Genre-Bending at *Mansfield Park*: The Remediation of Austen's Female Characters Across Novel, Theatre and Film

Carlotta Farese

Abstract
Both the intertextual relationship between *Lovers' Vows* and *Mansfield Park* and Patricia Rozema's cinematic adaptation of Austen's novel have been the object of intense critical scrutiny. The purpose of this paper is to examine them together as belonging to a hypertextual continuum that stretches from Elizabeth Inchbald's comedy to Rozema's postmodern filmic pastiche. From this perspective, Austen's text will be considered as the centre of a network of transmediatic relationships where meaning and representation undergo successive re-adaptations across three centuries as well as across the boundaries between different genres and media. The paper will discuss, in particular, the ways in which the three authors have engaged with generic conventions, social norms, and their 'sources' in order to refashion their representation of female characters and gender dynamics. On one hand this approach will shed new light on Austen's own intertextual practices and the subtle dialectics she establishes with Inchbald by questioning and revising the thematic, ideological, and formal features of different genres, while on the other hand it will allow a fresh understanding of the ways in which Rozema's film re-articulates the contrast between the "two heroines" of *Mansfield Park* and their relationship to male desire and authority.

Keywords: theatricals*, Mansfield Park, Lovers' Vows*, comedy, film adaptation.

1. Fanny, Mary, and Amelia

Moving from the complex and often ambiguous relationship between *Mansfield Park* and *Lovers' Vows* – Jane Austen's most controversial novel and Elizabeth Inchbald's re-adaptation of the German sentimental comedy *Das Kind der Liebe* (1790) by August von Kotzebue – this essay aims to examine them along with Patricia Rozema's 1999 audacious cinematic adaptation. Crossing different

genres and historical periods – from Inchbald's play to Rozema's postmodern filmic version – this paper will demonstrate how intertextuality can shed new light on the multifaceted rapport between Fanny Price and Mary Crawford that lies at the centre of Austen's novel.

Published with great success after the first triumphant performance at Covent Garden in 1799 (Gay 2000: 105), *Lovers' Vows* (1798) had been performed at the Theatre Royal in Bath in the years between 1801 and 1805 when the Austens resided there. Considering their keen interest for theatre in general and for sentimental comedies in particular, it is quite possible that some members of the family, if not Jane herself, attended one of the public performances, and, according to some biographical reconstructions, she might have been among the spectators of a private *mise en scène* of *Lovers' Vows* (Kirkham 1975; Byrne 2000: 150; Carroll 2005: 552). Although the evidence supporting such speculations might be considered inconclusive, Austen indisputably knew the text very well, and I would agree with Antonia Byatt that the parallels, symmetries and coincidences that link the characters of the novel to those of the comedy are so remarkable that "she must have had the play in mind from the beginning" while writing *Mansfield Park* (Byatt and Sodré 1995: 27). Indeed, *Lovers' Vows* seems to function as an intertextual blueprint for the novel, a source of inspiration shaping some crucial developments of its themes and characters: "the intertwining of the two texts is achieved with such virtuosity that they seem to be constantly challenging and modifying one another" (Armstrong 1988: 71).

The triangular relationship between Edmund, Mary and Fanny provides a particularly significant example of the ways in which the dialogue between the novel and its theatrical subtext creates refractions that multiply and amplify the details of the former, thus making its darker and hidden sides come out of the shadows. When, after a long discussion, *Lovers' Vows* is finally chosen as the play to be staged at Mansfield, Fanny first refuses to act and ends up accepting a very marginal role (the Cottager's wife). But despite her initial opposition and resistance, the rehearsing gives her the opportunity to engage with the theatre and, through it, to get in touch with a secret part of herself, thus experiencing a process of indirect sentimental and sexual education. The first thing she does,

as soon as she can, hidden in solitude from the glances and giggles of the group, is to take over the text and get acquainted with the love scenes that her beloved cousin Edmund and Mary Crawford will be performing on stage:

> The first use she made of her solitude was to take up the volume which had been left on the table, and begin to acquaint herself with the play of which she had heard so much. Her curiosity was all awake, and she ran through it with an eagerness which was suspended only by intervals of astonishment, that it could be chosen in the present instance – that it could be proposed and accepted in a private Theatre! Agatha and Amelia appeared to her in their different ways so totally improper for home representation – the situation of one, and the language of the other, so unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty, that she could hardly suppose her cousins could be aware of what they were engaging in; and longed to have them roused as soon as possible by the remonstrance which Edmund would certainly make (Austen [1814] 2005: 161).

