

DOUBLE VISION, DOUBLE VOICE

FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE AND THE DISCOURSE OF SPECTATORSHIP

IN JANE AUSTEN'S *MANSFIELD PARK*

By

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Mansfield Park, Jane Austen's fourth novel and the first of her mature works, represents a significant achievement in the development of represented consciousness in the English novel. As the first English author to fully employ free indirect discourse (FID), Austen represents speech and thought in ways that validate the emotional authenticity of her characters while simultaneously questioning narratorial authority. The central paradox of FID, as Dorrit Cohn explains in Transparent Minds, is that it offers a sense of emotional realism that is created by the reader's access to the unspoken thoughts of the novel's characters, yet these thoughts can only be retrieved from the literary construction of consciousness through the mediation of the narrator.¹ Therefore, the emotional immediacy that seems to be transmitted directly from the character to the reader is actually governed by the intermediate presence of the narrator. Since the interference of the narrator is not always obvious, Austen's use of FID casts narrative ambiguity on the identity of the speaker, inviting the reader to carefully consider whose voice, and by extension, whose motivations, prevail in directing the reader's attention and literary gaze. The concept of the "gaze" incorporates the literal act of looking at visible scenes with the subjective acts of interpretation that accompany every look: the selective framing or judging of one's visual information to suit the spectator's motivations and biases, the attendant emotional and intellectual reactions to the sight, and the implicit unawareness of what is unknowingly or deliberately not seen.

Austen's attention to directing the reader's metaphorical gaze is further reinforced by the morally-driven discourse of spectatorship that is manifested throughout the novel at the levels of plot and character interaction. To varying degrees, all of the inhabitants of Mansfield Park are concerned with manipulating their position as a spectator or as a spectacle as a way of reflecting their moral choices. That is, they desire to be seen or not to be seen in certain contexts by the

¹ See pgs. 5-7 of Cohn, Transparent Minds, 1978.

appropriate people in order to create an impression of their moral virtues, and they also selectively view other people in ways that illuminate or distort the viewed person's morality. However, the insight offered by FID allows the reader to evaluate the differences between the characters' appearance of virtue and the actual virtues they possess. FID reveals the characters' thoughts along with their evaluations of the other characters' visible manifestations of virtue and vice. Over and above these concerns of seeing and being seen is the formal construction of the novel as viewed through the protagonist's eyes. The reader obtains much of his or her knowledge of the world of Mansfield Park through Fanny's eyes, and Fanny's role as the thoughtful, observant bystander mirrors the reader's position of one who watches but does not intervene. However, Fanny is not a completely impartial spectator, and her moral perspective influences much of the reader's interpretation of her observations. Furthermore, the use of FID exposes literary mediation at the level of the narrator, so that any observations of the characters given in FID are filtered first through Fanny's consciousness and then through the narrator's words.

Austen's employment of FID points to a commentary on the connection between morality and spectatorship in the novel, a commentary that highlights the ethical implications of a reading practice in which characters are seen through the reader's literary eyes. Although the plot suggests that readers are examining the morality of the characters, the narration subtly invites readers to question how the narrator (and, by extension, Austen) is influencing them to see the characters in certain ways so as to interrogate their impression of what kind of morality is being proposed or endorsed by the book as a whole. Free indirect discourse refracts the moral gaze of the author through the eyes of the character and then through the words of the narrator before reaching the reader, making the novel into "an especially sinister instrument of coercion"

(Galperin 10) since the intentions of the author become obscured with each successive transformation of the gaze. In The Historical Austen, William Galperin explains that the “coercion” of FID is due in part to the evolution of a narrator whose credibility appears to be grounded in an intimate attachment to the characters yet capable of holding them at a distance. “The ‘voice’ of Austen’s novels,” Galperin remarks, “remains a disembodied omniscience whose service to ‘the real’ is no longer sufficient to prevent either the voice itself or the residual silence that remains its accompaniment from jointly complicating the authority on which direct (as opposed to epistolary) narrative now depends” (22).

Galperin’s reference to the shift from epistolary to direct narrative is important to the understanding of the birth of FID. FID inherited from the epistolary genre the ability to depict the individual voices of the various interlocutors, colouring the narrative with the idiomatic speech of the different characters. FID was also able to accommodate the new form of the narrator by allowing this figure to develop its own voice even when it adopted the voices of others. Writing in an era when the epistolary novel was still prominent, Austen’s development of FID allowed her to invent a narrator who is capable of filling in the silences between letters, lending the narrator the authority of apparent omniscience. At the same time, Austen’s narrator evolved into a character in her own right with biases and opinions, which destabilized the authority that the omniscience was supposed to provide. Austen’s narrator is a figure of questionable motivations, at once seeking to assure the reader of the narrator’s intimate knowledge of the characters while simultaneously daring the reader to interpret the limits of the narrator’s ability to influence the reader’s connection to the characters. Therefore, as David Lodge explains, FID allows the novelist to vary “the distance between the narrator’s discourse and the character’s discourse, between the character’s values and the ‘implied author’s’ values,

and so to control and direct the reader's affective and interpretive responses to the unfolding story" (126).

