing and contradictory discourses on the subject of matrimony, which constitute Austen's attack on her society's marriage and courtship conventions. In this novel, marriage is a transaction by which men transfer women to other men in order to better their own (and their family's) prospects. This is made clear when Sir Thomas packs Fanny off to bed on the night of the ball. "In thus sending her away, [he] might not be thinking merely of her health. . . . he might mean to recommend her [to Henry Crawford] as a wife by shewing her persuadableness" (286). Sir Thomas desires that Fanny marry

Henry Crawford because he thinks he is "a young man of sense, of character, of temper, of manners, and of fortune" (319)--this last being the most important quality.

According to Sir Thomas' value system, it is a good daughter's duty to accept such an eligible offer. I let Sir Thomas speak for himself:

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. . . . Gladly would I have bestowed either of my daughters on him. . . . And I should have been very much surprised had either of [them], on receiving a proposal of marriage at any time, which might carry with it only *half* the eligibility of *this*, immediately and peremptorily, and without paying my opinion or my regard the compliment of any consolation, put a decided negative on it. . . . I should have thought it a gross violation of duty and respect. You . . . do not owe me the duty of a child. But, Fanny, if your heart can acquit you of *ingratitude*--. (319)

This sentiment is echoed in "the only rule of conduct, the only piece of advice which Fanny received in the course of eight years and a half" from Lady Bertram, when she tells her that "it is every young woman's duty to accept such a very unexceptional offer" (331) as Henry's. But the novel shows that submission to Sir Thomas' marriage ethic is no guarantee that a successful union will result. Austen illustrates this by the introduction of a seemingly insignificant subplot which is related to Fanny by Mary Crawford. She says of her friends the Frasers:

I look upon [them] to be about as unhappy as most other married people. And yet it was a most desirable match for Janet at the time. We were all delighted. She could not do otherwise than accept him, for he was rich, and she had nothing; but he

turns out ill-tempered. . . . Poor Janet has been sadly taken in; and yet there was nothing improper on her side; she did not run into the match inconsiderately, there was no want of foresight. She took three days to consider of his proposals; and during those three days asked the advice of every body connected with her, whose opinion was worth having. (356-7)

Janet Fraser, in other words, follows the advice directed at Fanny when she refuses Henry Crawford. As Mary says, "[t]his seems as if nothing were a security for matrimonial comfort" (357).

And indeed, nothing is, save for Fanny's principle that "to marry without affection" is "wretched, and . . . unpardonable . . . hopeless, and . . . wicked" (323)--a principle that is given credence in the text by the example of the disastrous effects of Maria's marriage undertaken without affection. Fanny is allowed, finally, to assert herself when she gives voice to "the fullest and most forthright defence of the independence and power of woman's feeling and of woman's right to choose for herself and the most direct attack on sex-role stereotyping to be found in Jane Austen's novels" (Leroy Smith 154).

She tells Edmund:

I *should* have thought . . . that every woman must have felt the possibility of a man's not being approved, not being loved by some one of her sex . . . let him be ever so generally agreeable. Let him have all the perfections in the world, 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. . . . And, and--we think very differently of the nature of women if [Crawford's sisters] can imagine a woman so very soon capable of returning an affection as this seems to imply. (349)

Fanny seems more like an Austen heroine when she makes this assertion than at any other point in the novel. And one of the reasons she seems so is that an interesting inversion of the moral system of the "affirmative" text occurs here.

Fanny not only breaks out of her pattern of behaviour in making a very strong articulation of her feelings, but also by transgressing the values held by the authority figures in the book. In contrast, Mary's speeches on marriage echo Sir Thomas' own very practical view. She sees marriage as "a maneuvering business" (79), she believes "a large income . . . the best recipe for happiness" (226), and that "It is everybody's duty to do as well for themselves as they can" (293). These attitudes are made to signal Mary's lack of principle and proper delicacy even though they are the same values as those held by Sir Thomas himself.³⁶

There are no "positive" representations of matrimony in the text until Fanny and Edmund wed. Even the marriages of the Bertrams and the Norrises (apparently held up in the opening pages as examples of "prudent" unions) attack marriage as a patriarchal institution. "Lady Bertram is an extreme example of the reduction of the female to virtual non-being by the patriarchal system. Having achieved a fortunate marriage, she has no further sense of purpose in her life" (Smith 145). And if Lady Bertram has no sense of

³⁶ The connection between Mary and Sir Thomas is reinforced when she makes the very curious assertion that Sir Thomas is her example of the ideal husband (348).

purpose, Mrs. Norris has too much. Indeed, we might consider the two sisters as two extremes of the roles for women inscribed in the master discourses of the marriage plot and the conduct manual. Since the marriage plot prescribes matrimony as women's goal, it is easy to see that having reached this end, Lady Bertram has no other narrative by which to live. Mrs. Norris, on the other hand, becomes another type of patriarchal woman. She is the managerial housekeeper who finds the whole reason for her existence in ridiculous attention to domestic duties--to the extent that she seems almost to welcome her husband's death, as it means that she "shall not be ashamed to practice economy now" (64), and Mrs. Norris gains her greatest pleasure from saving a yard or two of baize here and "spunging" a cream cheese there. Indeed, most--if not all--of the details of domestic realism are introduced into the text via Mrs. Norris. She and her sister exemplify the limited roles available for women within the confines of patriarchal structures.³⁷

The final chapter of the novel affirms Fanny's heroism of principle when she is finally married to Edmund. But there are several things about this apparently conventional

³⁷ Several critics have commented on the implications of the older generation of women characters to the representation of the marriage plot in this novel. Susan Morgan, for example, argues that Lady Bertram and Mrs. Price "have become lazy and giddy mothers because they . . . were raised as foolish heroines, valuing the equally false tales of romantic love or luxury . . . which require finding the appropriate hero, more than . . . ways . . . to live productive lives" (46).

ending which merit exploration. The first line, "let other pens dwell on guilt and misery, I quit such odious subjects" (446), ushers in a chapter markedly different in tone from the rest of the novel. It is as if Austen remembered that she was writing a comedy, and wrapped up her plot forthwith. The speed with which she metes out to all her characters their "rightful ends" again seems to undercut the affirmative text of the novel. Sir Thomas learns his lesson, Henry Crawford is left to repent the loss of Fanny, Mr. Rushworth gets a divorce, Mary has to live quietly with her sister without finding a husband, Julia's marriage to Mr. Yates turns out better than expected, Tom is made a new and steadier man by his illness, and of course Maria "is obliged to go and live with the awful Mrs. Norris. And serve both right" (Weldon, *LTA* 136).

But most importantly, "[E]xactly at the time when it was quite natural that it should be so . . . Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny, as Fanny herself could desire" (454). And is this the end of the story? Is the rebellious impulse of female licence as completely contained as this ending proclaims? It seems not. For despite the relenting of tone in this chapter, Austen continues to inscribe her resistance to the authority of convention and closure.

The final chapter is a typical Austen ending in its deflation of the scene towards which the whole narrative has been driving. And despite its affirmation of Fanny's

principles, it is an unsatisfying ending. William H. Magee has argued that the novel's closure makes us uneasy precisely because Austen

modified the [marriage] convention by introducing some real sense of choice for both Fanny and Edmund. . . . As a result of this flexibility, the conventional conclusion is disappointing in Mansfield Park. In marrying each other, Edmund and Fanny seem to be taking the easy way out of their difficulties and so they look unheroic. But such a response is at variance with the convention. By its principles there is no chance that Edmund or Fanny would marry anyone but each other. If readers feel otherwise, Jane Austen has raised their doubts. It is she who declares the alternate possibilities to be probable, and she likely does so because the rigidity of the convention has been irking her. (202)

The marriage of Edmund and Fanny also makes us uneasy because they are too akin to each other. Claudia Johnson argues that their "marriage . . . savors of incest" (116), and there is much in the text to back up this reading. Before Fanny is even brought to Mansfield, Mrs. Norris allays Sir Thomas' worries on this very point by insisting that "[i]t is morally impossible" for cousins "always together like brother and sister" to fall in love. Even if she should have "the beauty of an angel . . . she will never be more to either than a sister" (44). And in the state of angst generated by the revelation of Mary's true character, Edmund presses Fanny "to his heart with only these words . . . My Fanny--my only sister--my only comfort now" (432).