Fanny's precise perception of the dramatic text makes her immediately conscious of the many dangers inherent in Inchbald's play, and she will become even more aware of them thanks to the cruel and voyeuristic role to which Austen has relegated her: the helpless and frustrated prompter/spectator of one of the most controversial love scenes of Regency theatre. I am of course referring to the scene in which Amelia, the outspoken daughter of Baron Wildenhaim, breaks the conventions of proper feminine behaviour by wittily declaring her love to her tutor Anhalt. Amelia clearly transgresses all rules of common propriety: she not only refuses to marry Count Cassel, the man chosen by her father, but also imposes on him her sentimental choices:

> *Amelia*. I will not marry.
> *Anhalt*. You mean to say, you will not fall in love.
> *Amelia*. Oh no! [*Ashamed.*] I am in love.
> *Anhalt*. Are in love! [*Starting.*] And with the Count?
> *Amelia*. I wish I was.
> *Anhalt.* Why so?
> *Amelia.* Because *he* would, perhaps, love me again.
> *Anhalt*. [*Warmly.*] Who is there that would not?
> *Amelia*. Would you?
> *Anhalt*. I – I – me – I – I –am out of the question.

Amelia. No; you are the very person to whom I have put the question.
Anhalt. What do you mean?
Amelia. I am glad you don't understand me. I was afraid I had spoken too plain. [*In confusion.*]
Anhalt. Understand you! – As to that – I am not dull.
Amelia. I know you are not – And as you have for a long time instructed me, why should not I now begin to teach you?
Anhalt. Teach me what?
Amelia. Whatever I know, and you don't.
Anhalt. There are some things, I had rather never know.
Amelia. So you may remember I said, when you began to teach me mathematics. I said, I had rather not know it – But now I have learnt it, it gives me a great deal of pleasure – and [*Hesitating.*] perhaps, who can tell, but that I might teach something as pleasant to you, as resolving a problem is to me.
Anhalt. Woman herself is a problem.
Amelia. And I'll teach you to make her out.
Anhalt. You teach?
Amelia. Why not? None but a woman can teach the science of herself: and though I own I am very young, a young woman may be as agreeable for a tutoress as an old one. – I am sure I always learnt faster from you than from the old clergyman, who taught me before you came.
Anhalt. This is nothing to the subject!
Amelia. What is the subject?
Anhalt. – Love.
Amelia. [*Going up to him.*] Come, then, teach it me – teach it as you taught me geography.
Anhalt. [*Turning from her.*] Pshaw!
Amelia. Ah! You won't – you know you have already taught me that, and you won't begin again.
Anhalt. You misconstrue – you misconceive every thing, I say or do. The subject I came to you upon was marriage.
Amelia. A very proper subject for the man who has taught me love, and I accept the proposal. [*Courtesying*] (Inchbald [1799] 2005: 592-4)

This scene clearly demonstrates the transgressive nature of the play and the challenge it poses to the ideology of Mansfield. In fact, Amelia's behaviour implies a radical reversal of the hierarchical relationship between tutor and tutee, man and woman: "love", and eventually marriage, are constructed as relationships based on the authority of the self-appointed "tutoress" who is able to "teach the science of herself" to her male counterpart.

