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# Austen, Byron, and Scott: Domestic Virtues and Fashioning History Britain 1805 through 1819

Joan Garden Cooper

*University of Denver*, [joangardencooperdu@gmail.com](mailto:joangardencooperdu@gmail.com)

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AUSTEN, BYRON, AND SCOTT: DOMESTIC VIRTUES AND  
FASHIONING HISTORY BRITAIN 1805 THROUGH 1819

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Joan Garden Cooper

June 2011

Advisor: Benjamin Kim

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### ABSTRACT

James Chandler in *England in 1819: the Politics Of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* says that the second-generation Romantic writers were in essence historicist. According to Chandler, the literary work of England in 1819 is concerned with its own historical self-representation. Romantic writers can be regarded as fashioning the history by which they must be understood. Chandler regards Romanticism as a crucial period because despite the relatively short span of years to which it is usually assigned (1790-1830), close attention has been paid to its literary activity (3). Chandler's concern is "with writings that seek to state *the case of the nation*—and do so in such a way as to alter its case" (6). A primary concern for second-generation Romantic writers was to examine through their texts and correspondence Britain's national identity because their writings demonstrate their desire to participate in "a national self-making or remaking," underscoring future possibilities for changes in the existing societal order.

My dissertation investigates three second-generation Romantic writers, Jane Austen, Lord Byron, and Sir Walter Scott. I argue they fashioned history by arguing for certain "domestic virtues" that would determine the future course of the nation and national identity. Examining a brief time span in the Romantic period, 1805-1819, my dissertation explores these writers' treatment of domestic issues and national identity in

the following texts: Austen's *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*; Byron's *The Corsair* and *Lara*; and Scott's *Ivanhoe*. At issue is how these writers' individualized yet communal sense of history, both personal and public, impacts their narrative accounts of domestic issues and national identity. Their texts examine both the national and personal aspects of domestic virtues. On a national level their texts investigate domestic issues, such as Britain's involvement in the slave trade, women's education, public and private morality in Regency England in 1814, and Scotland's place within Britain in 1819. Austen, Byron and Scott unite the past to the present to create a narrative structure of community and national history.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Domestic Virtues and Fashioning History—Britain 1805 through 1819**

Nineteenth-century England underwent significant imperial, societal, and industrial transformations that have deeply affected the development of modern society. Beginning in 1815, England rapidly began to form what would become the largest empire in history, reigning over hundreds of thousands of people in colonies that covered nearly a quarter of the globe's land mass. The landscape of England itself altered to accommodate the steam engine and a wealthier bourgeois class. Today, the Western world cannot separate modern cultural or industrial development from nineteenth-century England.

However, prior to imperial and industrial success, Britain faced France in terror of losing its independence. In 1809, Napoleon seemed to be an unstoppable force, having taken over Italy, conquered the Prussian army, and effectively redistributed power all over Europe. Napoleon now looked north to conquer Great Britain. Though Britain was weakened by the War of 1812 with the United States, the British navy still acted as England's strongest blockade, preventing Napoleon from crossing the English Channel. In 1815, Napoleon's army was finally defeated at Waterloo.

James Chandler in *England in 1819: the Politics Of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* says that the second-generation Romantic writers were in essence historicist. According to Chandler, the literary work of England in 1819 is



concerned with its own historical self-representation. Romantic writers can be regarded as fashioning the history by which they must be understood. Chandler regards Romanticism as a crucial period because despite the relatively short span of years to which it is usually assigned (1790-1830), close attention has been paid to its literary activity (3). Specifically investigating the literary work of England in 1819, Chandler finds it is concerned with “with a national operation of self-dating, or redating, that is meant to count as a national self-making or remaking” (5). In other words, Chandler’s concern is “with writings that seek to state *the case of the nation*—and do so in such a way as to alter its case” (6). A primary concern for second-generation Romantic writers was to examine through their texts and correspondence Britain’s national identity because their writings demonstrate their desire to participate in “a national self-making or remaking,” underscoring future possibilities for changes in the existing societal order.

My dissertation investigates three second-generation Romantic writers, Jane Austen, Lord Byron, and Sir Walter Scott. I argue they fashioned history by arguing for certain “domestic virtues” that would determine the future course of the nation and national identity. Examining a brief time span in the Romantic period, 1805-1819, my dissertation explores these writers’ treatment of domestic issues and national identity in the following texts: Austen’s *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*; Byron’s *The Corsair* and *Lara*; and Scott’s *Ivanhoe*. At issue is how these writers’ individualized yet communal sense of history, both personal and public, impacts their narrative accounts of domestic issues and national identity. Their texts examine both the national and personal aspects of domestic virtues. On a national level their texts investigate domestic issues, such as

Britain's involvement in the slave trade, women's education, public and private morality in Regency England in 1814, and Scotland's place within Britain in 1819. Austen, Byron and Scott unite the past to the present to create a narrative structure of community and national history.

For Austen, community and the English nation were inextricably intertwined. The moral health of the community is suggestive of the moral health of the nation. Byron portrays national domestic virtues both in Britain and France as on the verge of collapse because of the debased public and private morality that existed under the Prince Regent's rule in Britain, and because of the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in France after Napoleon's abdication. I suggest that Byron capitalized on the serial nature of *The Corsair* and *Lara* to portray the connection between the past and present in the tales as a metaphor for the state of national crisis in Britain in 1814, agonizing over the fact that the people of Britain might lose their civil and political liberties as a consequence of Napoleon's abdication and ultimate defeat by the European powers. The personal aspect of domestic virtues is essentially absent from these two Turkish tales because they reflect Byron's own personal life which was beginning to deteriorate in 1814. Medora Leigh thought to be Byron's daughter by his half-sister Augusta was born in April of that year. As Jerome McGann aptly notes that the Corsair, who is arguably a "failed revolutionary has one virtue among many faults—love for Medora;" noting the connection, McGann remarks that most of the poem was written while Byron stayed home with his sister at Newmarket (CPW 445).

In *Ivanhoe*, I propose that Scott's preoccupation with the place of Scotland appears in a submerged way in the figure of Rebecca, who represents both the personal and national aspects of domestic virtues. I suggest that Rebecca represents domestic virtues on a personal level because she chides Ivanhoe for seeking the vain glory of war rather than the domesticity and felicity of marriage and family. Alide Cagidemetro observes Rebecca is generally interpreted as a symbol of domesticity defined in terms of Englishness, making a Jewess representative of nineteenth-century national values, and representing this domesticity in terms of marriage (20). Most contemporary English readers desired that Ivanhoe marry the exoticized Rebecca instead of Rowena. However, at the end of the novel, Rowena and Ivanhoe marry, emphasizing the continued isolation of Rebecca, and more largely, the statelessness of the Jewish people. According to Cagidemetro, the plot could not sanction a marriage between Rebecca and Ivanhoe. Ivanhoe returns to "his blood by marrying the fine Rowena, and Rebecca, in the same mechanical way, chooses to return to the laws of her fathers" (20). My argument suggests that the figure of Rebecca symbolizes the national domestic attributes of Scotland that Scott felt had been lost in the union between Scotland and England in 1707. Rebecca's final departure from England as an exile can be interrupted as demonstrating Scott's sense of Scotland's lack of a voice of its own and its alienation within the British state.

The term "domestic virtues" in this dissertation is taken from the last line of Austen's *Persuasion*:

Anne gloried in being a sailor's wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance. (Chapter XII, 258).

The predominant literary interpretations of this last sentence take it to mean that Austen is examining not only the personal aspects of the term but also the national aspects as well. So, in *Persuasion* Austen examines not only the domestic felicity of Anne's marriage to Wentworth as well as that of the small community that exists at the novel's conclusion but also the domestic virtues of the navy on a national level. The term community concerns not only the groups of characters in *Persuasion* and narratives of Byron and Scott, but also the milieu in which they move and operate in these narratives. As used in this dissertation, the term "domestic virtues" applies to the narratives of Scott and Byron as well on both the personal and national level of the narratives and signifies these writers' consideration of what is virtuous and good for the national community as well as for the groups of characters in the narrative.

These second-generation Romantic writers differ from the first-generation Romantic writers in the way that they recognized their own historical consciousness and its implications for actual social and political change. Wordsworth, as a first-generation Romantic writer, was more concerned with personal feelings—the emotion recollected in tranquility of the Lyrical Ballads and the use of memory to recollect a past loss to create a transcendent community or a period of happiness; the lyrical "I" of his poems and egotistical sublime are characteristic. As Chandler points out in *England in 1819*, the different mode of the second-generation Romantic writers is demonstrated in Shelley's sonnet, *England in 1819*. In the 1790s political debate had a tendency to fashion itself in terms of preliminary distinctions, such as "reason/passion, liberty/slavery, state of nature/state of civil society" (24). On the other hand, political debate after Waterloo invoked

arguments about “historical movements, historical necessities, epochs, and formations” (24). Shelley’s sonnet does this especially in the way in which it makes King George III a kind of “dead letter” so that the conditions of Shelley’s time become a kind of enlightenment for the future that the final couplet of the poem anticipates (Chandler 24).

The concept of “the spirit of the age” is well-explained in the now famous final passage of Shelley’s *Defence of Poetry*. This final paragraph is noteworthy for the consideration of Shelley’s awareness of the romantic period’s unique place in literary history. According to Chandler, it is one of “the earliest self-representations of that period as a historical movement or normative system of a certain kind;” Chandler says: “What lends further interest to this passage is that it is one of the first mediations in English on the problem of the period as defined by a political or aesthetic movement or constituting a normative system” (“History” 356). The issue Shelley addresses stems from his recognition that the period will be a “memorable age” because of its cerebral achievements: “our own will be a memorable age in intellectual achievements, and we live among such philosophers and poets as surpass beyond comparison any who have appeared since the last national struggle for civil and religious liberty” (535).

James II of England, the last Stuart Monarch and a Roman Catholic, was deposed during the Glorious Revolution of 1688. This was the “last national struggle for civil and religious liberty” to which Shelley is referring. John Milton, who lived during the period of the Glorious Revolution, exercised a large influence on the Romantic poets. Byron modeled his Byronic heroes in *The Corsair* and *Lara* after Milton’s Satan, a rebellious angel, who fell from heaven. Byron told his wife that he thought himself to be the avatar

of a fallen angel and this belief could explain his absorption with the Satan of *Paradise Lost* (McGann, *Byron and Romanticism* 23). As McGann observes, Byron's early heroes are often generally linked in direct or indirect ways with Milton's fallen angel; Byron describes Lara as a guilty but fascinating human being: "He stood a stranger in this breathing world, / An erring sprit from another hurl'd" (23; *Lara*, 1,315-316). Similarly, Byron's description of the Corsair suggests the divine rebellions of Satan: "His soul was changed, before his deed had driven / Him forth to war with man and forfeit heaven" (23; *The Corsair*, 1.251-2). Byron, like Shelley, differentiated between the divine rebellions of Satan, who was properly self-destroyed, and Prometheus, who was the victim of arbitrary outside power; Prometheus is splendidly human and far from engaging in battle with the human race as Byron's satanic heroes do (*Byron and Romanticism* 23).

In the final passage, Shelley recognizes that second-generation Romantic writers possess a type of poetic inspiration, of which they are in part unconscious, because these renowned writers cannot possibly be aware of all the ethical and political implications of the "spirit of the age" manifested in their compositions. Noting the uniqueness of the Romantic period, Shelley writes about greatness and the capacity of the Romantic writers to capture the "spirit of the age:" "At such periods there is an accumulation of the power of communicating and receiving intense and impassioned conceptions respecting man and nature" (535). These writers possess this power even while they "deny and abjure" it, but "they are yet compelled to serve, the Power which is seated upon the throne of their own soul;" finally, Shelley observes that to some extent their power is in part unconscious, evidencing less their individual spirits than "the spirit of the age" (535).

As Chandler notes, Shelley's claim considers that given a certain understanding of connection between historical movements and literary activity, writers themselves cannot be expected to be fully aware of the most significant moral and political implications of their literary texts: "The greatest writers of an age are going to be to some extent unconscious of the tendencies of their inspiration, and the reason given for this is that this inspiration itself exists on a higher level of historical generality than they can, in any final sense, comprehend" ("History," 356). Critics such as Hayden White and Benedict Anderson have consistently regarded the narrative structures of national histories, myths, and identities as literary constructs in the latter half of the twentieth century (D'Arcy 27). As Ian Dennis says, "all national identities are stage personae, all actions performance" (61). Similarly, as Benedict Anderson contends, national identities are actually "cultural artifacts of a particular kind" (13). Anderson says, for instance, that Scott's fiction accomplishes this effect: "Insofar as nation itself is primarily a narrative that unites the past to the present, Scott's novels provided the generic means by which the nation could be seen as the expression of national identity" (27). In *Ivanhoe*, I suggest that the absence of Scotland from the novel is noteworthy because Scott examines the idea of exile and belonging through Rebecca, making her a symbol of Scotland within the novel's dissonant discourse. Although it is impossible to determine whether Scott was even aware of this symbolic reading, the complex and layered structure of the novel suggests this interpretation through the correspondence between Rebecca's situation and Scotland's position within Britain in 1819.

In both *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, Austen was conscious of these novels place in and as history. William Galperin observes that the “historical Austen” implicitly challenged the assumption pertinent to historical method generally that the material and cultural circumstances of a particular text operate in some way to free the text of the shrewdness that has most recently been handed over to the historically conscious reader (217). According to Galperin, critics may well rightly assert that Wordsworth’s poems deny both their intent and the history that they place under erasure; nonetheless, it does not follow that Austen “is either disabled or sufficiently possessed of false consciousness to require the supplement of retrospective reading” (217). Galperin points out that although Austen’s writing career can be split into works that belong to the late eighteenth century and the Regency period, respectively, it is clear that all six novels were envisioned or revised at least partially over a compressed period of no more than six years, so that there is a trajectory of development, both aesthetic and political; as a consequence Austen’s career is marked by steady change (214).

Austen looked backward to the first-generation Romantic poets and examined Wordsworthian memory in the ways in which the heroines, Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* and Anne Elliot and Wentworth in *Persuasion* employed memory. This affected the domestic virtues of the communities formed at these novels’ conclusion. Memory is one of the foremost ways that history is developed in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. Issues of nationhood and memory are examined within the context of late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century history: the overseas slave trade, women’s issues, the bolstering of the British navy, and the rise of the bourgeois class, all echoing in the background of these



texts. Fanny in *Mansfield Park* and Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion* have memories which transform and re-envision the past, much like Wordsworth's usage of memory. Wordsworth's conception of memory was different from that of the eighteenth century because, as William Deresiewicz says, memory is used not just to flatly record the past, but to transform it, and to reinterpret it; especially memory is employed to redeem feelings of suffering and loss by recognizing them as "part of the texture of the self and its history" (58).

Austen started writing *Persuasion* in August 1815 while her first draft was completed in July 1816, the final draft a month later. Austen manipulates time to set the novel in the spring of 1814 following Napoleon's abdication up and through the end of February 1815 to emphasize the importance of the British navy to the nation. Austen composed her novels not only in an instance of unusual transition in British life, from developments that she could influence to those she could not, but nonetheless was given a "second chance in the years that her novels achieved final form;" Austen, therefore, was provided with an opening on her historicity and her struggles with it that was distinctive. *Persuasion* has a particular historicity and literariness as a consequence of the way in which Austen employs time as a significant verbal aspect of the novel.

Like Austen, Byron was especially concerned with the impact of Napoleon and the Napoleonic wars upon the historicity of his own literary period. In Byron's narrative poems, *The Corsair* and *Lara*, the Byronic hero, Lara, is haunted by his past, so that he enters into trance-like states in his castle after returning from a long absence. The Spanish name, Lara, is both metaphoric (Conrad and Lara possess attributes, which can be

equated with Napoleon, especially their leadership style), and ironic for a Byronic hero, because Napoleon's defeat by the Spanish in the battle of Vitoria led to his ultimate defeat. The seriality of the Turkish tales not only appealed to Byron's enthusiastic audience that craved something new yet familiar, as Christensen observes, as a part of their nineteenth-century commercial existence (5), but also lent itself to Byron's intent to have his readers decipher their own future from the past and learn from their past in order to avoid a future corrupt and tyrannical government, seen during the reign of King George III and the Prince Regent. Byron investigated issues of liberty versus tyranny and a high public standard of morality in these two Turkish tales; as Jerome McGann observes, the poems are based on the historical writings of Simonde de Sismondi, a contemporary philosopher, whose work Byron employed as historical background to *The Corsair* and *Lara*.

This dissertation connects Austen, Byron and Scott in order to portray how they fashioned domestic virtues, national identity, and nationhood in their literary representations, thereby influencing the turn of events by making such a representation. According to Chandler, "Literary representations of the state of the nation become a way of making history in two senses: the construction in letters of a historically determined picture of things, on the one hand, and the influence on the course of events by the very act of making such a construction," (Chandler, *History* 357). This type of activity was considered very forceful, and was "jealously defended as a male prerogative" (357). But, Austen was able to challenge this male prerogative in both *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, because as a female writer, she was able to grapple with the political and

social problems of her time, even though she ironically makes reference to the limited scope of her own writing. Widening the dissertation's focus to the prose fiction of Austen and Scott makes it possible, as noted by Chandler, "to read (as post-Waterloo Britain did) Walter Scott's fiction alongside the contemporary productions of the poets" (11). Moreover, Austen's prose should be examined alongside these other writers because, as *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* all have an affinity with Romantic poetry, including that of Wordsworth, Byron, and Scott.

Stephen Greenblatt inaugurated the label "new-historicism" and proposed a pessimistic conceptual pattern, the subversion-containment dialectic: any lasting political and cultural order, not only to some extent permits, but actively promotes "subversive" elements and forces in such a manner as an effective means to confine such challenges to the existing order.<sup>1</sup> Austen, Byron, and Scott's discourses manifest dissonant elements that are beneath the surface of their texts in the form of subversive discourses with respect to contemporary domestic virtues and the concept of nationhood. Unlike Greenblatt, my dissertation takes a more optimistic, cultural materialist approach, demonstrating that these subversive texts work to bring about social change, because they criticized problems existing in society and invoked arguments about historical movements and historical necessity. My dissertation highlights the subversive discourses in *Persuasion*, *Mansfield Park*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, and *Ivanhoe* and their capacity to bring about an improved future, because these discourses are part of altering "the case of

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<sup>1</sup> See Greenblatt's "Towards a Poetics of Culture" in *The New Historicism* edited by H. Aram Veeseer (New York: Routledge, 1989) and Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt's *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

the nation.” As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 of my dissertation though Austen ties up her novels’ loose ends into happy endings, these summations do not completely accomplish narrative closure. Both *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* interrogate existing social mores, and communities, as well as social and political attitudes in submerged discourses. In Chapter 3, I propose that *The Corsair* and *Lara* are political although Byron willfully obscures the political past in *Lara*. These narrative poems are political to the extent that Byron desires his contemporary British audience to gain knowledge from history, so as not to acquiesce in the debased standard of public and private morality under the rule of the Prince Regent. Such acquiescence would put them in jeopardy of losing their liberty. In Chapter 4, I propose that in *Ivanhoe*, Scott suggests that Rebecca represents the spiritual qualities of Scotland indicating that Scotland must persist in quest of its own spiritual national identity, just like the “wandering Jewess.” The capacity of subversive discourses to bring about political and social change by making people think is demonstrated through the texts of *Mansfield Park*, *Persuasion*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, and *Ivanhoe* during this uncertain, dramatic period of British history.