Fanny and Edmund are also a disturbing couple because in them we have no sense of a fresh start or renewal. Tanner's reading of the Portsmouth branch of the family's

entrance into Mansfield as representing fresh potential is difficult to credit. Fanny is hardly a new inmate of the establishment, even though she now enters it with authority. Moreover, William, Susan and Fanny are all first cousins of the Bertrams. Fanny's status as Edmund's "only sister" merely serves to reinforce this consanguinity.

Throughout the text, Mansfield Park is a structure which confines and restricts its female inhabitants. The novel as a whole presents a more restricted community of characters than Austen's other novels. And where the closure of the marriage plot in other novels usually involves the expansion of the family circle as a new son or daughter-in-law and his or her family is embraced, in *Mansfield Park*, the novel's closure results in an even greater restriction of the community, when the Crawfords, Mr. Rushworth, Maria and Mrs. Norris are exiled from the text.

And what of Maria's ending? This too generates discomfort. We are used to Austen forgiving her characters as the curtain comes down in the final act. But there is no forgiveness here, for either Maria or Mrs. Norris. She is banished "for ever" (450) because her advocacy for Maria's re-establishment with her family illustrates once and for all to Sir Thomas that her presence is "an hourly evil" (450). Considering his own culpability in the development of Maria's bad character, this seems a harsh and authoritarian response.

All this contributes to our sense that Mansfield is a place of confinement, rather than tranquility. And no matter how decisively Austen slams her novel shut, we are left at the end with the same uneasiness that has disturbed us all along. We carry away from this text our awareness of Fanny as a woman trapped within the confines of both patriarchal ideology and the master discourse that is the genre of domestic fiction itself. Although she has asserted her independence, "[s]he is indeed the daughter [Sir Thomas] wanted" (456). And we know, because Austen tells us, that the law of the father is a difficult one to live by. Austen may reign in the house of domestic fiction, but her challenge to the inhibitions imposed on female experience therein is insistently inscribed upon its walls.

CHAPTER II
ANGEL INTO ARSONIST: CARNIVALESQUE INVERSION
AND THE HOUSE TURNED INSIDE OUT.

If Jane Austen's house of fiction is somewhat disarrayed, Fay Weldon's is a house turned inside out. For where Austen is a "secret subversive," Weldon is a "didactic deconstructor" (Sage 159). Her texts "announce their own flamboyant and ramshackle fictionality . . . that is, [they] demolish while they build" (Sage 158). Although Weldon's parodic texts invert and demolish the conventions they erect, Patricia Stubbs asserts that her writing demonstrates that "there has been no real break with fictional convention. The private world has been sexualized, but the assumption that inner experiences are the most significant part of a woman's life remains intact" (233-34). Weldon's novels are indeed situated on this axis, in direct--if distant--alignment with the writing of her literary foremother, Jane Austen. But like Austen, Weldon positions her novels according to the prescriptions of convention in order to "[manipulate] the dominant cultural myths which produce and maintain [the power] relations" between the sexes (Waugh 192). And this in turn allows her to challenge "culturally constructed oppositions, among them the oppositions that constitute the powerful codes of gender" (Hite 16).

In a passage from *Letters to Alice*, Aunt Fay articulates what is surely Weldon's own literary agenda:¹ a writer

writes out of a society: links the past of that society with its future; he or she can demonstrate to the reader the limitations of convention, as Jane Austen did in *Northanger Abbey* . . . The reader may well have mistaken the fictional convention for life itself, so severe is the social indoctrination to which we are all subjected, whenever and wherever we live, and needs to be reminded from time to time that novels are illusion, not reality. (32)

As if to emphasize her interest in exploring the same territory as her predecessor, Weldon experiments with the conventions of Gothic fiction in several of her novels, thereby following Austen's lead in *Northanger Abbey*.

Although both Lorna Sage and Patricia Waugh have discussed Weldon's appropriation of the structures of Gothic fiction in such novels as *The Lives and Loves of a She-Devil* as "a reflexive comment on the novel form" (Sage 158), her similar appropriation of the conventions of domestic fiction has thus far been overlooked.²

On every level, *The Heart of the Country* attacks the fictional convention of the domestic novel and the social indoctrination which it both encodes and mirrors. As Aunt Fay tells us, "fiction . . . if it is any good, tends to be a subversive element in society" (*LTA* 81). In the same way

¹ As Alan Wilde suggests, "There seems to be no reason . . . to distinguish between the attitudes and opinions of "Aunt Fay" and those of her creator." (408 n.10).

² For Waugh's discussion of Weldon as "contemporary feminist Gothic" see *Feminine Fictions* 189-196.

that Austen's use of the theatrical escapade creates a complex site of resistance in *Mansfield Park*, Weldon's invocation of carnival--and its related discourses--in *The Heart of the Country*, gives her access to a variety of narrative strategies which allow her to create a text that is subversive in several ways. Since "carnival refuses to surrender the critical and cultural tools of the dominant class" (Russo 218), Weldon's use of carnival allows her to appropriate these tools to her own ends. She is able to invoke the structures of the dominant class, while simultaneously demolishing them from within.

These structures take on a variety of shapes in *The Heart of the Country*. The novel destabilizes and subverts not only those social structures which delineate women and women's roles, but also the literary forms by which women have delineated themselves. Indeed, in relation to the domestic novel to which she is responding, Weldon's innovative narrative technique constitutes a "writing beyond the ending" of the genre itself.

From the opening pages, *The Heart of the Country* points to the domestic genre as its "cultural context." Like Jane Austen before her, Weldon takes "3 or 4 Families in a Country Village ... [as] the very thing to work on,"³ albeit three or four families in less than ideal domestic circumstances. The novel is set in the heart of the

³ Letter to Anna Austen, 9 Sept. 1814, letter 100 of *Letters*. 400-03.

country, in and around the village of Eddon Gurney, and concerns the daily lives and interactions of its inhabitants. In all these details, the novel bows to the conventions of domestic realism.

Ostensibly "Natalie's story,"⁴ the text opens in "the Harris' nice new bungalow, complete with dream kitchen, picture windows and parquet floors" (1-2). Since domestic fiction is "female writing--writing written for women," the novel overtly evokes its female audience. When the narrator addresses the reader on the opening page, "You know what those mornings are? . . . [when] there's just the bus to catch, or the washing up to get on with" (1), the reference to domestic chores marks the intended addressee as female. In this novel, at least, it is usually women who take buses and wash dishes. Men drive expensive cars, and leave the house each morning for work.

Like Austen before her, Weldon draws attention to the boundary between masculine and feminine spheres in order to expose the limitations imposed on women's experience. And this demarcation runs through *The Heart of the Country* from its opening pages. The "particular domestic tableau" (3) of the Harris' home "[lies] in the shadow of the Mendip Mast, that vital quivery, silver wand . . . erected by man . . . as near as can be to the ethereal god of telecommunications" (2). But true to the carnivalesque spirit of this

⁴ *The Heart of the Country* 17. When necessary for clarity, future citations to the text will be abbreviated to *Heart*.

irreverent text, this neat distinction is quickly subverted, for the Harris home also lies in the shadow of "Glastonbury Tor . . . the solid, ancient hummocky hill which . . . looks like a lady's breast . . . [and which] transmits as well" (3). Our expectations are quickly undercut, for if the vision of the Harris home seems a familiar (if parodic) domestic structure, the evocation of the decidedly undomesticated realm of the pagan Tor challenges the sanctity of this vision. The female realm in this novel may be the dream kitchen, but the "ancient spirit of carnival" (187) lurks within it as latent female power. The two belief systems which are to collide in the carnivalesque conflagration are thus established. Just as the Harris home is situated between the two poles of modern (male) science, and ancient (female) paganism, the novel is structured around the duality of "official" versus "carnavalesque" ideology.

The function of carnival in Weldon's text is strikingly similar to the role performed by the theatricals in Austen's novel. The theatricals destabilize the apparent tranquility of *Mansfield Park*, while carnival subverts the domestic novel in *The Heart of the Country*, through its very presence in a realm to which its entire structure is antithetical.

