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A COMPANION TO

# JANE AUSTEN

EDITED BY

CLAUDIA L. JOHNSON AND CLARA TUIE

Gillian Russell  
2009 B1

The Army, the Navy, and the  
Napoleonic Wars

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# Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	ix
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	x
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xviii
<i>A Note to the Reader</i>	xviii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xix
Introduction	1
<i>Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite</i>	
Part I The Life and the Texts	11
1 Jane Austen's Life and Letters	13
<i>Kathryn Sutherland</i>	
2 The Austen Family Writing: Gossip, Parody, and Corporate Personality	31
<i>Robert L. Mack</i>	
3 The Literary Marketplace	41
<i>Jan Fergus</i>	
4 Texts and Editions	51
<i>Brian Southam</i>	
5 Jane Austen, Illustrated	62
<i>Laura Carroll and John Wiltshire</i>	
Part II Reading the Texts	79
6 Young Jane Austen: Author	81
<i>Juliet McMaster</i>	

- 7 Moving In and Out: The Property of Self in *Sense and Sensibility*  
*Susan C. Greenfield* 91
- 8 The Illusionist: *Northanger Abbey* and Austen's Uses of Enchantment  
*Sonia Hofkosh* 101
- 9 Re: Reading *Pride and Prejudice*: "What think you of books?"  
*Susan J. Wolfson* 112
- 10 The Missed Opportunities of *Mansfield Park*  
*William Galperin* 123
- 11 *Emma*: World Games and Secret Histories  
*Linda Bree* 133
- 12 *Persuasion*: The Gradual Dawning  
*Fiona Stafford* 143
- 13 *Sanditon* and the Book  
*George Justice* 153
- Part III Literary Genres and Genealogies**
- 14 Turns of Speech and Figures of Mind  
*Margaret Anne Doody* 163
- 15 Narrative Technique: Austen and Her Contemporaries  
*Jane Spencer* 165
- 16 Time and Her Aunt  
*Michael Wood* 185
- 17 Austen's Realist Play  
*Harry E. Shaw* 195
- 18 Dealing in Notions and Facts: Jane Austen and History Writing  
*Devoney Looser* 206
- 19 Sentiment and Sensibility: Austen, Feeling, and Print Culture  
*Miranda Burgess* 216
- 20 The Gothic Austen  
*Nancy Armstrong* 226
- Part IV Political, Social, and Cultural Worlds**
- 21 From Politics to Silence: Jane Austen's Nonreferential Aesthetic  
*Mary Poovey* 237
- 22 The Army, the Navy, and the Napoleonic Wars  
*Gillian Russell* 249
- 251
- 261

- 23 Jane Austen, the 1790s, and the French Revolution  
*Mary Sponberg* 272
- 24 Feminisms  
*Vivien Jones* 282
- 25 Imagining Sameness and Difference: Domestic and Colonial Sisters  
in *Mansfield Park*  
*Deidre Coleman* 292
- 26 Jane Austen and the Nation  
*Claire Lamont* 304
- 27 Religion  
*Roger E. Moore* 314
- 28 Family Matters  
*Ruth Perry* 323
- 29 Austen and Masculinity  
*E. J. Clery* 332
- 30 The Trouble with Things: Objects and the  
Commodification of Sociability  
*Barbara M. Benedict* 343
- 31 Luxury: Making Sense of Excess in Austen's Narratives  
*Diego Saglia* 355
- 32 Austen's Accomplishment: Music and the Modern Heroine  
*Gillen D'Arvy Wood* 366
- 33 Jane Austen and Performance: Theatre, Memory, and Enculturation  
*Daniel O'Quinn* 377
- Part V Reception and Reinvention**
- 34 Jane Austen and Genius  
*Deidre Lynch* 389
- 35 Jane Austen's Periods  
*Mary A. Favret* 391
- 36 Nostalgia  
*Nicholas Dames* 402
- 37 Austen's European Reception  
*Anthony Mandal* 413
- 38 Jane Austen and the Silver Fork Novel  
*Edward Copeland* 422
- 434

39	Jane Austen in the World: New Women, Imperial Vistas <i>Katie Trumpener</i>	444
40	Sexuality <i>Fiona Bridenake</i>	456
41	Jane Austen and Popular Culture <i>Judy Simons</i>	467
42	Austenian Subcultures <i>Mary Ann O'Farrell</i>	478
	<i>Bibliography</i>	488
	<i>Index</i>	513

## List of Figures

5.1	<i>Mansfield Park</i> (London: Richard Bentley, 1833), frontispiece and engraved title page, by William Greatbatch after Picketing. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.	64
5.2	<i>Northanger Abbey and Persuasion</i> (London: Chapman & Hall, 1872), front and back boards. Matheson Library, Monash University.	66
5.3	<i>Mansfield Park</i> (London: Groombridge, 1875), illustration by A. F. Lydon. University of New South Wales Library.	68
5.4	<i>Mansfield Park</i> (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1922), frontispiece and engraved title page, by Charles E. Brock.	69
5.5	<i>Pride &amp; Prejudice</i> (London: George Allen, 1895), headpiece and ornamental capital letter on p.89, by Hugh Thomson. Dover Publications, Inc. (Image reproduced from modern facsimile edition.)	72
5.6	<i>Mansfield Park</i> (London: Macmillan and Co., 1897), p.54, illustration by Hugh Thomson.	74
5.7	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (London: Macmillan & Co., 1895), p.161, illustration by Charles E. Brock.	76
22.1	James Gillray, <i>Fatigues of the Campaign in Flanders</i> , Lewis Walpole Library – 793.5.20.1+.	265
25.1	Josiah Wedgwood anti-slavery medallion, <i>Am I Not a Man and a Brother?</i> The British Museum.	294
25.2	<i>Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?</i> Wilberforce House Museum, Hull City Council, UK.	294
25.3	Isaac Cruikshank, <i>The Abolition of the Slave Trade</i> , published April 10, 1792 by S. W. Fores No 3 Picca. engraving BM 8079, The British Museum.	298
25.4	<i>The Rabbits</i> , published October 8, 1792 by Robt Sayer & Co, Fleet Street, London, engraving BM 8217, The British Museum.	299
37.1	Output of new translations of Austen's works, 1905–2004 (excluding extracts, reprints, reissues).	424

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## List of Abbreviations

- E: *Emma, The Novels of Jane Austen*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford University Press, 1932-4), revised by Mary Lascelles (Oxford University Press, 1965-6).  
 MP: *Mansfield Park*, ed. Chapman, rev. Lascelles.  
 NA: *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Chapman, rev. Lascelles.  
 P: *Persuasion*, ed. Chapman, rev. Lascelles.  
 PP: *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Chapman, rev. Lascelles.  
 SS: *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. Chapman, rev. Lascelles.  
 MW: *Minor Works, The Works of Jane Austen*, ed. R. W. Chapman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954, revised by B. C. Southam. Oxford University Press, 1969.

Letters: *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye. Oxford University Press, 1995.

## A Note to the Reader

Nowadays, the status of Jane Austen texts, once a quiescent issue in Austen criticism, is a lively subject. A very fine range of editions is available not only for scholarly and classroom use but also for — lacking a better term — ordinary readers, a vast public, who read Austen's novels (often every year!) for pleasure: Chapman's landmark edition of the 1920s; the related and distinguished set from Oxford World Classics; the revised edition from Penguin, based on challenging new editorial principles; volumes published variously by Broadview Press and W. W. Norton, and Longman, among others; and, most ambitiously and impressively of all, the monumental new Cambridge Edition of the Novels of Jane Austen. The multiplicity of differently authoritative editions of Austen's novels raises fascinating questions. To some extent, of course, Austen's novels are a marketing opportunity, but more critical questions are at stake than the bottom lines of publishers. What is it that makes an Austenian text authoritative? Who gets to say so? Is it necessary to establish a single definitive edition when so many important, carefully prepared and annotated editions are available? Is there really such a thing as a definitive text?