The Romantic writers, Jane Austen, Lord Byron, and Sir Walter Scott looked backward to interpret their own cultural history, and fashioned history in their texts, which sought to influence or persuade future generations to build an improved future. The texts of Austen, Byron, and Wordsworth show a remarkable intertextuality, because these Romantic writers were intrinsically involved in their shared present and past. My investigation opens doors to future scholarship, addressing a specific question: how do Romantic writers treat domestic virtues, (such as the emancipation of women, the

eradication of the slave trade, the integration of the bourgeois class into a formerly aristocratic order) both personal and public, in view of their sense of community, nationhood and history? My study speaks more broadly to a core issue in the field, because Romanticism was and still is a presentation of cultural history. In many ways, it is also relevant to our own time because we too encounter the same sort of challenges experienced by the Romantics; optimism and despair are frequently coupled emotions, as we involve ourselves in the thorny problems we confront in the world, many of which are similar to those faced by the Romantics—economic downturn, piracy, and global warfare. The ways in which we view our cultural history through literature determine future actions and domestic virtues and affect the very well-being of our public and private morality.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Economic Issues in *Mansfield Park*: Fanny's Reading of Her Own Story**

“What should I do with your strong, manly, spirited Sketches, full of Variety and Glow?—The little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which I work with so fine a brush as produces little effect after much labour.”

—Jane Austen in a letter to James Edward Austen Leigh  
 (“Letter 134” 2:469)

In her 1814 novel *Mansfield Park*, Jane Austen treats domestic virtues regarding Britain's imperialism and its sanction of the slave trade ambiguously; Britain's ambivalence towards the status of slavery and the slave trade reappears throughout the novel along with the conduct-book mentality of the novel's heroine, Fanny Price, a dependent young woman in the Mansfield Park household. As David Monaghan points out, several critics have uncovered the subversive tendencies in Austen's novels; in the last thirty years academic criticism has taken a major turn as scholars have fashioned an Austen who is our contemporary in her treatment of domestic virtues such as gender (Kirkham); sexuality, including incest (Smith); ideology (Thompson); and colonialism (Said); (Monaghan 1).<sup>1</sup> And, the issues of colonialism, slavery and empire in *Mansfield Park* have been the subject of continuous critical inquiry. Yet, according to Edward Said, the importance of the novel's references to Antigua, the Mediterranean, and India have

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<sup>1</sup> See Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen: Feminism and Fiction* (Totowa, NJ Barnes and Noble, 1983); Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*, Chicago: Chicago U.P., 1988/ Johanna M. Smith, ““My Only Sister Now””: Incest in Mansfield Park,” *Studies in the Novel* 18.1 (1987); James Thompson, *Between Self and World: The Novels of Jane Austen* (University Park: Penn State U.P., 1983); Edward Said, “Jane Austen and Empire,” *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Knopf, 1994) 80-97.

no significance in regard to Britain's imperialism and would not have been recognized by the Bertrams or even Austen herself. He goes on to say, "[Y]et these signs of 'abroad' include, even as they repress, a rich and complex history, which has since achieved a status that the Bertrams, the Prices, and Austen herself would not, could not, recognize" (97). Said suggests that Fanny's question to her uncle about the slave trade which evokes the "dead silence" upon his return from Antigua has no importance in regard to Britain's imperialism, and that Austen herself would not be cognizant of any significance.

However, subsequent literary interpretations of the "dead silence" in the novel suggest that Austen meant to have a buried meaning with respect to the slavery issue. Helena Kelley observes that Austen's "hidden critique of slavery" is found in the shared connotations between slavery and game, while George Boulukos suggests that the "dead silence" that follows Fanny Price's question to her uncle about the "slave trade" can be interpreted as manifesting a politics of "amelioration," a position which held that slavery and colonialism were "morally redeemable" and potentially even noble pursuits for men such as Sir Thomas (362). In contrast, Claudia Johnson finds that Austen depicts Sir Thomas as a dominating and terrifying patriarch (121-122). Recently, Miranda Burgess suggests that Austen's rendering of Fanny's cognitive and affective processes, her experience, memory, and sympathy, demonstrate not only the reliance of empire abroad on class distinctions at home, but also serves "as a record of the processes of reading, thinking, feeling and forgetting that make imperialism possible" (210); Burgess proposes that in some ways the Romantic imagination becomes complicit with the problems of imperialism.

I suggest that in the novel, the national debate in Britain over the slavery issue is conducted both at the domestic and national levels. In the novel, the national aspect of domestic virtues concerns the evangelical religious impulse, which was behind the desire to end the slave trade and behind the anti-slavery campaign. Another aspect of the national debate would involve the question of Sir Thomas's relationship to issues of slavery and slave trade. Sir Thomas would have likely been directly connected with slavery because it is probable that his estates in Antigua would be established by it and the wealth of Mansfield Park would have been created by it. The personal aspect of domestic virtues is demonstrated by the conduct-book mentality and religious impulses of the novel's heroine, Fanny Price. As Isobel Armstrong notes, there is a deep-felt sense of incipient change in the novel. This incipient change was brought about by the institutions which supported tradition. For instance, John Wesley's Methodist movement grew out of the Church of England before it became a member of a Protestant denomination in its own right. Wesley's movement was part of the evangelistic cause which had its beginnings in England at the close of the eighteenth century and continued into the nineteenth century. As Armstrong notes, the Church of England's lethargy motivated an attempt to redefine the basics of spiritual life; further, Wesley's evangelistic teachings and style appealed to the poor (8).

My argument also suggests that Austen engages with issues of slavery on the personal level of domestic virtues through Fanny's reading and growing understanding of her own personal history. Fanny is released from the poverty of her home in Portsmouth as a result of Sir Thomas's magnanimity. He takes her into his family when she is 10



years old. Nevertheless, when Sir Thomas demands gratitude from her, encouraging her to marry Henry Crawford, Fanny resists his patriarchal authority. She challenges Sir Thomas's opinion that she should be obligated to him based on gratitude. Rather, she follows her conscience and strong sense of ethics. Even though the novel's ending has aspects of fragility (because of slavery as the likely source of Mansfield's Park wealth), my argument considers that Fanny and Edmund, (the youngest son of the Bertram family who is destined for the clergy), will make Mansfield Park itself a repository of domestic virtues. Fanny is released from poverty, a type of slavery, when she is in effect adopted by Sir Thomas. Fanny and Edmund's marriage at the novel's end and their evangelistic type of Christianity manifest the novel's concern with the reinvigorating the National Church and its buried criticism of slavery and the slave trade.

The novel can be interpreted as a debate about ideas and values negotiated through the characters and happenings at Mansfield Park: "one can never map a simple intellectual or political position on the novel: it is often divided and contradictory about the issues it explores, disclosing their complexity rather than arriving at conclusions" (Armstrong 10). The novel's title may allude to Lord Mansfield's decision in the *Somerset v. Stewart* case in 1772, which made slavery illegal on British soil, even though the slave trade continued surreptitiously for many years after that. Because issues of slavery and the evangelical religious movement are bound together, this chapter also reassesses Said's argument. I suggest that Austen indeed would recognize the negative implications of Britain's rise to an imperial power in 1815 and of the slave trade, because of her family history and her appreciation of British history, even though Britain's

relation to empire and slavery was ambivalent. Said designates Fanny as the “spiritual mistress” of Mansfield Park. Mansfield Park is “located by Austen at the centre of an arc of interests and concerns spanning the hemisphere, two major seas, and four major continents . . . The Bertrams could not have been possible without the slave trade, sugar, and the colonial planter class” (112). Also, for Said, this imperial achievement was a bourgeois, rather than an aristocratic phenomenon; the inclusion of middle-class Fanny Price into the formerly exclusive aristocratic complex of Mansfield Park forecasts the recent bourgeois input into nineteenth-century British imperialism (Sutherland 3).

Said does not consider the title of the novel which may allude to William Murray, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Mansfield (1705-1793), and his famous decision in the *Somerset v. Stewart* case of 1772. The title is itself some evidence that Austen did recognize issues involving the slave trade in the novel (Harris 81). It is likely that Austen had some knowledge of this legal decision. James Somerset had been brought to England as a slave and had escaped, but was recaptured and awaited shipment to Jamaica. When Mansfield took up his case, he held:

It [slavery] is so odious, that nothing can be suffered to support it, but positive law. Whatever inconveniences, therefore, may follow from the decision, I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the law of England; and therefore the black must be discharged. (*Somerset* 82)

Mansfield reasoned that the principles of English liberty were so plainly incompatible with slavery that even if a slaveholder from another part of the world brought his slave into England—though only for a temporary purpose and with no intention of remaining—he must nevertheless liberate the slave (82). Prior to the decision, bringing slaves into England for temporary purposes had been tolerated. Mansfield’s judgment was critical in

the process leading to the abolition of slavery. Fanny's status as a poor relation substantially transforms itself when she assumes a new role at Mansfield Park and becomes its "spiritual mistress" but not in the imperialistic manner imagined by Said. Fanny becomes the spiritual mistress of Mansfield Park through her domestic virtues, which value women's education as well as her evangelic and religious impulses which tend to the eradication of slavery and the slave trade.

As Armstrong observes, the circumstances that Fanny finds herself in when she arrives at Mansfield Park are complex; it is not certain whether she or any of the characters are aware of the complexity (7). At the beginning of the novel, Sir Thomas decides to take his niece Fanny into his household and to bring her up. Lady Bertram's sister has made a bad marriage, which results in her being poor, and asks for help. Another sister-in-law, Mrs. Norris instigates the decision, but it is an unclear decision from the start because Mrs. Norris actually relies on the generosity of her brother-in-law rather than assuming any financial responsibility for Fanny. Mrs. Norris dishonestly implies that she may take Fanny into her own home at a later time. Nonetheless, the honesty of Sir Thomas ensures that Fanny is brought to Mansfield Park and when she arrives, she is shy and terrified.

Metaphorically speaking, Fanny can be viewed as being released from the impoverished conditions of her home at Portsmouth and as such, liberated from poverty just as slaves from other parts of the world became free men and women when they stepped onto English soil pursuant to Lord Mansfield's decision in 1772. Fanny's entry into the more sophisticated and well-mannered world of Mansfield Park allows her to

gain access to the books that she reads and studies in the nursery. Armstrong notes that the period Austen lived through witnessed the most intense inquiry into the education of children and an interrogation of eighteenth-century ideas. Austen is more allied with her anti-types, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who rallied for the education of woman and thought the poor nature of female education was primarily due to their willingness to be subordinate to men. Still, Austen paid attention to the disquisitions of woman's duty such as found in the work of Hannah Moore. However, according to Armstrong, the novel's criticism of women's education is strangely linked to the more radical Wollstonecraft (9-10).

Fanny's literary choices enable the reader to designate a specific date for the novel's setting. In Volume 1, Chapter 16 of the novel (the scene in which Edmund reveals to Fanny that he has decided to play the part of Anhalt in *Lovers' Vows*), Edmund glances at three of her books: Macartney's *Journal of the Embassy to China* (1807), Johnson's *Idler*, and Crabbe's *Tales in Verse*, published in September 1812. Based on this selection of books and Tom's subsequent observation of the wretched weather in October upon his father's return, Austen must have set the month and year of Sir Thomas's return in October 1812 (Southam 494). As John Sutherland observes, anyone attempting a historical reading of the text should mark the period in which the action of *Mansfield Park* is set: between 1805 and February 1811 (when Austen began composing the novel),<sup>2</sup> which was the prelude to the extraordinary rise of the British Empire (3).

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<sup>2</sup> Sutherland notes that there are other possible dates for the novel's setting, going as late as 1812, as supposed by Brian Southam in his article, "Silence of the Bertrams" (3).

1815 (the year of Waterloo and also the year following the novel's publication) marked the beginning of Imperial Britain's century (Sutherland 3).

Austen would have been familiar with the slavery issue because she and her family lived in Bath from 1801 until her father's death in 1805. The slave trade in the West Indies and Africa was officially abolished in 1807 with the Abolition Act, which first (from May 1, 1807) disallowed ships carrying slaves from sailing from British ports, and then prohibited slaves from landing on British soil (beginning March 1, 1808). However, the slave trade continued surreptitiously for years later until the British navy was free of its involvement in the American and Napoleonic wars, and could more effectively blockade slave labor ships from leaving and entering British ports (Southam 13). The thousands of black slaves living in London, Liverpool, and Bristol (near Bath) would not be fully emancipated until 1834 as a result of the Slavery Abolition Act. In the one-and-a-half centuries before 1807, Britain shipped as many slaves to America as all the other slave-supporting nations combined (Harris 80). Planters, negro-drivers, and hucksters from American plantations were frequently seen on the streets of Bath (Harris 36), and would have been an ordinary sight for Austen. She would have likely gained access to information about the ramifications of British investments in the West Indies.

Moreover, Austen's naval brother, Francis, was an ardent abolitionist. He expressed disgust when he encountered a ship of about 3,000 tons horribly overloaded with 714 slaves on the American blockade (Knox-Shaw 164). Later, he openly attacked the despotism which had been charged to the behavior of land-holders, or the slaves' managers, in the West Indies:

Jealous as she [England] has ever been of her own liberty, she should pay equal attention to the inalienable rights of all the nations, of what colours so ever they may be, and in particular should take care that the blessing be fully and equally distributed to all who live subject to her sway. (qtd. in Knox-Shaw 164)

Further evidence contributing to the argument that Austen agreed with her brother can be found in her letters. Austen admired the leading antislavery polemicist Thomas Clarkson, author of *History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament* (1808), declaring she was “in love” with him (Austen “Letter 78” 198). Although Austen might not have been quite as vocal as her brother Francis, this chapter suggests she shared his progressive views which are part of the novel’s hidden discourse. Michael Steffes suggests that Austen, who had read the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson, named Mrs. Norris after his villain (11). Mrs. Norris believed in the more traditional eighteenth-century theories of education. Further, in the absence of Sir Thomas, Mrs. Norris’s management of the Mansfield Park staff, and particularly Fanny’s person, highlights rather than ignores the question of slavery.

Antigua is a difficult spot in the novel; as Armstrong notes, it is a “concealed, unsettling and destabilizing element, the place which calls Sir Thomas away and which is responsible for his ‘unsettled’ fortunes” (9). Austen’s buried criticism of slavery is further underscored by the detail that no one in the novel speaks about the exact nature of the affairs which Sir Thomas needs to take care of in Antigua except that they concerned “some recent losses on his West India Estate” (20). Sir Thomas’s recent losses could have involved any variety of business matters, which may or may not have been connected to the slave trade. As Sutherland points out, Austen says nothing particular on

the subject; the Bertrams, for instance, could have owned a farm, which provided produce and timber to other plantations, and which did not rely on slave labor (7). Yet, a contemporary reader would probably connect Sir Thomas's business in the West Indies with the slave trade because some connection with the slave trade or reliance on slave labor would be a likely reason for Sir Thomas' trip to check on his affairs abroad.

Equally significant to the reader's interpretation of the Bertrams' silence following Fanny's question to Sir Thomas about the slave trade is the fact that the novel leaves uncertain the source of Mansfield Park's wealth. Large landowners, like Sir Thomas, reaped windfall fortunes from agriculture, sheep farming, and cattle farming, although agricultural wages had dropped and the economy of southern England had slumped during this period (Sutherland 7). Therefore, the "dead silence" of the Bertrams following Fanny's query about the slave trade to Sir Thomas could be a purposeful maneuver by Austen. She keeps the Bertrams' attitude toward slavery ambivalent at the outset of the novel in order to add to the complexity of Fanny's growing understanding. The Bertrams' silence baffles Fanny, as her subsequent contemplation of the silent response to her inquiry suggests. The silence of the Bertram family could have implied that Sir Thomas' children assumed that Mansfield Park's wealth came from a West Indies plantation; perhaps they were embarrassed by the question because of an apparent, but not directly known, relationship between the West Indies plantation and the slave trade. The "dead silence" may also have been a reflection of Britain's ambivalent attitude toward the slave trade, which is also represented through the family's ambivalence toward Fanny's dependent status in their household. The Bertram family half-heartedly

accepts Fanny into their household. The Bertram sisters act arrogantly towards Fanny, and Sir Thomas worries about Fanny and Edmund becoming romantically attached, initially considering that a future match between them to be undesirable.<sup>3</sup>

Sir Thomas would have been involved in the numerous debates surrounding abolition of the slave trade as a member of the House of Commons as well as the owner of a plantation in Antigua (Johnson 406). Moreover, the American War of Independence (1775-83) had deprived Britain of her most populous colonies; these issues (slavery, imperialism, colonialism, paternalism, and the end of the “first British empire” in America) would still be fresh both in the minds of Sir Thomas and Austen and her contemporary readers. Austen’s contemporary readers would naturally make associations between the “dead silence” and Fanny’s mention of the slave trade, depending upon their biases towards the slavery issue and Fanny.

Fanny is often portrayed as an ignorant by the Bertrams. When Fanny first arrives at Mansfield Park, the Bertram sisters smugly complain to their Aunt Norris of their cousin Fanny’s inability to “repeat the chronological order of the kings of England, with the dates of their accession, and most of the principal events of their reigns” (16; vol. 1 ch. 2). Also, Fanny takes no interest in learning either music or drawing (17; vol. 1 ch. 2). As Looser observes, the study of schoolroom history was a critical part of women’s education (45). The study of history was regarded as “polite knowledge” that was acceptable conversation for women just as drawing and music were suitable

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<sup>3</sup>“In England, the term ‘Fanny’ is vulgar slang for female genitals” (<http://www.elook.org/dictionary/fanny.html>). Thus, Fanny’s name is ironic when viewed in light of her conduct-book mentality and prudish nature, but it would also denote that she is from the lower or middle-class.



accomplishments (45). At an early age, Fanny neither possesses “polite knowledge” nor seems interested in learning it, refraining from memorizing schoolroom history at Mansfield. However, at Mansfield Park, Fanny acquires access to books and begins to educate herself. She later acquaints her sister, Susan, with the joy of reading when she returns to Portsmouth, the home of her natural parents.

Although Fanny eventually becomes more well-read than the Bertram sisters through her own efforts at self-education, they continue to behave conceitedly towards her, touting their superior learning and accomplishments. Aunt Norris takes it upon herself to instruct the Bertram sisters in the difference between the strength of their memories and that of Fanny’s as well as the importance of modesty:

There is a vast deal of difference in memories, as well as in everything else, and therefore you must make allowance for your cousin, and pity her deficiency. And remember that, if you are ever so forward and clever yourselves, you should always be modest; for, much as you know already, there is a great deal more for you to learn. (16; vol. 1 ch. 2)

Aunt Norris is right—the Bertram sisters have a quite different type of memory from Fanny’s. They can memorize historical information, but there is no evidence that they desire to use their memory to remain in touch with their past feelings. This seems to be so partially because they have had such a privileged life absent of pain throughout their childhood; their selfishness is accentuated because they feel superior to Fanny. Unlike her cousins, Fanny has a Wordsworthian memory. Fanny’s favorite room in the Mansfield house is the nursery—the space which the children use before they are old enough to take part in the public, social areas of the house. This is the room where Fanny creates her own world away from the everyday afflictions she experienced as a child

while trying to integrate herself into the Bertram's family life. In the nursery a transparency of Tintern Abbey is enshrined between pictures of a cave in Italy and her "a moonlight lake in Cumberland" (107; vol. 1 ch. 16). Isobel Armstrong sees the nursery as a poignant, almost tragic space for Fanny, because she must suffer all the indignities inflicted on her as a result of the family's self-importance, and must go to the nursery to retreat from the stressful public world (52). However, I suggest Fanny's sense of this space is positive rather than negative. Fanny comes to the nursery to acquire mental fortitude at times of stress, especially during rehearsal of *Lovers' Vows*, so that her times spent in the nursery are suggestive of moments in which the reflective state contemplates emotions; these emotions are in turn capable of asserting their energy and power over Fanny's mind, leading to her inspiration and spiritual growth as a person in the Mansfield household.