The carnival belongs to the borderline between art and life . . . it is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its

very idea embraces all the people. (Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* 7)⁵

Just as the publicity and exhibition inherent to the theatricals resist the containment of the private domestic realm, the nature of carnival is such that it does not acknowledge the boundaries which delineate this realm. It does not abide by the distinctions between public and private by which the domestic "hearth" is bound because it embraces all of the people. To drive a parade through the heart of the country is therefore to conflate the public and the private in a way that necessarily explodes the domain of the domestic novel, which is turned inside out by its inability to contain the carnivalesque universe.

The conventional enclosure of the realm of domestic fiction is not the only structure whose authority is challenged in both these novels. *The Heart of the Country*, like *Mansfield Park* before it, subjects many of the discourses of patriarchal society to the destabilizing and disruptive forces of the theatrical/carnivalesque spirit. Our narrator explicitly defines society as a patriarchal construct when she tells us:

by "society" I mean men, for who else forms and regulates the world we live in? Who else but men would dress their wives and mistresses, those they torment, abuse, and exploit, in the clothes of the fifties, hand them feather dusters, oblige them to smile, and parade them through the streets . . . ? (53)

⁵ All future citations of this text will be abbreviated to R&HW.

Similarly, she takes aim at organized religion, specifically Christianity, which in *The Heart of the Country*

is a man's religion: there's not much in it for women except docility, obedience, who-sweeps-a-room-as-for-thy-cause, downcast eyes and death in childbirth. For the men it's better: all power and money and fine robes, the burning of heretics --fun, fun, fun!--and the Inquisition. (78)

And the State too becomes another manifestation of monologic, authoritative discourse in the text. When Natalie approaches her local Welfare officer, she is quizzed on her past sexual history. She is asked about her "association" with Angus, and tartly reminded that "You can't mess up your life wilfully and then expect the State to step in and pick up the pieces!" (113). All of these structures (and the genre of domestic fiction) come under attack in the novel because they prescribe and uphold "the consoling myth of the loving female in the dream house" (*Heart* 53), to which men, in this novel at least, still cling.

Published in 1984, *The Heart of the Country* also specifically targets the "official" ideology of the Thatcherite Government. "[T]he heart of the country's rotten. . . . If the rulers put profit . . . first, how can the people be expected to do any better?" (10). And "racism's rampant. In this respect the heart of the country is mean, and spiteful, and frightened" (37). One of Weldon's agendas in this novel, as the title suggests, is to explode the myth of the heart of the country as Edenic.

This myth, and the Conservative (Thatcherite) ideology interwoven with it, form a master discourse which props up many of the other structures under attack in the text.

Just as the theatricals in *Mansfield Park* release female licence against the law of the father, carnival in *The Heart of the Country* lets loose female subversion to challenge the "official" ideology of the master discourses of the patriarchy. This is nowhere more apparent than in the women's appropriation of the West Avon Estate Agents and Dealers Association's float. An important point in Bakhtin's theory is his distinction between the "official" feasts and the carnivals of the marketplace.

The official feasts . . . whether ecclesiastical, feudal, or sponsored by the state, did not lead the people out of the existing world order, and created no second life. On the contrary, they sanctioned the existing pattern of things and reinforced it. . . . As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order. (R&HW 9-10)

The float as it is initially commissioned by Arthur and Angus represents the "official" vision of the "established order." Arthur and Angus are "[r]obber barons . . . buying and selling property and land, jobs for the boys on the town council . . . --nothing went on [they] didn't know about, nothing happened they didn't want to see happen" (33). The "official" theme of the float as Arthur and Angus envision it is "to present WEAEDA as an altruistic body whose only concern was good housekeeping and happy marriages untroubled by serious debt" (18). This blissful domestic picture

sanctions and reinforces the vision of the existing order. It is a vision which is central to the genre of the domestic novel. The "official" nature of the parade is reinforced in the manner in which the people receive it:

There are no cheers from the crowd as it passes, dancing or singing, or other demonstrations of good cheer: this is not a participation show. No, it is a religious ceremony: applause when it comes is scattered and reverential (85).

It is not until the women subvert the float to their own ends that the parade enters the realm of the carnivalesque.

Of their own accord, out of their own oppression, they were back in the ancient spirit of carnival, when the images of the hated were paraded through the streets, and hung from gibbets, or rolled down hills in burning tar barrels (187).

Motivated by this spirit, the women turn the vision of Arthur and Angus inside out. "Little boxes, on the hillside/little boxes made of ticky tacky" becomes the theme song of the float, in contrast to the message emblazoned along its side: "WAEADA, the housewife's friend." In keeping with Bakhtin's statement that in carnival, "all that was terrifying becomes grotesque" (R&HW 91), the portraits of Arthur and Angus at either end of the float become "effigies." Finally, the float, consisting of "the frontage of ideal homes . . . [complete] with . . . lace curtains and pot plants . . . an ideal housewife (circa 1955) in frilly apron waving a feather duster . . . with a happy smile" (171) is destroyed by fire. It becomes "one of the indispensable accessories of the carnival . . . --the set

called 'hell' [which] . . . was solemnly burned at the peak of the festivities" (Bakhtin, R&HW 91).

The conflagration of this hellish vision of domesticity at the heart of the novel is the point at which the dialogic axes of the text intersect. The conjunction of the "official" vision of Arthur and Angus with its carnivalesque subversion at the hands of the women is the central dialogic relationship around which the novel is structured. But the burning of the "idyllic" domestic tableau also constitutes an inversion of the central myth of the domestic genre.

Having cheerfully disposed of this central myth, Weldon continues to subvert the expectations she engenders in her readers by situating her novel within the realm of domestic fiction. And just as the theatricals serve to call into question the apparently distinct delineation of the female characters in *Mansfield Park*, the carnivalesque spirit inverts and explodes female roles in *The Heart of the Country*. The most irreverent of these subversions is the murder of Flora at the hands of our narrator, Sonia. For if, as Aunt Fay tells us, "the Angel of the House stood at Jane Austen's elbow . . . and she never quite learned how to ignore her" (29), Weldon herself has no such qualms. No woman in *The Heart of the Country* is sexually modest enough to qualify as an angel in the text of the order of Fanny Price, but Natalie's housekeeper, Flora, is the "angel ascending" (9) of the novel put to flames by Sonia at the climax of the carnival. Flora, who seemed "the Virgin and

the Madonna mixed in one" (91) is a symbol of Woman as she is inscribed according to Christian doctrine, and as this symbol is sacrificed to "the ancient spirit of carnival" (187).

But Flora is also (in a deft conflation of imagery) "the new Madonna, pop star" (53). She embodies the virgin/whore dichotomy of Christian ideology, but she is also an image of a more secular ideology. She is "Mrs. Housewife Princess" (181); she is "the prettiest and youngest of [the women]. . . . Both the mother who loves her child, and the child who looks forward to love" (88). Flora symbolizes all that the dominant order has ascribed to women. As representative of "all of [the women], what [they] once were" (194), Flora is that part of themselves which the women must excise. She is the cancer of which the carnivalesque body politic must rid itself. She becomes the sacrificial victim, destroyed in the conflagration "so the world can cure itself of evil and renew itself" (*Heart* 194).⁶

There are several other carnivalesque elements associated with Flora's death-by-fire. At the moment of conflagration, Flora is "mesmerized by her good fortune" (193), as Arthur hands her a cheque for two thousand pounds. "He'd done what he said he would. He had achieved a moral

⁶ Weldon is obviously drawing here on the idea that the frequent goal of ritualized violence "is that of ridding the community of dreaded pollution" (Davis, 157).

act, finally. It killed Flora" (193). Just as in carnival, the fool becomes king for the day, so the "robber baron" attains morality. In his abrupt moral turn around, Arthur succumbs to the spirit of "the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal" (Bakhtin, *R&HW* 10) that is carnival.