The question of the agency of the female subject and her right to express and pursue desire is also tackled in *Mansfield Park.* In particular, as highlighted by Paula Byrne, the choice of *Lovers' Vows* is probably connected to Austen's long-standing interest for the subject of "female conduct in the courtship process" (Byrne 2000: 155). The archetype for this theme was one of Austen's favourite novels, *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) by Samuel Richardson, whose first three volumes are focused on the heroine's struggles to decide whether to confess or not her love to Sir Charles. Such a declaration would clearly have gone against the common rules of modesty and decorum since the lady had not received a formal marriage proposal from him. Amelia's behaviour in the scene we have just read is indeed, in Austen's own words, "very little short of a declaration of love be made by the lady" (Austen [1814] 2005: 196) and, for this very reason, Inchbald herself was afraid that "the forward and unequivocal manner in which she announces her affection to her lover" would appear "revolting to an English audience" (Inchbald [1799] 2005: 559). The potential reaction that Inchbald attributed to the (conservative) English public is therefore very close to the one experienced in the novel by Fanny, who, as we have seen, finds Amelia's language, if not indeed "revolting", "unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty". Conservative readings of *Mansfield Park* tend to assume that the character functions here as the spokesperson of the author, and understand the staging of *Lover's Vows* as the "source of the puritan dislike for acting" (Armstrong 1988: 59) that is shared by Fanny, Sir Thomas, and Jane Austen herself.

Things, I would argue, are much more ambiguous. In fact, the character of Amelia seems to provide an intertextual reflection and, as it were, a role-model for both the heroines of *Mansfield Park* that will have a major impact on the triangular relationship between Edmund, Fanny and Mary, where the two young women personify the alternative between conventional patterns of feminine behaviour and their transgression; between the "perfect conduct book heroine" (Halsey 2013: 49) and "feminine lawlessness" (Austen [1814] 2005: 110). Their antagonism is indeed suggested by Austen from the beginning of the heroines' acquaintance and reaches its climax during the staging of the play. Despite her marginal role in *Lovers' Vows,* Fanny, as we have already mentioned, gets herself well acquainted with Inchbald's play, participates in the rehearsals

and directly witnesses the daring part of Amelia who is played by Mary. One of the most interesting coincidences between *Lovers' Vows* and *Mansfield Park* is the extraordinary web of similarities and correspondences that Austen creates with the character of Amelia who, at first sight, seems to be a perfect intertextual alter ego for Mary. Charming, witty, outspoken, and ironical, Mary is, like Amelia, a young woman who tends to cross the boundaries of appropriate behaviour, something Fanny would never do. But, in some respects, Fanny is also like Amelia: as the latter is in love with Anhalt, a clergyman and her tutor, the former loves Edmund, a prospective clergyman who has also performed for her the role of adviser and educator. Just like Anhalt with Amelia, Edmund has in fact "formed her mind and gained her affections" (Austen 2005: 76).

Although Mary, as Byatt points out, "can go further" than Fanny, as far as the theatricals are concerned and enjoys playing the scene "because she can ask Edmund to marry her" in disguise (Byatt and Sodré 1997: 27), in the novel's plot she will never be able to disclose her feelings to Edmund. That means that Fanny and Mary feel the same painful tension between their desire and the social conventions that forbid its expression. The rehearsal thus functions for both characters as an imaginative dimension where they can project such desire and engage with it. Mary and Edmund, it is worth noticing, will never perform the scene on their own but only in front of Fanny and, as readers, we see it through the eyes of Fanny "who's feeling tortured by having to watch them proposing to each other" (Byatt and Sodré 1997: 27). The play is therefore a painful experience for Fanny, but her apparently marginal and voyeuristic role fosters her increasing awareness: by watching Mary acting the role of Amelia, Fanny witnesses the vicarious acting out of her own desire as she realises that, in the reality of the novel, she has to claim that role (and the matrimonial happy ending it involves) for herself. She has to embark, that is to say, on a process of change that, while rejecting the transgressive and immodest aspects of the character's "language", will allow her to become, as it were, Edmund's Amelia. Like Amelia, she will become the *tutoress* of the man who "has formed her mind", and will teach him "the science of herself". Also like Amelia, she will reject a socially advantageous marriage proposal endorsed by paternal authority and will eventually persuade the father-figure (Sir Thomas) to accept her decision with "joyful

consent" (Austen [1814] 2005: 546). Through the experience of the private theatricals Fanny receives a unique sentimental and sexual education that slowly transforms her. Indeed, it is from the staging of *Lover's Vows* that everything seems to change for her, and she starts to compete more self-consciously and effectively with Mary to take on Amelia's role, not in the play, but in the reality of Mansfield Park. With Sir Thomas's return from Antigua and the abrupt and disappointing finale of the rehearsals, the carnivalesque interlude comes to an end. The theatre is dismantled and the copies of the play burned, a symbolic gesture that underlines the reestablishment of patriarchal authority and a return to the status quo.