Austen makes the nursery hold a special place in the novel, because it is also the place where Mary and Edmund come simultaneously to seek out Fanny in order that she may help them rehearse their parts for the upcoming performance of *Lovers' Vows*, this repetition of the nursery as central meeting place in the novel's plot reinforces the important moral and domestic role that Fanny will come to play in the novel as a whole. The fact that Sir Thomas decides to light a fire in her room so that Fanny will not suffer from the cold suggests a new sense of community which forms by the novel's end. Fanny's ability to relate to memory as Wordsworth did is more than a mechanism for self-survival; she is able to revisit her suffering and revise her history, ultimately

contributing to the creation of community at the end of the novel. Like Wordsworth, Fanny is aware of this wonderful power of memory, telling Mary Crawford:

If any one faculty of our nature may be called more wonderful than the rest, I do think that it is memory. There seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is so retentive, so serviceable, so obedient—at others, so bewildered and so weak—and at others again, so tyrannical, so beyond control!—We are to be sure a miracle every way—but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting, do seem peculiarly past finding out. (143; vol. 2 ch. 4)

Through her use of memory, Fanny acknowledges past suffering and loss, redeeming those experiences by acknowledging them as part of herself and her own personal growth.

One of the novel's most ethically crucial points is the performance of *Lovers' Vows*. Mrs. Inchbald's presence in the drawing room itself highlights a subversive discourse. Inchbald was twenty years older than Jane Austen, and one of five daughters of the Roman Catholic family living in Bury St. Edmunds. She took flight to London to pursue an acting and writing career and took on walk on parts to support herself (Armstrong 3). Whether or not Jane Austen knew the circumstances of Mrs. Inchbald's life while she was writing was not clear, however, as Armstrong notes the significant aspect of the contrast is not just the difference between the declassed actress' life and the relatively comfortable circumstances of Jane Austen as Tory gentlewoman. Austen and Inchbald were at opposite poles ideologically. Mrs. Inchbald publicly announced her interest in the egalitarian and social ideals of the French Revolution. She believed in Rousseau and her writing was openly political criticizing the social privilege that created a large gap between the poor and rich (3). Armstrong says

It is fascinating that Jane Austen had the resilience to introduce her subversive antithesis into the very drawing-room of Mansfield Park, test out the stable values being explored at one level by the text and enabling them to be interrogated by another female writer. This silent dialogue with Mrs. Inchbald, of which more will be said later, suggests that the stability of Jane Austen's environments is being explored and negotiated in a complex way and is never taken for granted by the text. (3)

The play can be interpreted as not only introducing the question of whether it is too transgressive for performance in Sir Thomas's drawing room but also it makes the reader ask questions about exploitation and privilege as noted by Armstrong. Finally it is an example of an outbreak of energy and unruly sentiment on his estate. The desire for an end to the slave trade can be connected with "Jacobin" forces which were eroding traditional values (Armstrong 9).

Fanny is unlike the Bertram sisters because she is painfully shy and modest, so that the concept of a home performance of *Lovers' Vows* is appalling to her. Aunt Norris's advice to the Bertram sisters to be modest is reminiscent of John Gregory's conduct book, *A Father's Legacy to his Daughter* (published in 1774). The book was widely regarded and frequently reprinted (Johnson 391). In contrast to her female cousins, Fanny is naturally modest and does not like to expose herself or her feelings publicly. Therefore, the reader is not surprised that Fanny abhors the idea of a private performance of the play *Lovers' Vows*. When the group chooses this play, Fanny immediately reads it over, concluding that it is inappropriate: "Agatha and Amelia appeared to her in their different ways so totally improper for home representation—the situation of the one, and the language of the other, so unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty" (97; vol. 1 ch. 15).

Characteristically, in his conduct book, *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, Thomas Gisborne, an Anglican clergyman and a supporter of Evangelism, disapproves of female performers in private theatres, believing acting to be injurious to female modesty (398). Published in 1797, Gibson's conduct book was widely read, running through eight editions by 1810 (Johnson "Mansfield Park Confessions of Guilt" 401).<sup>4</sup> Here, once again, Fanny, who most likely read Gisborne's book, appears to align herself with the evangelical, paternalistic viewpoint, which overlaps with her natural modesty and timidity. She defers to Edmund, believing that he will put an end to the theatrical performance. Fanny's fear of domestic theater can be interpreted as stemming from the same evangelical motives that make her an opponent of slavery. As Sutherland notes, there are clear indications in the novel that Fanny belongs to the Clapham Sect of Evangelical Christianity, which disliked plays and light morality "only slightly less than it loathed slavery" (8). As Sutherland proposes, it could have been William Wilberforce's successful bill for the abolition of slavery in 1807 which led to Fanny's naïve question to Sir Thomas (8).

The disruption of the play *Lovers' Vows* is also significant because the play presents in microcosm, although in hyperbole, the various aspects of the novel's plot as well as the different personalities of the novel's characters, while it changes the fate of its characters from the corresponding characters in *Mansfield Park*. As the play was staged at Mansfield, the role of Baron Wildenhaim was played by Mr. Yates; Count Cassel by Mr. Rushworth; Anhalt by Edmund Bertram; Frederick by Henry Crawford; Verdun the

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Gisborne (1758-1846) authored numerous sermons, poems, and tracts seeking to "improve" the manners and morals of his readers (Johnson "Mansfield Park Confessions of Guilt" 398).

Butler by Tom Bertram, who also takes the Cottager's part; Agatha by Maria Bertram; Amelia by Mary Crawford (Johnson 333).

The melodrama has two dramatic plots: the first is that the wealthy Baron seduces Agatha, a country girl, who comes to his mother's house as his mother's companion. The Baron impregnates her and then refuses to marry her; she is abandoned for twenty years and is ultimately reduced to poverty and ill health. Her illegitimate son, Frederick, a soldier, discovers her and, shortly after, encounters his father the Baron. The Baron initially arrests Frederick, who has threatened to kill him but pardons him when he discovers that Frederick is his natural son.

The sequence of the play's second story concerns Amelia. Amelia, the daughter of the Baron, falls in love with the young clergyman, Anhalt, who has been her tutor. She is courted by Count Cassal—a fop—whom her father dislikes. When she reveals to her father that she loves Anhalt, he gives his consent with only slight resistance. The unique aspect of this story is that Amelia essentially makes love (although in a more muted fashion than in the source play) and proposes to Anhalt, who is her inferior in social status. Frederick urges the Baron publicly to marry Agatha (whom he has cast out for twenty years) in the country village.

Fanny is set apart from the other young people in the novel because of her reluctance to act in the play; Fanny had been urged to act the role of Cottager's wife and would have had to reluctantly agree had it not been for the fortuitous return of Sir Thomas. If Fanny had been compelled to take this part, she would have been obviously miscast. The Cottager's wife orders her husband around—"Run, husband, run, and fetch

a bottle of wine from the landlord” (2.1.340)—and speaks ill of the wealthy male authority figure Baron Wildenheim’s mistreatment of his abandoned mistress, Agatha (2.1.342). Finally, she accepts the Baron’s purse of gold from the young clergyman after her husband had laid it aside (5.1.371).

While Fanny is a foil to the Bertram sisters (e.g., the Bertram sisters both vie for the part of Agatha to perform in a relationship with Frederick, who is cast as Henry Crawford), she can also be seen as the complement to Mary Crawford. Mary is an independently wealthy woman, having inherited a fortune of 20,000 pounds. Mary was raised as an orphan by her uncle, the Admiral, and his wife. Stereotypically, Mary is the type of woman who would be approved by Mary Wollstonecraft and disapproved of by *Gisborne*. Wollstonecraft says, “[T]he woman who strengthens her body and exercises her mind will, by managing her family and practicing various virtues, become the friend, and not the humble dependent of her husband” (396).

However, Austen makes Mary Crawford more complicated. Though she openly challenges and criticizes male authority and social restraints, she is also sensitive, empathetic and practical. These are qualities which Fanny, too, possesses. Edmund is attracted to Mary, intellectually and erotically. He is engaged by her “pure genuine pleasure of the exercise [horseback riding],” and he enjoys being “close to her . . . directing her management of the bridle” (48-49; vol. 1 ch. 7). Fanny witnesses this horseback riding scene somewhat jealously. Fanny and Mary Crawford are, again, counterparts when they are walking in the “sweet wood” of the Rushworth estate. Fanny easily tires while Mary hardly needs the support of Edmund’s arm for her brisk walk;

however, they both walk arm-in arm with Edmund (67; vol. 1 ch. 9). Mary does not always seek Edmund's approval, but Fanny does; Mary makes irreverent and sexual puns, disparaging the navy by making a comment about the "*Rears and Vices*" (44; vol. 1 ch. 6). Edmund privately quizzes Fanny, asking what is wrong with Mary speaking negatively in public about so daunting a figure.

A significant difference between Fanny and Mary is their willingness to acknowledge female desire.<sup>5</sup> While Inchbald softens the unequivocal way in which Amelia announces her affection for her lover, the play's indelicacy still scandalizes Fanny. On the other hand, Mary fearlessly brings everyone's attention to the anxiety over female desire when she boldly inquires: "What gentlemen among you am I to have the pleasure of making love to?" (101; vol. 1 ch. 15). There is a moment of stunned silence (yet another instance of silence in the novel), emphasizing Mary's forwardness. Still, Fanny and Mary seem to conflate after the play is disrupted, and Edmund becomes anxious that they should be friends. Mary gives Fanny a necklace (unbeknownst to Fanny, the necklace was a gift to Mary from her brother, Henry) to wear at Fanny's coming out ball.

Austen's use of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* and Inchbald's *Lovers' Vow* also serves to point out the similarities between the two women. Fanny shows female desire and pleasure as well as a "greater enjoyment" of acting when she hears Henry dramatically

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<sup>5</sup> Galperin notes in the way which desire casts the regulatory disposition of Austen's novels into dubious relief. Galperin says "Although increasingly instrumental in the striking detailism that Austen's contemporaries found more interesting than her plots, such desire is, in the early works especially, connected more broadly to the articulation of alternatives at variance with the particular *future* of which narrative closure remains an instance as well as a description." Galperin, William, H. *The Historical Austen*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2003. Print. p. 215



read *Henry VIII*: “His acting had first taught Fanny what pleasure a play might give . . . for it came unexpectedly, and with no such drawback as he had been used to suffer in seeing him on the stage with Miss Bertram” (228-9; vol. 3 ch. 3). Interestingly, Inchbald’s play also brings these two women together in a scene which plays on the erotic and homoerotic desires among Edmund, Mary, and Fanny. While Mary is chosen to play Amelia, Amelia’s role is obviously more applicable to Fanny’s situation. Edmund, now a young clergyman who has been Fanny’s instructor since she was ten, is also the object of her secret desire. The two women conflate their roles when Mary approaches Fanny for some coaching on her performance of Amelia. The dramatic irony is that we know Fanny also desires and loves Edmund and could also play the part of Amelia. When Fanny coaches Mary, they exchange roles: Mary exhibiting hesitation and shyness in seeking help with her performance from Fanny.

The connection between these two plays, which Austen was probably aware of when choosing to include them in her text, involves issues of slavery and tyranny. In 1806, Inchbald compiled a twenty-five volume anthology of *The British Theatre* and wrote prefaces to each of the plays. According to Johnson, Inchbald’s remarks on Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII* represent a contemporary response to this popular play “whose treatment of deeply flawed figures of temporal and spiritual authority parallels that of *Mansfield Park*,” (*Mansfield Park* 410), particularly in regard to Sir Thomas. Inchbald compares Henry VIII’s attitude to that of a “slave” because he dies a bitter tyrant, who is hated by Englishmen: “Henry’s remaining life was divided between fits of anger,

remorse, despondency; and he died, after a reign of thirty-seven years, hated by every Englishman,--with the rancour of a slave” (412).

Fanny takes the place of her cousins as Sir Thomas’s daughter who follows conduct-book mentality even before her marriage to Edmund, and before Maria’s unforgivable transgression—Maria runs away and apparently commits the unforgivable sin of adultery with Henry Crawford (all within six months of her loveless marriage to Mr. Rushworth). Prior to the display of Henry Crawford’s affection for her, Fanny had been taught, as Hannah More advocates in her conduct book, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education with a View of the Principles Prevalent Among Women of Rank and Fortune*, “that this world is not a stage for the display of superficial talents, but for the strict and sober exercise of fortitude, temperance, meekness, faith, diligence, and self-denial” (94). Fanny follows ideals of conduct based on Protestant morals and thus resists even Edmund’s authority in desiring not to act in *Lovers’ Vows*.

Armstrong notes another interpretation of Austen’s use of *Henry VIII*, which supports the fact that the novel’s resolution is fragile. She says:

[T]he presence of *Henry VIII* in the text makes it clear that historically the tradition of the continuity of the English Protestantism founded on the break with Rome, the tradition Edmund’s ministry intends to create anew with the new ‘spirit of improvement abroad’ in the land [230; vol. 3 ch. 3] that this founding tradition is one in which Mansfield Park actually participates. (87)

Like Fanny, Edmund approves of the ardent and zealous rendition of Henry Crawford’s dramatic reading of *Henry VIII* and applies it to evangelical principles (230; vol. 3 ch. 3). The style and manner of preaching and representation to communicate religious doctrine is important to evangelical practices. Likewise, Edmund and Fanny’s religious

inclinations represent evangelical tendencies, because the novel can be read as taking an anti-slavery stance. Moreover, in 1814, the same year *Mansfield Park* was published, Austen responded to her niece, Fanny's concerns about her evangelical suitor's conservative views: "I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be Evangelicals & am at least persuaded that they who are so from Reason & Feeling must be happiest & safest" (Austen, "Letter 109"). Armstrong points out, that "so often, the novel points quietly to a profound cultural change, the education of religious congregations through the diffusion of evangelical principles" (83). This is why Fanny enjoys Henry Crawford's reading even though she opposes the private performance of *Lovers' Vows*, because his style and manner demonstrate his ability to communicate to an audience, an important ability for an evangelical minister (Armstrong 83). Also, as observed by Karounos, upon his return from Antigua, Sir Thomas begins to treat Fanny with unusual kindness, and this may be explained by the fervent evangelical climate in England at the time (11); Antigua was also the site of concentrated missionary activity as well as a site of political and Evangelical debate on the inhuman conditions of slavery (Karounos 11).

Finally, Fanny undermines patriarchal society in her refusal to accept Henry Crawford's proposal because he does not meet her high moral standards. For this act of resistance, Sir Thomas reproaches Fanny and exiles her from Mansfield Park, exaggerating her transgression: "I had thought you peculiarly free from willfulness of temper, self-conceit and every tendency to that independence of spirit, which prevails so much in modern days, even in young women (216; vol. 3 ch. 1). He goes on to rebuke

her, comparing her transgression against his authority to a “gross violation of duty and respect,” in refusing Mr. Crawford’s proposal without asking his advice (216; vol. 3 ch. 1). But, Sir Thomas goes on to say, Fanny’s biggest crime is that of ingratitude: “You are not to be judged by the same rule. You do not owe me the duty of a child. But, Fanny . . . if your heart can acquit you of ingratitude . . .” (216; vol. 3 ch. 1).

Several critics who have interpreted these lines, have regarded Fanny as a “slave”; According to Johnson, “Sir Thomas’s kindness is like the model paternalist Mr. Edwards, in Edgeworth’s ‘The Grateful Negro’ (1802)” (107). Similarly, Joseph Lew compares Fanny to “a child slave” upon her arrival at Mansfield and notes that “[a]t nine years old, she is as costly and as unwanted as a child slave (298). According to Lew, Fanny “improves” her situation at Mansfield by demonstrating her economic value. Fanny becomes a “credit” instead of a “debit” when she becomes an unpaid companion to Lady Bertram (298). Her value increases even further when she attracts the notice of the affluent Henry Crawford; she is suddenly transformed into “an extremely marketable commodity” (299).

I argue that Fanny’s growth and use of memory prevents her from being a “commodity.” A turning point in the narrative comes when Fanny is sent back to Portsmouth to live with her natural parents. She remembers her home fondly and is excited to be reunited with her family. However, Portsmouth turns out to be a terrible disappointment to Fanny; her mother expresses hardly any affection for her (264; vol. 3 ch. 8). Her real home is incessantly noisy and disordered; everything about it made her long for the peace, tranquility, and harmony of Mansfield. Fanny cannot bear the

incessant noise of the Portsmouth home (266; vol. 3 ch. 8). Fanny later returns to Mansfield because she is needed to help the Bertram family with Tom Bertram's illness. In Volume 3, Chapter 11 of the novel, Henry Crawford sees this as one more instance in which Fanny is used by the family in a subservient role. He says that Sir Thomas has the power to exile Fanny to Portsmouth and recall her at will, at his convenience, thinking only of his own selfish needs (279). Yet, the situation of the Bertram family is so dire because of the changed circumstances, including Maria's humiliation and Tom Bertram's illness, that Fanny comes back as a family member instead of a slave or a servant without any voice of her own. Therefore, Fanny is happy to be returned to a home which has material and spiritual comforts. These comforts were not at all present at Portsmouth; she does not return with the gratitude of a slave, but rather with the higher worth of an elevated status. She arrives with the solace of a family member who equally shares in the grief and mortification of her family's recent sufferings and material comforts.

Moreover, Fanny's view of herself conflicts with the slave analogy because she is conscious of the fact that she has educated herself, releasing her from authority. Her conduct-book mentality conflicts with her role as a slave because an ingrained sense of decorum and etiquette and, more importantly, self-esteem, which is also derived from evangelical teachings, do not allow for unthinking servility. Therefore, although her attic room is next to the servants' quarters, Fanny manages to maintain her dignity and freedom through her education and mentality. She does this partially through memory, reconstituting painful experiences of her past as positive ones. Also, she educates herself so that she rises above the Bertram sisters in both common sense and literacy. Even

though she was treated as an inferior as a child, she is able to transform herself into a knowledgeable, but sensitive, adult.

The narrative structure of the novel, therefore, allows Fanny to be envisioned as playing a role in the abolitionist fight against slavery that takes place in England instead of supporting the crumbling edifice of imperialism. As Sutherland observes, once she has power over the Mansfield estate, she may join her Clapham brethren in their struggle to end slavery (8). Austen was part of a slave-owning society, as Said observes, and when she died in 1817, slave ownership was still a key piece of British imperial rule—no matter what was written in the Westminster law books (Sutherland 9). Said is correct in stating, “Yes, Austen belonged to a slave-owning society, but do we jettison her novels as so many trivial exercises in aesthetic frumpery? Not at all” (97). However, Said is wrong when he says, “It would be silly to expect Jane Austen to treat slavery with anything like the passion of an abolitionist or a newly liberated slave” (97). Said does not recognize the anti-slavery discourses underlying the novel and implicitly proposing Austen’s abolitionist and evangelical leanings insofar as her depiction of Britain through domestic virtues in Fanny’s world of *Mansfield Park*.

Also, contrary to Armstrong’s view, Fanny has a very special relationship to the Mansfield Park estate. The house itself provides nurture; she takes from the house what she needs. The nursery provides books that she uses to educate herself and the quietness and orderliness of the house provides her with a sanctity she never could have experienced in Portsmouth’s distasteful and unloving home. Fanny develops a memory that is far different from that of the Bertram sisters, allowing her to revitalize the past and

change the Mansfield Park environment. In some way, Fanny is representative of old English values and an English class system with its resilient modes of regeneration. The novel's primary thrust is about Fanny's domestic virtues, which become both part of the family and the estate.