Her brisk disposal of Flora illustrates Weldon's impatience with the roles accorded to women by social and fictional convention. Her tactics are obviously much more overt than those of her predecessor, but her interest in exploding the confining roles by which women are inscribed parallels Austen's resistance to the limitations imposed on female experience. All the women characters in *The Heart of the Country* embody some element--inverted or otherwise--of the domestic and social roles prescribed for women within domestic fiction. Natalie and Sonia initially appear to be paired as heroine and anti-heroine, in much the same way as are Fanny and Mary Crawford. Natalie seems a conventional domestic heroine, while Sonia is her inverse, the fallen or marginalized woman. As the novel opens, Natalie is presented to us as the embodiment of "the consoling myth of the loving female in the dream home."⁷ We are invited to construct her for ourselves:

⁷ Of course, this image unravels almost faster than it is knitted up in the text, since the second line informs us that "Natalie Harris sinned" (1), thereby causing us to question her status as a "heroine" immediately.

Picture Natalie. Round face, blonde-haired, pretty as a girl in an early Charlie Chaplin movie, with that same blank look of sexy idiocy on her face. It was as if she was born to go round with subtitles: *Help me, save me, poor little me.* It was how she had been brought up to look: not her fault. (4)

She is like a Victorian doll, "all wide eyes, smooth cold skin and silent blinking" (34); she is "a good wife and mother" (11); and to complete her status as a parodic heroine, she is like Fanny in being "very much alone in the world" (20). Indeed, in as much as she is a construct of all that the dominant order ascribes to women, Natalie is a sort of updated model of Fanny Price.

Sonia, on the other hand, has lost her status as good wife and mother, and been reduced to "unpaid child minder for the state" (133). But since Sonia-as-Narrator is writing from the perspective of the future, we also know her from the beginning of the text in her incarnation as mad "convicted arsonist" (25). When Natalie's story opens, Sonia is paying her dues for

[falling] in love with Alec the solicitor. . . .
 [Her husband] left her when he discovered her in
flagrante delicto and never forgave her . . .
 which is how Sonia happened to be living off the
 State's munificence, with three small children.
 What else was she to do? 'I'm not going to
 subsidize a whore!' said Stephen, when the
 question of maintenance arose. (31)

Both Natalie and Sonia are delineated according to the conventions which define women according to their submission to sexual and social norms. But the distinction between "good" heroine and "immoral" anti-heroine is quickly dissolved. For as the novel opens, Natalie is about to

"[leave] the wives and [join] the women" (51). "Natalie Harris sinned, and her husband Harry left for work one fine morning and didn't come back" (1). She is about to experience life as a marginalized woman, and as she will find, this is a very different experience from the "dream house" existence that she has been living.

Natalie as heroine is also undercut by Sonia's continued thrusting of herself into the centre of the text. In this she seems to carry through on the threat offered to Fanny by Mary Crawford, as many readers have found Mary a more compelling and attractive character than the priggish Fanny, and suspected her of being the real Austen heroine in the novel. Although *The Heart of the Country* purports to be Natalie's story, she remains a sort of cardboard cut-out heroine. We have very little sense of her as a character because we have little access to her thoughts. Instead, it is Sonia's world we enter when we enter the realm of the novel--a world in which the border between madness and sanity is a shifting and insubstantial one, and in which the process of following Natalie's story becomes a journey through Sonia's subjective landscape.

Sonia is both orchestrator of the novel and malevolent spirit of carnival.

Sonia wanted justice. Sonia wanted to get to the root of things. Sonia bore a grudge. Sonia knew the history of the carnival. . . . Sonia wanted her past to catch up with her present. Sonia hated men . . . the same way as Angus and Arthur, Harry, Stephen and Alec, to name but a few, hated women. (185)

Sonia's status as "omniscient narrator" not only reinforces her role as a figure of carnival, it also reminds us that to enter the novel is to enter her internal world. She has the capacity to report on events at which she could not possibly be present, either as "Sonia," or as "I." She asks, "You wonder how I know all this? What goes on in one woman's head goes pretty much on in another's . . . We are all of us part of one bleeding body, if you ask me" (24). In so saying, Sonia makes herself part of the body politic that is carnival, in which there are no individuals, and in which all people are organically linked in one unified body. But she also reminds us that the narration is presented to us through the filter of her own subjectivity. This becomes another means by which Weldon proclaims the "ramshackle fictionality" of the text, and constitutes another challenge to the authority of the genre of domestic fiction itself.

Sonia similarly demonstrates her subjectivity in her inability to "see [herself] as others see [her]--that is to say in the third person--when and as [she enters] into Natalie's story" (17). She frequently asserts "I'll try and keep out of it, I promise you, except in the third person" (25, my emphasis), only to reappear a few lines later as "me" (26). Sonia's ostensible aim in attempting to kill herself off as "I" is her "quest for sanity and self-improvement . . . as instructed by [her male] psychiatrist to objectivize [herself]" (17), but as she says:

to practise "objectivity," to third-personalize, which

[he] likes [her] to do, may well reduce the ego, but it doesn't half fracture one's sense of continuing identity, already seriously threatened. (29)

Sonia as a fluctuating subject/object of her own narrative becomes a parodic representative of the feminist attempt to use writing to reinscribe the self. She is consistently unable to represent herself as object as her psychiatrist requests--her subjectivity keeps intruding. She is thus a familiar figure in Weldon's writing, in which woman characters frequently "seek to construct a subjectivity through [such] marginal representations . . . as witches, herbalists, monsters and she-devils, to subvert the moral complacencies of liberal-humanist and patriarchal society" (Waugh 193).

As a "fat, garrulous, semi-mad succubus" (169), Sonia seems as far removed from Fanny Price as any character in fiction. Fanny is "silent," Sonia, "garrulous." Fanny has "some touches of the angel" (*MP* 340) about her, Sonia is an arsonist and murderer. However, there are some interesting parallels--inverted and otherwise--between the two. Both are marginalized characters. Fanny remains on the periphery of the activities and community of Mansfield Park, while Sonia is obviously a woman on the fringe of society. Both serve as focalizers in their respective novels, and both are in turn the moral lenses in their respective texts--Fanny is the moral centre of *Mansfield Park*, while Sonia is "[t]rying to establish a moral framework for our existence, to decide exactly who to blame for what, and why" (*Heart* 25).

In their incarnations as "moral centres" of the texts they inhabit, both these characters are unreliable. Obviously, the difference in degree is substantial. Sonia's claim that her "search for truth is enough to drive a sane woman mad, and a mad one even madder" (25) immediately warns us that she is not to be trusted. Fanny's capacity for moral judgement is opened to question, rather than denied outright. They are both particularly questionable when they pass judgement on women who do not measure up to their own standards of womanhood. Fanny's condemnation of her cousins and Mary Crawford is much like Sonia's condemnation of women who fail to live up to her standards of sisterly solidarity. The ambivalence of this element of their characters is revealed in both texts through the vehicle of double voiced discourse. In Austen's text, this takes the form of free indirect discourse.⁸ But the "ambivalence" inherent in Sonia's narration is revealed in a strikingly similar manner. For instance, she tells us

I don't want to be unfair to Mary Alice. All women are our sisters. She is underpaid and overworked like anyone else and is a virgin at forty-three. Some women are (a few) and there's nothing wrong with that in itself. It's just that Mary Alice does seem to feel it's a woman's *fault* if she finds herself in the kind of emotional and/or practical quandaries which afflict women who insist on consorting with men. . . . If only they'd keep their bodies to themselves, Mary Alice thinks. . . . Mary Alice's hair is very coarse, straight, and thick. (69)

⁸ See my discussion of this point above, 55-56.

The "double-voicedness" of this passage in its shift from "I don't want to be unfair to Mary Alice. All women are our sisters" to "Mary Alice's hair is very coarse, straight and thick" is typical of Sonia's ambivalence. She is repeatedly torn between her desire for "sisterly solidarity" and her impulse to condemn women who do not measure up to her standards of sisterhood.