2. Becoming Bad: the Dark Side of Fanny Price

But everything is different by the time the master of Mansfield comes back, the relationships between the characters have irreversibly evolved so that nothing will be as it used to be, either for the Mansfield community as a whole, or for Fanny herself. A new volume starts off (the first had indeed ended with Sir Thomas's interruption) and a new curtain rises on a quite different story: we follow Fanny's slow and irretrievable change that will convert her into the heroine who, like Amelia and unlike Mary, will lead the man she has always loved to the recognition of his own feelings for her. It is from the third chapter of the second volume that the reader is made aware of a change taking place: Fanny is turning into an attractive young woman, as neither Edmund nor his father Sir Thomas fail to remark:

> "Your uncle thinks you very pretty, dear Fanny – and that is the long and the short of the matter. Any body but myself would have made something more of it, and any body but you would resent that you had not been thought very pretty before; but the truth is, that your uncle never did admire you till now – and now he does. Your complexion is so improved! – and you have gained so much countenance! – and your figure – Nay, Fanny, do not turn away about it – it is but an uncle. If you cannot bear an uncle's admiration what is to become of you? You must really begin to harden yourself to the idea of being worth looking at. – You must try not to mind growing up into a pretty woman" (Austen [1814] 2005: 231).

The heroine's slow metamorphosis is also sanctioned by the symbolic scene that takes place in Mrs Grant's shrubbery where Fanny, in the

company of an "untouched" and "inattentive" Mary (Austen [1814] 2005: 243), observes how a rough hedgerow, that only some years earlier seemed weak and inconsistent, has turned into a verdant walk:

> Three years ago, this was nothing but a rough hedgerow along the upper side of the field, never thought of as any thing, or capable of becoming any thing; and now it is converted into a walk, and it would be difficult to say whether most valuable as a convenience or an ornament; and perhaps in another three years we may be forgetting – almost forgetting what it was before. How wonderful, how very wonderful the operations of time, and the changes of the human mind! (Austen [1814] 2005: 243)

One cannot but think that the "operations of time" Fanny is wondering about could also be applied to herself, who for such a long time was almost invisible in the Mansfield household, and is now turning into an indispensable companion for Lady Bertram and into an attractive woman–who will soon become the object of interest of the most sought-after male character of the novel: the rakish Henry Crawford. If in the first chapters of the novel Mary had wondered about Fanny's puzzling social position (a member of the Bertram family but not really equal to them), her situation becomes less ambiguous in the second part since Fanny's development is also sanctioned by a more active social life. She is invited to dine at the Grant's parsonage and a ball is organised to celebrate her coming out in society and becoming marriageable (Sir Thomas openly uses the ball to favour a possible engagement between Fanny and Henry).

On the evening of the dinner at the Grant's, Edmund once again stops to look at Fanny and realises how different she looks: "A woman can never be too fine while she is all in white. No, I see no finery about you; nothing but what is perfectly proper. Your gown seems very pretty. I like these glossy spots. Has not Miss Crawford a gown something the same?" (Austen [1814] 2005: 259) The binary relationship between Fanny and Mary reaches here an important turning point: Fanny, who has always been *unlike* Mary, starts looking *like* Mary, and is perceived by Edmund as fascinatingly similar to her antagonist. The process of identification is slowly reaching its climax. Fanny is progressively appropriating Amelia's role although, of course, there's "nothing but what is perfectly proper" about her. If Fanny looks *something the same* as Mary to

Edmund's eyes, and embodies a *perfectly proper* version of her, it is easy to predict that Mary's *finery*, tainted as it is by a suspicion of "lawlessness", will become superfluous in due time. In fact, the conclusion of the novel will eventually confirm that Fanny's attempt to replace Mary as Edmund's Amelia has indeed been successful:

> I only intreat every body to believe that exactly at the time when it was quite natural that it should be so, and not a week earlier, Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny, as Fanny herself could desire (Austen [1814] 2005: 544).