On one hand, the plurality of editions seems to us an extremely healthy sign, testifying to the liveliness of Austen studies and to the healthy diffusion of scholarly authority, resistance, and debate. On the other hand, this very plurality makes settling on a standard set in this volume a difficult and vexing task. For the purposes of internal cross-referencing, it seemed important to regularize quotations using a single edition rather than oblige readers to fetch citations from different volumes of different editions; but every time we advanced a qualitative argument in favor of one set, an equally convincing qualitative argument on behalf of another emerged. Acutely aware that there is no single, fully satisfactory solution to this problem, we eventually decided in favor of the long-standard Chapman edition on purely practical grounds: it is mostly widely available to students in libraries and having been for better or worse the standard edition since the 1920s, it is the set almost invariably employed in the literary criticism alluded to throughout this volume and collected in the bibliography.

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Our greatest debts are to our contributors, for the intelligence and flair with which they collaborated in the project of showing the vitality, variety, and excitement of current Austen studies. We appreciate equally their patience and their sense of adventure.

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## Introduction

Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite

Writing at the outset of the twentieth century, Henry James famously complained that the public's enthusiasm for Jane Austen was being abetted by a "body of publishers, editors, [and] illustrators" who find "their 'dear,' our dear, everybody's dear, Jane so infinitely to their material purpose." To be sure, James acknowledged that Austen would not be so "saleable if we had not more or less . . . lost our hearts to her" in the first place, but he censured the "special book-selling spirit" which, with all its "eager, active interfering force" whips up a "stiff breeze" and drives the waters of reputation above their natural levels.<sup>1</sup> Writing at the outset of the twenty-first century, we can say with certainty that the waters of Austenian study, appreciation, and marketing have, far from subsiding, continued their steady rise, flooding beyond national and media boundaries. Shaped to some extent by the transformative energies of the global Austen surge of the mid 1990s – for we cannot really speak of *revival* in connection with a figure whose vitality has never abated – Austen study today is a diverse, expansive, excitable, critical life-form, with feelers that reach out and across disciplines. For popular audiences across the world, the plethora of cinematic adaptations and spin-offs of Austen's novels and life – and all the reviews and commentary they have in turn generated – have produced new modes of transmission and more diverse audiences. But Austen criticism has been fuelled by the momentum of that surge. This *Companion* seeks not only to describe the present state of Austen studies but also to explore how it both informs and is informed by changes and innovations within the broader field of literary and cultural studies.

We might characterize the fascination with Austen today as a form of reenchantment, a rediscovery of particular Austenian pleasures and of what Sonia Hofkosh, in her essay on *Northanger Abbey* and Austen's work more generally, refers to as Austen's "uses of enchantment." This reenchantment has occurred at least to some extent as an effect of the cinematic enchantment with Austen, the delivery of Austen in the form of a new repertoire of captivating visual effects. But it is not beholden to it. For despite truisms that abound about Austen having been rescued from print and delivered to



new audiences through the screen – truisms that naturalize cinematic adaptation as the final destiny of print (as though cinematic reinvention is the only form of reinvention) – intriguingly, while Austen has been delivered to mass audiences in the mode of visual rhetorics, Austen readers have been inspired to return to the specificities of print and reading. Cinematic and televised versions of Austen, inevitably saturated with a sensuous visual detail notably lacking in the novels themselves, have encouraged a renewed attention to the specificities of print and reading, as other specific forms of cultural pleasure and forms of enchantment.

A particular area of recent scholarly intensity has been textual criticism and history of the book. As with interpretation, so with textual production and textual criticism, and there is now a new attention to the variability and changeability of the text. When R. W. Chapman's edition of Jane Austen's novels appeared in 1923 – touting its scholarly textual principles on its title pages – the status of Austen's texts (and Chapman's representation of them) was not a particularly lively or contested issue, but over the past decade the textual study of Austen has become intensely important, implicating as it does our most basic apprehension of the words and punctuation on the page and our concomitant sense of Austen as a writer with a certain style, and several new editions now vie with Chapman's. A number of essays in this volume engage with questions of textual production and the changeability of textual status, particularly in Part I, "The Life and the Texts." The essays in Part I introduce the reader to Jane Austen's life, produced by texts and their absences, biographies and letters; to her edited texts; and to the cultural and material contexts of production of the early published volumes and modern editions, as text, or as image, or as a combination of both. We start with Jane Austen's letters, "the key to everything," as Kathryn Sutherland suggests, "the contested place where the ordinary becomes extraordinary," and "the raw data for the . . . untransformed banalities which, magically transmuted, become the precious trivia of the novels." Here, then, the materials of a supposedly unexceptional life become the stuff of enchantment.

Was there ever a moment of disenchantment? Modern Austen criticism, which arguably begins with Reginald Farrer's 1917 tribute, seems at first to celebrate an entirely escapist, enchanted Austen, who passes over the "tyrannies and empires" that "erupt and collapse" here below, and for turning instead towards a "new kingdom of refuge from the toils and frets of life," a kingdom of "Art" existing "outside and beyond daily life" (Farrer 1987: 249). But Farrer's essay, shaped by his experiences on the Western Front during World War I, in other ways epitomizes a therapeutically disenchanting Austen, one who is to be revered for her remorseless iconoclasm and stylistic control, and thus in many ways Farrer's tribute prefigures D. W. Harding's classic 1939 celebration of an astringent Austen who hates precisely those people who adore her as quaint and civilized.<sup>2</sup> Though Harding's emphasis on irony and his insistence on Austen's fundamental orientation as a social critic profoundly influenced later generations of readers and critics, this disenchantment fostered its own sort of counter-enchantment with an author now cast as manly, acerbic, and clear-sighted, and as such it actually complemented rather than foiled the more

popular mid-century evocations of Austen as the last exemplar of a blessedly clear world where judgments could be pronounced with wondrous ease.

From the 1970s until the 1990s, Jane Austen was the focus of a revisionist criticism, what we might call a compelling form of fascinated disenchantment. As Nicholas Dames suggests in his essay on "Nostalgia," Austen studies developed "a disenchanting critical practice" that sought to counter a nostalgic tendency in Austen criticism that sentimentalized Austen by associating her work with a world safely past and always already known. One way of explaining this disenchantment then would be to say that the object of analysis and disenchantment was a particular version, or versions, of Austen: canonical Austens identified with particular allegiances of class, race, gender, and sexuality, and a totem of an aesthetic greatness taken for granted and as a given. Powerful revisionist works of Marxist, feminist, new historicist, and postcolonial criticism sought to challenge established modes of reading, and to question the cultural and institutional alliances that had been forged in Austen's name. They illuminated ways in which assumptions of class, gender, and empire underwrote Austen's canonical status. This was part of a broader move in literary studies to illuminate the functions of the literary institution, and to problematize the category of the aesthetic which was often detached from social function. In particular, the historicist reading pioneered in Marilyn Butler's groundbreaking *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975, rev. edn 1987), which influenced much subsequent feminist and historicist criticism of Austen, was instrumental in transforming Jane Austen's oeuvre into something demanding serious historical analysis rather than a fetish invoked as a habit of ritualistic praise. Indeed, a mark of Butler's determination to demystify Austen studies is her readiness to question our knee-jerk assumptions about Austen's greatness: "are we right to call her a great novelist at all?" (Butler 1975: 298).