Sir Thomas is portrayed as improved by the end of the novel, being kinder, gentler, and less mercenary. He becomes less greedy and more cognizant of true virtue, giving his blessing to the marriage between Fanny and Edmund, even though this is what he had initially worried about. He becomes tired "of ambitious and mercenary connections" and is concerned "to bind by the strongest securities that remained to him of domestic felicity" realizing that Fanny was indeed the daughter that he desired (320; vol. 3 ch. 17), Fanny's relationship to Sir Thomas becomes one of mutual attachment, replacing his earlier harshness; Sir Thomas is no longer the formidable dictator. Also, by her marriage to Edmund, Fanny will elevate her social status and become mistress of Mansfield Park because her conduct-book mentality and evangelical leanings can be interpreted as leading her to become a partner in Edmund's work, changing her formerly passive role in their relationship, in which Edmund had always been her guide and protector, into a more active one. Still, the narrator suggests that Fanny's relationship with Edmund suppresses erotic desires: "Loving, guiding, protecting her as he had been doing ever since her being ten years . . . what was there now to add, but that he should prefer soft light eyes to dark sparkling ones" (319; vol. 3 ch. 17). Fanny's sister, Susan, replaces Fanny as Lady Bertram's companion at Mansfield Park, but she has a "more fearless disposition and happier nerves" (320; vol. 3 ch. 17).

The complete exclusion of Mary Crawford from the Mansfield community at the end of the novel seems harsh, particularly to modern readers. Though Fanny is not depicted as a subservient at the end of the novel, she is not totally emancipated. As a child, Fanny submits to the paternalistic authority of Sir Thomas; however, she rejects his authority when he tries to force her to accept Henry Crawford's marriage proposal out of gratitude, proving that Fanny is not simply a slave figure. Armstrong notes, it is difficult not to feel that Fanny is fortunate as well as virtuous: "In gaining access to Mansfield Park parsonage and to the gravitas of marriage with Edmund, Fanny is not quite Mary's proxy, but it is difficult not to feel that she is lucky as well as good" (87). Nonetheless, it is possible to view Mary Crawford as more independent than Fanny. But Fanny is far from "being very much his [Edmund's] object" (87), as observed by Armstrong; she proves this with her obstinate refusal to marry Henry Crawford, who does not meet her high moral standards and thereby asserts her own individualism. Fanny is about as liberated as her society would tolerate; her sister, Susan, will do better. Mary Crawford's time will not come for many years.

The centrality of *Lovers' Vows* to the text points to the possibility of a different outcome for the novel's characters. Again, Austen is interested in a negotiation of two sets of opposing values. Interestingly, it is Mary Crawford, rather than Edmund the clergyman, who argues for marriage between Maria and her brother Henry after they commit adultery. If this marriage had taken place, then it might have been Fanny—not Mary—left out in the cold. The narrator seems sympathetic toward Mary Crawford; in Volume 3, Chapter 27, the narrator describes Mary Crawford's elevated sense of taste in



possible partners: “[F]or Mary, though perfectly resolved against ever attaching herself to a younger brother again, was long in finding . . . anyone who could satisfy the better taste she had acquired at Mansfield” (318; vol. 3 ch. 17).

But we must remember that Henry Crawford committed the unpardonable act of adultery, and it was Fanny who correctly read Henry: “Her ill opinion of him was founded chiefly on observations” (215; vol. 3 ch. 1). Austen intentionally does not allow Henry to repent for his sin, unlike the Baron in *Lovers’ Vows*. Similarly, Maria is not saved from being a “fallen woman” unlike her character, Agatha, who is saved in the play. Sir Thomas refuses to let her back into the neighborhood of Mansfield (315). Adultery would be an unforgivable crime for Austen, because this would go against all sense of propriety and decorum. Also, as the daughter of a country parson, she was raised with strict moral standards. Adultery would have been an unforgivable sin, disruptive of both domestic and family values. At the beginning of Chapter 17 in Volume 3 of the novel, the narrator says she will forgive those who are not very much in the wrong, but she will dispose of those who are: “Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore every body, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest” (312). Austen disposes of Henry Crawford and Maria, because they have crossed the line, committing the unforgivable act of adultery.

The connection between the play’s disruption and the silence ensuing upon Fanny’s mention of “the slave trade” underscores Austen’s engagement with contemporary issues of slavery, colonialism and empire. As Devoney Looser argues,

“Austen did not avoid history. On the contrary . . . she engaged it directly, grappled with it, and refashioned it for her own purposes” (36). In *Mansfield Park*, Austen engages with issues of women’s history as well as issues of slavery through Fanny’s personal growth. Memory comes into play because Fanny transforms her initially painful relationship with the Mansfield Park estate and its inhabitants into a family relationship that implies the well being of its residents, while Fanny becomes a critical person in this community at the novel’s conclusion. Similarly, Karounos suggests that when Austen says she will write of “a complete change of subject- Ordination” in *Mansfield Park*, Austen applies the notion and device of ordination primarily to the property of Mansfield Park and to the person of Fanny Price: “Ordination, as I believe Austen meant it, is a process of both ordering and ordaining . . . the person to be ordained first in fact as well as degree of importance-is Fanny Price” (Karounos 716). The intimate connection between the narrator and Fanny is fashioned not only through the narrator’s use of indirect discourse, but also because the narrator adopts Fanny as her own; thus in the novel’s concluding chapter, the narrator refers to Fanny as “My Fanny.” The narrator makes the reader appreciate Fanny’s happiness with the narrative resolution: “My Fanny indeed at this very time, I have the satisfaction of knowing, must have been very happy in spite of everything” (312; Vol. 3, ch. 17).

Armstrong acknowledges the complexity of the novel. According to Armstrong, chiefly contributing to the fact that Fanny cannot be easily characterized as a slave is her constant unwillingness to sacrifice her Protestant beliefs for patriarchal authority if such authority goes against her conscience (87). Moreover, Armstrong finds that Fanny’s new

status is partly fortuitous: “What makes Fanny entitled to her new status—chance, Edmund’s change of heart, Sir Thomas Bertram’s astuteness in sustaining the fortunes of Mansfield Park—is very much an open question” (87). Moreover, Armstrong concludes, *Mansfield Park* presents a paradox because of the conflict between slavery and the rebirth of Protestant sentiment: “Founded on slave labour, yet declaring itself for ideals of conduct based on the rebirth of Protestant feeling, *Mansfield Park* remains paradoxical to the last (87). Nevertheless, this chapter suggests that Fanny and Edmund is representative of the ideals of conduct that are based on a renewal of Protestant sentiment, so that personal and national domestic virtues are incorporated into the novel’s ending, despite the areas of vulnerability as put forward by Armstrong. And Austen’s attachment to her heroine, Fanny, buttresses a reading of Fanny that takes into account her conduct-book mentality and the narrative’s treatment of her spiritual growth. However, because of Britain’s ambivalence towards slavery and the slave trade in 1814 and the rise of the British Empire in 1815, the domestic virtues represented by Edmund and Fanny’s union with its evangelical anti-slavery and anti-slave trade bent lie below the surface of the text, contributing to the novel’s “shade.” In her famous letter of 1813, Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra that she felt *Pride and Prejudice* was “too light and sparkling;--it wants “shade”:

[*Pride and Prejudice*] wants to be stretched out here & there with a long Chapter—of sense if could be had, if not of solemn specious nonsense--about something unconnected with the story; an Essay on Writing, a critique of Sir Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparte—anything that would bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness & epigrammatism of the general stile. (Austen “Letter 80” 203)

Though we can hardly call the style of *Mansfield Park* playful, the novel does have “shade;” the issues of slavery, colonialism, and empire are connected rather than being “unconnected” with the story; still, in the novel, history is woven into the narrative, giving its readers and critics a riddle to unravel in attempting to interpret its “shade.”

## CHAPTER TWO

### ***Persuasion: Austen, Captain Wentworth/Wordsworth and the Navy***

That young lady [Austen] had a talent for describing the involvement and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I had ever met with. The big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going, but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!

—Sir Walter Scott from a letter dated March 14, 1826  
("March 14" 292)

In *Persuasion*, published posthumously in 1817 along with *Northanger Abbey*, Austen romanticizes the domestic virtues of the British navy both at home and abroad. The chief literary interpretations have treated *Persuasion* as depicting an extremely happy marital relationship between Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth; also, the naval community that closes the novel is generally interpreted as a positive one. According to critic Gene Ruoff, an infinite sense of happiness will pervade both the small community that closes *Persuasion* and the relationship between Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, the handsome sea captain, whom she marries. Ruoff notes an affinity between Austen, born in 1775 and William Wordsworth (born April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1770) because they both recognized the power of memory to reflect on a sense of loss in the past, which brings a healed memory into the present, extending into the future and also establishing a feeling of community (350). More recently, Laura Dubundo, quoting the final words of

*Persuasion*, also points out the natural affinity between Austen and Wordsworth, particularly in their attitudes toward community and the English nation:

Austen catalogues who the ‘true friends’ of this couple are and locates the community then not geographically but nonetheless specifically: Anne ‘gloried in being a sailor’s wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance’ . . . suddenly the author inscribes her picture on a national canvas where the commitments and service are on a national scale. (71)

Interestingly, as Brian Southam observes, the navy is portrayed with “sly diminuendo” in the final sentence of *Persuasion*; Austen seems to favor the navy at home instead of abroad, and he says that as a novelist her attention was not upon great events but upon private lives, “not upon war but upon the character of the warriors returned home from the fray, sailors home from sea, now at home and settling into peacetime life with their families or seeking wives” (3). On the other hand, Jocelyn Harris remarks that in knowing that the war with France had ended two years before the novel was published, *Persuasion*’s contemporary readers might imagine Captain Wentworth forsaking the public for the private sphere, exchanging war for domestic joy; however, in the last sentence of the novel, Austen applauds martial accomplishments (85).<sup>1</sup>

Paradoxically, the narrative ends with the announcement of the marriage of Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth and the call to war again, in which it is imagined they both will go off to sea, sailing off to far horizons. This can be interpreted as suggesting a sense of loss and the finality of death. Austen started writing *Persuasion* in August 1815 while

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<sup>1</sup> Here, Austen may remember the phrasing of Joseph Nolleken’s wall monument in Bath Abbey to Colonel Alexander Champion (d. March 15, 1793): “Not less adorned, exalted, and endear’d by domestic Virtues, than by professional Abilities” (qtd. in Harris 85).

the first draft was completed in July 1816, the final draft being completed a month later. Austen began to feel seriously ill in 1816 and her health worsened during the year; there is a moribund feeling which lingers at the novel's close. By the time the final draft of the novel was completed, Austen had experienced her own personal disappointment because she was approaching death and had failed to achieve marital felicity. Austen's disappointment may in turn also account for the novel's autumnal melancholic tone.

When Austen composed *Persuasion*, the glorious role that the British navy and Admiral Nelson had played in defeating Napoleon's fleet at the battle of Trafalgar had become reduced in the eyes of the nation and its public; instead, Wellington's victory at Waterloo had become more in vogue. While Austen ostensibly romanticizes the navy in *Persuasion*, my argument suggests that Austen's depiction of the naval community as representing domestic virtues and the grandeur of the British nation, which closes the novel, is not as solid and joyous as it superficially appears; she investigates the characters' different types of memories to question the community's cohesiveness. Moreover, the navy's role was greatly diminished in Britain by 1815-1816 when Austen was writing the novel, so that the last sentence of the novel might also be ironic, Austen highlighting the nation's forgetfulness and lack of appreciation for the British navy's past accomplishments in the Napoleonic wars and its continued importance to the nation. Similar to the "shade" of *Mansfield Park*, *Persuasion* can also be seen as marked by a certain "shade" insofar as Austen's treatment of domestic virtues is concerned.

In the novel, Austen makes allusions which focus her contemporary readers on the novel's setting in 1814. In Chapter 11, the narrator notes that Benwick has read Lord

Byron's poetry—according to the narrator, this makes him a “young man of considerable taste in reading” (100)—and Benwick and Anne privately converse about Byron's *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos* during the group's excursion to Lyme. Byron's *The Corsair* is quoted in the following chapter with the narrator's indirect allusion to Byron's “dark blue seas” (the first line of *The Corsair*) as the narrator comments on Anne's and Benwick's continued conversation as they stroll down to the sea (109).<sup>2</sup> Austen's reference to *The Corsair* is significant because it brings to mind the Byronic/Napoleonic hero. While for the most part, Napoleon was a military hero for Byron, Austen's allusions to the Byronic/ Napoleonic hero, as critic Jocelyn Harris observes, would not necessarily had positive connotations with regard to Austen's portrayal of the state of Britain in 1814 (74). Austen's literary career as an adult basically coincided with Napoleon's military career. In 1817, when *Persuasion* was published posthumously, her audience would have been as familiar as she was with Britain's naval, historical and political events (Harris 74).

As William Deresiewicz notes, *Persuasion* opens following Napoleon's abdication in the spring of 1814, and although Austen does not exactly specify its concluding date, the novel's closing events run up to the end of the following February (146). Napoleon's flight from Elba occurred at the very end of February 1815—he escaped from the island on February 26 and landed on the European mainland on March

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<sup>2</sup> Knox-Shaw presents a first-rate study of Byronic analogies and echoes in *Persuasion*, viewing Wentworth, Anne and Louisa as reenacting the parts of the Corsair, Medora, and Gulnare (146). Knox-Shaw, like Galperin, does not see much real chance for Anne's domestic happiness, despite the novel's happy ending, because *Persuasion* persists tirelessly in pushing its theme of arrested experience in a way, “which far surpasses Byron's in both subtlety and power” (66).



1<sup>st</sup> (146). According to Harris, even though Napoleon was exiled to St. Helena, Austen feared that he could still be a threat, as manifested in the novel's setting date of 1814; Harris observes that by curtailing her timeline on the eve of the Hundred Days, she may warn that the "history of Bonaparte" is not necessarily over (85). Similarly, the public perception was that Napoleon might still present a threat: "Will his attempt be a mere adventure," a German paper questioned on March 15, 1815, seventeen days after Napoleon escaped from Elba, "or an event involving the destinies of the world? Shall we again witness a complete revolution of affairs?" ("Napoleon in France" B3). Austen does indeed value the navy's ability to be the guardian of the British nation, although she probably no longer regarded Napoleon as a threat when she was composing the novel, because he had been trounced at the battle of Waterloo. Nonetheless, my argument proposes that she is anxious for the navy to recover its national importance in the estimation of both the public and Britain, and to demonstrate itself as an exemplar of domestic virtues, both at home and abroad.

At the time, Austen's expectations for the navy's future would have been undercut because British naval expenditures were decreased to pre-1793 levels after Waterloo (Harris 75). Still, on August 2, 1816 the *Times* was fearful about governmental preference for the military over the navy: "An alarming and unwieldy military system has been built up and cherished in preference to our glorious marine—the natural, the invincible, the constitutional, the economical guardian of the British Empire" ("Public Distresses" E2). Mostly, the *Times* feared irresponsible government expenditures, saying earlier in the same article, "The pressure... is that of an enormous system of taxes,

strengthened by the improvident or unprincipled uses to which a large portion of them continues to be perverted” (“Public Distresses” E2). On March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1815, the Admiralty responded to Napoleon’s escape from Elba by halting demobilization and maintaining the Fleet in commission (Harris 75). Following 1814, when Napoleon was exiled to Elba, the number of commissioned ships went from 713 to 134 by 1820 and the number of seaman from 140,000 to 23,000 (Harris 75).

The backdrop to Austen’s glorification of the British navy in *Persuasion* is the fact that the navy was experiencing a decline in its perceived importance to the nation, and the issue of the navy’s retrenchment had become highly politicized. Upon Napoleon’s imprisonment on St. Helena, the navy became a particularly vulnerable target for cutbacks in government expenditures, as Margarette Lincoln observes (188), because groups of Whigs and radicals, who were afraid of military oppression, disparaged the government for spending huge sums on the military. The *Times* stated in the August 2, 1816 article, “We cannot fail to recollect how often, and how fruitlessly, immense debts have been paid, and a heedless extravagance encouraged” (“Public Distresses” E2). Accordingly, the British navy’s devaluation and its reduced importance as part of the public discourse should be considered in a materialist study of Austen’s text.

Naturally, Austen would be upset by the navy’s devaluation by both the government and the public because two of her younger brothers, Francis and Charles, were officers in the navy with distinguished careers in service. Indeed, both Austen and Byron remarked on public capriciousness towards the navy; in *Sanditon*, Austen writes: “Mr. Parker almost wishes he had not named his house Trafalgar, because ‘Waterloo is

more the thing now” (380). In September 1818, Byron also observes the forgetfulness of an unappreciative Britain:

Nelson was once Britannia’s god of war  
And still should be so, but the tide is turn’d;  
There’s no more to be said of Trafalgar,  
'Tis with our hero quietly inurn'd;  
Because the army’s grown more popular. (*Don Juan*, canto 1, st. 4)

To both Austen and Byron, the glorious days of the British navy’s heroism seemed to be fading away after the Battle of Waterloo.

For Austen, the navy’s role in protecting the British Empire and its wealth would also bring up issues surrounding slavery and the slave trade, which *Mansfield Park* also depicts. The ambivalence, which is present in *Mansfield Park* regarding Britain’s economic dealing with the West Indies, also manifests itself in *Persuasion*.<sup>3</sup> In *Persuasion*, the widow Mrs. Smith, was not alone in deriving her income from the West Indies; most of Britain’s upper middle classes had investments in plantations, and therefore, in the slave trade. Austen’s father, the Reverend George Austen, was the principal trustee for a plantation in Antigua (Southam *Navy* 191). In *Persuasion*, Galperin finds that Anne and Wentworth’s position in securing the reacquisition of Mrs. Smith’s property in the West Indies has the effect of “deconstructing any difference that might exist between the old order and the newer democratic order under whose auspices both slavery and the continued subjugation of women are also countenanced” (233). From

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<sup>3</sup> Until 1815, the British West Indies was Britain’s most important colony, providing most of the nation’s wealth (Harris 79). French-controlled St. Domingo was the wealthiest single colony, its foreign trade larger than that of the United States. Between 1783 and 1789, the prosperity of St. Domingo had been increased by Britain supplying the island with forty thousand slaves a year between 1783 and 1789, so it was constantly being fought over. By 1806, The British West Indian colonies accounted for 55 percent of the sugar trade (Harris 79).

Austen's standpoint, the British navy's implicit countenance of the slave trade would have been a negative aspect of the navy's role as guardian of Britain's domestic virtues.

Austen's glorification of the navy in 1815-1816 when she was writing the novel would seem somewhat ironic to her contemporary audience because of the fickleness of the government and public's attitudes, which now favored the army after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. From a personal standpoint, it seems that Austen would have been disappointed over the navy's recent devaluation in public perception because this would also devalue her brothers' distinguished careers of long service. Further, Harris observes, Austen probably desired to urge continued vigilance after Waterloo, and for that reason she brought *Persuasion* to a close at the temporary peace of 1814 rather than the more stable peace of 1815 (75). Austen's timeline in the novel buttresses the role of the British navy as the "economical guardian" of Britain, as observed by *The Times*, in the minds of her contemporary readers.

Notwithstanding the social and political discourses, which underlie the novel's surface text, *Persuasion* is still regarded as Austen's most romantic novel. Not until Chapter 4 of the novel does the reader learn the cause of the poor spirits of the novel's heroine, Anne. Seven years earlier, Anne had parted with Captain Wentworth, the man whom she had deeply loved. He is the brother-in-law of the Crofts, who are about to lease Sir Walter Elliot's ancestral home. The narrator treats the earlier engagement with sympathetic irony: "half the sum of attraction, on either side, might have been enough, for he had nothing to do and she had hardly anyone to love" (18; vol. 1, ch. 4).

