

Verbal Characterisation of Fanny Price: *A Stylistic Analysis*

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Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* has slightly different features from her other novels, because there are depictions of Fanny's childhood, and this enables us to consider the novel as a *Bildungsroman*. In my thesis, I examined how the linguistic features of descriptions of Fanny Price and her conversation are presented and change through the novel. My research findings were shown in Chapters I through III. The findings of this study can be briefly summarized as follows.

In Chapter I, I examined the use of negative forms of the verb 'know'. Fanny's use of the negative form of the verb in speech only appears without objects. It emphasizes her timid and shy character. However, in narrative, the negative form of the verb with objects is most often used to describe Fanny's confusion among other characters in the novel. Furthermore, at first the dramatically simpler form 'knew not' is chiefly used in descriptions of Fanny's feelings; however, at the end of the novel, its subject changes from Fanny to Sir Thomas, which shows that the sufferer changes. I shall focus on the difference in meaning of the word 'know' between Fanny and the Bertram sisters. Fanny's use of 'know' means something closer to individual emotional experience or conviction than to acquiring knowledge of accomplishments. In " 'A little Spirit of Independence': Sexual Politics and the Bildungsroman in *Mansfield Park*" (1984: 204), Jane McDonnell mentions that "Fanny's story thus is based more on 'feeling' than on 'knowing' —and in this is different from the typical Austen novel where the suspense is epistemological, and leads to the heroine's enlightenment or change of mind."

In Chapter II, I discussed how Austen describes the change in Fanny's feelings through the novel. Especially I focused on the use of words related to 'agitate' and 'colour'. The frequency of the use of the words related to 'agitate' increases as the story progresses. Fanny's feelings become more complicated and this struggling and confliction of feelings shows that she grows mentally. Furthermore, Austen uses words related to 'colour' only in descriptions of Fanny's blushing face, which indicates that her feelings of

agitation truly derive from her personal emotion.

Chapter III shows how Fanny's discourse changes through the novel. At first, her speech is depicted in free indirect speech and is curiously assimilated into the narrative. In comparison with the use of free indirect speech to describe Maria and Henry, her speech seems to be weaker. As the story progresses, however, Austen's use of free indirect thoughts to depict Fanny's consciousness increases, and they tend to be used with the exclamatory infinitive, which shows the strong conflict between her feelings and her sense of morality. At the end, she expresses reproaches against Mary, confronting Edmund in direct speech. It represents her mental growth and she has grown to the point where she can confidently express her own opinion to her mentor, Edmund.

I shall express my agreement with the opinion of McDonnell that "Fanny's mental history is one of the important themes of the book" (203). Her mental history and growth is skillfully depicted in Austen's use of specific linguistic features in her depiction of Fanny. In my thesis, I especially dealt with linguistic features of the depiction of Fanny which are confined to some particular items. My ideal goal is that I shall examine further the linguistic features of the depiction of the characters in all of Austen's novels and categorize them in terms of the character's social status.