Subsequent studies that followed this path of compelling disenchantment illuminated the ways in which Austen's supposed absence of history was linked to the forgetting of history that marks a certain function of the canon in general, and it is not surprising that a good deal of scholarship from this period turned its sights on the novels of Austen's predecessors and contemporaries that hadn't attained canonical status (or in the case of once esteemed writers like Burney and Edgeworth, hadn't *retained* it). As early as 1924, E. M. Forster parodied a certain kind of Austen reading as a mode of uncritical praise: "I read and re-read, the mouth open and the mind closed. Shut up in measureless content, I greet her by the name of most kind hostess, while criticism slumbers."<sup>3</sup> Some revisionist criticism and scholarship enlisted Austen on the side of progressive, protofeminist social criticism, and some showed how Austen as well as the world of her novels were alike blinkered by ideology, but all of it disrupted Janeite slumber, and some of it was attacked in the press for violating her pristine aura, whether by discussing sexuality or simply by using big words.

More recently, however, Jane Austen studies in particular, and the discipline of literary studies more generally, has returned to forms of analysis that had to some extent been problematized or bracketed by such revisionist work – note how Butler

herself had, for example, disparaged literary criticism as it was then practiced as disengaged with history. This renewed attention to literary form registers at once both a move away from many of the historicist readings that so compelled in the 1970s–1990s in their strenuous critique of the canonical Jane Austen, as well as a recalibration or refinement of the relationship between form and context. In this sense, much recent criticism has consolidated the insights of Marxist, feminist, and historicist criticism and gone on to develop analysis within the context of a more focused engagement with the specificity of the cultural objects and practices. Many of the essays in this volume, particularly in Part III, "Literary Genres and Genealogies," mark a return to questions of form, and demonstrate a reenchantment with Austen, with her particular modes of linguistic invention and rhetoricity (see, in particular, Margaret Anne Doody's essay, and the essays by Harry Shaw and Michael Wood). This reenchantment celebrates a sense of magic that is arguably intensified through rediscovery and that comes from a heightened appreciation of the ways in which Austen's linguistic spells are social acts, but spells nonetheless.

Many of these essays thus engage in what we might call the study of the historicity of form, and of form, style, and genre as modes of social practice. This means a new attention to the aesthetic features of the Austen text, as a form of practice and even as a "system," as Mary Poovey has suggested, in her essay "From Politics to Silence: Jane Austen's Nonreferential Aesthetic." Our volume registers this new interest in formal, stylistic, and generic concerns marking recent Austen criticism as part of that recalibration of the relationship between questions of context and form occurring within the development in literary studies that has been referred to, for better or worse, as the "new formalism" (see Levinson 2007), as distinct from older formalisms that were less routinely engaged with social contexts. We see this engagement with form as part of the much larger movement in literary studies toward what Ellen Rooney has referred to as "the revision and reanimation of form in the age of interdisciplinarity" (Rooney 2000: 25).

Another way of characterizing these long-term critical developments would be to say that the criticism of the early to mid twentieth century that was involved in the production of Austen as a canonical oeuvre, conceived of Austen as a supremely commanding and ironic writer who dealt confidently and knowingly in fixed meanings that were largely predetermined. Like most canonical literary criticism of the time, this work rarely considered the profoundly mediated nature of the canonical Austen text because, in large part, it naturalized authorial greatness in general. However, "disenchanted critical practice" demonstrated that there is no natural object. We might say that the result of this revisionist criticism has been not to controvert Austen's canonicity (as though this canonicity were some kind of conspiracy or delusion). Rather, it has demonstrated the ways in which the seemingly natural object of aesthetic beauty can never be separated from its prior readings, and that it is always experienced through them. In this sense, then, Austen's canonicity has everything to do with the intensely mediated nature of Austen as a cultural object of study and experience of textual pleasure. Austen criticism has been transformed over the last 10

years by the ways in which this insight has been incorporated as a kind of working practice.

The awareness of our own historically conditioned and contingent disciplinaryity has imparted a new subtlety to the ways in which critics now negotiate their relation to prior readings, and it has also imparted a new urgency to the ways in which critics and audiences comprehend and conjure with the traces of past readings, past lives, and textual afterlives of Austen. Much Austenian appreciation and criticism is thus animated by a fascinating sense of rereading, reviewing and reencountering the known but in powerful new ways. It's about encountering that enchantment not once and for all, but ever and again. Something of the subtle affective intensity of the rediscovery of a familiar pleasure is what marks Austen current criticism. This sense of rereading has been to some extent an effect of the cinematic culture of adaptation, dissemination, and transformation of Austen. What the cinematic revival of Austen has achieved in particularly spectacular terms has been to draw attention to the transformative mediation which occurs with any act of reading, particularly with an author who is the subject of such profoundly intense and diverse reading cultures as Austen. Cinematic "versions" make manifest the multiplicity of textual versions, and thereby challenge the authority of any one version of the work, and of the author's intention, editor's version, or interpretive version of the work, or the autobiographical versions of the self and others that Austen produces. In this way, they foster an awareness of the variability of the text and its interpretations.

The most interesting forms of critical engagement demonstrate a mobility and a familiarity with these traditions of reception and interpretation. Current Austen criticism is marked by a deftness in reanimating past readings, and in understanding Austen as a product of these readings. Many essays in this *Companion* are keenly engaged in the negotiation of layers of readings, and in the negotiation of the Austen text as a historical object, one that projects the historicity of its own moment of production and original reception, but also those of later moments. This is the nature of the literary text as a historical witness and agent: the literary text projects history, a past, but that projection is always the product of interpretation. And in that sense it is always directed to the future moment of reception and interpretation and reinvention. A simpler way of putting this might be to say that contemporary criticism is about rereading rather than simply reading. It always acknowledges that the object of analysis and the analysis itself is always the product of a prior reading or a prior constitution of the text. This practice of rereading animates Part II, "Reading the Texts," where, in particular, the essays by Susan J. Wolfson and Linda Bree take it as their central theme.

Many of the essays in this volume also register Austen's own pleasure in writing, and in writing as a form of rereading and rewriting, as experimentation and pastiche. In the work of Jane Austen, as Emilio Cecchi, quoted in Anthony Mandal's essay, points out, "a curious stylistic joy is never absent." Much of that stylistic joy is linked to experiments in form and genre. Austen was for so long regarded as the enforcer of correct style, ridiculing lower and more popular literary and cultural forms, and

carrying out this enforcement by nothing other than her atypical genius, her perfect style unself-consciously – and indeed often unconsciously – playing out its blind, relentless destiny toward the perfection of the realist novel. However, as the essays in this volume demonstrate, Austen worked *with* rather than against popular literary genres and diverse cultural forms. Part III, "Literary Genres and Genealogies," illuminates the intertextual indebtedness of Austen's fiction to genres such as gothic (Nancy Armstrong), sentimental fiction (Miranda Burgess), and history writing and historical fiction (Devoney Looser), and to contemporary practitioners of fiction such as Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Ann Radcliffe (Jane Spencer).