Lodge's emphasis on distance has important implications for the discourse of moral spectatorship in Mansfield Park. Adam Smith's philosophical text, The Theory of Moral Sentiment, called for a distancing within the individual self as a way to evaluate one's own morals. In the 1790 publication, predating Mansfield Park by twenty-four years, Smith's philosophy argues that an individual's assessment of his/her moral judgement should be examined by creating an imaginary extension of oneself, which would scrutinize one's own behaviour as an impartial spectator would. In Smith's words,

We can never survey our own sentiments and motives, we can never form any judgment concerning them; unless we remove ourselves, as it were, from our own natural station, and endeavour to view them as at a certain distance from us. ... Whatever judgment we can form concerning them, accordingly, must always bear some secret reference ... to what, we imagine, ought to be the judgment of others. We endeavour to examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it. (III.i.2)

Smith's concept of the impartial spectator provides an interesting framework through which to examine free indirect discourse as a literary interpretation of the relationship between spectatorship and morality. Austen often uses FID to describe the characters' descriptions of what they observe as well as what they perceive of how they themselves are being observed. In this way, FID becomes an interrogation of the impartial spectator, creating a doubled impression of the character as an observing subject and as an observed object. Smith explicitly points to the division of the self as a crucial element of the impartial spectator: "When I endeavour to examine my own conduct, ... *I divide myself*, as it were, *into two persons*; and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of" (III.i.6, emphasis added). The creation of two selves, one that is being

judged and the imaginary projected self that is judging, finds its literary counterpart in the dual voice of FID.

This double intonation marks one of the easiest methods of identifying FID, which is to look for a layering of voices: the narrator mimics a character's idiom but retains ultimate control over the communicated thought. Often, the thoughts or speech of a character are interspersed throughout a piece of descriptive third-person narrative but lack the introductory tags that signal indirect speech, such as "she thought" or "he said." Grammatical hallmarks also alert the reader to the presence of FID: first-person subjects are replaced with third-person pronouns, and verb tenses are shifted to the past rather than the present. Austen also places third-person pronouns within quotation marks, even when those pronouns indicate the speaker. For example, when the narrator reports Lady Bertram's impression of Fanny, a paragraph that describes Lady Bertram's opinion includes the sentence, "As for Fanny's being stupid at learning, 'she could only say it was very unlucky, but some people *were* stupid, and Fanny must take more pains; she did not know what else was to be done'" (Austen 16). The "she" within quotation marks refers to Lady Bertram, even though it is Lady Bertram who is speaking. According to Monika Fludernik, "free indirect discourse preserves some of the expressive elements of direct discourse as well as its syntactic independence, but shares with indirect discourse the temporal and referential consonance with the quoting instance" (74). The orthodox conceptualization of FID places it within a tripartite scheme of direct speech, free indirect speech, and indirect speech. However, Fludernik is of the opinion that within the past twenty-five years most narratologists and linguists have rejected this scheme in favour of placing FID along a spectrum or scale of different modes of representing consciousness, ranging from diegetic summary to direct discourse (289-290).

Two of the primary functions of FID in Austen's writing are to give narrative depth to the interiority of a character's personality by articulating inner thoughts and feelings and to paraphrase speech in ways that subtly comment on the externally displayed aspects of the characters' personalities. Accordingly, to borrow Deidre Lynch's words, Austen's use of FID in the novel "bring[s] about an ideal blend of the individual and the social" (212), combining the subjective narrative mode that devotes itself to the inner sensibility of the characters with the conventional narration that describes the external social world in which those characters interact. FID thus allows the reader to examine aspects of characters that they may not be fully aware of themselves and therefore incapable of judging impartially, as Smith would urge. Fanny's role in Mansfield Park parallels the position of the reader, in that her interested attentiveness to her surroundings allows her to justify her moral evaluation of others but does not translate into acting in such a way as to impose her view of morality on the inhabitants of Mansfield Park. Even though both Fanny and the reader are somewhat distanced from the people they observe, this does not imply that the reader is expected to subjectively identify with Fanny. Rather, FID allows Austen to manage the distance between Fanny and the reader in order to allow the reader to critically evaluate Fanny while retaining the ability to empathize with her. Marilyn Butler points out, "If there must be identification, it is with Fanny's role, not with her individual responses, which (at least as they affect Edmund) are depicted with ironic detachment" (228). Fanny's estrangement from her peers brings her closer to the narrator's scrutiny, which is reflected in the high number of incidences in which FID is used to communicate her thoughts through the voice of the narrator.

Fanny's function as an intermediate narrator is reinforced by the complexity of FID, which conveys the narrator's comments on Fanny's moral assessment of the people she observes

instead of simply replicating Fanny's observations. FID therefore exposes the observing spectator as a spectacle of its own and invites the reader to pass moral judgement on both the viewing subject and the viewed object. This narrative technique is particularly effective when it mirrors the plot action, such as during the preparations for the performance of *Lovers' Vows* in volume one, where Fanny's surveillance of the actors is as interesting as the play itself. Fanny's refusal to participate in the play as an actor, in both senses of the word as a dramatic character or as an active agent, enables her to observe the entire cast instead of focusing on those with whom she shares a scene. Since she is not completely engrossed by her own rehearsals as the others are with theirs, she hears everyone else's opinions on the business at hand.

