

'Active Principle', Education and Austen

SUZUKI Mika

Jane Austen's works addresses the issue of education in various aspects of the heroines' learning about themselves as well as by presenting comments on the cultivation of mind, the refinement of manners and the acquisition of accomplishments. The frequency of education-related terms such as learning, teaching, education and school in each work, though the chosen examples are only a few among many, supports the impression and it leads to focus on *Mansfield Park's* attention to the pedagogic concerns.

Sir Thomas Bertram at first is the authority in education. His daughters have acquired whatever information ladies should have, while they later turn out to have problems with self-knowledge, generosity and humility. To him, Fanny, a daughter of his wife's sister, is ignorant, mean and vulgar, which he assumes would be rectified through learning offered at his house. He, as is often the case with Bertram family matters, sees to it that she is properly instructed. Yet there are others who contribute to Fanny's edification. One of Sir Thomas's sons, Edmund, encourages Fanny's learning through reading. Acquaintance with Mary Crawford and Henry Crawford results in posing tests on Fanny's readiness to show her maturity in mind. Her sense of disqualification and disinclination by degrees gives way to willingness to work on others.

The two daughters, Maria and Julia, let Sir Thomas down by their misconduct. Sir Thomas suffers, reviewing what the education he conducted as a parent failed to achieve in them. He realizes he could not trigger their principle which should actively work on their words and deeds. Just as happiness awaits the heroines who deeply regret their mistakes and learn to know themselves better, Sir Thomas is not left disappointed. He finds consolation in Fanny, who marries his son. Remarkably Sir Thomas humbly admits his mistakes, learning from Fanny's rectitude and principle. Fanny is now confident of herself, placing herself as an instructor to her younger sister Susan as well as the one from whom Sir Thomas learns.