By the same token, essays in Part IV, "Political, Social, and Cultural Worlds," also produce encounters of tension and critique between Austen and contemporaries, where previously there had been untroubled concurrence. Mary Spongberg presents an analysis of Austen and Burke, in relation to Burke's account of England's transition from Catholic past to Protestant present, and Deirdre Coleman discusses Austen's relation to the uneasy alliance between feminists and abolitionists such as Hannah More. A number of essays in Part IV demonstrate rich and unexpected connections between Austen's fiction and wider cultural worlds: of war and mass media (Gillian Russell), masculinity (E. J. Clery), consumption (Barbara Benedict and Diego Saglia), music (Gillen D'Arcy Wood), and theatre (Daniel O'Quinn). Gillen D'Arcy Wood relates the piano practice of Jane Austen to the biographical subject to her development of novelistic interiority, and her complex exploration of feminine "accomplishment," social display, and the famous reserve of Jane Fairfax in *Emma*. Similarly, where critics once assumed a censorious asceticism on Austen's part in relation to material things and commodities, Diego Saglia suggests how Austen was "deeply versed in the rituals of conspicuous consumption," and how these rituals pervade her fiction. These serious considerations of Austen's relation to material and to extraliterary culture thus recall with their pictures of carriages, dress, ballrooms and the like, except that while those seemed to testify to the antique charm of Regency England, these are used as instruments of sustained analysis.

Austen has been recast and reconfigured in many ways, and some of the essays here demonstrate the rich multitude of generic uses to which Austen's later readers put her writing, such as Edward Copeland on silver fork reworkings and Katie Trumpener on Austenian New Woman novels. Part V, "Reception and Reinvention," also devotes attention to another feature of contemporary Austen studies, no doubt an effect of the recent Austen surge: the opening up of dialogues between academic and popular modes of Austen reception. Although early twentieth-century Janeites were eminent authors and scholars – think of Forster, Kipling, Caroline Spurgeon, and Chapman himself – the subsequent professionalization of literary study created a largely impassable chasm between popular readers and readings and "legitimate" academic ones, and thus critics rarely discussed the movies, plays, radio broadcasts, and fiction inspired by Austen well before the boom of the 1990s. Many of the essays here celebrate the interplay between the scholarly and the popular, and display keen interest in fan

culture and in affective forms of critical practice. No longer does criticism disavow affective allegiance or the supposedly anachronistic acts of reception informed by sexual identification. Rather than bracketing affect, many of our essays engage with, practice, and cultivate different forms of what Deidre Lynch refers to, in her essay on "Jane Austen and Genius," as "Austen-love." There is a new respect for the intriguing affective ecologies that attach themselves to Austen, in all their effusive glory (see especially the essays by Fiona Bréideoake, Mary Ann O'Farrell, and Judy Simons). Ten years or so ago we might have asked, with Pierre Bourdieu, and as a rhetorical question, "Is it legitimate to invoke the experience of the lover, to make of love, as an astonished abandon to the work grasped in its singularity, the only form of understanding which accords with the work of art?" (Bourdieu 1996: xvii). Today, though, we are far less concerned about the "legitimacy" of love than we are inspired to think about its uses, and about how love crosses intellectual and corporeal domains, high and low. Our *Companion* reflects and licenses this wider move away from the bracketing of evaluation and affect associated with much materialist and new historicist criticism and canon critique, and toward emphasizing cultures of affect and appreciation as productive cultural formations, and working to reconstruct a range of cultures of reading and reception and reinvention.

Practices of affect and history converge as memory. One way that contemporary critical theory and practice has opened up has been in relation to new understandings of history as a practice of cultural memory. Many of the essays in this volume are concerned with the ways in which history is about the moment of original production and reception but also about later interpretations. Cultural objects are changed by these acts of reception. They speak of both the earlier and later moments. In particular, Daniel O'Quinn's essay engages the relationship between historical reading and theatrical and social performance as acts of memory.

This brings us to another site of intense scholarly interest: Austen and history. The question of how historical Austen is continues to intrigue and fascinate. A number of essays in our volume analyze the diversity of Austen's modes of historical representation (Spongberg, Jones, Looser, Coleman). Mary Poovey's essay, for example, examines "the narrative system" Austen developed in order to "carefully manage the historical traces her novels contain." Gillian Russell, in her essay "The Army, the Navy, and the Napoleonic Wars," argues for a particular kind of mark of the historical in Austen's fiction, claiming that Austen's fiction can be thought of as "a kind of military library," where the "hum of wartime, if not the blast or cry of battle, pervades her fiction." As Devoney Looser suggests, the question of Austen, history and historicity needs to address how history has usually been understood. It is also about recognizing, as Devoney Looser does, that the practice of history can mean an engagement with wars or with the most minute details of current everyday life and social history. History is not always about proper context; it is often about complex affective states and journeys and reflections and speculations. In a similar way, a number of essays engage the question of time, and the complex relations between past, present, and future that inform Austen's fiction (see Mary Favret's essay on "Jane Austen's Periods,"

and the essays by Daniel O'Quinn and Michael Wood). These essays engage the multiple temporalities that disturb and complicate Austen's seemingly smooth and unruined realistic textual surface.

As the essays in the *Companion* demonstrate, discussions about history and historicity in relation to Austen often involve the materialism of sociohistorical analysis in relation to broad social and historical contexts; and they can also involve an engagement with the materialism of a signifier in a particular discursive field, and a sense of the text itself, in all its minute detail, as a projection of history. The text as a projection of history implies a sense of temporal dislocation – inevitably anachronistic but productively so too – in its capacity to inhabit multiple historical moments. For, as a projection of history, the text is a revelatory relic and record of the past that exists in the present and is projected toward the future. It never occupies one single moment, but speaks with the voice of the past as activated in the present of reading, moving toward the future, and back again. The Marxist cultural historian, Raymond Williams, in *The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence* (1970), brought the term "worldliness" to the debate about Austen and history, where it is a byword for mercenary impulses and for something opposed to passion. (Williams formulates this as part of a recasting of the familiar Austen/Brontë opposition.) He writes "A certain worldliness, readily understandable in earlier periods (though never, I think, as persuasive as it is made out), made for the qualification of love; found its value as social exchange and respect, as most coolly in Jane Austen" (p. 61). Our *Companion* celebrates this worldliness, as the stuff of history and social details and life and complexity and love. This worldliness is the stuff certainly of "social exchange," but of social exchange conceived of as a complex and layered world and multiplicity of engagement. We would say, pace Williams, that a certain worldliness makes for the intensification of love, and that it does so most warmly in Jane Austen. Part IV, "Political, Social, and Cultural Worlds," in particular, presents the worldliness of Austen's worlds and of their multiplicity.

Something of this worldliness informs Humphry Repton's conception of the "Modern Living Room" in his *Fragments of the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816), featured on our cover. Landscape gardener, professional improver, and protagonist in debates about the picturesque, Repton was fond of advertising his handiwork with before-and-after illustrations designed to show the improving effects of his miracles of modernization. Thus the lively, crowded afterstory of the "Modern Living Room" is contrasted to the gloomy *before* of the "Ancient Cedar Parlour," inhabited only by a circle of clunky empty chairs that mutely regard each other in overupholstered discomfort. Such brisk and insouciant refashionings of the complicated relations between past and present help explain the generous sprinkling of ironic and parodic allusions to Repton that Austen features as homage throughout *Mansfield Park*. The ambivalent nature of such homage notwithstanding, the "Modern Living Room" features a scene of a certain companionship, warmth, and sociability that we think Austen would have readily recognized and understood. Here are people in animated conversation, a woman playing a harp, men and women of different ages

conversing in chairs, strolling the room, and sitting on light elegant chairs reading; reading silently, alone; reading aloud communally at a table, and reading to and with a child, the little girl pointing out the words with her outstretched arm. Apart from these multiple scenes of reading, Repton's "Modern Living Room" also features books on shelves – a lot of books on shelves, with gaps on the shelves to indicate where books have been taken down for the purposes of reading for the occasion. Books, in short, are central protagonists in this vision and experience of "modern living." This vision features, as do the novels of Jane Austen, in the words of Miranda Burgess, "print culture – reading – as inseparable from social life."