Fanny, being always a very courteous listener, and often the only listener at hand, came in for the complaints and the distresses of most of them. *She* knew that Mr. Yates was in general thought to rant dreadfully, that Mr. Yates was disappointed in Henry Crawford, that Tom Bertram spoke so quick he would be unintelligible, that Mrs. Grant spoiled everything by laughing, that Edmund was behindhand with his part, and that it was misery to have anything to do with Mr. Rushworth, who was wanting a prompter through every speech. (Austen 129)

The panoply of voices that resounds in the usage of FID in this passage emphasizes Fanny's unique role as an observer, highlighting her silence in contrast to the clamour of speakers. In fact, the voices seem to be layered upon each other, and the lack of identifying pronouns means that the original speaker cannot be distinguished from the inheritance of second-hand knowledge. Fanny may eventually learn "that Mr. Yates was disappointed in Henry Crawford," yet there is no way of knowing whether this opinion comes directly from Mr. Yates, or whether the statement has been repeated first to another speaker who then relayed the message to her, or whether this is the summation of a series of complaints from many other actors. Austen's skilful handling of the syntactic indeterminacy of the subject in FID suits the confusion of multiple voices jostling to gain prominence in Fanny's attention and also alerts the reader to the subordination of Fanny's voice to the narrator's. Each of the clauses in the last sentence of the

passage quoted above lacks a specific grammatical subject, so the reader cannot determine which opinion originated with which character, nor how many interpretations have influenced Fanny's understanding of who has said what.

Besides condensing a great deal of conversation, lengthy passages of FID are often used to describe a character's emotional turmoil, as well as to explore the attendant conflict of motivations. A prime example of this is found in chapter XVI of volume I, soon after Fanny suffers a double-pronged attack from Tom and Mrs. Norris, who pressure her to act in the play. Fanny's distress is narrated in FID, which offers the reader an emotional immediacy that helps to create sympathy for her anxiety. Her concern at the loss of control over her ability to determine the circumstances in which she is seen is expressed in one long sentence that reflects the intensity of her distress:

To be called into notice in such a manner, to hear that it was but the prelude to something so infinitely worse, to be told that she must do what was so impossible as to act; and then to have the charge of obstinacy and ingratitude follow it, enforced with such a hint at the dependence of her situation, had been too distressing at the time to make the remembrance when she was alone much less so,—especially with the superadded dread of what the morrow might produce in continuation of the subject. (118)

Fanny's reported thoughts are characterized by rapidity and anxiety, as shown by the length of the sentence (93 words) and the fluidity with which her mind turns from her recollection of the event to her opinion on the impropriety of the request to her dismay at her aunt's accusation. This passage is interesting because the narrator inserts words and phrases that articulate Fanny's non-verbalized emotional response to the situation while managing to maintain a vocabulary that sounds similar to what Fanny might actually think to herself. For example, Fanny's horrified dismay is expressed as "*so infinitely worse*" and "*so impossible as to act,*" which does not necessarily indicate that she thought, "It would be so infinitely worse to act than to be seen." In fact, Fludernik argues, Ann Banfield's Unspeakable Sentences demonstrated conclusively that

free indirect speech is not a faithful transformation from direct speech (75). FID does not necessarily correspond with the original discourse, especially if that discourse is itself barely articulated, so the intervention of the narrator is instrumental in describing the reported speaker's feelings to the reader.

Judging from the order in which her worries are introduced, Fanny is most upset about being "called into notice." Tom's insistence that she should act in the play signifies that he wishes to include her in the field of the theatrical gaze. He is less concerned with her dramatic abilities than with the fact that she must be looked at as all the other young people are. "It will not much signify if nobody hears a word you say," he exhorts, "but we must have you to look at" (Austen 115). In response, Fanny is "shocked ... to feel that almost every eye was upon her" (115). Her moral strength is subjected to the intense scrutiny that the other young people immediately impose on her as they literally turn their gaze in her direction. In this instance, Fanny is disconcerted by the combination of Tom's demand and the unusual circumstance of being the centre of visible attention, which compounds her anxiety at having to publicly reinforce her moral position. Fanny's conflation of the act of literally seeing a person with the act of discerning that person's moral values is caused by the emotional distress that accompanies this situation, and so her concern about being literally seen is connected to her struggle to maintain a morally upright stance.

Although Fanny bears the visual and moral examination well during this incident, she soon grows worried over the possibility that her resoluteness might fail upon subsequent supplication: "Miss Crawford had protected her only for the time; and if she were applied to again among themselves with all the authoritative urgency that Tom and Maria were capable of, and Edmund perhaps away, what should she do?" (118) Fanny's awareness of the limitations of

her ability to negotiate the terms of her social and physical visibility culminates in a question that is posed to herself and to the reader, since the dual intonation of FID implies the presence of two audiences to correspond with the two voices. The query, “what should she do?” is simultaneously a narratorial projection of Fanny’s introspection and a nudge to the reader to engage in Fanny’s dilemma and answer that question.