But, as Katie Halsey has convincingly argued, such a conclusion is extremely ambiguous and ironic as the narrative voice encourages readers to question how "natural" this outcome really is, and points to the other possible ending to *Mansfield Park* – "the Fanny-Henry and Edmund-Mary marriages" (Halsey 2013: 54-5), an ending that is of course rejected, but explicitly evoked as a potential alternative:

> Would he [Henry Crawford] have deserved more, there can be no doubt that more would have been obtained; especially when that marriage had taken place, which would have given him the assistance of her conscience in subduing her first inclination, and brought them very often together. 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 (Austen [1814] 2005: 540).

The evidence provided by Halsey shows that the competitive coexistence between these two possible endings has sparked controversy since the publication of the book, as many readers have felt that "the alternative ending was either more probable or more satisfying" (Halsey 2013: 55).

One might indeed argue that the alternative between the two endings (and the two heroines) has proved so problematic and controversial with readers because it reflects two different readings of the novel and of Austen's oeuvre as a whole: readers that are more responsive to the subversive and radical aspect of Austen's writing will tend to side with Mary and find the actual ending of the novel "both troubling and uncomfortable" (Halsey 2013: 56), while readers that support a conservative view will fully endorse the 'official' conclusion as the expression of the author's own

approval for the traditional moral values embodied by Fanny. If such dichotomy in readers' response is far from being surprising, it might be interesting to note that many readers tend to see the two characters as projections within the text of the image of the author herself: Mary and Fanny, that is to say, are often interpreted, more or less explicitly, as textual 'self-portraits' of the writer or, at least, as reflections of the readers' understanding of her personality and moral values. 'Subversive' readings will thus tend to suggest that Austen has lent her "true voice" (Battaglia 2009: 119-20) to Mary who "sounds much more like the Jane Austen of the *Letters*" (Byatt and Sodré 1997: 24), while conservative readings imply an identification between the author and a character that, with her demure attitude and unpretending domestic virtue, sounds very close to the description of Austen provided by James Edward Austen Leigh's biographical *Memoir* (1870), the text responsible for drawing "the hagiographic portrait" of "St. Aunt Jane of Steventon-cum-Chawton Canonicorum" (Sutherland 2005: 130). I would maintain that if we want to respect the inherent ambiguity and complexity of Austen's narrative construction, we should consider that, as suggested by Byatt and Sodré, "different attitudes of the same person can be explored in two different characters", and that Austen is probably "examining, via her characters, the relationship between different aspects of herself" (Byatt and Sodré 1997: 23-4).

However, perhaps we should not accept the standard reading of Fanny Price as the embodiment of the perfect conduct-book girl, the champion of established traditional values with whom Austen sympathises. I would rather agree with Claudia Johnson that we must resist "one of the stubbornest myths about Fanny Price", the myth "that she is a good girl by conventional standards. For it is by conventional standards that she is a bad girl indeed" (Johnson 1995: 65). The intertextual reference to *Lover's Vows* will help us to understand why Johnson is right. One of the most striking parallels between the play and the novel is the fact that Fanny, like Amelia, rejects the marriage proposal of a socially suitable but rakish pretender (Henry Crawford-Count Cassel) against the advice of the father figure (Sir Thomas-Baron Wildenhaim). Amelia's rejection of the count is the result of the "Rousseauesque" education (Armstrong 1988: 69) she has received from a father who has taught her to always

be sincere and freely express her feelings. Fanny will partially follow Amelia's example when she rejects Henry Crawford's proposal resisting the pressure from Sir Thomas; however her act of rebellion to patriarchal authority will be based on reticence and dissimulation rather than on sincerity. As we know, when Fanny receives Henry's proposal, "her affection" is undoubtedly "engaged elsewhere" (Austen [1814] 2005: 270), but when Sir Thomas questions her on the point she responds with a silent lie:

> Sir Thomas looked at her with deeper surprise. "This is beyond me," said he. "This requires explanation. Young as you are, and having seen scarcely any one, it is hardly possible that your affections –"
>
> He paused and eyed her fixedly. He saw her lips formed into a *no*, though the sound was inarticulate, but her face was like scarlet. That, however, in so modest a girl, might be very compatible with innocence; and chusing at least to appear satisfied, he quickly added, "No, no, I know *that* is quite out of the question – quite impossible. Well, there is nothing more to be said" (Austen [1814] 2005: 365).