The proposed marriage of Anne and Wentworth had been frustrated because it contradicted the conservative principles of Anne's friend Lady Russell, who substitutes for Anne's late mother and her vain father, Sir Walter, the ineffectual patriarch of the family. Lady Russell believes Wentworth to be a young man "who had nothing but himself to recommend him, and no hopes of attaining affluence, but in the chances of a most uncertain profession [the navy], and no connections to secure even his farther rise in that profession" (19; vol. 1, ch. 4). While Anne in her youth sees Wentworth as "brilliant" and "head strong" (20; vol. 1, ch. 4), the conservative Lady Russell views him as "dangerous" and "imprudent" (20; vol. 1, ch. 4) Anne's feelings rebel against an overanxious conscience; however, she ultimately obeys Lady Russell's superior wisdom and authority, breaking the engagement. Facing spinsterhood eight years later, Anne regrets following Lady Russell's advice. As the novel's title underlines, Anne was persuaded to go against her true feelings: "She was persuaded that under every disadvantage of disapprobation at home and every anxiety attending his profession . . . she should yet have been a happier woman in maintaining the engagement, than she had been in sacrifice of it." (20; vol. 1, ch. 4)

The novel is generally thought to focus on Anne's growing understanding of romance as a mature young woman (Astell 2-4), so that Anne's is an autumnal romance, occurring after she has practically given up all expectations of personal happiness. With regard to the domestic happiness achieved by the marriage of Anne and Captain Wentworth, my argument also proposes that Wentworth is the character who learns romance while Anne interprets her personal history without admitting any fault on her

part for the lost seven years, demonstrating that Austen has doubts about the domestic felicity of their relationship and the small naval community—noted for its “domestic virtues”—at the end of the novel. Reflecting on the ending of *Persuasion*, we discover tiny cracks in Anne’s and Captain Wentworth’s relationship and the surrounding community. Moreover, the lost years and difficulties surmounted by Wentworth’s and Anne’s autumnal relationship may allude to Austen’s own disappointments in securing a romantic love, leaving us with a less secure picture of future domestic happiness than that proposed by Ruoff.

In her book, *Dear Jane*, Constance Pilgrim investigates Austen’s personal romantic disillusionments. She conjectures that the name of Austen’s unknown lover was Captain John Wordsworth, younger brother of William Wordsworth, and that Austen met Captain Wordsworth in Devon while his ship was unable to sail due to adverse winds: “by a series of delays . . . had put into Torbay . . . in July [1797] and was kept there by adverse winds till September, eight weeks of enforced idleness” (35). Elaborating on Austen’s opportunity to meet Captain John Wordsworth, Pilgrim suggests that Austen was probably introduced to Captain Wordsworth through her long-time friend, Mary Johnson Furse, Charles William Johnson’s aunt. According to Pilgrim, Charles William Johnson was on Captain Wordsworth’s ship, the *Duke of Montrose*. Captain Wordsworth rescued Johnson from mutineers aboard his ship before it reached Tor Bay. Furse and Austen decided to visit Johnson during the long delay, and Johnson introduced them to second mate Wordsworth who had saved his life. According to Pilgrim, during the subsequent weeks Austen and Wordsworth fell in love.

Yet, according to Carl Ketchum, there is “not a scrap of evidence” that “Jane” ever met “John” nor is there any indication that Wordsworth had time to engage in a love affair during the ship’s delay in Tor Bay (5). However, he admits the following: first, Charles William Johnson did travel to Calcutta on the *Duke of Montrose* when Wordsworth was second mate, and Wordsworth saved Johnson’s life by quashing the mutiny. Second, Furse and Austen were friends. These facts were recorded by William Johnson’s son, William Johnson Cory, in his letters, also adding that Captain Wordsworth was Austen’s lost lover (based on information from his grandmother, Mary Johnson Furse) (2). Ketchum contends that the name and title, Captain Wentworth, in *Persuasion* versus Captain Wordsworth is probably the strongest support for Pilgrim’s theory (1). Even if Austen did not have a love affair with Jonathan Wordsworth, she had probably read *Elegaic Stanzas* composed May – June 1806. Stephen Gill observes that in this poem “more than any other save *The Prelude*, past and present life and art interact” (William Wordsworth, *The Major Works* 718). Wordsworth stayed at Peele Castle (off the southernmost coast of the Lake District, opposite Rampside) in late summer 1794. John Wordsworth died in February 1805. Sir George Beaumont’s painting, ‘A Storm: Peele Castle’ was exhibited in 1806, and Wordsworth likely viewed the painting at the Royal Academy in May 1806 (Gill 718). The painting depicts a ship laboring past Peele Castle in very heavy seas. In the poem, Wordsworth mourns the loss of his brother John to a storm at sea. The contrast between a calm and stormy sea expresses Wordsworth’s regret that his brother could not have “been planted” in a world quite different: “Beside a

sea that could not cease to smile; / On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.” (*Elegiac Stanzas*, lines 19-20) (326)

Unlike Anne and Wentworth, the supposed relationship between Austen and Wordsworth would never have had a second chance to flourish. John Wordsworth died at sea in 1805 during a voyage on the *Earl of Abergavenny* that would indeed have made his fortune. The shipwreck became one of the greatest maritime tragedies in British history; two hundred lives were lost along with a cargo worth £200,000 (McAdam 240). By February 7, 1805—two days after Wordsworth’s death—the tragedy had been reported in major newspapers across Britain—including the *Morning Chronicle*, *The Times*, and the *Observer*—so Austen would have known about his death (McAdam 240). Prior to leaving, both William and John Wordsworth looked forward to bright futures (McAdam 240). The *Earl of Abergavenny* was carrying 1,200 tons of cotton to China, “a venture which promised large profits” for John, who had been unable to gain large profits on two previous voyages as captain (McAdam 240). John Wordsworth had hoped to share his finances with his family upon his return, finally being able to support William in his literary endeavors (240).

According to Pilgrim, Austen’s friend, Anne Lefroy, assumed a role similar to *Persuasion*’s Lady Russell. Pilgrim says that Lefroy frustrated Austen’s relationship with her nephew, Tom Lefroy: “Mrs. Lefroy did not approve of Jane’s friendship with the Irish nephew, who stayed in Hampshire when Jane was twenty, in 1796. Tom was poor at the time. However, he later became the Chief Justice of Ireland (45). Pilgrim hypothesizes that Mrs. Lefroy exercised a similar veto regarding Austen’s relationship



with Captain Wordsworth—Captain Wordsworth was optimistic about becoming wealthy, because he was to make four voyages in nine to ten years. Pilgrim says: “That kind of optimism would have carried little weight with Mrs. Lefroy and Jane was no doubt influenced by her friend against her own inner convictions” (45).

Indeed, if it was proven beyond a doubt that John Wordsworth was a lost love of Austen’s, the *Abergavenny* tragedy makes Austen’s possible self-examination in *Persuasion* even more poignant; in *Persuasion*, it is implied that Anne Elliot, like Mrs. Croft, will accompany Wentworth on his voyages once she is married. Therefore, if Austen had a romantic involvement with John Wordsworth, she must have regretted not taking the risk of marrying him before he went to sea. If Wentworth is a characterization of John Wordsworth, then Austen rewrites her disappointment of losing her love because Wentworth returns safely home despite serious risks associated with his career. The fact that John Wordsworth died at sea makes the ending of the novel even more precarious, assuming Austen personally experienced the loss of her love as a result of a tragic shipwreck. As William Walling comments, “Austen’s art conveys to us a peculiarly modern terror: that our only recourse amid the accelerations of history is to commit our deepest energies to an intense personal relationship but that an intense personal relationship is inevitably subject to its own kind of terrible precariousness” (350). Ironically, John Wordsworth died as a result of a huge commercial venture, which is representative of the part England played in the eighteenth century’s greatest period of merchant development in Western culture. The ending of *Persuasion*, therefore, can be viewed as subject to the terrors of the modern world for yet another reason, underscoring

the fact that the prospect for Anne's future happiness with Wentworth remains extremely fragile.

Significantly, Pilgrim observes that Austen's "ideal of love—of mind influencing mind—of 'gentleness and fortitude,' of reciprocal, beneficent development of character, was, for Jane, the only sure foundation of happiness in marriage" (7). According to Pilgrim, the fictional Anne and Captain Wentworth discover this type of idyllic relationship. My argument considers that there is no perfect "reciprocal beneficent development of character" with regard to Anne's and Wentworth's relationship because Austen's own hopes of personal happiness were frustrated, at least once, if not twice, by Lefroy. This would also explain Austen's treatment of Anne's and Captain Wentworth's relationship as a melancholy and tender romance with Anne learning to read relationships while Wentworth learns romance. Austen treats Wentworth as the character who is transformed because *Persuasion* is partially autobiographical. She criticizes herself: the "conservative" Jane Austen.<sup>4</sup> The transfer of focus to Wentworth may be a part of Austen's self-examination; Wentworth, not Anne, is the character who honestly remembers and reassesses his personal history. This allows him to learn from his past mistakes, enabling him to change in the future. Anne's development is more internal as opposed to Wentworth's, whose development furthers the plot, leading to the fulfillment of romance between him and Anne. Wentworth accurately remembers his personal

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<sup>4</sup> In *On Persuasion*, Marilyn Butler says: "The comparison Jane Austen makes between an idle, useless 'gentlemen' proud of his rank, and the eminently useful sailors, has been seen as a notable example of Jane Austen's willingness to be radical. So too has her perception that Lady Russell's wrong advice stemmed from a refined kind of worldliness. On the contrary, the tone of Jane Austen's criticism of her novel's father-and mother-figure together with its fictional source, in the conscience of a selfless and dutiful daughter—belong to a familiar kind of conservative social comment" (284).

history, admitting his past mistakes so that they become a part of his personal history. Anne has a more internal memory; she recollects the loss of the past seven years. However, she uses the power of memory to reflect on her sense of loss in the past, bringing a repaired memory into the present and extending into the future. Anne, not Wentworth, has a memory that is more like Wordsworth's.

In the novel, Captain Benwick's fiancée, Fanny Harlow, dies before they can marry, their marriage being delayed for financial reasons. This presents still another correspondence to Austen's life because Captain Wordsworth dies prematurely, terminating any hope for the sort of second rendezvous (Ketchum 1) that fortuitously happens in *Persuasion* with Anne and Wentworth. The seasonal melancholy of autumn is present in *Persuasion*, at least in part, because at least the romance with Tom Lefroy (and the possible affair with Captain Wordsworth) in Austen's own life did not mesh with an entirely happy ending. In her letter, dated March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1817 to Fanny Knight, Austen says, "I must not depend upon being ever very blooming again. Sickness is a dangerous indulgence at my time of Life" ("Letter 142" 2:487). Austen realized that she had forfeited her own opportunity for her "ideal of love," which was the only certain basis for happiness in marriage.

Yet, in *Persuasion*, naval service, although dangerous, allows Captain Wentworth to gain his fortune because he can keep the prize money from the French ships that he defeats in battle. Since Wentworth was not an eldest son, he was not first in line for inheritance under the doctrine of primogeniture. According to British political philosopher Thomas Paine, the legal doctrine of primogeniture is "against every law of

nature” and must be destroyed. In the first part of the *Rights of Man*, published in 1791, Paine says, “All the children which the aristocracy disowns (which are all except the eldest) are, in general, cast like orphans on a parish, to be provided for by the public, but at a greater charge” (288). Therefore, the navy allows Wentworth, as a younger son, to improve his social status, allowing him to be judged on his abilities rather than by an aristocratic title. Anne Elliot also now gains access to social mobility and a more equal relationship with Wentworth in a fashion similar to Admiral and Mrs. Croft’s marital relationship.

Both Francis and Charles Austen were younger sons, like Wentworth, and the navy offered them a chance to have careers and make fortunes despite their status as younger sons. England’s declaration of war on France in 1793 had some positive aspects for Austen because the war, as Claudia Johnson notes, brought the promise of liberation for males and females from a feudal society that was tied to landed estates and primogeniture (289). Similarly, Armstrong says, “The rhythm of revolution and reaction—French revolution and the subsequent repressive politics pursued in England during the French wars and their aftermath until 1832—that shapes the work of male writers is different for women” (17). For Wordsworth, the reign of terror was disillusioning; however, for Austen in *Persuasion*, the war is the impetus for Anne and Wentworth’s romance allowing Wentworth liberation from the restrictions of primogeniture.

Austen romanticizes the navy in *Persuasion*, primarily through the characters’ dialogue and the characters’ consciousness of the navy’s domestic virtues, both in its

national importance and especially in its personal camaraderie: “Anne thought she left great happiness behind her when they quitted the house; and Louisa, by whom she found herself walking, burst forth into raptures of admiration and delight on the character of the navy” (66; vol. 2, ch. 11). The descriptions of the naval characters are unique but distinctively naval. Collectively, as Southam points out, they depict social representations of their vocation, which are full of their occupational peculiarities (8). Similarly, their talents and creativity are related to their naval inclination for both creativity and fastidiousness. For instance, when Anne visits the home of Captain Harville and his family, she beams with pleasure upon seeing his naval talents in the “fitting up of his room,” his wind-proofing the windows, and his ingenious handiwork, “rare species of wood . . . from all the far-away places that he has traveled . . . the effect of its influence on his habits, the picture of repose and domestic happiness it presented made it to her a something more, or less, than gratification” (66; vol. 2, ch. 11). There is no reason to doubt Louisa’s enthusiasm for the navy, and the fact that Anne Elliot shares her sentiments; on its face this would appear to be the perfect picture of domestic happiness.

However, according to Southam, Harville’s sea-side house would be representative of low pay (291). But although Austen is proud of her brothers’ careers and desirous of the navy playing an important role in the nation—contrary to Southam’s contention that Austen has equal fervor for all aspects of the navy—Austen may have had some reservations about the navy’s treatment of its officers insofar as their rate of pay and recognition for their loyal services were concerned. Francis had been engaged to Mary Gibson for over a year, held back by his lack of funds (Southam 118). When

Francis was transferred from the *Leopard* to the *Canopus*, his rate of pay increased from about £182 to £237 per year (Southam 119). However, because he was unable to fight in the battle of Trafalgar, Francis did not receive the benefits of his pay raise (Southam 119). Southam notes that the navy's low rate of pay resulted in economic and domestic hardships to its officers and their families:

So when Francis returned to England in May 1814, he came home to greet his fifth child, Cassandra Eliza, born at Portsmouth. Standing 139<sup>th</sup> on the Captain's list, Francis received £230 per annum (equivalent to approximately £9200 today), while Charles, 369<sup>th</sup> at the bottom of the scale, and would receive £192 (£7680) on leaving active service in the summer of 1816. So without the support of prize-money or some other source of income, half-pay would provide only a bare minimum to live on. (292)

Because Lord Nelson died in battle Francis again lost all chance of a frigate—the smaller ships which could travel faster and capture pirate ships, which also offered the chance for prize money (Southam 101).

After the British victory at Trafalgar in October 1805, Napoleon relinquished his scheme of invading England and attempted to disrupt British trade in the West Indies. Two French squadrons met up off St. Domingo with Vice-Admiral Sir John Duckworth, who captured or drove ashore all five French ships of the line in one of the squadrons, with the loss of over fifteen hundred Frenchmen. Francis took part in the battle as captain of the *Canopus*, an eighty-gun ship of the line and described their victory in logbook entries and a letter to his fiancée Mary Gibson (Harris 81). As William Austen-Leigh puts it, “This accession of honours and prize-money evidently encouraged him to think that he could now afford to marry Mary Gibson” (William Austen-Leigh, *Family Record* 137). Austen chooses to focus not on Trafalgar, but on the less famous but economically

crucial Battle of St. Domingo. In the novel Captain Wentworth is able to seek a wife that the battle's rewards gave to Anne's brother, Francis. However, Southam notes that the rewards Francis received were modest. Austen rewrites the small reward that Francis receives when Wentworth is amply rewarded with prize money, accruing a large fortune, which makes him a desirable bachelor. Similarly, in the novel, Admiral Croft serves as "rear admiral of the white" in "the Trafalgar action" (16; vol. 1, ch. 1). Croft would be directly under the Vice-Admiral in Nelson's own squadron, the White (Harris 77). Unlike Francis, the Admiral makes a "noble fortune" from his share of the prize money distributed round the Fleet (16; vol. 1, ch. 1).

At the novel's end, the domestic community surrounding Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth consist of Anne's two female friends, Lady Russell and Mrs. Smith, and, broadly speaking, the naval officers. According to Ruoff, the conclusion of *Persuasion* is particularly harsh toward the characters that are omitted from this community (345). Except for Anne, all the Elliots have disappeared, the Musgroves are also out of sight, and even one naval officer, Captain Benwick who has become engaged to Louisa, probably would not be included. The BBC film version of the novel shows Wentworth and Anne sailing off together aboard Wentworth's ship due to another outbreak of war. Ruoff observes that several usual Austenian bonding agents are missing from this new community—"blood ties, cultural backgrounds, ages, and even dispositions" (345). While Ruoff concludes that these figures still "seem somehow solidier than those who have closed other novels" (345), Ruoff's premise does not take into account the difference between Wentworth's and Anne's use of memory regarding how they perceive

their relationship. Their varying power of memory is yet another factor affecting the strength of the domestic community at the conclusion of the novel in a potentially harmful way.

This aspect of Anne's and Wentworth's differing memories is further underscored because various other characters in *Persuasion* also raise questions about the solidity and felicity of the novel's ending, primarily because of how they recount and connect to their past experiences. Ruoff states, "In *Persuasion*, character is judged less in terms of behavior in a present situation than in terms of how individuals relate and relate to their own past experiences" (348). The most disliked character, Walter Elliot, the heir presumptive in the Elliot family, narrates his past life dishonestly and ultimately cannot be trusted, running away at the novel's end with Mrs. Clay, who previously was his rival; he is likened to a "snake" (Morillo 2). The voice of conservatism belongs to Lady Russell instead of Anne's father, who is portrayed as too ridiculous to possess any patriarchal authority. The portrait that Austen draws of Anne's father, Sir Walter Elliot, is so exaggerated that we must consider it a caricature: "Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character: vanity of person and of situation" (4; vol. 1, ch. 1). Lady Russell attempts to replace Anne's dead mother, and the responsibility is initially placed on her to persuade Anne not to accept Wentworth, a navy man with no wealth or certain future. Anne gives up the romance because of Lady Russell's influence—not because of her feeble and effeminate father. Neither Anne's father nor her sister have any memory of Anne's past connection to Captain Wentworth when they hear that his sister was likely to rent Kellynch Hall, and Lady Russell remains silent, while Anne remembers



the past vividly, causing a revival of her previous pain (21; vol. 1, ch. 4). In this instance, Anne, unlike Wordsworth, does not alter her memory.

At the end of the novel, Anne feels that her decision to break her engagement with Wentworth was correct, and she does not reproach herself for being persuaded by Lady Russell—it is as if she does not allow herself to remember the actual, personal trauma of her loss. Anne says to Wentworth:

But I mean that I was right in submitting to her, and that if I had done otherwise, I should have suffered in my conscience. I have now, as far such a sentiment is allowable in human nature, nothing to reproach myself with; and if I mistake not, a strong sense of duty is no bad part of woman's portion. (164; vol. 3, ch. 23)

Anne sounds almost pompous and even selfish here—contrasting with the image of Anne coming to Wentworth's aid when Louisa jumps off the stairs and injures herself at Lyme in Chapter 12. The reader is forced to respond negatively to Anne's lack of regret for her past action. Ruoff observes, "*Persuasion* places its highest value on the power of the individual memory, which, in the absence of such mnemonic aids as a stable home and family must itself provide the continuity essential to the formation of a new community" (346).

Anne does experience regret when she visits the Harvilles at Lyme, noting that they could have been her friends all along; however, her final assessment with respect to "a strong sense of duty" seems to wipe the slate clean insofar as her acceptance of heartfelt fault for their long postponed romance and appears to superficially absolve her from any misgivings. Anne is not really true to her past, and she attempts to evade or mask its reality by relying on a self-imposed sense of duty. Anne's faulty memory may

pose difficulties in her relationship with Wentworth and the continuity of this newly-formed community that does not have blood ties, proximity, similarities in age, or disposition to tie it together.