FID is especially helpful in directing the reader’s gaze inwards towards the emotional conflict of the character when she is least aware of her visible position as a spectacle or spectator. Exhausted by the constant demands to observe the theatrical rehearsals and by the continual dread of being forced to act and be looked at, Fanny retreats to the East Room to engage in the solitary reflection that allows her to examine her own motivations for her actions without worrying about how she is being seen at the present moment, as there is no one there. The narration turns the focus away from the visible environment and towards her own behaviour and her own thoughts.

...[S]he had begun to feel undecided as to what she *ought to do*; and as she walked round the room her doubts were increasing. Was she *right* in refusing what was so warmly asked, so strongly wished for? ...Was it not ill-nature—selfishness—and a fear of exposing herself? ... It would be so horrible to her to act, that she was inclined to suspect the truth and purity of her own scruples, and as she looked around her, the claims of her cousins to being obliged, were strengthened by the sight of present upon present that she had received from them. (120, emphasis added to indicate FID)

In this excerpt, the presence of FID is indicated by the resemblance to direct speech, since the questions mimic Fanny’s idiom, and by the third-person pronoun to reference the quoting instance. Fanny’s questions to herself are posed in FID to show that the narrator is recording her inner dialogue between herself and her imagined impartial spectator. Safely ensconced in the room that “was now generally admitted to be hers” (119), Fanny’s personal space affords her the opportunity to retreat from the gazes of others and to fully embody the doubled self of Smith’s

impartial spectator, concentrating all her attention on the self-reflexive act of being simultaneously the object of moral scrutiny and the person imposing those moral guidelines. Fanny is unsuccessful in resolving her dilemma on her own, so Austen switches from FID to diegetic narration and directs the reader's attention to the physical environment, specifically the visible reminders of Fanny's cousins' presence. The move emphasizes Austen's reinstatement of Fanny as an observer, in which role she and the reader can gather the additional observations needed to answer Fanny's questions of propriety.

In contrast to Fanny, who prefers to observe without being observed herself, Mary Crawford thrives on being seen and admired by others. Mary and Fanny's opposing relationships to social visibility are reflected in the narrative approach to their speech. Fanny's "favourite indulgence" is to be "suffered to sit silent and unattended to" (175), and as a result the majority of her thoughts and speeches are reported through FID and paraphrase. Mary Crawford, on the other hand, loves to be admired and attended to, and the animation of her character is expressed through her lively volubility, which Austen conveys through lengthy dialogue. Louise Flavin points out that "by allowing her direct speech ... Mary's wit and spirited manner of talking are concretely realized. Fanny's speech by comparison is prosaic and dull" (152). The frequency of Fanny's free indirect thought emphasizes the prominence of her perspective in the overall structure of the novel, but Mary's words speak directly to her peers and to the reader.

Consequently, many readers are as entranced by Mary's speech as the Bertrams are. The contrast between Fanny's hesitant speech and Mary's direct self-expression is nicely illustrated by their conversation during a stroll in Mrs. Grant's shrubbery. Gazing upon the evergreens, Fanny offers one of her longest speeches in the novel, using the metaphor of the growth of the surrounding greenery to work through her thoughts on the development of the different social

relationships around her. Fanny's uncharacteristic verbosity, rhapsodic and poetic though it may be, seems garrulously banal in comparison to the perspicuity with which Mary expresses her thoughts. With characteristic candidness, Mary says, "I am something 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" (Austen 164). Whereas Fanny tentatively offers her opinion as a spectator of Nature to illustrate her moral feeling, Mary freely speaks her mind without being overly concerned about how her bluntness may affect others' perception of her, since she is secure in the knowledge that she is an attractively feminine spectacle. Moreover, Mary does not conceal her feelings in metaphor but tells her listeners exactly what she feels: "take it all and all, I never spent so happy a summer" (164), and her visibly beautiful smiles are as unreserved as her speech.

Since most of the other characters are more reserved in their speech than Mary is, FID helps Austen create sympathy for characters other than Fanny, who occupies most of the emotional centre and narratorial focus of the novel as its protagonist. Although the narrator is consistent in her moral disapprobation of the other characters, using FID does offer those characters a chance to place their heart before the reader, seemingly free from the interference of the narrator or of the protagonist. In the episode where Julia and Maria vie for the coveted part of Agatha in the play, Austen introduces FID to convey Julia's evaluation of the discussion, so that Fanny is no longer the sole means through which the reader experiences the scene. Julia's voice, expressed decisively through FID, describes Henry's recommendation of Maria by saying, "it was a scheme – a trick; she was slighted, Maria was preferred; the smile of triumph which Maria was trying to suppress shewed [sic] how well it was understood" (106). Here, FID is used to narrate Julia's train of thought, showing more clearly than could be discerned from her

appearance how she is constructing a scenario based on her observations and motivated by her jealousy. The reader then follows Julia's eye in "look[ing] suspiciously at her sister; Maria's countenance was to decide it ... but Maria looked all serenity and satisfaction" (107). Austen gives the reader direct insight into Julia's mind, which Fanny would probably guess at but could not know with the certainty that the narrator indicates. Although Austen later assures the reader that "Fanny saw and pitied much of this in Julia" (128), the temporary shift to Julia's point of view stimulates the reader's empathy for Julia, independent of the sympathy that Fanny feels for her. Moreover, as William Galperin has noted, the reader should be wary of always trusting Fanny's observations. "It is one thing for Fanny to be correct in surmising Julia's condition; it is quite another for her to stand apart convinced that her difference or privacy is an escape from selfishness and a measure thereby of her superiority" (Galperin 174).