As we know, and as Austen's novels remind us ever and again, a book is not simply an object, but a practice and a sociable event and occasion, a bit like a party. And Austen appreciated both, as her letters to Cassandra from over a fortnight in London in April in 1811 amply suggest. Staying in Sloane Street, Austen wrote to Cassandra with news of a weekend of visiting the Liverpool Museum, the British Gallery, going shopping ("spending all my Money [and] spending yours too"), and staving in with a cold instead of going to a play, and then going out to see Molière's *Tartuffe*, but missing Mrs Siddons (*Letters*: 179–80, 184). She also writes of trying to acquire a copy of Mary Brunton's *Self-Control*, "but in vain" (*Letters*: 186), and in reply to Cassandra's news about an acquaintance who had just read *Sense and Sensibility*: "No indeed, I am never too busy to think of S&S. I can no more forget it, than a mother can forget her suckling child" (*Letters*: 182). Even so, she did look forward to a party: "The day of the Party is settled, and drawing near; above 80 people are invited . . . & there is to be some very good Music. One of the Hirelings, is a Capital on the Harp, from which I expect great pleasure" (*Letters*: 179–80). So do we, and we hope the reader finds this volume to be an occasion of pleasure.

## NOTES

- 1 James's remarks, originally appearing in "The lesson of Balzac" (1905) and reprinted in *The House of Fiction*, are included in B. C. Southam's invaluable *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, 1870–1940*, vol. 2. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, p. 230.
  - 2 D. W. Harding (1980). Regulated hatred: An aspect of the work of Jane Austen. In Monica Lawlor (Ed.), *Regulated Hatred and Other Essays on Jane Austen* (pp. 5–26). London: Athlone Press. Harding's essay was first delivered as a lecture in 1939 and first published in *Scrutiny* 8 (1940), pp. 346–62.
- From a review of Chapman's edition of Austen's novels originally published in *Nation and Athenaeum*, January 5, 1924, and reprinted in E. M. Forster's *Abinger Harvest* (pp. 145–8). London: Edward Arnold, 1936.

fact about representation that the Restriction made visible. And third, the nostalgia the conclusion conveys, as the tonal mark of lost possibilities, expresses what passage of the Restriction Act made clear and what must have grown more obvious as the Restriction period dragged on: the power associated with landed gentlemen like Darcy was beginning to wane in favor of the power exercised by the moneyed men who backed the Restriction. Whatever its other effects, after all, the Restriction Act and its prolongation made it clear that the Bank of England's directors were successfully equating the interests of the Bank – and not the landed gentry – with the welfare of the nation as a whole. Thus the gentle rebuke Elizabeth deals to herself – “what becomes of the moral, if our comfort springs from a breach of promise” – preserves what Darcy represents in a kind of historical aspic, memorializing the comfort he can confer in the novel as an appealing, but increasingly distant, possibility for Austen and her readers. The way in which Austen memorializes the possibility associated with Darcy is also deeply ironic, of course, for sanctioning the violation of Lydia's and Mrs Gardiner's and Elizabeth's promises can clear the way for Elizabeth to know, and for Darcy to act upon, their mutual love, but sanctioning the Bank's violation of its promise to pay, as this resolution implicitly does, acceded to the transformation of political power that was already beginning to marginalize Britain's actual landed gentry.

The anxieties that we know the Bank Restriction Act to have provoked in many of Jane Austen's contemporaries register in *Pride and Prejudice*, if they do at all, in a muted and indirect way – through the complex dynamics of a narrative that forecloses reference, the thematic and formal treatment of representation, and the ambiguous register of tone. But this makes sense, too, for, unlike her more radical peers, Austen did not want literary writing to be a political engine, nor did she want simply to provide escapist fantasies for her readers. The aesthetic she developed, which curtails reference by raising, then dismissing, the issue of representation, constituted an engagement with the social situation that her readers could experience, but not find distressing. That this engagement was complex as well as enjoyable should come as no surprise – given the complexity by which Austen made Elizabeth Bennet's engagement to Darcy so pleasurable for readers to share.

#### FURTHER READING

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## The Army, the Navy, and the Napoleonic Wars

Gillian Russell

### I

Jane Austen grew to maturity as a writer during one of the most significant conflicts in British history – the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars of 1793–1815. Apart from the Peace of Amiens of 1802–3 and the temporary “peace” of 1814, Britain was at war with France for an exhausting 22 years. The first truly “world” war, fought in many theatres on both land and sea, the struggle against France had profound effects on many levels of British society – political, cultural, and economic. By 1814 a quarter of a million men were serving in the regular army, while the navy grew tenfold between 1789 and 1812. However, as Linda Colley has shown in an influential argument, more than bodies were mobilized in defense of the nation (Colley 1992). The French Wars also entailed a struggle for hearts and minds and had an enduring effect on nation formation, as patriotic loyalty was encouraged in order to counter the French threat abroad and its domestic counterpart, radical disaffection, at home. What it meant to be a “true” Briton became an ideological battleground, as keenly disputed as the English Channel or the field of Waterloo. While no battles were fought on the British mainland during the Wars, the impact of the conflict was inescapable, particularly in the region which Austen knew best – the south-east of England. Between 1798 and 1803 when invasion by Napoleon's forces was felt to be imminent, the south coast was on full alert, the resources of the auxiliary home defense force, the militia, being augmented by volunteers, the first attempt at mass mobilization in British history. It is estimated that by 1804 around half a million men, consisting of regular soldiers, the militia, and the volunteers, were under arms in Britain.

Austen had a personal interest in the fortunes of war in the form of the career of her brother Henry, who joined the Oxfordshire Militia in 1793 and later became an army agent. Henry's military connections underpinned his later venture into banking and were also relevant, as I will suggest, to Austen's emergence as a published writer. Two other brothers, Francis (Frank) and Charles, had more conspicuous careers in the

Royal Navy, Frank rising ultimately to the rank of Admiral of the Fleet (in 1865) while Charles became a Rear Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of the East India and China Station (1850). Both men were on active service when Austen was writing her major novels. In spite of these contexts, Austen's fiction has traditionally been regarded as innocuous about the subject of war, though that view has recently undergone serious revision (see Southam 2005, Fulford 2002 Favret 2005). Soldiers and sailors are as ubiquitous a presence in her novels and letters as they were in the streets, Downs, and coastal waters of southern England. The hum of wartime, if not the blast or cry of battle, pervades her fiction. This chapter will outline two major aspects of Austen's engagement with the wartime conditions of late Georgian Britain: how her fiction addresses the professionalization of the military and its implications for the gentry class to which she belonged, and associated with this, her exploration, particularly in *Persuasion*, of war as a media event. The French Wars are significant, not only for their global scale, but also because they coincided with a major expansion of the print trade and the consolidation of the Romantic reading public. Austen's fiction is remarkable, I will argue, for its representation of how print culture spread news about war, shaping and influencing public opinion; as products of print culture her novels are also part of that very process, with implications for how we interpret them and her achievement as a professional writer.