While Amelia triumphs by following her father's advice "never to conceal or disguise the truth" (Inchbald [1799] 2005: 594), Fanny does exactly the opposite: "she would rather die than own the truth, and she hoped by a little reflection to fortify herself beyond betraying it" (Austen [1814] 2005: 365). If the happy ending of *Lover's Vows* outlines the victory of sincerity, desire and affection over social convenience, the much darker and pessimistic conclusion of *Mansfield Park* seems to advocate, in a world ruled by hypocrisy and repression, the legitimacy and necessity of dissimulation as a way for women to resist patriarchal arrogance and "fortify" their own souls against any coercive attempt to induce them to "betray" the truth of their feelings and inclinations. Sir Thomas's interpretation of Fanny's blush is wrong precisely because, like many readers, he applies to her the interpretive pattern of modesty and innocence. However, as this passage clearly demonstrates, such a pattern is (or has become) misleading: if we follow it, we are at risk of misunderstanding, as Sir Thomas does, Fanny's intentions and motivations.

Thus, we might include among the things that Fanny has learned from the theatricals the art of masquerade and performance; the art of lying and looking different from what she really is. One of the most "unsettling and comic inversions" in *Mansfield Park*,

Jill Heydt-Stevenson has observed, "makes Fanny, our presumed moral representative, the most brilliant actress in the novel" (Heydt Stevenson 2008: 156). Mary does not succeed in her designs because she has acted out her opinion and desire too openly, something Fanny never does. Fanny therefore becomes the legitimate heir of Mansfield Park and Sir Thomas's ideal daughter because she has been good at pretending and performing "the role patriarchal rules dictate women should play" (Heydt Stevenson 2008: 156). Reconsidering the relationship between *Mansfield Park* and *Lovers' Vows* in the light of our discussion, we notice that the single heroine (Amelia) the comedy rewards with an unquestionable happy ending for her outspoken wit and emotional sincerity is replaced in the novel by a couple of characters (Fanny and Mary) who struggle against each other to secure the role of protagonist of the successful marriage plot for themselves. The character that prevails in this struggle is the one (Fanny) who, after having been relegated to a minor role in the theatricals, displays in real life the unexpected and uncommon performing skills that will ensure her final success.

3. Back to Sentimental Comedy: Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park*

The problematic nature of the conclusion of the novel and the relationship between the two heroines of *Mansfield Park* emerges very clearly from Patricia Rozema's 1999 controversial cinematic adaptation of the novel that allows us to develop a further reflection on the issues we have discussed so far. It is of course inevitable that "remediations" (Bolter and Grusin 1999) of literary classics should respond to the cultural concerns of the time in which they are produced, and Rozema's film is certainly no exception. Criticism levelled at the Canadian director's work, however, has been particularly insistent in accusing her of "modernising" the characters with "features of second-wave feminism" that do not belong to the original text (Foster Stovel 2015). The object of such manipulation would be in particular the character of Fanny Price that Rozema has attempted to make "palatable to millennial audiences" by conflating "the creation with her creator" (Foster Stovel 2015).

In fact, Rozema's Fanny, unlike its novelistic counterpart, is confident and assertive; she gains centre stage as the undisputed female protagonist of the movie, a fascinating woman who speaks

with Jane Austen's satirical voice and gives an unknown vitality and sparkling liveliness to *Mansfield Park*. In the film, Fanny is an author who writes stories that are in fact Austen's own *Juvenilia*, entertains her family and looks with confidence directly into the camera. By including the biography and the writing of the author within the movie, Rozema has indeed created a metafictional hybrid where the novel's adaptation is mixed with the biopic and the protagonist is also a projection of the author; in Claudia Johnson's words, the director has successfully transformed the dull "creepmouse" (Austen [1814] 2005: 171) heroine "into a version of the Austenian author we love" (Johnson 1999: 16). Needless to say, the "we" in Johnson's quote refers to the 'subversive' readers among whom the critic belongs. In fact, the interesting and innovative feature of Rozema's work is that the identification of Fanny Price as the *alter ego* of Jane Austen does not result in a conservative image of Austen, but rather in a transformation of the character.