Another example of bypassing Fanny's consciousness to reveal insight for another character can be found in the juxtaposition of Fanny and Mary's reactions upon realizing the imminence of Edmund's departure from Mansfield in order to be ordained:

Whatever effect Sir Thomas's little harangue might really produce on Mr. Crawford, it raised some awkward sensations in two of the others, two of his most attentive listeners, Miss Crawford and Fanny. —One of whom, having never before understood that Thornton was so soon and so completely to be his home, was pondering with downcast eyes on what it would be *not* to see Edmund every day; and the other, startled from the agreeable fancies she had been previously indulging on the strength of her brother's description, no longer able, in the picture she had been forming of a future Thornton, to shut out the church, sink the clergyman, and see only the respectable, elegant, modernised, and occasional residence of a man of independent fortune—was considering Sir Thomas, with decided ill-will, as the destroyer of all this, and suffering the more from that involuntary forbearance which his character and manner commanded, and from not daring to relieve herself by a single attempt at throwing ridicule on his cause.

All the agreeable [sic] of *her* speculation was over for that hour. It was time to have done with cards if sermons prevailed, and she was glad to find it necessary to come to a conclusion, and be able to refresh her spirits by a change of place and neighbour. (Austen 194-195)

The syntax of the portion that describes Mary's reaction clearly shows the governing hand of the narrator, but the concluding thought, "It was time to have done with cards if sermons prevailed," sounds exactly like the sort of statement Mary would silently announce to herself. The narrator seems to mock Mary's "agreeable fantasies" by juxtaposing violent verbs ("shut out," "sink") and sophisticated adjectives ("respectable, elegant, modernised"), contrasting the forcefulness of her imaginary method of achieving her wishes against the elegance of her desired result. However, an indulgent reader may still sympathize with Mary's aggravated disappointment. Furthermore, Austen employs subtly different uses of FID to remind the reader of the contrast between Fanny's passivity and Mary's activity. Fanny's thoughts are simply summarized, "pondering ... on what it would be *not* to see Edmund every day," whereas the use of FID to describe Mary's emotions is closer to a verbal approximation of her unspoken declaration.

Reporting Mary's thoughts may allow readers to hear what she does not speak aloud, but when FID is used to report spoken dialogue, it often signals the irony of the division between the speaker's desire to appear virtuous and his or her true feelings, opinions, and desires. "Precisely because they [narrated monologues, Cohn's term for FID] cast the language of a subjective mind into the grammar of objective narration," remarks Dorrit Cohn, "they amplify emotional notes, but also throw into ironic relief all false notes struck by a figural mind" (117). Austen's use of FID to highlight the irony of the division between the characters' self-perception and their peers' observations of their personality achieves a highly sophisticated level of execution when the observer's moral stance is being judged by the narrator at the same time that the observer judges another character. The narration of Edmund's efforts to convince his sisters not to act presents the sisters' arguments in FID, but a few words also provide a subtle description of Edmund's analysis of his sisters' attitudes:

His sisters, to whom he had an opportunity of speaking the next morning, were quite as impatient of his advice, quite as unyielding to his representation, quite as determined in the cause of pleasure, as Tom.—Their mother had no objection to the plan, and they were not in the least afraid of their father's disapprobation. — There could be no harm in what had been done in so many respectable families, and by so many women of the first consideration; and it must be scrupulousness run mad, that could see anything to censure in a plan like theirs, comprehending only brothers and sisters and intimate friends, and which would never be heard of beyond themselves. Julia *did* seem inclined to admit that Maria's situation might require particular caution and delicacy—but that could not extend to *her*—*she* was at liberty; and Maria evidently considered her engagement as only raising her so much more above restraint, and leaving her less occasion than Julia to consult either father or mother. (101-102)

Their arguments in favour of continuing the play are related in FID, and the sentence beginning, “there could be no harm...” sounds almost like a verbatim report of what they might have cried to Edmund, with the similarity of their perspectives on that point being reflected in the plural third-person pronouns. However, the phrase “*did* seem inclined to admit” can only have come from Edmund's appraisal of Julia's grudging admission, even though the subsequent clause reverts to a summary in FID of Julia's speech. Similarly, the adverb “evidently” represents Edmund's understanding of Maria's attitude, for such a word could only come from an observer and not from the original utterance. The passage therefore exemplifies Cohn's remark by replicating the urgency with which Maria and Julia endeavour to persuade Edmund, while the inappropriateness of their justifications is highlighted by Edmund's understanding of their true intents.