But although she is ostensibly dedicated to the "great universal sisterhood" (97), that part of herself "given over to jealousy and envy is not sorry but glad, that all things flesh are mortal, especially the flesh of the prettier members" (97) of that sisterhood, and she suffers little compunction at the sacrifice of Flora. This ambiguity pervades Sonia's narrative, and in particular, her portrait of Natalie. In the same way that we are made to see Mary according to Fanny's priggish abhorrence of her lack of "modest loathings" (MP 441), Sonia judges Natalie on the basis of her adherence to the "great universal sisterhood." For example, Sonia says of Natalie, "if a man turned up, any obligation to a female friend fell by the way. It was inexcusable" (165). And according to our narrator, "by the end of the story . . . Natalie was looking less like a heroine and more like a call girl" (4), and this is a judgement Sonia passes despite the fact that "[i]n Natalie's situation . . . [Sonia would] have been in bed with Angus like a shot" (109). There is an element of jealousy which colours these portraits. Fanny, possessed of her passion

for Edmund, is particularly harsh in her judgement of Mary because she feels her to be unworthy of him. Sonia, on the other hand (in another flamboyant inversion of convention), is possessed of a desire for Natalie herself. She "could quite see herself in the same bed with Natalie, clasped, clasping and intertwined, giving and receiving all kinds of pleasure, in imitation of the act (as she remembered it) with men" (127).

As the orchestrator of the novel and as the malevolent spirit of carnival, Sonia takes a certain satisfaction in portraying Natalie's cycle of degradation. The spirit of carnival infusing the entire text ensnares Natalie, whose status as "heroine" is inverted when she is very explicitly delineated in carnivalesque terms. She represents what Mary Russo calls a "female grotesque." Russo points out that

the central category under which Bakhtin organizes his reading of Rabelais as a carnivalesque text is "grotesque realism," with particular emphasis on the grotesque body. The grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process and change. . . . The grotesque body is associated with the rest of the world (Russo 218).

An important element of grotesque realism is degradation, which

here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forward something more and better (Bakhtin, *R&HW* 21).

From the initial pages of the novel, Natalie is signalled as a "female grotesque" through her repeated association with excremental images. She is left "well and truly in the shit,

if you'll excuse me . . . floundering in the excreta (if the word seems less offensive)" (1), when Harry leaves her, and Sonia makes the (dubious) assertion that she "would no more have *touched* Natalie than picked up a dog's turd" (127). Corresponding to this figurative association of Natalie with excrement is the "literal" process of degradation which she undergoes as the novel progresses. Natalie is abandoned by Harry, loses the children to him, and is reduced to working as a "quarry drudge" (172)--a position which involves her repeated submersion in the "thick gluey paste" (151) of the quarry mud, which in the grotesque world symbolizes the excrement of the lower bodily stratum. Natalie eating "ravenously" and drinking "heartily" (167) on her date with Angus, previous to the sealing of "their bargain--that is, her body for his flat--up on the tussocky grass at the foot of the Mendip Mast" (169), is a body "open to the world," a female grotesque.

As Sonia says, "that was her point, wasn't it? She wanted to be really worthless, really degraded, really at the bottom of the pile, our proud Natalie" (123). And Natalie's degradation has its desired effect. Death in carnival "is always related to rebirth; the grave is related to the earth's life giving womb" (Bakhtin, *R&HW* 50). Natalie's ritual degradation results in her symbolic rebirth. She "looked . . . her role changed once again, no longer a deceitful wife but taken a step or so back into little-girl

dependency, so that she seemed altogether new and fresh" (180). The cycle of degradation is completed.

But Natalie's cycle of degradation also illustrates the tenacious hold that master discourses exert upon women, for it is also the cycle of her exploration of the possibility that "there might be life beyond marriage" (48). Although it presents some conventional marriages,⁹ *The Heart of the Country* presents no conventional courtship plots; indeed, Sonia and Natalie's stories are direct inversions of this traditional plot, since both of them, as "adulteresses," are ejected from their marriages as the novel begins.

Ejected from her role as loving wife in the dream kitchen, Natalie finds herself ill-equipped for an alternative plot. When Harry runs off with his secretary, he leaves her "with no job, unqualified and untrained, and with no experience other than as a businessman's wife and mother of two extremely self-centered children" (7). She has no money and "Harry doesn't believe in credit cards--not for [Natalie], anyhow--though he's got a gold American Express" (12). The house is in her husband's name (106), and Natalie is left destitute. Lacking the knowledge or the skills to negotiate "the fearful nexus of chaos" (*Heart* 36) that is the real world, Natalie finds herself obliged to throw herself onto the charity of the state. But here she

⁹ For example, the marriages of Arthur and Jane, Angus and Jean. These marriages are not conventional according to the "myth" of domestic fiction, but they are conventional in being typical examples of contemporary matrimony.

finds that without her protective identity as Harry Harris' wife, both her abilities as a mother and her sexual mores are open to question. As she is told at the DHSS, in "a world in which you are asking for public funds . . . your character and behaviour when in receipt of them must be taken into account" (113-114). Natalie finds herself, like Sonia, marginalized as one of "the abandoned mothers, the sloppy and bad" (155).

Forced to rely on the help of such upstanding members of the patriarchy as Arthur and Angus, her bank manager and her solicitor, Natalie is repeatedly provided with false or partial advice as all of them protect their interests over her own. "But there you are. Women who live by the good will of men have no control over their lives, and that's the truth of it" (7), as Sonia rather smugly proclaims. And Natalie cannot construct another identity for herself.

Her job as quarry drudge is the last straw. She gives up her efforts to survive by herself and enters into the bargain with Angus, "that is, her body for his flat" (169). The "new and fresh" Natalie, reverted into "little girl dependency" is ready to re-play her domestic role as a woman living by the protection of men. It is not until the spirit of carnival is unleashed in the text that she is able to free herself from the confines of this vicious cycle.

The carnivalesque inversion of many of the female roles in the novel is one of the central strategies employed by Weldon to resist the containment of the prescriptions of the

master discourses. But she also resists these discourses-- as Austen does in *Mansfield Park* before her--by evoking a variety of speech types as a narrative strategy with which to undercut and subvert the authority of the dominant order

One of the most interesting examples of this technique occurs in her appropriation of the discourse of domesticity itself. In the manner of women's magazines and housekeeping guides, *The Heart of the Country* dispenses domestic advice. Weldon uses this technique repeatedly throughout the body of her writing. For example, *The Rules of Life* is liberally scattered with extensive laundry instructions such as the following:

To remove fruitspots, first cold-soap the article, then touch the spot with a paintbrush dipped in chlorite of soda, and dip instantly into cold water, to prevent injury to the fabric. (36)

Sonia is similarly instructional in *The Heart of the Country*:

about layering. Hedges ought to be layered in the winter, not just have their tops sheared by that machinery which is so dangerous to passing traffic. Branches must be bent, part-severed, and intertwined in all but horizontal position, so a calculated and stock proof tangle of foliage is achieved. (55-56)

Sonia does not restrict herself to gardening tips alone. She also dispenses culinary advice: "[p]otatoes and kale can be quite delicious, the secret is to pressure cook the kale, which reduces its obstinate toughness to quite acceptable stringiness" (31), and advises that "cats should be kept in at night, it is brutal to do otherwise" (2).

These instructional digressions centrifugally disrupt the narrative in which they are contained. They situate the novel firmly in the realm of the domestic genre, (as do Mrs. Norris' domestic digressions in *Mansfield Park*); at the same time, the conventions of domestic realism are violated by the interruption of the narrative with the seemingly random insertion of domestic advice. We are constantly forced out of the narrative into the "real world" of these instructional digressions. This not only emphasizes the fictionality of the text, it also reminds us that domestic detail is an inescapable part of the real world.

The instructional tone of these digressions echoes the conduct manuals in which the domestic novel has its genesis. One of Weldon's most interesting narrative strategies is her situation of her text in relation to those novels which follow the educational aims of the conduct manuals. Natalie's story is essentially the "History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World," but it is a very different educational experience to the ones undergone by conventional heroines. After Harry runs off with "Miss Eddon Gurney 1978" (4), Natalie must begin her new existence as one of "the abandoned mothers of Britain" (133). Completely innocent as to the convolutions of the DHSS, she is forced to rely on the more experienced Sonia, who "[gives] her tutorials on the Welfare State" (132). For example, Natalie "should have gone to the Welfare in the first place--they'd have presented her case to the DHSS and the Housing

Department themselves and then both would have coughed up" (133). In statements such as these, Weldon effectively dispenses advice for all women in Natalie's position. The novel on one level becomes a conduct manual itself: a "How To" book on living on Social Security.