The army and the navy, in addition to the church, were the main professions open to gentlemen of Austen's class, particularly those without prospects of inheriting wealth and property who needed to make their fortunes. Becoming an officer in the regular army entailed the purchase of a commission and was thus more expensive than joining the militia, the officers of which were chosen by the Lord Lieutenant of the relevant county; as regular army service could involve service overseas it was also riskier than the home-based militia. Austen's militia officers are George Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*, who seeks refuge in the service after he crosses his patrons in the Darcy family, and *Emma's* Mr Weston, who comes from a family that is "respectable" and "rising" but of limited financial resources and ambitions (*E*: 15). For both men the militia offers opportunities for geographical and class mobility: it enables Weston to meet and marry the eminent Miss Churchill of Yorkshire, while for Wickham the army is a means to reinvent himself beyond the reach, he thinks, of his Derbyshire connections. Becoming a soldier takes Colonel Brandon in *Sense and Sensibility* even further afield, to the East Indies. Austen implies that as a younger son of a family whose estate is "much encumbered" Brandon had little option but to pursue a military career (*SS*: 205). By suggesting that Brandon's experience of the East would include knowledge of "nabobs, gold mohrs, and palanquins," that is, the trappings of oriental corruption, Willoughby implies that the Colonel's military service was motivated by self-aggrandizement (*SS*: 51). For the Colonel himself, however, soldiering is associated with estrangement and suffering. While he was overseas with his regiment, his first love, Eliza, married against her will to Brandon's brother, had fallen from virtue and it was "nearly three years" before he could return to England to discover her on her death bed (*SS*: 207). Another military officer who speaks "feelingly" about his

position as a younger son is Colonel Fitzwilliam in *Pride and Prejudice* who, in conversation with Elizabeth Bennet, contrasts his situation with that of Darcy: "A younger son, you know, must be inured to self-denial and dependence" (*PP*: 183). The very fact that Fitzwilliam is in the army is a sign of the constraints on him as a gentleman though, as Elizabeth Bennet boldly points out, as a son of an earl he has very little to complain about. Austen's representation of military service is therefore an important aspect of her finely calibrated sense of interclass and intraclass, gender, and familial hierarchies, enabling her to render the different experiences and competitiveness of men such as Willoughby and Brandon, or Fitzwilliam and Darcy, in the ironic light of the more profound disadvantages of genteel women.

The status of the military as a profession is also raised by Edward Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility*. He preferred the church but "that was not smart enough for my family. They recommended the army. That was a great deal too smart for me" (*SS*: 102). In nominating the "army," by which Ferrars means an elite regiment in the regular army, as "too smart," Austen was alluding to the military as a means of access to the "right" social circles, with possible long-term consequences for a gentleman's career. For most of the eighteenth century becoming an officer was regarded as a means to an end – the enhancement of status – rather than as a vocation of intrinsic value to the nation. Socializing was therefore not merely a distraction from the serious business of war, but a means of gaining notice, as well as reinforcing the ties with civilian society that affirmed one's gentlemanly identity. Thus Wickham confides in Elizabeth Bennet that it was "the prospect of constant society, and good society," that attracted him to the militia, rather than, implicitly, a burning desire to serve his country (*PP*: 79). *Pride and Prejudice* as a whole explores the integration of the military into provincial polite society, in the form of the redcoat presence at balls and assemblies, and the spectacle of military encampments near places such as Brighton. The latter, part of the mobilization against Napoleon, were also opportunities for communal festivity and entertainment. As I have argued elsewhere, theatricality was crucial to military ideology and practice in this period (Russell 1995). Display, parade, and ceremonial ritual, including the ritual of punishment, reinforced the group identity, hierarchy, and discipline that were essential to the effective conduct of war on the battlefield. The sociable behavior of soldiers of all ranks – ranging from attendance at balls and playhouses to drinking in taverns – was an extension of this theatricality, forming a zone of interaction between military and civilian worlds that was important in maintaining the bond between the people of Britain and their defenders.

This zone of interaction, as Austen's fiction reveals, had gendered and sexual meanings. The mobility that was intrinsic to military life not only facilitated access for gentlemen officers into families and social situations that were closed to men whose rank and background were more normatively fixed, but also enclosed the officer with an additional element of mystery and allure. Hence the appeal of Wickham for the Bennet girls partly derives from his status as an exotic outsider in Meryton. Captain Frederick Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* is another officer interloper, whose behavior both intrigues and baffles Catherine Morland. Described as "a very fashionable-looking,

handsome young man," Tilney has no compunction in using Catherine as a foil in order to conduct a flirtation with Isabella Thorpe, who is engaged to Catherine's brother, in the very public context of the Bath pump rooms (NA: 131). Catherine is compelled to sit by in uncomfortable silence as he speaks, "low" and urgently, to Isabella (NA: 147). Henry Tilney later attempts to assuage Catherine's anxieties over his brother's interest in Isabella. "His leave of absence will soon expire, and he must return to his regiment," Henry advises. "And what will then be their acquaintance? — The mess-room will drink Isabella Thorpe for a fortnight, and she will laugh with your brother over poor Tilney's passion for a month" (NA: 152–3). It is clear that Captain Tilney's visit to Bath was an interlude in active service and therefore subject to the particular conditions and constraints associated with "R and R" — sexual irresponsibility, self-indulgence, even desperation. Henry Tilney's advice to Catherine is both reassurance and a coded warning, his reference to the male homosociality of the mess-room acknowledging the predatory behavior of his brother and the vulnerability of any young woman who flirts with an officer. As a socially responsible man of taste, who combines parish duties with pump room politesse, Henry Tilney is contrasted with his mercurial soldier brother and with his father, the calculating General Tilney who shows Catherine Morland the door of Northanger Abbey when he discovers that she is not an heiress. A soldier who could have seen service in the American War of Independence and who has gained his social position and wealth through marriage, General Tilney represents Austen's sharpest critique of the officer as a man on the make. As Carolyn D. Williams has shown, Austen's depiction of the General may have been influenced by the dubious career of another general, John Gunning (Williams 1998: 41–62). The latter was brother to the celebrity Irish beauties, the Gunning sisters, and owed his career to their influence with their aristocratic husbands. In the early 1790s he became notorious for a complex scandal involving his wife, the novelist Susannah Minifie Gunning, and their daughter Elizabeth Gunning, which culminated in Gunning expelling his wife and child from his household. Soon after, the General was sued for adultery with the wife of a superior of military uniform. The barrister Thomas Erskine famously apostrophized Gunning as a "hoary lecher." While General Tilney's peccadilloes do not extend beyond the acquisition of the latest china or a Rumford stove, together with his son, the "gallant" Captain Frederick, he reflects the view of the officer class that had prevailed for most of the eighteenth century — as gentlemen who were both inside and outside-their class, glamorous defenders of the nation who were also, potentially, its greatest threat.