Most of the ironic FID that concerns Edmund actually reports Fanny's observations of him, rather than portraying his feelings or his own self-perception. With that in mind, some examination of Edmund's character must precede a discussion of the narrator's ironic commentary on him. Edmund's claims to being an impartial observer are negated by the fact that he is the person who is most influenced by what he sees and what he wishes to see. His moral staunchness is easily overpowered whenever he looks at Mary Crawford, since he places an inflated value on her beauty in order to compensate for the lack of compatibility between their

personalities. Edmund's stated belief in the irreproachability of his moral judgement, such as when he says, "You can bear me witness, Fanny, that I have never been blinded" to Mary's "little errors" (Austen 211), is consistently undermined by the obvious fact that he can only bemoan Mary's faults when she is out of sight. The irony is that his blindness is caused by literally looking too much at Mary's visible prettiness, rather than being caused by failing to metaphorically see, and thereby discern, her personality. Even during the first days of their acquaintance, Edmund is able to appreciate her "wonderful play of feature" at the same time that he denounces her unflattering depiction of her uncle as "very wrong—very indecorous" (50). He has always been aware of Mary's faults, but is quick to dismiss them in order to maintain his image of her as a suitable wife.

The imagined sight of watching Mary play Agatha against Charles Maddox's Anhalt in *Lovers' Vows* provokes Edmund's jealousy and prompts him to place himself literally within the theatrical scene. When Edmund announces his intention to act in the play, Miss Crawford's smiles had "but one effect on him. 'He was certainly right in respecting such feelings; he was glad he had determined on it'" (124). Fortunately for Edmund, having the narrator relate his sentiments in FID releases him from the hypocrisy of actually stating such a blatant reversal of his position, allowing him to avoid the insincerity that would have been so evident in direct speech. The FID narration of this comment gives it the semblance of internal dialogue, as he would have justified his actions to himself, while paraphrasing the statements that he presumably would have offered to anyone nearby as proof of his upright justifications for such selfish action. In particular, as Louise Flavin has noticed, "while the narrator does not state that this passage is filtered through Fanny's consciousness, it is obvious that Edmund's rationalization of his decision to act is presented as it would sound to Fanny" (140). Expanding on Flavin's approach,

Edmund's statement ("he was certainly right...") could be read both as the narrator's report of Fanny's weak efforts to convince herself that Edmund might be right to consider Mary's feelings, insofar as it appears to demonstrate his gentlemanly consideration for others, and as a summary of what Edmund might have actually said to Fanny.

Austen's skilful handling of FID is impressive when the employment of FID is exceptionally ambiguous, compelling the reader to re-read attentively in order to determine whether the prevailing voice is that of the narrator or of one of the characters. When FID is used to create uncertainty in the identity of the speaker, the reader must carefully attend to the context and idiom of the passage in order to determine whose opinion is being presented. Often, the greatest ambiguity is caused by the apparent fusion of the narrator and the character who best suits the context. In the following example, the phrases in FID are grammatically similar to descriptive narration, and Fanny's feelings and thoughts are intertwined with the narrator's description and ironic comment. The passage describes Fanny's conflicting reaction to Tom's near-fatal illness, which was caused by a fever brought on by heavy drinking:

Without any particular affection for her eldest cousin, 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. (Austen 336, emphasis added to indicate FID)

The words "feel" and "considered," along with the subordinating conjunction "that," indicate the presence of FID for the purpose of reporting Fanny's thoughts. The second phrase in FID reveals a particular difficulty in extricating Fanny's actual thoughts from the narrator's ironic commentary. Fanny's disapproval of Tom's hedonistic activities are clearly evinced by the terms "how little useful, how little self-denying," yet the parenthetical remark is more ambiguous. The punctuation seems to mark the word "apparently" as an insertion from the narrator, acknowledging both the narrator's insistence on the limits of Fanny's knowledge of her

cousin's personality, and the lack of true omniscience on the part of the narrator. The narrator's focus on the different characters largely parallels Fanny's closeness to them, and the narrator devotes little attention to describing Tom's character in comparison to characters who are nearer to Fanny's interest, such as Edmund or Mary Crawford. The parenthetical "apparently" therefore displays the narrator's arch dubiousness about Tom's usefulness and self-denial. On the other hand, the word could also be another hallmark of Fanny's gentleness, which is more sincerely compassionate than the narrator's irony. In that case, "apparently" would refer to Fanny's willingness to give Tom the benefit of the doubt in being more useful than he had so far appeared to be.

Besides intertwining the narrator's views with a character's observations, the complexity of FID is useful for commenting on a variety of gazes when there are multiple characters watching each other. The passage that describes Fanny opening the ball with Henry Crawford is a particularly masterful employment of FID. It depicts the serial revelation of several consciousnesses, moving from the moral feeling of the individual to the general admiration shown by the social assembly before transitioning back to an individual perspective on the observations of the group. It also performs the unique function of commenting on the metastructure of observation, showing Sir Thomas watching the guests looking at Fanny, who is uneasily aware of their gazes.