According to Ruoff, it is Wentworth's conversations with his fellow officers that most show the strength of his memory because he remembers their shared personal histories. This type of shared "remembered personal history of the officers" is in stark contrast to the summary knowledge provided by the navy list of officers who served at Trafalgar: "The distinction between the summary knowledge provided by the list... and the remembered personal history of the officers is made clear" (348). Also, unlike Anne, Wentworth ultimately is able to recount his past and relate it in a way that is not evasive, while he also has the courage to acknowledge his past mistakes. In Chapter 23 of *Persuasion*, Wentworth does this movingly in his letter to Anne. His letter does much more than propel the narrative forward; it gives us insight into his identity and how he has changed.

In Wentworth's letter to Anne, he freely admits his suffering and loss: "He had imagined himself indifferent, when he had only been angry; and he had been unjust to her merits, because he had been a sufferer from them" (161; vol. 3, ch. 23). Wentworth recognizes his past errors. Anne, in conversation with Wentworth, does not admit that she made a bad decision by listening to Lady Russell's advice not to marry him (163; vol. 3, ch. 23). Wentworth's letter is a catalogue of self-recriminations: obstinacy, heedlessness, pride, folly, and resentment—all faults that could apply equally to Louisa—and Wentworth recognizes this. Wentworth's emotional admission of fault sharply contrasts

with Anne's cool deliberation, allowing exoneration from guilt or blame for the lost eight years. The narrator says, "There he had seen every thing to exalt in his estimation the woman he had lost, and there begun to deplore the pride, the folly, the madness of resentment, which had kept him from trying to regain her when thrown in his way" (161; vol. 3, ch. 23). Consequently, the narrator's description of Captain Wentworth's revelations and sense of loss in his letter to Anne accentuate the events at Lyme as a significant moment in Wentworth's life that causes him to make the connection between his romantic love for Anne in the past and his present feelings for her, reviving his love for her. Austen's treatment of Anne's memory as faulty instead of Wentworth's highlights the novel's connection to Austen's own failure to achieve a lasting romance. Her treatment of Anne's memory as flawed may be expected if Austen herself were indeed blocked twice by Anne Lefroy in pursuing romance or was influenced to act conservatively because Austen did not correctly read her own personal history and desires, thereby failing to secure domestic happiness.

The scene in which Wentworth catches a hazel nut from an upper bough of a tree concerns the novel's central debate between resolution and independence; it also reflects upon Anne's inclination to be persuaded by Lady Russell. In Chapter 10 of the novel, Wentworth compliments Louisa for her resolute and firm character— according to Wentworth, a person who is firm is bound to be happy. He compares the hard and glossy hazel nut to a firm character, like Louisa, who does not allow herself to be persuaded or swayed by the opinions of others:

"Let those who would be happy be firm.—Here is a nut," said he, catching one down from the upper bough. "To exemplify,—a beautiful glossy nut,

which blessed with the original strength has outlived all the storms of autumn . . . —This nut . . . while so many of its brethren have been trodden under foot, is still in possession of all the happiness that a hazel nut can be supposed capable of.” (59)

Later, when Louisa falls and injures herself after jumping down the stairs at the Cobb, Anne thinks to herself “that a persuadable temper might sometimes be as much in favor of happiness, as a very resolute character” (79; vol. 2, ch. 12). However, whether or not Anne remembers her own experience correctly is problematic. Just as Wentworth had promised Anne, he earned enough money after a few years in the navy to support her. Anne admits that she would have married him then. If Anne had been more firm in character, it seems likely she would have had a happy relationship with Wentworth during those seven years that she spent alone. Anne acts conservatively, not agreeing to marry Wentworth unless he has some money. She admits “by her accent” to his question about marriage that she would have married him when he returned with a few thousand pounds (164; vol. 3, ch. 23).

In Chapter 23 of the novel, Captain Wentworth is not convinced that Anne was right in following Lady Russell’s advice, and neither are many readers (163). Couples, like the Harvilles, can live with little money in a small house. Though he was never able to make his fortune in the navy, Francis Austen was still happily married to his wife (Southam 139-140). *Persuasion* challenges whether or not a person can be happy without wealth. Based on Austen’s personal life, the question becomes whether Anne should have trusted in Providence and taken the risk of marrying Wentworth. In her letter of March 13, 1817 to Fanny Price, Austen tells Fanny it is important only to marry if there is love

between her and her prospective fiancé even though single women have a great propensity to be poor:

By your description he *cannot* be in love with you, however, he may try at it, and I could not wish the match unless there was a great deal of Love on his side . . . Single Women have a dreadful propensity for being poor—which is one very strong argument in favour of Matrimony . . . Do not hurry; depend upon it, the right Man will come at last. (Austen “Letter 141” 2:483)

In her correspondence, Austen advises Fanny not to marry unless she is in love, but she also acknowledges that single women are often poor, and that improvement of material condition is a strong argument in favor of marriage if there is love. Taken alone Austen’s statements about love and money in her letter are ambiguous. However, if Austen did have an affair with John Wordsworth that was thwarted, it seems she regretted not taking a risk and marrying him without wealth; the fact that Wordsworth died before the purported love affair progressed further echoes Captain Benwick’s affair with Fanny Harlow, who dies before they can marry. Finally, since Anne’s memory is not as accurate as Wentworth’s, Austen may desire that the reader sides with Wentworth—not Anne—on their points of disagreement.

In her letter of March 23<sup>rd</sup> to Fanny Knight, Austen seems to criticize her own behavior in not marrying Tom Lefroy or purportedly Captain Wordsworth. She says: “You may *perhaps* like the Heroine, as she is almost too good for me” (Austen “Letter 142” 2:487). Austen may imply that Anne is too good for her because she strongly adheres to her sense of duty, or she may mean that Anne was too good at listening to Lady Russell. Her sentiment may reflect her own frustrated efforts at finding love; or perhaps she is being sarcastic, saying that Anne’s behavior is selfish and pompous.

The ambiguity reflects, in part, the temporal split in the novel—*Persuasion* opens after eight years have passed since Anne’s refusal of Wentworth. Anne’s initial decision comes into question as an aspect of hindsight or “moral luck.” When Anne thinks over the past, she says in her dialogue with Wentworth: “Do not mistake me, however. I am not saying that she did not err in her advice. It was, perhaps, one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the event decides” (164; vol. 3, ch. 23). Robert Hopkins says, “Anne Elliot’s rationalization that ‘the event’ may decide the goodness or badness of moral judgment suggests consequentialism” (145). Under this theory, whether an action is right or not is contingent upon whether the action has a favorable outcome. In *Persuasion*, once Anne and Wentworth finally profess their love for one another, the reader assumes their relationship will last into the future. Under Hopkins’ interpretation, Lady Russell’s advice was bad because Anne lost out on seven years of happiness with Wentworth.

Wentworth—not Anne—is the character who takes risks to develop a relationship; as he states in his letter, he was initially angry that Anne would not marry him because he did not have money. Anne rationalizes her past decision not to marry Wentworth, saying that it was for Wentworth’s benefit: “Had she not imagined herself consulting his good, even more than her own, she could hardly have given him up” (29; vol. 3; ch. 4). However, in actuality, the decision caused him much agony. Since Wentworth’s memory is more accurate than Anne’s, the reader may conclude that Austen favors Wentworth’s risk-taking personality over Anne’s conservatism, believing that a person can be happily married without wealth. This view corresponds with Austen’s

complex portrait of the naval community at home, especially the domestic portrait of the Harvilles who do not possess wealth. Though Austen was critical of the fact that her naval brothers did not receive high rates of pay, she still recognized that they could be happily married without wealth.

According to Dabundo, there are many communities in Wordsworth's poems (70) and she lists "Nutting" as an example of a poem whose tale arises from a community "Nutting" was written in about 1799 when Wordsworth was twenty-nine or thirty (Heinzelman 3), and Austen was most likely familiar with the poem. Wordsworth's narrator revisits a grove that he once visited as a child—as a boy he had been sent to gather hazel nuts by a "frugal Dame" (bringing into the poem the idea of labor). The nuts hang from boughs in "clusters." The boy violates the "virgin" grove, but experiences pain afterwards. In interpreting this poem, Kurt Heinzelman says:

In revisiting the grove through the retelling of the story, Wordsworth's narrator discovers crime . . . Returning to the grove of his orgiastic destruction with a 'gentle Maiden' in hand, Wordsworth's narrator learns another and deeper mystery. Together, man and maiden enact a new ceremony of 'touch,' a kinder and gentler one, to replace the maimed rites in which he formerly found himself 'exulting' alone: 'Then, dearest maiden move along these shades/In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand/Touch,—for there is a Spirit in the woods.' (6)

Also, Heinzelman observes:

In 'Nutting', gentility or kindness is also seen as a function of narrative revisitation, for the power of the Maiden's 'gentle' touch at the end of the poem is exponentially raised by the act of retelling the story to her—that is, by the act of singling out the event for mature re-inspection for expostulation and reply. (6)

Austen's ideal relationship seems to echo the narrator's sentiments expressed in Wordsworth's "Nutting." The narrator remembers the event during which he destroyed

the virgin grove, but when he retells the story, he recounts a gentler version to the Maiden while still remembering his past crime, and together they move along the “shades.” Arguably, the maiden reciprocates and develops her character as well and brings her own insights into the tale. This “sharing” of ideas, coupled with gentleness and fortitude, makes an ideal relationship as well as an ideal community, built on continuity with the past through thoughtful re-examination. In *Persuasion*, neither the ideal personal relationship between Anne and Wentworth nor the ideal community is achieved because of the varying strengths of the characters’ memories, including Anne’s and Wentworth’s.

Austen has often been thought to limit her subject-matter in a number of ways within her six novels (her early *Juvenilia* and her letters often did not conform to these limitations). Austen herself reinforces this notion in her letter, dated September 9<sup>th</sup> 1814, to her niece Anna, whom she advises about novel-writing:

You are now collecting your People delightfully, getting them exactly into such a spot as is the delight of my life;—3 or 4 Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on--& I hope you will write a great deal more, & make full use of them while they are so very favourably arranged. (Austen “Letter 100” 2:401)

Similarly, Sir Walter Scott compares his “big Bow-wow strain of history writing with that of Austen’s, noting that her “exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and sentiment” is denied to him:

That young lady [Austen] had a talent for describing the involvement and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I had ever met with. The big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going, but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the



sentiment is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!  
(Scott 292)

Scott's statement encompasses the belief formerly held that he had cornered the market on weighty historical matters, and Austen the old-fashioned common-place ones; however, fortunately, the days of Austen's ahistoricism are behind the twenty-first century reader. Both *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* demonstrate Austen's knowledge of weighty worldly matters, her professional savvy, and her self-conscious skill as a writer. In *Persuasion*, Austen investigates types of memory to investigate the strength of domestic virtues in the small naval community that closes the novel, revealing some buried cracks in the community at the novel's conclusion.

Also, Austen lets her audience know in her last unfinished novel, *Sandition* that she is critical about the way in which the public's appreciation of the battle of Trafalgar had become diminished; the public dissonant discourse in the *Times* was also critical of the devaluation of Britain's "glorious marine." Austen's comment in *Sandition*, which she begins in January 1817, implies that she was consciously aware of this public discourse. Just as there is an element of irony in Austen's statement of the narrow scope of her own writing, there is a certain irony about Austen's statement that her novels do not concern weighty historical matters. Both *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park* concern Britain's domestic virtues. Yet, underlying Austen's praise of the navy's domestic virtues, both at home and abroad, are submerged discourses, which challenge her ostensible glorification of the British navy and its well-being.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *The Corsair and Lara: The Paradox of the Past*

I have read [Byron's] *The Corsair*, mended my petticoat, and have nothing else to do.

—Jane Austen in a letter date March 5, 1814  
("Letter 98" 379)

In *Lara*, Byron portrays domestic virtues both in England and France as being in jeopardy because of the debased public and private morality that existed under the Prince Regent's rule in England, and because of the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in France after Napoleon's abdication. Byron composed *Lara* just after Napoleon's abdication when he had no idea that Napoleon had contemplated suicide rather than abdication. The narrative poem is suggestive of the battle of Vittoria, in which Napoleon was badly defeated by Wellington and his troops. *Lara* is haunted by his past, just as is Napoleon, whose defeats in the Peninsular War are often treated as the start of his ultimate downfall. Chapter 3 examines Byron's treatment of his central character, *Lara*, in relationship to the paradoxical circumstances that arose as a result of Napoleon's victories and defeats in the Peninsular War.

Several recent critics have examined Byron's *Lara*, proposing that it has absolutely no story to tell whatsoever while they also observe that the tale's locale is utterly obscure. Accordingly, critic Jonathan Shear proposes that *Lara* can be positioned in relation to a certain aspect of Romanticism in which the text resists or defers a moral

judgment; it reveals an anti-narrative force, as in the fragmentary poem *The Giaour* (1). Jerome Christensen has taught us to consider the importance of book-history on Byron's reputation, and he isolates seriality as one determinative factor in Byron's unprecedented celebrity; nonetheless, from Christensen's perspective, "[t]he purest sequel among the Oriental tales, *Lara*, written in 1814 attempts to narrate the absence of a story to tell; it takes shape as an allegory of blame for having nothing to say and for having to say it again and again" (26); seriality must be considered in *Childe Harold* and in the Oriental tales as they unfold, because as Christensen puts it, novelty is critical "but the new is recognizable only when its appearance—whether in a distinct sheet six days a week or . . . a new line from Wedgwood is predictable" (6). In his materialist study, *Social Relations in Byron's Eastern Tales*, Daniel Watkins examines Sismondian historical forces in *The Corsair*; however, he also suggests that in *Lara*, Byron seemed intentionally to create the "dark, oppressive quality" that characterizes the narrative, "for he studiously avoided specific details and adamantly refused to provide the vaguest hint for the context of the story" (89). These predominant literary interpretations regarding *Lara* have, therefore, concerned themselves with its abstract mode. This chapter instead focuses attention on the importance of John Charles Leonard Simonde de Sismondi's *A History of The Italian Republics Being a View of The Origin, Progress And Fall of Italian Freedom* to *Lara* and to the paradoxical relationship *Lara* has with his past. I suggest that *Lara* has a recognizable narrative, which makes a moral judgment, contributing to contemporary social and political discourse when read in conjunction with *The Corsair*.

Byron's Conrad most likely takes his name from two well-known kings of Germany, Conrad IV and his son; Conrad V. Conrad IV succeeded his father, Frederick II, to the throne in 1250, but ruled only until 1254, when he died suddenly. During most of his brief tenure as king, he fought successfully against the Neapolitan Guelphs in an attempt to gain power over the two Sicilies, which his father had ruled as a wealthy kingdom. But when Conrad V (Conradin) came into power in 1267, he tried to reclaim the rights and property of his family which had been confiscated by the popes. Along with many German princes and Ghibelline nobles who had supported him, Conradin was defeated and beheaded. According to Sismondi, "The defeat and death of Conradin established the preponderance of the Guelphs throughout the Peninsula" (97). Watkins observes that the critical connection between *The Corsair* and the writings of Sismondi is that commercialism was the driving force that increasingly informed the struggles of Conrad IV and Conradin. Under Watkins's reading of *The Corsair*, Conrad looks backward toward a pre-capitalist society, so that he seems essentially traditional and conservative (74-5). Conrad's backward look results in the creation of Lara, the resurrected Conrad, who abandons his revolt against commercialism and turns back to an ostensibly feudal existence, which is no better than his former existence because of its rigid hierarchical structure (Watkins 90-1).

My more nuanced observations about Byron's Sismondian notion of historical forces will complicate the prevalent view that *Lara* has no discernable story to tell or ascertainable milieu. It also builds on Simon Bainbridge's widely received view of Byron in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage III* as transforming "the gloominess" he had done so much

to make fashionable in his earlier work, *Lara*, into a political mind-set that both admires Napoleon and worries about his fall, not just in *Lara* but throughout his oeuvre.

Bainbridge says Byron's depiction of Napoleon's "antithetically mixt . . . spirit" and his representation of Napoleon as "Extreme in all things!" (lines 317, 320) in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage III* brings to mind the Byronic heroes of the Oriental Tales such as Lara: "In him inexplicably mixt appeared/ Much to be loved and hated, sought and feared" (*Lara*, stanza 17, lines 1-2) (181).<sup>1</sup> My argument considers the gloominess of *Lara* and the public confusion about Lara's past as emblematic of Byron's pessimistic attitude about his hopes for liberty and a republic in France and liberty in England as well, because in *Lara*, Byron specifically alludes to the theme of the rise and decline of liberty, which are intertwined in Sismondi's text. In *Lara*, Byron depicts political and social life in England in 1813-1814 at a serious point of crisis when Napoleon is on the verge of what appears to be his final defeat by the combined European powers, making noteworthy the seriality of the two tales. Also, Lara's personal and public crises, in which he is haunted by his past, bring to mind Napoleon's defeat at Vitoria, Spain in 1813 and Spain's struggle for a constitutional monarchy.

John Charles Leonard Simonde (the family name by which he was known as a young man) was born in 1773 in Geneva, the son of a pastor of the Reformed Church. Sismondi's basic philosophy stems from his faith in the power of government and laws to fashion the character of nations; according to Sismondi, history teaches "that government

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<sup>1</sup> For Lord Byron's poems in this chapter see Byron, George Gordon. *Lord Byron Selected Poems*. Ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Peter J. Manning. London: Penguin Books, 2005. Print. And Byron, George Gordon. *Don Juan*. Eds. T. G. Steffan, E. Steffan, and W.W. Pratt. London: Penguin, 2004. Print.

is the prime cause of the character of peoples” (Ferguson xvi). Sismondi records from 1150- 1183, the Italian cities had fought to obtain the peace of Constance (established on 25 June 1183), which they regarded as their constitutional charter; Sismondi comments, “[t]hus terminated, in the establishment of a ‘legal liberty,’ the first and most noble struggle which the nations of modern Europe have ever maintained against despotism” (52). Until 1814, Sismondi had remained consistently anti-Bonapartist, but the restored Bourbon monarchy soon convinced him that the Napoleonic Empire presented a better option for liberty than the restored Bourbon monarchy. Then, when Napoleon returned from Elba and promised to inaugurate a liberal constitution, Sismondi joined with his friend Benjamin Constant in journalistic attempts to rally public support for Napoleon (Ferguson xvii).

The names Ezzelin and Otho in *Lara* were based on Sismondi’s Eccelino and the Emperor Otho, evidencing Byron’s use of Sismondi in *Lara*. The name of Conrad in *The Corsair*, like that of Ezzelin, in *Lara*, was also derived from Byron’s reading of Sismondi (CPW 3:445). According to McGann, Sismondi portrays the defeats of the Ghibelline Party at the end of the thirteenth century as a pivotal point in Italian history, when the Italian populace started to relinquish their faithfulness to republicanism and allow the rise of tyrannical rulers: The *Corsair* is “partly a symbolic formulation of the political circumstances of the day, with its contrast between equivocal forces of revolt and the established powers of an old and corrupt order” (445); further, McGann asserts that *Lara* presents the political dimension of the earlier poem [*The Corsair*] in an even more explicit manner (442).