Such a view conditions Austen's representation of the military in *Pride and Prejudice*. Lydia Bennet swoons at the prospective "glories of the camp" at Brighton: "its tents stretched forth in beautiful uniformity of lines, crowded with the young and the gay, and dazzling with scarlet; and to complete the view, she saw herself seated beneath a tent, tenderly flirting with at least six officers at once" (PP: 232). This prospect evokes a satirical print by James Gillray, "Fatigues of the Campaign in Flanders" (1793), depicting generals, including the Duke of York, consorting with female camp



Figure 22.1 James Gillray, *Fatigues of the Campaign in Flanders*, Lewis Walpole Library — 793.5.20.1+.

followers (Figure 22.1). The implicit argument of Gillray's print is that by engaging with "society," here identified with the sexual charms of women, Britain's defenders risked the security of their class, their masculinity and ultimately, their nation. *Pride and Prejudice*, written and published during the height of the Peninsular War, would seem to endorse this view, in its representation of the giddy Lydia "sighing for a soldier" and the superficiality of George Wickham. However, considered as a whole, Austen's fiction suggests a more complex position on changing attitudes towards an officer class in this period. Rather than martial virility being compromised by an engagement with female "society" or, conversely, female "innocence" being exposed to a predatory soldiery, the novels highlight the mutual investment of men and women in the sociable, affective, and erotic dimensions of wartime experience. A striking example of this is the only reference to a rank and file soldier in Austen's work. In *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth Bennet returns from her visit to Netherfield to learn from Kitty and Lydia that "several officers, had dined lately with their uncle, a private had been flogged, and it had actually been hinted that Colonel Forster was going to be married" (PP: 60). As Tim Fulford has noted, the flogging of soldiers and sailors was politically contentious, part of an antiwar critique by radicals such as William Cobbett (Fulford 2002: 165–8). The insouciance with which the younger Bennet girls refer to the flogging, making it less important than the prospect of Colonel Forster's marriage, suggests their callous immaturity. But the very fact that

this "information," in Austen's terms, is conveyed within a network primarily of women also has relevance to the arguments about war in which the critique of flogging featured. A crucial issue for radicals such as Cobbett and John Thelwall was that the army should not be used as an instrument of tyranny against the people. The numerous barracks constructed across England after 1789 were regarded as problematic because they detached the affections and loyalties of the ordinary soldier from the mass of the people to whom he belonged: barracks could corrupt those inside as much as they were capable of oppressing those without. Underlying such critiques was the principle that the military was part of society as a whole, to which it owed obligations and duties. While Austen's fiction does not endorse a radical position on the role of the army, its emphasis on military sociability shares a concern with the place of the armed forces in civilized society. Elizabeth Bennet's curiosity about Colonel Fitzwilliam's career, the delight Lydia takes in a uniform and even gossip about a flogging all suggest that, far from being passive spectators of war, women were implicated too in both its pains and its pleasures.

## II

Austen's fiction therefore reflects a profoundly ambivalent view of the military, which only began to change after the victories of the Peninsular War and the emergence of Wellington as a national hero. As a bastion of Britain's imperial and commercial power, the Royal Navy was regarded more positively, but not without some qualification. Admiral Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, who keeps a mistress and whose circle is the target of Mary Crawford's questionable joke about "Rears and Vices," indicates that the senior service could be as worldly as its counterparts in the army. As Brian Southam (2005) has shown, *Mansfield Park* is a study in the workings of patronage in the navy, of which Austen had direct knowledge in the form of the careers of her brothers. The promotion of Fanny Price's brother William is dependent upon the political influence of Sir Thomas Bertram and strings pulled by Admiral Crawford at the behest of his nephew Henry, who wants to ingratiate himself with Fanny. Henry Crawford, like Willoughby, Darcy, and Frank Churchill, is one of those gentlemen whose wealth and familial status mean that military service is optional. He experiences some envy of the fact that Fanny's brother has rested himself, both mentally and physically, in the heat of battle: "he wished he had been a William Price, distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour," to which Austen adds crisply "The wish was rather eager than lasting" (MP: 236). Crawford's "war envy" is a sign of how the ideological security of the gentleman was beginning to be threatened by changes in the reputation of the military profession as a result of the French wars. The navy, as exemplified by the career of Horatio Nelson, demonstrated that active service in defense of one's country could confer a value and status on the individual surpassing that of rank, defining in the process too a different kind of masculinity, forged by what Crawford discerns

in William as "the glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance" (MP: 236).

Austen develops this theme more fully in *Persuasion*, published posthumously in 1818 but set during the peace of 1814 before the renewal of hostilities that culminated in the Battle of Waterloo. In the character of Captain Wentworth, a younger son without a fortune who rises by means of talent and good luck to the rank of captain and £25,000, Austen represents the officer class of the navy as an alternative to the degenerate landed gentry, exemplified by Sir Walter Elliot. Wentworth has the charm of other military characters in Austen's fiction — he is as adept in the concert or dining room as he is on the quarterdeck — but his ease in polite society is contextualized in terms of the more authentic sociability which he practices with his fellow officers, based on mutual respect, informality, steadfastness, and honesty. Anne Elliot encounters this naval brotherhood when she visits the Harvilles at Lyme: Austen's description of naval hospitality as "bewitching" (P: 98), a term also applied to the "wit" of Wentworth (P: 27), suggests that in their own way naval manners could be as seductive as those of a redcoat. "These would have been all my friends," Anne ponders wistfully (P: 98), and in general *Persuasion* commends the naval profession as a more inclusive social model in which women might find a place as "friends" rather than as primarily wives, daughters, or mothers. Austen's emphasis on the navy "at home" — as consumers, readers, and playgoers rather than as distant defenders of the nation — reflects the long-standing concern in her fiction with the familiarity of wartime experience. As Mary Favret has argued (2005), *Persuasion* is suffused with the sense of war as part of the everyday and in particular, with anxiety, loss, and wounding, of both the mind and the body. The pain of war is implicit elsewhere in Austen's fiction, for example in the reference to flogging in *Pride and Prejudice*, the sufferings of Colonel Brandon, or in the life of Jane Fairfax, a war orphan, but *Persuasion* represents her most sustained exploration of war as an affective experience.

The French wars had such an impact, *Persuasion* suggests, largely because of the role of print in mediating them to an eager reading public. The growth in the number of newspapers after 1750, combined with improvements in transport and postal services, meant that news of Britain's wars could be disseminated more quickly and widely than ever before. Families such as the Austens learnt about what was happening in the theatres of war by a combination of the press and private correspondence. Sometimes these media could overlap, as the newspapers relied on dispatches and letters from soldiers and sailors for their information about the wars: in 1800, for example, *The Times* published a letter from Frank Austen to his commander giving details about an action in which his ship, the *Petterell*, had been involved in the Mediterranean: "I have a lively pleasure," he declared, "that this service has been performed without a man hurt on our part" (Austen 1800). The time taken to convey news of major battles may seem slow in comparison with real-time news coverage of war today — it took 16 days for news of the battle of Trafalgar to reach the Admiralty in London — but once reports had arrived in the metropolises they could be conveyed comparatively quickly via newspapers which normally reached Steventon, for example,



one or two days after publication in London. The simultaneity of reading about war in the newspapers helped to define it as a national experience, creating an "imagined community" in Benedict Anderson's terms (1983). Conversely, the anxiety of not knowing, of scanning the newspaper for information that was not there, was also experienced collectively through the medium of print.

The importance of the newspaper as a medium of information about the French Wars and the role of men as gatekeepers of that intelligence are apparent in *Mansfield Park* when Henry Crawford discovers news of William Price's ship by means of his uncle's newspaper, the Admiral "having for many years taken in the paper esteemed to have the earliest naval intelligence" (MP: 232). Crawford then uses this news of William to promote his interest with Fanny. Much of Austen's commentary about the Wars in her letters takes the form of the relaying of information about Frank and Charles gleaned from the newspapers: in 1805, for example, she reported to Cassandra that their mother had "seen in the papers that the Urania [Charles's ship] was waiting at Portsmouth for the Convoy for Halifax" (Letter: 101). The fact that the Austens could discover information of direct personal interest to them reflects how the Georgian newspaper could combine news of general national importance with specific quotidian detail about fleet movements, battles, promotions, or losses. The men named in this way (and implicitly the women reading about them) were therefore accorded a wider national significance and value: family news was war news and vice versa. Print culture in the form of the newspaper could enable men of Austen's class to achieve publicity and status in a way they never had before, to the envy of stay-at-home gentlemen such as Henry Crawford whose dubious claim to newspaper fame is a mention as "the captivating Mr. C" in the "matrimonial fracas" at Wimpole Street (MP: 440).