She [Fanny] could hardly believe it. To be placed above so many elegant young women! The distinction was too great. It was treating her like her cousins! And her thoughts flew to those absent cousins with most unfeigned and truly tender regret ... The ball began. It was rather honour than happiness to Fanny, ... but she was a great deal too much frightened to have any enjoyment, till she could suppose herself no longer looked at. Young, pretty, and gentle, however, she had no awkwardnesses that were not as good as graces, and there were few persons present that were not disposed to praise her. She was attractive, she was modest, she was Sir Thomas's niece, and she was soon said to be admired by Mr. Crawford. It was enough to give her general favour. Sir Thomas himself was

watching her progress down the dance with much complacency; he was proud of his niece; and without attributing all her personal beauty, as Mrs. Norris seemed to do, to her transplantation to Mansfield, he was pleased with himself for having supplied everything else; —education and manners she owed to him. (216-217, emphasis added to indicate FID)

The presentation of consciousness through FID begins with Fanny's surprise at being placed in a position of such high social visibility. Her capacity to feel genuine empathy for her absent cousins, who crave the social attention that she is fruitlessly hoping to avoid, is demonstrated by her hesitation to be looked at by the other guests, which they interpret as an endearing awkwardness. Despite Fanny's wishes, the other guests do look at her and their general approbation of her is succinctly summarized in FID ("She was attractive, she was modest.... It was enough to give her general favour.") The narrator's attention then focuses on Sir Thomas, whose pride in Fanny is validated by his guests' approval of her being related to him ("she was Sir Thomas's niece") and contentedly concludes, "[E]ducation and manners she owed to him." Sir Thomas bases his evaluation of Fanny on the observations of others, which he takes to be indicative of the degree of social approbation that she has earned, and so he relies on the gazes of others to inform his moral evaluation of his young charge. Austen's management of FID therefore facilitates smooth transitions between different representations of perspective in order to highlight the reliance on others' gazes to inform one's own observations.

Fanny's trip to Portsmouth requires a different use of FID, since her control over her social and literal visibility undergoes a significant alteration. At Mansfield Fanny held at least partial control over the circumstances in which she was exposed to the gaze of others, whereas at Portsmouth she is at the mercy of her physical environment as shaped by her family. Instead of being unseen when she chose to be, as she was at Mansfield, she is now involuntarily invisible when she most wants to be seen and admired. Before she arrives in Portsmouth, Fanny eagerly anticipates her position within her family as one that places her firmly within the regard of those

whom she loves, and FID is used to encapsulate and verbalize all of her excitement and hopeful anticipation.

To be in the centre of such a circle, loved by so many, and more loved by all than she had ever been before, to feel affection without fear or restraint, to feel herself the equal of those who surrounded her, to be at peace from all mention of the Crawfords, safe from every look which could be fancied a reproach on their account! (290)

The FID in which this passage is narrated hints that Fanny's feelings are intimately connected with her role in the different kinds of social spectatorship that she associates with each place. At Portsmouth, Fanny anticipates a positive role as the recipient of familial love, welcoming the loving gazes of the family. By contrast, Fanny construes nearly every look at Mansfield as indicative of her extended family's disapproval of her intransigence in refusing to abandon her own moral code in order to follow theirs, so that every situation in which she is the viewed object makes her painfully aware of their condemning gaze. Although William forewarns her that "the house is always in confusion" (292), Fanny's yearning for genuine familial warmth leads her to expect that her home in Portsmouth will appear exactly as she sees it in her mind's eye, and her mental idealization of her home is realized through the emotionally charged form of FID instead of the concrete articulation of her desires in direct speech.

Fanny's time in Portsmouth is marked by Austen's choice to use FID mainly to paraphrase the speech that Fanny overhears instead of to reveal the emotions that she does not openly display. This decision lets readers experience the same sensory environment that Fanny does without having to resort to FID to outline Fanny's distress at having her nostalgic expectations disappointed. The most significant change associated with Fanny's move to Portsmouth is her loss of control over her visibility, since the microcosm of society at Portsmouth prioritizes sound instead of sight as a way of establishing social prominence. Appropriately, the majority of sensory description shifts to sound instead of sight with the move

from Mansfield to Portsmouth. The most prominent feature of Fanny's perception of Portsmouth is the constant, overwhelming presence of noise. Everyone in the Price household is constantly hallooing for one another, and Fanny regards the place as "the abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety" (305). Unlike the silence and isolation of the East Room, where Fanny's thoughts spill out in FID, Fanny is distracted by the constant noise around her. Consequently, there is a corresponding decrease in the frequency of FID, accompanied by a general shift in function from revealing characters' inner thoughts to paraphrasing spoken conversation.