Indeed, Byron signifies to his audience that the connection between Conrad and Lara is more than superficial as Christensen implies, because the Advertisement prefixed to the first three editions of this poem emphasizes *Lara* to be “a sequel” to *The Corsair*, suggesting resemblances in the “hero’s character, the turn of his adventures, and the general outline and colouring of the story” (CPW 3:453). Further, the Advertisement teases the reader: “To his conjecture is also referred the name of the writer, the knowledge of which would be of no service in assisting his decision on the failure or success of the attempt” (CPW 3:453). Byron’s contemporaries, as George Ellis notes in his *Quarterly Review* essay which appeared in July 1814, understood the poem to be his because of the obvious parallels of verse form (heroic couplets) and character; Conrad can be recognized in Lara (returned home after a long unexplained absence) and Gulnare can be recognized in Lara’s page, Kaled (disguised as a young male) (Garland 2021). Also, the comprehensive scene-setting description of Lara in Canto I (lines 2-8, 16-19), as Susan Wolfson and Peter Manning observe, richly delineates the Byronic hero, a portrayal that turned out to be one of the most admired passages in the poem (796).

The main events of *Lara* encapsulate those of *The Corsair*. Lara, who has returned to Europe with his page, Kaled, from an unexplained stay in the East, is confronted by Sir Ezzelin, who mysteriously charges Lara with transgressions in his past. Lara is to answer the challenge by individual combat in order to prove his honor. But, repeating events in *The Corsair*, an antagonist (Ezzelin), who might have been legitimately killed in a duel by Lara, is mysteriously found dead. It can be supposed that he was assassinated by Kaled, who is climatically revealed to be a woman. Civil war

erupts between Lara and Otho, who sides with the deceased Ezzelin. The peasants, who are manipulated by Lara, fight with him, believing they are engaged in a battle against tyranny.

The idea of public and private morality and political liberty is essential to *Lara* and *The Corsair* as it was to Sismondi's portrayal of the Italian republics of the middle ages. The political nature of *The Corsair* is made apparent, in part, because of Byron's insistence that it be republished with *Lines to a Lady Weeping* in 1814 (Wolfson and Manning 788). Initially, this poem was written and published anonymously in the *Morning Chronicle* in March 1812 (Marchand 37). This decision was a result of Byron's Whig politics and his desire to make a political statement with regard to the anti-Whig actions of the Prince Regent in 1812. When the Prince Regent was granted additional royal authority in 1812, the Whigs assumed that they would be brought into primary power as a result of their cooperation; instead, the Prince Regent proposed a coalition with the Tory opposition (Wolfson and Manning 788-9). The enraged Whigs, including Byron, refused, and the Prince chastised them at Carlton House in a speech that resulted in the Prince Regent's daughter, Charlotte, being brought to tears (Wolfson and Manning 788). Due to these circumstances, Byron had an argument with his Tory publisher, John Murray, who feared political repercussions about this decision to publish *The Corsair* with *Lines to a Lady Weeping* (CPW 3:444). Byron insisted that the two poems be published together: "The lines 'to a Lady weeping' must go with the Corsair—I care nothing for consequences on this point—my politics are to me like a young mistress to an old man the worse they grow the fonder I become of them" (BLJ 4:37). When Byron



added the poem to *The Corsair*, acknowledging its verses as his, the Tory press vigorously attacked him (*BLJ* 4:37n.5), and Byron responded, “The eight lines . . . have I believe given birth to as many volumes” and contributed to the “unprecedented sales of *The Corsair* volume” (*BLJ* 4:82; Wolfson and Manning 788-89).

The dedication of *The Corsair* to Sir Thomas Moore, Esq. (Irish patriot, bard, lawyer, and good friend of Byron) also caused a political stir and an uncomfortable situation between Murray and Byron; the published dedication empathized with the injustices inflicted upon the Irish people by the English. Byron had written two dedications to *The Corsair*: the first was more political than the second and he published the first with the poem because Sir Thomas Moore preferred it over the second, notwithstanding the fact that Murray would have chosen the second dedication (*CPW* 3:446). In his first dedication to *The Corsair*, Byron acknowledged the wrongs done to Ireland by the English and extolled the wild, tender, and original attributes of Ireland, which had an affinity with the similar qualities of the East (*The Corsair* 248-9). Refusing to retract these controversial views, Byron wrote to Murray, “Mr. Moore has seen & decidedly preferred the part your Tory bile sickens at—if every syllable was a rattlesnake or every letter a pestilence—they should not be expunged—let those who cannot swallow chew the expressions on Ireland” (*BLJ* 4:32).

Indeed, in *Lara*, Byron, as he does in *The Corsair*, makes a statement regarding Europe’s political climate, in the way in which he treats the poem’s setting. In the poem, Byron appears to situate his tale in medieval times, because the opening stanza in Canto I refer to “feudal chains,” which implies a medieval system of land tenure with allegiance

and service to the landowner. Further, in Canto I, Stanza I, the narrator mentions “serfs” and a “busy hall,” from which the reader can imagine a large room in a castle bustling with activity because their Chieftain Lara has returned home after a long absence in a foreign land:

The Serfs are glad through Lara’s wide domain,  
And slavery half forgets her feudal chain;  
He their unhoped but unforgotten lord,  
The long self-exiled chieftain is restored: (*Lara* I.1.1-4)

But the footnote, most likely written by John Hobhouse, which accompanies the term “serfs” in the first three editions of *Lara*, alters this description of time and place:

The reader is apprised that the name only of Lara being Spanish and shows no circumstance of local or national description fixing the scene or hero of the poem to any country or age; the word ‘Serf,’ which could not be correctly applied to the lower classes in Spain who were never vassals of the soil, has nevertheless been employed to designate the followers of our fictitious chieftain. (*Lara* 316)

In his journal entry of July 24<sup>th</sup> 1814, Byron makes an ostensibly mystifying comment with regard to this footnote. He says, “Mr. Hobhouse is right as for his conclusion—but I deny the premises—the name only is Spanish—the country is not Spain but the Moon—*Waverley* is the best & most interesting novel I have redde since—I don’t know when—” (*BLJ* 4:145-46). Here, Byron seems deliberately to obscure the context of the poem. Yet, Byron’s comments that the “name only is Spanish—the country is not Spain but the Moon” must be taken ironically, because both the Spanish name and Byron’s reference to Spain have key inferences connecting the poem to the present and to his relationship with Napoleon Bonaparte. In the battle of Vitoria, Spain on June 12, 1813, Wellington and his

Portuguese and Spanish allies finally broke the French army in a battle near Vitoria leading to the eventual victory against Napoleon in the Peninsular War (Gates 390).

A Spanish name for a Byronic hero connects Lara's past with England in 1813-1814 and with Byron's notion of Sismondian historical forces. For Sismondi, liberty and a high standard of public and private morality were inseparable. As Ferguson notes, Sismondi's *History of the Italian Republics* demonstrates that if a high standard of public and private morality was lost, then liberty declined (Ferguson xv). If *Lara* is re-envisioned in 1814 by way of Hobhouse's footnote and Byron's subsequent comments with regard to it, then Byron, like Sismondi, desires his British readers to learn from history, so that they do not become in danger of losing their liberty. Sismondi says, "History has no true importance but it contains a moral lesson" (1). According to Sismondi, it should be investigated "not for scenes of carnage" but for "instructions in the government of mankind" (1). Byron was painfully aware of the political corruption and decadence of King George III and the Prince Regent. Byron scornfully employed the term 'Guelph' as a despicable pat-phrase, which he applied to the aristocratic political environment because the House of Hanover descended from the Guelphs who were originally opposed to the Ghibellines (*CPW* 3:445). Byron depicts England on the brink of disaster, its citizens facing a loss of liberty, because both King George III and the Prince Regent ruled with base standards of public and private morality.

Moreover, from Byron's vantage point, this crisis was worsened because of Napoleon's recent defeats. Liberty was in jeopardy in France, as a consequence of Napoleon's defeats in battle during November 1813 to April 1814 and ultimately

Napoleon's abdication on April 6, 1814. In *Lara* Byron depicts his anxiety over the restoration of the Bourbon regime and the introduction of an era of conservative reaction throughout Europe and in England (*BLJ* 3:218). This crisis parallels Sismondi's depiction of the Italian cities at a moment of extreme political crisis when they lose their republican government as a result of the bitter hatred between the Ghibellines and the Guelphs, ending with the defeat of Conradin and the establishment of the Guelphs throughout the peninsula. The analogy to Sismondi in *Lara* is decisive with respect to the poem's setting because it suggests that, in a subversive fashion, Byron depicts the peril to political and civil liberties which the citizens of England and France faced. If *Lara* is re-envisioned in 1814 by way of Hobhouse's footnote and Byron's subsequent comments with regard to it, then Britain was on the brink of disaster, facing a loss of liberty — the nation had reached the height of its commercialism and the Regency government displayed low standards of public and private morality. Moreover, Byron's hopes for a republic in France had been dashed as a result of Napoleon's ignominious defeat and the restoration of the old regime.

Further, in *Lara*, Byron assimilates Napoleon with the cult of the Byronic hero because he gives *Lara*'s misanthropy and duality specific historical and political dimensions. *Lara*, like Conrad, is correspondingly portrayed as a guilty adventurer (McGann, *Byron and Romanticism* 24). This element of "guilty complicity" echoes the French cult of Napoleon (Butler 118). McGann says, as is the case with all his heroes, that Byron asks the reader to sympathize with all the circumstances surrounding *Lara*, including the "vital scorn" that is a characteristic attribute of the Byronic hero: "there was in him a vital scorn of all . . . he stood a stranger in this breathing world/ An erring spirit

from another hurl'd" (I.18.315-316) (*Byron and Romanticism* 24). According to McGann, men like Lara are "vital" because they are "so problematic" (*Byron and Romanticism* 25). In fact, "vital scorn" is paradoxical because such description simultaneously portrays positive and negative qualities, making Lara, the Byronic/Napoleonic hero stand above ordinary beings, but also making him undergo an extraordinary fall from grace.

*Lara* also has something to say about the Peninsular War and Byron's notion of Sismondian historical forces. The entire escalation of the private feud between Lara and Ezzelin leading to a large battle between their two opposing factions itself evokes thoughts of the commencement of the Peninsular War. Byron's act of naming his Byronic/ Napoleonic hero Lara places the tale within a milieu of political meanings, carrying thoughts of the Peninsular War. Its meanings are deepened if read in conjunction with Sismondi's text. Lara's past haunts him because, when he returns home after his long absence in the East, he unexpectedly encounters his personal enemy from the past, Ezzelin, at Otho's medieval reception. In Canto I, Stanza 13, Lara's psychological state upon his return to his boyhood home is such that he is extremely apprehensive of Ezzelin's return. Lara's buried anxiety results in his trance-like collapse in the hall, his countenance reflecting memories both of terror and defiance: " Cold as the marble where his length was laid, / Pale as the beam that o'er his features play'd / . . . And still defiance knit his gather'd brow" (I.13.211-6). Lara's fit foreshadows the threat that Otho's personal enmity will ultimately destroy him. Lara's meeting with Ezzelin, as Watkins observes, becomes the focal point of the narrative and ultimately leads to Lara's demise when he is mortally wounded in the large battle between his forces and those of Otho.

Like Ezzelin from Lara's past, the indigenous and independent strength of the Spanish people, who united with Wellington to defeat Napoleon at Vitoria, haunted Napoleon's past.<sup>2</sup>

The Peninsular War began as a consequence of several circumstances, which, at the least, demonstrated bad judgment and leadership skills on Napoleon's part. The Spanish Bourbon monarchy was facing serious problems because King Charles IV (a cousin of Louis XVI of France) was detested by the Spanish people who desired the King's son, Ferdinand, to replace him (Moskal 24). Instead, through a series of political maneuvers, Napoleon placed his brother Joseph Bonaparte on the Spanish throne on June 6, 1808, deceptively disregarding the rights of Ferdinand and the Spanish people. When the Bourbons were removed from the capital, the Spaniards revolted, starting with an uprising in Madrid in May 1808 (Chapman 488-98). Joachim Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law, put down the rebellion viciously, executing all citizens possessing weapons; these repressive events were later commemorated in Goya's paintings (Moskal 23).

These events mirror the cruelty of Eccelino, who was portrayed by Sismondi as an excellent but cruel military commander, of "diminutive" stature, whose defeat by the Lombards demonstrated the Lombards' valorous effort to preserve their right of self-government (Sismondi 89). Byron's allusion to Eccelino by his use of the name Ezzelin in *Lara* may imply Byron's criticism of Napoleon's acquiescence in and ratification of

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<sup>2</sup>As critic Jeanne Moskal advances in her essay, "To Speak in Sanchean phrase' Cervantes and the Politics of Mary Shelley's *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*" for Mary Shelley to identify herself with Sancho Panza in *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* places her travel book within a "matrix of political meanings," because to speak of Cervantes in 1817 necessarily evoked thoughts of Spain, the recent events of the Peninsular War, and Spain's current struggle for a constitutional monarchy (18, 23).

Murat's conduct in putting down the uprising in Madrid because Ezzelin's mysterious death causes the outbreak of civil war between Lara's and Otho's forces. With the publication of the first canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in March 1812, Byron makes reference to Spain's proud independence and the fierce strength of Spanish women in stanzas 53-57, particularly questioning the wholesomeness of Napoleon's reign: "And must they fall? The young, the proud, the brave, / To swell one bloated Chief's unwholesome reign? / . . . The rise of rapine and the fall of Spain?" (l.53-57. 549-552). Byron's sentiments are in line with the initial public reaction that Napoleon's actions in assuming power in Spain were wrong, so that British politicians, such as Whitbread, Holland, and Sheridan, who were usually favorably inclined towards Napoleon, were now against him, because of what they interpreted as imperialistic ambitions towards Spain (Bainbridge 99). Napoleon's expansionist policies with respect to Spain can be compared with Ferdinand's and Eccelino's desire to expand their control over the independent cities of Lombardy. As Sismondi noted, the defeat of Eccelino was the final struggle of the Lombards against imposition of tyranny in their country (89). Similarly, Spain's struggle for national independence and civil liberties was tortuous, including Ferdinand's refusal to swear allegiance to the Constitution of Cádiz upon his restoration in 1814 and relying on his popularity with the peasants instead (Chapman 494-5).

Additionally, the initial English reaction of shock and disapproval of Napoleon's usurpation of power in Spain was not built on firm ground. Some English liberals viewed the Spanish uprising as a popular revolt against a tyrannical leader, in this instance, Napoleon; radicals were upset by the popular Spanish desire to reinstate absolutism and

the continued establishment of the Roman Catholic Church (Moskal 25). In 1808, a controversy arose over whether the Spanish people should reject a liberal but foreign rule in their national uprising (Hevda 40-1).

Moreover, the Spanish Constitution of 1812, also called the Constitution of Cádiz, brings to the forefront the ideal of a republican form of government as promoted by Sismondi. This Constitution was written by the Cortes (parliament) while Ferdinand was a prisoner of Napoleon in France (Moskal 25). The constitution established a limited monarchy, providing that the Cortes held the power to enact legislation together with the King (Moskal 25). The Constitution of Cádiz can be seen as analogous to the Peace of Constance, which limited the powers of the Emperors over the towns in Italy. After the war, patriotic Britains regarded Spain and Ferdinand in a favorable light because they believed that the Peninsular War had been a decisive factor in defeating Napoleon and because Wellington's victories at Talvera (1809) and Vitoria (1813) had glorified the nation (Colley 258-9). But, British Tories' support for Ferdinand was attacked in 1816 by diehard Bonapartist, William Hazlitt, calling Ferdinand a tyrant "both by profession and practice" (19, 164). Likewise, in *Don Juan*, (1819-1824) Byron lamented the fall of Spain's constitutional regime in 1814: "Cervantes smiled Spain's Chivalry away; / . . . seldom since that day / Has Spain had heroes" (*Don Juan* XIII.11.45).

Byron's notion of historical forces carries positive connotations with respect to Byron's relationship with Napoleon and his naming of his hero, Lara, because Napoleon had tried to place a more liberal government in Spain than that of Ferdinand, who turned out to be a despotic leader. Nonetheless, the gloomy atmosphere of *Lara* persists, because



even though Napoleon's government in Spain was more progressive than the absolutism that preceded it, it was brought about by a foreign power that dishonored the plan of Spanish sovereignty; England was brought into the war at the request of Spanish provinces because of the uprising in Madrid when the Bourbons were removed from the capital and Murat's cruelty (Moskal 23). When the provinces looked to England for assistance, the Peninsular War started. In *Lara*, Byron takes advantage of all these paradoxical circumstances by naming his hero Lara.

Napoleon's decision to yield rather than nobly commit suicide deepened Byron's personal crisis and left Byron completely "bewildered and confounded" (*BLJ* 3:256). Byron could not know that on April 12, 1814, two days after he composed his first draft of *Lara*, Napoleon did attempt to poison himself (Wolfson and Manning 794). *Lara* was written between May and June 1814, at the height of Byron's disappointment with Napoleon because of his abdication (Wolfson and Manning 795); Byron's "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte" was written just before *Lara* and published anonymously, in April 1814. Byron's name appeared in the tenth edition (published in 1814) and caused a stir because the poem is, at least in part, critical of Napoleon (Wolfson and Manning 794).

The "Ode," which is much more directly critical of Napoleon than *Lara*, sheds light on the gloomy atmosphere in *Lara* and its apparent fantasy setting. Read in conjunction with *Lara*, the irony of the "Ode" with regard to the poem's noble hero and paradoxical setting is more legible; Byron's criticism of Napoleon in the "Ode" can be read beneath the surface of *Lara*. Byron uses the original spelling "Buonaparte" in the title. This brings to mind the young Napoleon, who freed the Italian states with inspired

republican ideals, militarily and politically. “Buonaparte” was not the man who sidestepped his republican ideals by signing the *Concordat* with the Pope and crowning himself Emperor; on the other hand, for radicals like Leigh Hunt, Hobhouse, and Byron, Napoleon was a legitimate monarch, because, in contrast to the Bourbons who had inherited the throne of France, the people had crowned Napoleon (Clubbe n. pag.). The tension in the “Ode” arises because, as Bainbridge observes, Byron imaginatively fashions a transformed Napoleon “through the powers of myth” rather than Shakespearean drama. Throughout, Byron’s rejection of Napoleon as a consequence of the abdication is contradicted by Byron’s preserving a heroic depiction of him that he cannot discard (Bainbridge 146).

Byron’s letters written in close proximity to and after Napoleon’s defeat also evidence the fact that Byron desired a republic and that he deplored a return to the old system of government. That Byron desired a republic in France is evident in his journal entry of November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1813: “To be the first man—not the Dictator—not the Sylla, but the Washington or the —the leader in talent and truth—is next to the Divinity!” (*BLJ* 3:218). In this same entry, Byron expresses his disappointment with Napoleon; “I thought, if crushed, he would have fallen . . . and this was not a mere *jeu* of the gods, but a prelude to greater changes and mightier events” (*BLJ* 3:218). Byron laments the return to “the dull, stupid old system;—balance of Europe—posing straws upon king’s noses instead of wringing them off!” (*BLJ* 3:218). He goes on to write: “Give me a republic, or despotism of one, rather than the mixed government of one, two, three. A republic—look at the history of the earth” (*BLJ* 3:218). But then, Byron becomes more dejected

questioning whether or not any form of government is capable of securing a people's liberty; in his journal entry of January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1814 he writes, "I have simplified my politics into an utter detestation of all existing governments . . . the first moment of a universal republic would convert me into an advocate for single and uncontroversial despotism" (*BLJ* 3:242). Byron goes on to grieve that "riches are power, and poverty is slavery all over the earth," indicating that wealth and power versus poverty are in actuality what determines individual freedom (*BLJ* 3:242). Still, in the end, for Byron it all comes down to the fate of Napoleon, who after his abdication, was at his lowest point in Byron's esteem. However, even though Byron recognizes that Napoleon, "this imperial diamond," is flawed, he refuses totally to discount him as a hero; thus Byron writes in his journal entry of April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1814: "But I won't give him up even now; though all his admirers have, like the Thanes, fallen from him" (*BLJ* 3:257).