A typically carnivalesque inversion occurs here, for while conduct manuals and didactic novels aimed to perpetuate "the principles and conduct prevalent among women of rank and fortune" (More, title page), *The Heart of the Country* offers a variety of means by which those on the margins of society can seek to beat the system, or at least ensure that they receive the maximum benefit to which they are entitled. In its evocation of this kind of didactic fiction, the text simultaneously subverts the genre and the values encoded therein. The middle class woman to whom the conduct manual was addressed is implicitly placed in conjunction with the "unpaid child minder for the State" (133) to whom the "tutorials on the Welfare State" are directed. The resulting dialogic tension reduces the value system encoded within the conduct manual (and also, indeed, within the dominant ideology) to the "grotesque."

Weldon situates her novel in a similar relation to the domestic realm by appropriating the discourse of women's magazines. For example, at one point, Sonia asks facetiously of Arthur and Jane's relationship, "Can this marriage be saved?" (142). She also refers to Natalie's "dream kitchen" (1), and in a particularly striking

appropriation of the format of women's magazines, describes Natalie's clothes:

She came out . . . in a tight black skirt (hers, from the Harrix days) and a frilly white blouse (mine, Oxfam, one pound eighty), and make-up (Marks & Spencer, bought at the school fair for four pence--the blue eyeshadow all gone, but everything else okay). (165)

The dialogic tension in this passage results from the expectation generated by the cultural context of the women's magazine format, and its subsequent undercutting in the content. Instead of the listing of boutiques and brand names we expect to find in the parentheses, we find out that Natalie purchases her clothes and accessories at Oxfam and the school fair. Weldon therefore undercuts the authority of these particularly "feminine" discourses and, in doing so, she undercuts the authority of domestic fiction itself, as these "feminized" genres all contribute to the fantasy of the loving woman in the dream house.

However, her appropriation of speech types also allows Weldon to expose the hypocrisy of "patriarchal" discourses. The "official" ideology in the text is most often represented in the speech of "patriarchal" men (although there are good many women working for the State who rival the men in their authoritarian approach to their troubled sisters). There is no doubt that this discourse is often used to parodic purposes in the novel, and becomes a kind of "double-voiced discourse" similar to that in many of Sonia's speeches on women. This is apparent in the following passage, in which the use of free indirect discourse reveals

the attitude of a particular group of men "in their own words."

Avon Farmers--a nebulous grouping of farmers, farm suppliers and business men--were to sell cheap imported agricultural chemicals and foodstuffs. By the time the Ministry inspectors got to hear of the existence of the warehouse, it would have evaporated . . . such subterfuge would not have been necessary had unreasonable EEC regulations not prevented the sale of certain fertilizers, growth promoters, hormones, insecticides and fungicides--used to advantage and without harming a soul in various parts of the world--to the detriment of British farmers. (93-94)

In this passage the speaker's intention (the justification of the actions of Avon Farmers) and that of the narrator are obviously opposed. Phrases such as "unreasonable EEC regulations," "without harming a soul," and "to the detriment of British farmers," expose the hypocrisy of these apparently upstanding pillars of the community, willing to subject others to possible harm in their efforts to line their own pockets. However, this passage is also undercut by its relation to other relativizing discourses in the text, among them the "statistic" that "one child in thirty these days is born physically handicapped" (150-151). This relationship is reinforced later in the text when we are told that "something had got into the soil" of the Garden Centre established by Arthur on the site previously occupied by Avon Farmers, and "one of his assistants had a baby born with a crooked leg but that could happen to anyone: there's an epidemic, remember, of handicapped babies" (197).

"Statistical" digressions of this sort function in the novel in much the same manner as do the instructional

digressions considered previously, in that they interrupt the narrative into which they are inserted. More importantly, however, the "statistics" (which may or may not be factual) serve to undercut the authority of other discourses in the text, including those which are conventionally considered to be "feminine." For instance, notions of "dream kitchens" and "Housewife Princesses" become grotesque in the context of the following statement of "fact":

You know how many marriages end in divorce? One in three. And a recent survey shows that a woman's standard of living falls on average by 42 per cent after divorce, and a man's actually rises. (11)

These factual episodes serve as grounding points in the novel, and undercut the various monologic discourses of the dominant ideology.

These discourses number too many in the novel to be exhaustively discussed here,¹⁰ but the following particularly interesting instance of dialogic tension merits consideration. In this excerpt, a woman's internalization of her husband's perception of her is revealed:

Val was right. [Sally] knew well enough that coffee never tastes its best after being in a thermos an hour or so; she should have remembered that, instead of how the thermos would let him sleep on, escape from the pain in his back, and still have something hot and reviving to drink when he woke up. She'd got it wrong as usual. (62)

¹⁰ Other forms of discourse in the novel include the "jargon" of Sonia's psychiatrist, and the professional "slang" specific to real estate agents and antique dealers.

Sally's effective revision of herself and her actions parallels the inscription of women according to the dominant order that the domestic novel encodes.¹¹ But all of the women in the text, at least in the opening stages of their stories, suffer from this internalization. Both Sonia and Natalie immediately assume that the misfortune they suffer when their husbands abandon them is their own fault.

When [e]verything's wrong and miserable and awful, . . . whose fault can it be but the wife's? Since wives tend to take their husband's view of them, they get confused and wretched themselves, not to mention hit, and feel it's their fault their husband's job/back/talent/life has failed, because he keeps saying it is I suppose it must be darling, if you say so. How I wish I were nearer what you want, that my breasts were bigger (smaller), that my brain was better (worse), that I wasn't so argumentative (acquiescent), then this would never have happened. (61)

This is one of Weldon's main thrusts. She may attack patriarchal structures, but women are complicitous in their own fates, since "while women adapt, and adapt and adapt, men will continue to get away with everything" (186). Women condemn themselves in their willingness to

take the moral blame. . . . Ever heard a man say 'it was my fault the marriage broke up'? No. Those are women's lines. They'll stare at you with black eyes and broken noses and say, 'My fault! I provoked him.' (76-77)

It is only when Sonia persuades the women to "stop colluding" (186) with agents of the patriarchy like Angus and Arthur that they are able to break out of the confines

¹¹ In this she is much like Fanny Price who has certainly internalized the patriarchy's prescriptions for womanhood.

of conventional definitions, and write beyond the ending of the master plots by which society and domestic fiction contain them. And they do so by means of the carnival.

The novel's carnivalesque overthrow of the romance plot is made particularly apparent in the "ending" of each woman's story. According to the dictates of the traditional marriage or romance plot, the reward for the woman who successfully conformed to society's conventions was her entrance into her own domestic realm, complete with "dream kitchen," in which she took up her rightful role as wife, mother, and "angel of the house." However, *The Heart of the Country*, is Sonia's novel, and Flora, who attains the status of "Mrs. Housewife Princess," goes up in "a triumphant puff of smoke" (199), while Natalie, "who turned out to be nothing much better than a whore, deserved nothing and got everything" (164). Her pragmatic acceptance of the necessity of the bargain she makes with Angus--her body for his flat--is not unlike Mary Crawford's view of marriage, and as we know, Mary is condemned for this view according to the moral system of *Mansfield Park*. But Natalie, whose "immorality" merits "death" according to the traditional romance plot, is rewarded with a "happy ending." Natalie, who says "'I prefer the company of men' once too often" (50), and who "has no social conscience at all" (155), is rewarded for her non-conformity when she steps "into Flora's shoes, with Bernard in the caravan" (197). And in doing so, Natalie seems at least partially to escape the cycle in

which she has been trapped. During the height of the carnival, she realizes that Angus "only wanted [her] because Arthur wanted [her]," and "brushe[s] him out of her life" (191). With Bernard, she is "happier than she had ever been in her life" (198), but in case we imagine that Natalie's happy ending merely entraps her once more within the closure of the "marriage" plot, we are told that this blissful domestic tableau is achieved on "the edge of the council rubbish tip" (102). She may arrive at a "happy ending" but it is one which inverts the traditions.

Sonia's "end" also constitutes a carnivalesque inversion of the romance plot. Despite her failure to rewrite herself according to the dictates of her psychiatrist, he proposes to her anyway. "She can't accept, of course. Happy endings are not so easy" (199). To the last, Sonia refuses to inscribe herself and her story according to the "established truth" of the dominant ideology, and the conventions of the romance plot central to the domestic novel.