There are two possible reasons for the change in the function of FID. First, the Price family is as unknown to Fanny as she is to them, so she cannot anticipate their feelings in the way that she can recognize the feelings of her family at Mansfield. Therefore, FID reflects the exteriority of the family's characters as they are projected through speech, rather than the interiority of their thoughts, which Fanny does not yet understand. Second, FID is often used to depict characters' thoughts as they engage in mental reflection, which requires that they direct their attention inwards and away from their external environment. In Portsmouth, few people, especially Fanny, have the ability to ignore the constant hustle and bustle of the Price household and focus on their inner state of mind. By contrast, the noises of conversation and music at Mansfield help to conceal a great deal of mental agitation. For example, when Sir Thomas returns abruptly to Mansfield during the rehearsals for the play, "The evening passed with external smoothness, though almost every mind was ruffled; and the music which Sir Thomas called for from his daughters helped to conceal the want of real harmony" (150).

The exceptions to this trend appear when Fanny is most struck by the contrast between Mansfield and Portsmouth, and the sensory assault of her culture shock is superseded by her mental evaluation of the differences between the two environments. When Fanny finally pauses

to reflect on her reaction to Portsmouth, her thoughts are narrated in a remarkably continuous stream of FID:

She was at home. But, alas! it was not such a home, she had not such a welcome, as—she checked herself; she was unreasonable. What right had she to be of importance to her family? She could have none, so long lost sight of! William's concerns must be dearest—they always had been—and he had every right. Yet to have so little said or asked about herself—to have scarcely an enquiry made after Mansfield! It did pain her to have Mansfield forgotten; the friends who had done so much—the dear, dear friends! But here, one subject swallowed up all the rest. Perhaps it must be so. The destination of the Thrush must be now pre-eminently interesting. A day or two might shew the difference. *She* only was to blame. Yet she thought it would not have been so at Mansfield. No, in her uncle's house there would have been a consideration of times and seasons, a regulation of subject, a propriety, an attention towards everybody which there was not here. (300)

FID runs consistently throughout the passage, but it is difficult to tell whether the passage narrates a constant stream of Fanny's thoughts or whether it encapsulates what Roy Pascal calls the "reduction made by the narrator of a multiple confused self-argument whirling in Fanny's head" (54). Regardless of whether the narrator is reporting verbatim or summarizing the whole of Fanny's multiple confusions, there is a clear direction in the thought process, which suggests that she is attempting to reason herself into a better state of mind. Specifically, Fanny is struggling to reconcile her sentimentally motivated expectations of her place of birth with the alienation that she feels there. In addition, she realizes that her literal invisibility to her family during her long absence, "so long lost sight of," has also rendered her socially imperceptible. Despite her expectation of the family love and notice to which she feels entitled, Fanny's upright character and morals are simply "undistinguished in the dusk, and unthought of" (298).

The startling emergence of a narratorial "I" in the final chapter disturbs the previous incidences of FID by calling attention to the narrator as a character in her own right, rather than a shadowy voice that does not intervene in the plot action that it reports. The obvious appearance of the narrator adds complexity to the problem of literary visibility, since the narrator's opinions,

biases, and construction of the plot are made explicit. Remarks such as, “My Fanny indeed at this very time, I have the satisfaction of knowing, must have been happy in spite of everything” (362), clearly establish the narrator as an agent with her own agenda. The narrator appears to have deliberately constructed a happy ending for Fanny by actually determining the character’s feelings, as Fanny “*must* have been happy,” instead of reporting them in a way that reflects the narrator’s biases. The presence of the narrator’s voice in FID thus reveals itself to be a deliberate filtering of the characters’ thoughts and speech in order to create a certain impression on the reader, justifying Galperin’s accusation of “coercion” (10) on the part of the author working through the narrator. Essentially, this is a reminder to the reader that the voice of the narrator is subject to the same scrutiny by which the characters are also evaluated. The ramifications of the narrator’s inclusion in the reader’s field of scrutiny are that narration in FID is subject to the same moral examination as any other character’s utterance and that the faithfulness of the narrator’s report of a character’s speech and thought to the character’s voice becomes questionable.

In conclusion, Austen’s innovative use of free indirect discourse is the ideal device for presenting the interplay between seeing and scrutinizing. The great advantage of FID is its ability to give a simultaneous presentation of different perspectives, both visual and moral, especially when those perspectives hold contradictory opinions. An analysis of the multiple intonation of FID exposes the author’s interrogation of narrative authority by calling attention to the polyvocality of any utterance that originates in one character’s consciousness and is subsequently refracted through its representation in another character’s consciousness or that of the narrator. FID encourages the existence of what D.A. Miller calls “the staring paradox of Austen’s narration: it is at once utterly exempt from the social necessities that govern the

narrated world, and intimately acquainted with them down to their most subtle psychic effects on character. It does not itself experience what it nonetheless knows with all the authority of experience” (32). Miller claims that Austen’s narration is not subject to the same social rules and moral code that influence the actions of the characters, but in fact, the narration does engage in the same acts of selective interpretation of morality in which the characters are also involved. Therefore, FID establishes the reporter of a character’s views, specifically the narrator, as an agent in the metastructure of the discourse of spectatorship that occurs at the level of the reader. More than simply providing a description of what a character observes, FID highlights the complexity of the mediation provided by the narrator’s selective report of the characters’ observations, and therefore encourages the reader to examine the motivations and interpretative acts of the characters, of the narrator, and of the author.

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