The status of the French Wars as partly a reading event, what Mary Favret has called the period's "war literacy," was a matter of concern to some commentators (Favret 1996: 181). Samuel Taylor Coleridge argued that the private opinions of combatants, some of which made it to the newspapers in the form of letters, were liable to misinterpretation: "The impression made by each Officer on his relatives and connections spreads in ever-widening circles; and from the nature of our imagination, a few particular facts attested by an eye-witness of our own acquaintance, will produce a livelier conviction for, or against, a whole cause, than the clearest general reasoning . . . communicated through the common channels of public information" (1978: 44). Seeking to assert the authority of his own opinion on the war, Coleridge implicitly genders the information flow to and from the battlefields of Spain, contrasting the uncontrollability of feminized "private" talk about war, prone to imaginative excess, with the clarity and rationality of public "information" regulated in the proper channels. It is precisely the circulation of war news in these "ever-widening circles" and the impact of war on the imagination that forms the subject of *Persuasion*. Austen's last completed novel needs to be seen in the context not only of newspaper publicity but also as part of a response to the French Wars by print culture as a whole — in other words, the emergence of a Romantic war literature. Some of this literature took

the form of the kind of poetic meditation on war that has become familiar to us from World War I. But equally significant was the literature debating and theorizing war, such as Charles William Pasley's *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire* (1810) which Austen read in 1813, as well as manuals and treatises giving practical advice to the aspiring soldier and sailor.<sup>1</sup> One notable promoter of the latter kind of text was Thomas Egerton, the publisher of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Mansfield Park*. From the late 1790s Egerton was mainly known as a publisher and seller of books of military interest, promoting his "Military Library" at Whitehall. It is possible that Henry Austen's military connections, deriving from his period in the Oxfordshire Militia, were a factor in persuading Egerton to publish Jane Austen's novels, which stand out in the publisher's largely military output. This aspect of Egerton's profile has received comparatively little attention in Austen studies: it is relevant because it locates her fiction as a kind of "military library" in its own right, linking her endeavors as a literary professional with her brother Henry's circle and with an entrepreneur such as Egerton.

Another publishing enterprise relating to the French Wars that is directly relevant to Austen's fiction is the *Naval Chronicle*. Established in 1799, this journal claimed to be "open to all the gradations of the Navy": its aims were "to do good, and to give pain to no one," offering a source of "amusement and instruction" to sailors at sea and informing the public as a whole of the value of the naval profession, "by whose exertions Great Britain stands pre-eminent in the scale of political importance" (1799: iii). Its coverage included biographies of notable sailors, "naval poetry" (including prologues and epilogues from shipboard theatricals), a register of naval events, letters containing information about engagements and battles, weather reports from Plymouth and Portsmouth, illustrations by naval artists, accounts of births, deaths, and marriages, and a list of "ships lost, destroyed, captured, and recaptured." The 1799 Prospectus for the journal also stressed the importance of its "Literary Department" which relied on the "Communications of Naval Friends" (n.d.: 2). Austen was certainly familiar with the *Naval Chronicle* as Frank and Charles gave accounts of their exploits in its pages (Southam 2005: 54, 230). The project of the journal — its promotion of the moral utility of the naval profession, its rhetoric of inclusiveness, its intellectual curiosity and emphasis on plain-speaking, its very vocabulary of friendship, doing "good," "exertions" — all suggest that it was a major influence on Austen's fiction and on *Persuasion* in particular. Most importantly, the inclusiveness of the community implied by the *Naval Chronicle* also extended to women. The journal's reference to marriages and births acknowledged women as part of the larger naval "family": in 1814, for example, the birth was announced of Austen's niece Cassandra Eliza, daughter of "Captain Austin [sic], of HMS Eicphant" (Southam 2005: 291). Some of the notices in the journal were more poignant. In 1799 the death by drowning of a Lieutenant Kinmeere was reported: his father, also serving in the navy, first learnt of his son's death "by seeing it in a newspaper accidentally." In commenting that "the shock can be conceived, but not described," the writers of the *Naval Chronicle* were acknowledging the suffering of war and the role of print in mediating it (1799,

vol. II: 548). Austen does something similar in *Persuasion* when Wentworth gives an account of how he was nearly drowned with his sloop, the Asp: "I should only have been a gallant Captain Wentworth, in a small paragraph at one corner of the newspapers; and being lost in only a sloop, nobody would have thought about me." "Anne's shudders were to herself, alone," Austen comments (P: 66). *Persuasion* as a whole is concerned with what it means to imagine and experience conflict in the "ever-widening circles" of those connected with soldiers and sailors in Britain's theatres of war, circles which were increasingly being made more visible by print culture and thereby accorded national political significance. Moreover, Austen suggests that the virtues of those who wait at home were as valuable as those who fought in their name: significantly, the qualities which Henry Crawford envies in William Price – "usefulness," "exertion," "endurance" – are identified with Anne Elliot, suggesting that she, and women in general, were capable of their own "glory of heroism." In its attentiveness to the role of print culture in defining the boundaries of the political nation – the meritocracy represented by the *Navy List* being contrasted with the otiose dynastic histories of the *Baronetage*, Sir Walter Elliot's favorite reading – *Persuasion* also makes implicit claims for the novel itself as a rational "channel of information" about war, and for novel writing itself as a profession of comparable "national importance" to the army and navy.

Austen's fictional representation of wartime was part of a broader phenomenon, a Romantic war literature that is only beginning to receive recognition. Real-life William Prices, and even the private soldier, the flogged nobody of *Pride and Prejudice*, would subsequently use print culture to achieve public names for themselves in the many military memoirs that appeared after 1815. In its deployment and exploration of the power of print and the rehabilitation of the military profession, Austen's fiction reflects the conditions that led to the emergence of these subaltern voices. The aftermath of war also features in her novels in the form of the deceptive stability of Highbury in *Emma*, circumscribed by a world of change, or conversely, the mania for alteration in *Sanditon*, in which the England of Austen's early work seems no longer recognizable. *Sanditon* is also a novel about the forgetting of war, its becoming history, the entrepreneur Mr Parker regretting naming his housing venture Trafalgar House because "Waterloo is more the thing now" (MW: 380).

Finally, for a writer whose work has been traditionally regarded as oblivious to the world of war, it is remarkable how frequently Austen's iconic status has been mobilized at times of crisis such as World War I, the London Blitz, and even the Iraq War that began in 2003. In an essay on the Iraq War for the US PBS program *NewsHour*, first broadcast in May 2003, Roger Rosenblatt asked the question: "Which was of greater importance, Jane Austen's novels or Napoleon's conquests and defeats . . . what matters most in a war . . . ? Sometimes one wonders what constitutes news at all." For Rosenblatt, Austen's novels represent war's antithesis, the enduring realities of domestic or private life, marriage, birth and death, but his comment is also an unconscious acknowledgement, and ultimately a product of, her own questioning of the affective experience of "news" and what "matters most in a war."

## NOTES

I would like to acknowledge the research assistance of Neil Ramsey. I have also benefited considerably from discussions with Neil about military memoirs of this period. 1 For Austen's response to Pausley see Vivien Jones (2005). Reading for England: Austen, taste, and female patriotism. *European Romantic Review*, 16:2, 221–30.

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