If *Mansfield Park's* closure leaves us uncomfortably aware that the claustrophobic sense of restriction pervading the text continues to exert its suffocating hold on Fanny, imprisoning her ever more tightly within the confines of both the marriage plot and patriarchal structures, Weldon's novel resists containment to the end. Sonia, at least, has no intention of allowing her story to conclude. She eschews her "happy ending" in favour of continuing her struggle.

"She must get on with changing the world, rescuing the country. There is no time left for frivolity" (199).

Weldon's appropriation of the sign system of carnival provides her with a mode of critique which is particularly suited to the feminist attempt to overturn and "write beyond" the conventions of the dominant structures. Because the

carnavalesque body politic . . . [ingests] the entire corpus of high culture and, in its bloated and irrepressible state, [releases] it in fits and starts in all manner of recombination, inversion, mockery and degradation . . . carnival . . . can be seen above all as a site of insurgency, and not merely withdrawal.
(Russo 218)

In Weldon's novel, the insurgency is far reaching. The novel appropriates not only the discourse of the patriarchy, but also the genre of the domestic novel, both of which are subsequently refracted in inverted and subverted forms. And if the theatricals in *Mansfield Park* are less extreme in their subversion of convention and dominant ideology, the difference remains one of degree rather than intent. In both novels, the evocation of carnival/theatricals creates a site of resistance within the house of domestic fiction. And in both novels this site of resistance provides a place in which those on the margins of society are freed from the prohibitions of the dominant ideology. Those "maenads, harridans, hags, [and] witches" (*Heart* 185), traditionally denied voice, can enter into the dominant discourse and begin to subvert it from the inside out.

CONCLUSION

Since *Letters to Alice* has been my main means of bridging the apparent (or perhaps superficial) difference between *Mansfield Park* and *The Heart of the Country*, I should perhaps conclude by musing on its place in the scheme of things. Weldon's BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, as well as *Letters to Alice*, demonstrate her on-going engagement with the writing of her literary foremother. But in some ways this engagement seems a little curious.

Writing in the guise of Aunt Fay, Weldon tells us,

The Angel of the House stood at Jane Austen's elbow, that is my guess, and she never quite learned how to ignore her--except perhaps in the early *Lady Susan*, for the writing of which, I imagine, she was gently chided by her family, and drew back quickly as at the touch of a cold, cold hand and never tried that again. But she learned how to get round the Angel, how to soothe her into slumber, and write while she slept. (29-30)

The Heart of the Country demonstrates that Weldon herself has no difficulty in dispensing summarily with angels, when Flora goes up in a puff of smoke. And if Austen had to "[pay] lip service to propriety . . . at a time when the reading of a novel, let alone the writing of one was seen as frivolous at best and immoral at worst" (Weldon, introduction to *Discipline* viii), Weldon obviously has no such need. Indeed, she is no stranger to controversy, having on one occasion gone so far as to "[alienate] a group of impassioned feminists by declaring that if they had been born male, she thought that some of them would be rapists"

(Interview in *Vogue* 184). And speaking through Aunt Fay, Weldon reports the anger generated by her portrayal of men in her fiction. "How, audiences say to me, can you be married and have sons and still be so horrible about men?" (119).¹ Weldon is perfectly capable of offending both men and women with aplomb, and has no need of the subterfuge to which Austen had to resort in her writing. Yet she insists, by means of *Letters to Alice*, that we consider her writing in relation to that of her predecessor.

Weldon makes us aware that she perceives herself as sharing some of the same agendas as Austen. For if Austen "chides women for their raging vanity, their infinite capacity for self-deception, their idleness, their rapaciousness and folly" (*LTA* 26), Weldon's writing is hardly very different. In fact, she reserves some of her severest censure for women. In an interview with Craig Brown, Weldon expressed her frustration at women's collusion with men's treatment of them.

What women want most of all is permission to suffer. They think they have to stand in the center [sic] of some family unit and sop up all the terrible feelings around them and feel nothing themselves. I tell them that's wrong. (*Vogue* 184)

¹ Aunt Fay is obviously at least partially an autobiographical figure. A great many of the details of her "life" correspond to Weldon's own (this reference to sons being one of them).

On the topic of men, Aunt Fay says of Austen, "she does not condemn" them, she merely "observes" (26). And of herself, she writes, "I am not horrible to and about men, I merely report them as I see them. I neither condone nor reproach" (119). Although I disagree with both these statements, they reveal the extent to which Weldon situates her own writing with Austen's.

Moreover, Weldon links herself to Austen through the character of Aunt Fay. Aunt Fay is not only an overtly autobiographical representation, she is also constructed after the model of Austen herself. Above and beyond the obvious parallel between Aunt Fay's letters of literary advice to her niece and Austen's own letters to Anna Austen, Aunt Fay appears a close relation to the "Aunt Jane" who now and then appears in Austen's letters, (despite Cassandra Austen's meddling scissors), if not in Austen-Leigh's *Memoir*. There is the same tartness and wit to both characters.

The effect of this conflation is to illuminate both Weldon and Austen as writers. Weldon seems to resurrect the ghost of her predecessor in an effort to place her before us in a new light, to give us her own view of Austen. She makes us see in Austen's writing "[s]omething truly frightening rumbling there beneath the bubbling mirth: something capable of taking the world by the heels and shaking it" (119). And by engaging in a dialogue with her literary foremother in both *Letters to Alice* and *The Heart*

of the Country, she reminds us that Austen is not so distant from us after all.

There can be no closure to speculations on how Weldon perceives herself in relation to Austen.² But *Letters to Alice*, if nothing else, demonstrates that Weldon acknowledges her debt as a woman writer to her literary foremother. Weldon knows that

words . . . go back and back into a written history. Words are not simple things: they take unto themselves, as they have through time, power and meaning: they did so then, they do so now.
(15)

At times, she appears to mine Austen's texts for material for her own fiction. In *Letters to Alice*, Aunt Fay objects to the ending of *Mansfield Park*, to the notion that the "unspeakably good" (LTA 134) Fanny should triumph over the attractive Mary Crawford. "Oh, Miss Austen, what wishful thinking do we have here! It has come to my notice . . . that in the real world, the worse women behave, the better they get on" (135). *The Heart of the Country* demonstrates this principle when "whorish" Natalie receives her happy ending, while "angelic" Flora goes up in flames. In this way Weldon's writing responds to and engages in a dialogue with that of Austen.

² A point which would no doubt gratify Weldon highly, as she expresses her disdain for the inquiries she receives from "women doing theses on some aspect of literature and/or feminism today [who] seem to believe that, if only they understood the writer, they would then understand the book. Recognizing that there is something inexplicable about the work, their ambition is instantly to nail it, and then explain it" (LTA 80). I stand condemned.

There is no way of knowing--short of asking--if Weldon's use of the carnival in *The Heart of the Country* was generated by her reading of *Mansfield Park*. But my own reading of Weldon's text made me see *Mansfield Park* in a different way. And perhaps this is all that any writer can ask, that the act of "writing out of a tradition, if only to break away from it," illuminates not only the contemporary work, but also the tradition itself.

Weldon explores domestic fiction, and Austen's writing, because she is able--within the confines of the genre--to manipulate the dominant myths which underpin the constructions of gender by which we still for the most part live. Austen's insistent inscription of her awareness of the limitations imposed on women by these dominant myths helped to form the shape of the domestic novel, even as she inscribed her resistance to these limitations. Weldon takes up the domestic novel and continues the process which Austen began.

The flamboyancy of Weldon's tactics turns her novel into a pyrotechnic spectacle. She erects conventions only to instantly explode and invert them. And yet, despite its audacity, *The Heart of the Country* reaches back over one hundred and seventy years to engage in a dialogue with the quiet disruptions of *Mansfield Park*. And this is possible because many of the structures challenged by Austen are still in place to be detonated by Weldon.