Such a transformation, however, means that Rozema's Fanny Price looks and sounds much more like the Mary Crawford of the book than like her namesake. This seems to provide empirical evidence supporting the claim that in fact *both heroines* of the novel should be considered textual reflections of the author: the attempt to merge author and character seems to almost fatally produce a conflation of the two characters in which Austen has projected and explored different aspects of her own identity. A Fanny Price that speaks and thinks like the Austen of the *Letters* and the *Juvenilia* is inevitably a Fanny Price that absorbs some of the crucial features attributed to Mary Crawford in the novel. This move, however questionable, has the effect of reconciling the two heroines and transforming the conclusion into a straightforward, much less problematic happy ending where the protagonist is the synthetic embodiment of all the positive features of the two antagonists of the novel. As has been observed (Shea 2006: 53-4), one of the side effects is that the screenplay character of Mary, whose good qualities have all been transferred to Fanny, is considerably flattened. She has been emptied of all her wit, liveliness and charm and transformed into a snobbish and cynical seductress, never really able to compete with Fanny.

The symmetrical, ambivalent relationship of contrast and identification between the two heroines is thus redefined and

simplified. But, far from being "modernising", this aspect of Rozema's adaptation could be described as a return to *Lovers' Vows*: from the moral and psychological complexity of Austen's novel we move back to the lightweight, if comforting, structure of sentimental comedy; the ambiguous contrast between two imperfect and complementary heroines gives way to the single, bright and witty heroine who, just like Amelia, will reap the rewards she undoubtedly deserves. If Rozema's intention was indeed to show that Austen as a writer is "resolutely anti-sentimental" (Berardinelli 1999) such an outcome is indeed paradoxical. The treatment of Fanny's character is particularly revelatory in this respect, as it tends to reinforce the "stubborn myth" that, according to Johnson, readers should try to resist: Rozema's Fanny is indeed a "good girl". The problem with the protagonist of the film, I would contend, is not that she is too 'modern' or 'feminist', but that she has almost completely lost the dark side that belongs to her novelistic counterpart, a dark side that is an essential component of her complexity as a character and of the novel as a whole. It is the inner 'heart of darkness' where dreams and desires seem to merge with unspeakable drive and fears; it is the source of the energy that fosters Fanny's difficult process of change and allows her the strength to resist the impositions of patriarchal authority through deceit and dissimulation. It is a dark side that belongs to the "Austenian author we love" and to many of her fictional creatures; it is the source of that "regulated hatred" (Harding 1998) to which they must resort when integrity and wit do not provide sufficient protection against the unfairness of life.

References

Allen Ford, Susan, 2006, "It is All About *Lovers' Vows:* Kotzebue, Inchbald, and the Players of *Mansfield Park*", in *Persuasions On-Line* 27 (1), http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no1/ford.htm, last accessed September 20, 2017.

Armstrong, Isobel, 1988, *Mansfield Park*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Austen, Jane, [1814] 2005, *Mansfield Park*, ed. J. Wiltshire, C.U.P., Cambridge.

Austen, Jane, 2008, *Later Manuscripts*, ed. J. Todd and L. Bree, C.U.P., Cambridge.

Austen-Leigh, James Edward, [1870] 2002, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollection*, ed. K. Sutherland, O.U.P., Oxford.

BATTAGLIA, BEATRICE, [1983] 2009, *La Zitella illetterata. Parodia e ironia nei romanzi di Jane Austen,* Liguori, Napoli.

BERARDINELLI, JAMES, 1999 "The Darker Side of Jane Austen. Patricia Rozema Talks About *Mansfield Park*" (November 15), http://preview.reelviews.net/comment/111599.html, last accessed September 20, 2017.

BOLTER, JAY D. and GRUSIN, RICHARD, 1999, *Remediation: Understanding the New Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.)

BUTLER, ELIZA MARIAN, 1933, "*Mansfield Park* and Kotzebue's *Lovers' Vows*", *The Modern Language Review* 28 (3), pp. 326-37.

BUTLER, MARILYN, 1975, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

BYATT, ANTONIA S. and SODRÉ, IGNÊS, [1995] 1997, *Imagining Characters. Six Conversations About Women Writers: Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Willa Cather, Iris Murdoch, and Toni Morrison*, Vintage, New York.