WORKS CITED

- Amis, Kingsley. "What Became of Jane Austen?" 1957.
Southam, *Casebook*. 243-46.
- Armstrong, Nancy. "Some Call it Fiction: on the Politics of Domesticity." *The Other Perspective in Gender and Culture: Rewriting Women and the Symbolic*. Ed. Juliet Flower MacCannell. New York: Columbia UP, 1990. 59-84.
- . *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*. 1814. Ed. Tony Tanner. London: Penguin, 1970.
- . *Lady Susan - The Watsons - Sanditon*. Ed. Margaret Drabble. New York: Penguin, 1987.
- . *Northanger Abbey: and Persuasion*. 1818. The Novels of Jane Austen. 3rd. ed. Vol. V. Ed. R. W. Chapman. London: Oxford UP, 1965.
- . *Pride and Prejudice*. 1813. Ed. Tony Tanner. New York: Penguin, 1977.
- . *Volume the Second*. Ed. B. C. Southam. Oxford: Clarendon, 1963.
- Austen-Leigh, James Edward. *Memoir of Jane Austen*. Ed. R.W. Chapman. 2nd. ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1963.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. "Discourse in the Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984.
- . "Epic and Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination*.
- . *Rabelais and his World*. Trans. Helene Iwolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.
- Bauer, Dale M. and Susan Jaret McKinstry. Introduction. *Feminism, Bakhtin and the Dialogic*. Eds. Bauer and McKinstry. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991. 1-6.
- Boone, Joseph Allen. *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Bowers, Bege K., and Barbara Brothers, eds. *Reading and Writing Women's Lives: A Study of the Novel of Manners*. Ann Arbor: U.M.I. Research Press, 1990.
- Brissenden, R. F. "Mansfield Park: Freedom and the Family." *Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays*. Ed. John Halperin. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975. 156-171.

- Brontë, Charlotte. "Letter to G. H. Lewes, 12 Jan. 1848." Southam, *Casebook*. 55-6.
- Brown, Lloyd W. "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 28 (1973): 321-38.
- Butler, Marilyn. *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- Castle, Terry. *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986.
- Chapman, R. W., ed. *Jane Austen's Letters to her Sister Cassandra and others*. 2nd ed., 1952. Rpt. (with corrections) 1952. London: Oxford UP, 1964.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1974.
- Duckworth, Alistair M. *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971.
- DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985.
- Farrer, Reginald. "Jane Austen's *Gran Rifiuto*." 1917. Southam, *Casebook*. 209-12.
- Fergus, Jan S. "Sex and Social Life in Jane Austen's Novels." Monaghan. 66-85.
- . *Jane Austen: A Literary Life*. Macmillan Literary Lives. Gen. ed. Richard Dutton. London: Macmillan, 1991.
- Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. Ed. Oliver Stallybrass. Markham. Ont.: Penguin, 1984.
- Fowler, Marian E. "The Courtesy-book Heroine of *Mansfield Park*." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 44 (1974): 31-46.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. Introduction. "Jane Austen." *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Tradition in English*. Eds., Gilbert and Gubar. New York: Norton, 1985. 206-208.
- . *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1984.

- Gisborne, Thomas. *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*. 1797. *The Feminist Controversy in England 1788-1810*. Ed, Gina Luria. New York: Garland, 1974.
- Green, Katherine Sobba. *The Courtship Novel 1740-1820: A Feminized Genre*. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1991.
- Harding, D. W. "The Priggishness of *Mansfield Park*." 1940. Southam, *Casebook*. 213-15.
- Hart, Francis R. "The Spaces of Privacy: Jane Austen." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 30 (1975): 305-333.
- Hinz, Evelyn J. "Hierogamy versus Wedlock: Types of Marriage Plots and Their Relationship to Genres of Prose Fiction." *PMLA* 91 (1976): 900-13.
- Hite, Molly. *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narrative*. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1989.
- Honan, Park. *Jane Austen, Her Life*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987.
- Inchbald, Elizabeth. Preface. *Lovers' Vows*. i-iv.
- Jacobus, Mary. "The Difference of View." *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*. Eds. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore. London: Macmillan, 1989. 49-62.
- Johnson, Claudia L. *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1988.
- Kirkham, Margaret. "Feminist Irony and the Priceless Heroine of *Mansfield Park*." Todd, *Jane Austen*. 231-47.
- . "The Austen Portraits and the Received Biography." Todd, *Jane Austen*. 29-38.
- . *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction*. Sussex: Harvester: New York: Barnes and Noble, 1983.
- Kotzebue, August von. *Lovers' Vows*. Adapt. Elizabeth Inchbald. 1798. *Revolution and Romanticism, 1789-1834*. Gen. ed. Jonathan Wordsworth. New York: Woodstock, 1990.
- Krouse, Agate Nesaule. "Feminism and Art in Fay Weldon's Novels." *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction* 20 (1977/78): 5-20.
- Leavis, Q. D. "The First Modern Novel in England." Southam, *Casebook*. 236-42.

- Litvak, Joseph. *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Lodge, David. *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Magee, William H. "Instrument of Growth: The Courtship and Marriage Plot in Jane Austen's Novels." *Journal of Narrative Technique* 17 (1987): 199-208.
- McMaster, Juliet. *Jane Austen on Love*. English Literary Studies 13. Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria, 1978.
- Meyersohn, Marylea. "What Fanny Knew: A Quiet Auditor of the Whole." Todd, *Jane Austen*. 224-30.
- Miller, Carolyn R. "Genre as Social Action." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 151-167.
- Monaghan, David, ed. Introduction. *Jane Austen in a Social Context*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble; London: Macmillan, 1981. 1-8.
- More, Hannah. *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*. 1799. 2 vols. *The Feminist Controversy in England 1788-1810*. Ed. Gina Luria. New York: Garland, 1974.
- Morgan, Susan. *Sisters in Time: Imagining Gender in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.
- Mudrick, Marvin. *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1952.
- Poovey, Mary. *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Richardson, Samuel. *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady*. 1747-48. Ed. with an Introduction by George Sherburn. Boston: Riverside, 1962.
- Russo, Mary. "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory." *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*. Ed. Teresa de Lauretis. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986.
- Sage, Lorna. *Women in the House of Fiction: Post-War Women Novelists*. London: Macmillan, 1992.

- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.
- Scott, P. J. M. *Jane Austen: A Reassessment*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1982.
- Simpson, Richard. Review from *North British Review*. April 1870. Southam, *Casebook*. 63-75.
- Smith, Leroy. W. "Mansfield Park: The Revolt of the Feminine Woman." Monaghan. 143-158.
- Southam, B. C., ed. *Jane Austen : The Critical Heritage*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968.
- , ed. *Jane Austen: Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield Park: A Casebook*. London: Macmillan, 1976.
- , ed. *Jane Austen's 'Sir Charles Grandison.'* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.
- Spacks, Patricia Meyer. *Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century Novels*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Stubbs, Patricia. *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920*. Sussex: Harvester; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1979.
- Tanner, Tony. *Jane Austen*. London: Macmillan, 1986.
- Todd, Janet, ed. *Jane Austen: New Perspectives*. Women and Literature (New Series) 3. Ed. Janet Todd. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983.
- . "Jane Austen, Politics and Sensibility." *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice*. Ed. Susan Sellers. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991. 71-87.
- Trilling, Lionel. "Mansfield Park." 1954. Southam, *Casebook*. 216-35.
- Waugh, Patricia. *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the post-modern*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Weldon, Fay. Interview. *Vogue*. By Craig Brown. Jan. 1989: 182+
- , ed. Introduction. *Discipline*. By Mary Brunton. 1814. London: Pandora Press, 1986. vii-viii.
- . *Letters to Alice On First Reading Jane Austen*. London: Coronet, 1984.
- . *The Heart of the Country*. London: Arrow, 1987.
- . *The Rules of Life*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

Wilde, Alan. "'Bold, But Not Too Bold': Fay Weldon and the Limits of Poststructuralist Criticism." *Contemporary Literature* 29 (1988): 402-19.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. 1792. Toronto: Everyman's Library, 1982.

---. *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*. 1787. *The Feminist Controversy in England 1788-1810*. Ed. Gina Luria. New York: Garland, 1974.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Middlesex: Penguin, 1963.

Yeazell, Ruth Bernard. *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Zagarell, Sandra A. "Narrative of Community: the Identification of a Genre." *Signs* 13 (1988): 498-527.