BYRNE, PAULA, 2002, *Jane Austen and the Theatre*, Hambledon and London, London.

CARROLL, LAURA, 2005, "Introductory Note on *Lovers' Vows*", in J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. J. Wiltshire, C.U.P., Cambridge.

CASTLE, TERRY, 1986, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*, Methuen, London.

FERRECCIO, GIULIANA, 2004, "Character and Characters: The Problems of Fanny Price", in B. Battaglia and D. Saglia (eds), *Re-Drawing Austen: Picturesque Travels in Austenland*, Liguori, Napoli.

FOSTER STOVEL, NORA, 2015, "Modernizing *Mansfield Park* at the Millennium: Reconsidering Patricia Rozema's Film Adaptation", in *Persuasions On-Line* 35 (1), http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol35no1/stovel.html, last accessed September 20, 2017.

GAY, PENNY, 2002, *Jane Austen and the Theatre*, C.U.P., Cambridge.

GAY, PENNY, 2006, "Theatricality and the Theatricals in *Mansfield Park*", in *Persuasions: Journal of the Jane Austen Society of North America* 17, pp. 121-9.

HALSEY, KATIE, [2012] 2013, *Jane Austen and Her Readers, 1786-1945*, Anthem, London-New York.

HARDING, DENYS WYATT, [1940] 1998, "Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen", *Regulated Hatred and Other Essays on Jane Austen*, ed. M. Lawlor, The Athlone Press, London-Atlantic Highlands (NJ), pp. 5-25.

HEYDT-STEVENSON, JILL, [2005] 2008, *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions. Subversive Laughter, Embodied History,* Houndsmill-New York.

INCHBALD, ELIZABETH, [1799] 2005, *Lovers' Vows* in J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. J. Wiltshire, C.U.P., Cambridge.

JOHNSON, CLAUDIA. L., 1988, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

JOHNSON, CLAUDIA L., 1995, "What Became of Jane Austen? *Mansfield Park*", *Persuasions: Journal of the Jane Austen Society of North America* 17, pp. 59-70.

JOHNSON, CLAUDIA L., 1999, "'Run mad but do not faint'. Review of Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park*", *Times Literary Supplement* (31 December), pp. 16-7.

KIRKHAM, MARGARET, 1975, "The Theatricals in *Mansfield Park* and 'Frederick' in *Lovers' Vows*", *Notes and Queries* 220 (September), pp. 388-90.

MACDONALD, GINA and MACDONALD, ANDREW F. (eds), 2003, *Jane Austen on Screen*, C.U.P., Cambridge.

Mansfield Park, Dir. Patricia Rozema, Miramax, UK, 1999.

MURPHY, OLIVIA, 2013, *Jane Austen the Reader: The Artist as Critic*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

PARRILL, SUE, 2002, *Jane Austen on Film and Television: A Critical Study of the Adaptations*, McFarland & Company, Jefferson (NC).

PEDLEY, COLIN, 1995, "'Terrific and Unprincipled Compositions': The Reception of *Lovers' Vows* and *Mansfield Park*", *Philological Quarterly* 74 (3), pp. 297-316.

PERKINS, PAM, 1993, "A Subdued Gaiety: The Comedy of Mansfield Park", *Nineteenth Century Literature*, 48 (1), (June), pp. 1-25.

SHEA, ALISON, 2006, "'I am a wild beast': Patricia Rozema's Forward Fanny", *Persuasions: Journal of the Jane Austen Society of North America* 28, pp. 52-8.

SUTHERLAND, KATHRYN 2005, *Jane Austen's Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood*, O.U.P, Oxford-New York.

TANNER, TONY, 1986, *Jane Austen*, Macmillan, Houndsmill-London.

TRILLING, LIONEL 1963, "Mansfield Park", in I. Watt (ed), *Jane Austen. A Collection of Critical Essays*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs.

TROOST, LINDA and GREENFIELD, SAYRE (eds), [1998] 2001, "The Mouse that Roared: Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park*", in L. Troost and S. Greenfield (eds), *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington (KY), pp. 188-204.