In Canto III, stanza 17 of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron abandons the persona of the Childe, and speaks in first person, still giving homage to Napoleon, and recognizing his superiority over ordinary men. Childe Harold arrives at Waterloo, and the poet says: "Stop! for thy tread is on an Empire's dust! / An Earthquake's spoil is sepulchered below! / Is the spot mark'd with no colossal bust?" (*Child Harold Pilgrimage* III.17.145-7). Sir Walter Scott analyzes this passage in his critique of the third Canto in the *Quarterly Review*, and approves of Byron's melancholy contemplation because such a scene would excite moral interest, especially in a poet like Byron. Yet, Scott points out that Byron's sentiments about Napoleon "do not correspond with ours," and laments that Byron is not using his poetical talents to praise "a field of glory such as

Britain never reaped before” (2038). Scott comments that if Byron supposes Napoleon’s fall to be occasioned by a “just habitual scorn of men and their thoughts,” then Byron is in error (2041). Scott remarks, “But, if we are to understand . . . how little he [Napoleon] regarded human life or human happiness in the accomplishment of his views . . . his indeed may be called a *scorn*, but surely not a *just scorn* of his fellow-mortals (2041). On the other hand, Bainbridge observes that Byron refuses to celebrate the victory of Waterloo, because it marks the start of a conservative era in England and Europe, which will be oppressive rather than liberating. Because Byron is not afraid of expressing his “Republican antilegitimist political sentiments,” he is capable of engaging with Napoleon in a way that would be despicable to Wordsworth, Southey, or Scott (Bainbridge 180). I suggest, even before Waterloo, in *The Corsair and Lara* Byron expresses the political gloom of the post-Waterloo world although in a more subversive manner.

That Byron highly praised Scott’s conservative review in the *Quarterly Review* (Reiman 2028) seems like yet another contradiction because of his approval of Napoleon’s brave conduct in returning to battle after his first exile. When Byron tells the traveler to “stop” at the spot where the battle of Waterloo was fought, he is also alluding to William Wordsworth’s *Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree*, in which the poet tells the traveler, “—Nay, Traveller! rest.” It would appear that Byron intentionally opposes his view to Wordsworth’s low estimation of scorn. The poet in Wordsworth’s poem says:

Stranger! henceforth be warned; and know that pride,  
Howe’er disguised in its own majesty,  
Is littleness; that he, who feels contempt  
For any living thing, hath faculties  
Which he has never used; (46-50)

The poet continues to tell the stranger that wisdom holds scorn unlawful, and true dignity lies with the person, who can still respect himself “in lowliness of heart” (55-62).

Similar to Napoleon, Conrad, and Lara, Byron’s past preoccupied him. *The Corsair* especially touches on his personal relationship with his sister, Augusta. The Corsair, who arguably “failed criminal revolutionary has one virtue among many faults—love for Medora.” Byron writes in his journal, “No one else, except Augusta, cares for me” (*BLJ* 3:218). Noting the connection, McGann writes, “In the end he [Byron] stayed home to write a poem about a failed revolutionary whose ‘one virtue’ among his ‘thousand crimes’ was love. Most of the poem was written while he stayed with his sister at Newmarket” (*CPW* 3:446).

In his journal entry of July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1814, Byron also remarks that he does not care for any of the critics of *Lara*. As Marchand notes, the critic might be “George Ellis of *The Corsair* and *Lara* in the *Quarterly Review* of July, which did not appear, however, until after October 20<sup>th</sup>” (145). Besides the fact that the *Quarterly Review* is a Tory publication, Byron probably did not like Ellis’ review because the latter hints at some unsavory connections between Conrad/Byron and Medora/Augusta. According to Ellis, because of the sequential nature of the two poems, the reader could assume that Medora and Ezzelin were romantically involved and that Conrad stole Medora from Ezzelin, thereby securing her in the tower on the isle of Cyclades. After Medora dies, and Conrad disappears with Gulnare, Conrad and Gulnare (now disguised as the male page Kaled) decide to return to Conrad’s former home after Conrad’s long absence (*Ellis Romantics Reviewed* 5:2025-2026). In his journal entry of 10 March 1814, Byron remarks that

Hobhouse told him “an odd report,—that I am the actual Conrad, the veritable Corsair, and that part of my travels are supposed to have passed in privacy . . . Um!—people sometimes hit near the truth; but never the whole truth . . . however, it is a lie—but, ‘I doubt the equivocation of the fiend that lies like truth!’” (*BLJ* 3:249-50).

On the other hand, Ellis significantly notes that the narrator-fisherman’s account that he of Ezzelin’s dead body floating on the river could be erroneous. If the body was Sir Ezzelin’s, the reader would hope that Lara was not the killer (Ellis 2025). Then, the reader would neither infer that Medora was involved in a “disagreeable ambiguity” by means of some mysterious relation between her and Sir Ezzelin nor that Conrad was degraded into “a vile and cowardly assassin” whose life and liberty were “purchased by a nightly murder” (2026). The reader must accept this latter interpretation in order to feel the sense of loss:

And Kaled—Lara—Ezzelin, are gone,  
Alike, without their monumental stone!  
The first, all efforts vainly strove to wean  
From lingering where her chieftain’s blood had been, (II.25.598-601)

Byron was fascinated by the nature of language at least from late 1813, when he inquires in his journal, “and are not ‘words’ ‘things?’ and such ‘words’ very pestilent ‘things’ too?” (*BLJ* 3:207). He employs a similar metaphor in his letter of January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1814 to John Murray when he writes “if every syllable was a rattlesnake or every letter a pestilence,” they should not be rubbed out (*BLJ* 4:32). He still thought about this quality of words years later, words as ‘things’ in *Don Juan* when he writes, “But words are things, and a small drop of ink, / Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces / That which

makes thousands, perhaps millions, think”<sup>3</sup> (Byron, *Don Juan* III.88). While Watkins points out in *Lara*, “confusion and half-knowledge” characterize the characters’ world, because words limit their thoughts, so that they are unable to comprehend their past and present lives, Byron, like Sismondi, desires just the opposite, using words to help his readers and himself understand the past.

In *Napoleon’s Farewell (From the French)* Byron imagines himself to be the deposed Emperor bidding farewell to his native land. In *Don Juan*, written years later, Byron named this attribute of imagining oneself in another’s place or adopting different roles as the circumstances require, “mobilité” defined in Canto 16, Stanza 97 of *Don Juan* as “an excessive susceptibility of immediate impression” made upon the individual by other persons (*CPW* 5:649, 769). Although in *Napoleon’s Farewell*, the chain linking Napoleon to France is broken, the final act of Napoleon’s story had not yet been written. Napoleon remains his country’s chosen “Chief” who incorporates (in his being if not in reality) political freedom: “Farewell to thee, France!—but when Liberty rallies / Once more in thy regions, remember me then, —”; Napoleon is ready to return. Napoleon may still “baffle the hosts that surround us” even though “there are links which must break in the chain that has bound us” (Byron, *Selected Poems* 356). Byron projects his republican ideals into an indefinite future by his new imagined vision for Napoleon and into his vision of himself as a Napoleonic / Byronic hero.

In *Don Juan*, the chain, which bound Byron to his past poetry, breaks in some way; the poem simultaneously carries the “stamp of originality” as well as being an

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of words as things is a classical rhetoric issue that Byron derives from classical sources such as Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De Oratore* 1942. Cambridge, Harvard UP. p.34, 39.

“unsparing assault on cant” (Wolfson and Manning vii). Byron refashions himself in relationship to Napoleon, because in Canto 11, Stanza 55 of *Don Juan*, Don Juan remembers himself reigning as “the grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme” during his time in England (CPW 5:482). When Byron decided to leave England in 1816, he designs his own exile on Napoleon’s, lavishly commissioning a copy of Napoleon’s coach for his journey. Paradoxically, in 1824, Byron dies under hard circumstances in Greece at Missolonghi, having financed the Greek army, despite the disarray of the Revolution. But, most importantly, Byron, like Sismondi, had a passionate devotion to the ideal of political liberty. This remained at the heart of his political philosophy throughout his life and is an aspect of his poetic legacy that carries into the present.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Ivanhoe: The Rebel Scott and the Soul of a Nation*

Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones.—It is not fair.—He has Fame & Profit enough as a Poet, and should not be taking the bread out of other people's mouths.—I do not like him, & do not mean to like *Waverley* if I can help it—but fear I must...

—Jane Austen in a letter dated September 28, 1814  
("Letter 108" 277)

Just as Byron had feared, following the Napoleonic wars, the government in Britain had become more conservative, suppressing so-called "radical" uprisings, such as the public assembly in Manchester, which had met to support changes in Parliament. I suggest that Scott's *Ivanhoe* connects its medieval setting with the present, constructing a narrative that investigates Scotland's presence within Britain in Scott's contemporary society. Further, *Ivanhoe* depicts domestic virtues through the figure of Rebecca. Rebecca can be seen as representing an imagined national identity for Scotland. This final chapter focuses on Scott's treatment of the novel's heroine, Rebecca, in relationship to Britain's present and its oppressive political and social environment in 1819.

Several critics have recognized the connection between the events of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* and the events of Britain in 1819, a year of political turmoil (Tulloch 407; Chandler 82). In the so-called Peterloo Massacre (named ironically after the battle of Waterloo), British troops killed eleven people on August 16, 1819 when they fired on a large crowd in Manchester which had gathered to support parliamentary reform. Scott

contributed a long letter supporting the authorities to the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal* of September 8, 1819, and signed it “L.T.”—as in Lawrence Templeton, the supposed narrator of *Ivanhoe*. As noted by Graham Tulloch, Scott evidently saw a connection between writing this letter and writing *Ivanhoe* (407). The novel makes a passing allusion to contemporary events in its mention of “a meeting of radical reformers” collecting “at considerable hazard to themselves immense crowds of spectators” (Scott 478). However, the predominant literary interpretations have concerned themselves with Scott’s relationship to the past (Duncan vi-xxvi; Butler 149-50). This chapter instead focuses renewed attention on the role of Rebecca, the Jewish heroine in the novel. Scott’s preoccupation with the place of Scotland within Britain appears in a concealed way through the figure of Rebecca. The absence of Scotland from the novel is noteworthy because Scott examines the idea of exile and belonging through Rebecca, hence making her a symbol of Scotland within the novel’s dissonant discourse. Although it is impossible to determine whether Scott was even aware of this symbolic reading, the complex and layered structure of the novel suggests this interpretation through the correspondence between Rebecca’s situation and Scotland’s position within Britain in 1819. Alide Cagidemetro has interpreted Rebecca as a “good girl,” who is representative of nineteenth-century domestic virtues, because she challenges Ivanhoe by implying how foolish chivalry can be compared to the felicity of domesticity; certainly Scott’s readers, says Cagidemetro, “would have agreed on leaving behind unproductive idealism in the name of their own bourgeois standards of loyalties and affections” (19). Similarly, Ibn Warraq notes that Rebecca’s moral qualities are “without blemish,” she possesses

superior qualities, such as devotion to her father and her religion, humility, generosity, and compassion” (para 32 of 44).

This chapter suggests that Rebecca can be seen as representing Scotland because the Jews, like the Scots, are associated with certain external trappings which define them as the other. Rebecca is perceived as foreign because of her clothing and darker skin color, while the popular imagining of Scots being all Highlanders means that they are seen as exotic and foreign because of their association with bag pipers, tartans, thistle, and clans. While the figure of Rebecca is indeed alienated from English society, she also embodies Scott’s own ideals of liberty and honor, Scottish national independence, and peace. As Rebecca says to the Saxon Rowena in Chapter 44, “but the people of England are a fierce race, quarreling ever with their neighbors or among themselves, and ready to plunge the sword into the bowels of each other . . . Not in a land of war and blood, surrounded by hostile neighbors, and distracted by internal factions, can Israel hope to rest during her wanderings” (499-500). Rebecca’s words echo Scott’s dislike of the bloodshed in the Napoleonic wars, ending with the battle of Waterloo (four years prior to the publication of *Ivanhoe*) and the divisive political factions in the British Parliament in 1819.

Chapter 29 details the siege of the Norman Front de Boeuf’s castle of Torquilstone by King Richard I and Robin Hood and his men, who free the Saxon prisoners and Rebecca and her father. However, it also brings the reader to the present, by its implications of the disastrous outcome of chivalry, which seeks glory through deeds of

violence. Rebecca remonstrates against Ivanhoe for seeing personal glory rather than the domestic virtues of “domestic love, kindly affection, peace and happiness.”

“What remains,” cried Ivanhoe; “Glory, maiden, glory! Which gilds our sepulcher and embalms our name.”

“Glory?” continued Rebecca; “alas, is the rusted mail which hangs as a hatchment over the champion’s dim and moldering tomb—is the defaced sculpture of the inscription which the ignorant monk can hardly read to the inquiring pilgrim—are these sufficient rewards for the sacrifice of every kindly affection, for life spent miserably that ye may make others miserable? Or is there such virtue in their rude rhymes of a wandering bard, that domestic love, kindly affection, peace and happiness are so wildly bartered, to become the hero of those ballads which vagabond minstrels sing to drunken churls over their evening ale?” (316)

Certainly for Scott’s nineteenth-century reader, this didactic outpouring from Rebecca reminds them of the vain glory sought by Napoleon and the futile deaths of so many innocent civilians, who were forced into warfare. Napoleon sought glory for France and himself without regard for achieving “any good or liberal institution,” as Scott maintained in his correspondence the day after Napoleon was sent to Elba (*Letters* 3:428).

In Chapter 7, Rebecca is first introduced to the reader at the Ashby tournament. Because Rebecca is gorgeous, Prince John notices her, desiring that she and her father, Isaac, replace the Saxon Cedric (Ivanhoe’s father) in the gallery seats. However, Isaac rolls down the steps when Cedric’s clown jests with him; his misfortune evokes the laughter of the spectators, especially as the Prince snatches Isaac’s pouch of gold pieces for himself. Nonetheless, the narrator describes Rebecca’s strange beauty, which contrasts with Isaac’s pitiable figure: Rebecca’s figure “might have been compared with the proudest beauties of England;” “her turban of yellow silk suited well with the

darkness of her complexion . . . the profusion of her sable tresses as a simarre of the richest Persian silk exhibiting flowers in their natural colours” (94; 97-8). But, most complimentary to Rebecca’s representation of Scotland is the narrator’s conclusion: “all these constituted a combination of loveliness, which yielded not to the most beautiful of the maidens who surrounded her” (93-4).

The creation of the British state involved incorporating Scotland into the English state rather than an alliance of equals. Scott had become embittered by the union between Scotland and England, the result of the Treaty of Union with England in 1707, because the Scots had little or no voice in the British Parliament, resulting in the loss of Scottish integrity and independence (D’Arcy 21, 31). The terms of the Treaty of the Union are contained principally in the Treaty of 1706, as amended and passed by the Scots Parliament on January 16, 1707 and approved without change in England (Pryde 30). Article XXII delineates the compromise by the Commissioners regarding Scottish representation in a United Parliament. Scotland was given 45 members of the House of Commons to England’s 513, and 16 elected Scots peers were to be elected to the House of Lords, where the ratio was between 11:1 and 12:1 in favor of the English (Pryde 44-5). The united Parliament has been referred to as the “English legislature” (Stair Society 284). As Caroline McCracken-Flesher states, “The Scots, indeed, began to realize that through subtle encroachment upon and quiet erasure of their Scottish difference, they had come to occupy a decidedly secondary, if not irrelevant, position in the Union,” and by the early 1800s, “this assimilation could not be ignored” (297).

Because he would alarm or antagonize the prejudices of his audience, as Julian D’Arcy asserts in *Subversive Scott*, Scott could not express his dissatisfaction openly; instead, it would have to be “obliquely and subtly infiltrated into his fiction” (30). This is the case in *Ivanhoe*. Both Duncan Forbes’ *The Rationalism of Sir Walter Scott* (1951) and David Daiches’ “Scott’s Achievement as a Novelist” (1953) set forth the standard view of Scott’s split loyalty between his personal and political ties. He mourned for a lost Jacobite, Scottish past while attempting to maintain rational allegiance to the British progressive economic and social government (Daiches 84-5). Interestingly, as D’Arcy observes, Andrew Hook’s introduction to the 1972 Penguin edition of *Waverley*, “solidly presents the usual Daichean interpretation of this novel” and concludes with the following four sentences:

*Waverley* speaks ultimately for peace and stability, for social and political cohesion and harmony. Was it a recognition of this, conscious or unconscious, which accounts for *Waverley*’s immense popularity? Or was it after all the other Scott, the Scott who speaks in the lofty tones of the heroic Evan Dhu rebuking the prudential Saxons, the romantically subversive and revolutionary Scott, who in the end called forth an irresistible response? The modern reader may judge for himself. (D’Arcy 35; Hook 27)

However, in *Ivanhoe* Scott’s duality is not resolved in a pro-British, pro-Union stance, as Daiches and Forbes contend. It is “the other Scott,” who speaks in the elevated tones of Rebecca, “the romantic and revolutionary Scott,” who in the end calls forth an irresistible response.

D’Arcy notes that the *Waverley* Novels often demonstrate Scott’s “ironic doubleness,” “ambivalence,” or “hidden structures,” which can be in the form of an “other” tale presenting a subversive nationalist or dissonant discourse (pp.18-19).

Similarly, there are at least two different versions of national history in *Ivanhoe*—an English version and a submerged and partly unconscious Scottish tale. Critics have generally focused on the English version. For instance, Marilyn Butler argues that *Ivanhoe* depicts a politically divisive medieval England in order to consider the dynamics of compromise (149-50). Duncan observes that the novel's treatment of its gothic setting is used to portray the birth of the English nation as actually founded on rape—the rape of Ulrica and the threatened sexual violence against Rowena and Rebecca so that it “discloses a vision of national history opposite to the evolutionary synthesis of differences” (xxi). These critics assert that *Ivanhoe* recreates a narrative of English nationhood; however, they do not consider its subversive Scottish nationalism or its societal criticism of Britain in 1819.

Scott places the most value in Rebecca because she exists outside of England. The universal medieval prejudice against Rebecca is similar to the English prejudice against the Scots (the identification of all Scots as Highlanders). The Highlanders were at first despised figures as a consequence of the rebellions of 1689, 1715, and 1745 (Walker V.110). In the years after 1707, as Murray Pittock observes, the defense of the Scottish language and Scottish culture were alone considered nationalists acts (54). At the outset of *Ivanhoe*, Scott portrays Jews as objects of abhorrence and at the mercy of both the Normans and Saxons:

Upon the slightest and most unreasonable pretences, as well as upon accusations the most absurd and groundless, their persons and property were exposed to every turn of popular fury; for Norman, Saxon, Dane and Briton, however adverse these races were to each other, contended which should look with greatest detestation upon a people, whom it was

accounted a point of religion to hate, to revile, to despise, to plunder, and to persecute. (81)

*Ivanhoe* is set in about 1193-4 (Duncan xii). This description is therefore significant in a historical context since 1190 marks the date of the infamous Shabbos HaGadol massacre of the Jewish community in York, England. Richard Malebisse, a York nobleman indebted to Aaron of Lincoln—a local Jewish banker—led the attacks beginning with the murder of Aaron and his family. The newly formed mob then commenced to burn other Jewish homes, forcing the Jews to take refuge in Clifford's Tower in York. For several days, the Jews remained trapped inside the Tower surrounded by an ever-growing mob. As the food and water supply began to dwindle, the leader of the York Jewish community, Rabbi Yom Tov of Joigny, concluded that the only solution was to take their own lives to avoid further violence and Christian baptism. A small number of Jews surrendered to the mob, accepting baptism to save their own lives. However, as soon as they left the castle, they too were killed (Chayil 27-8).

Scott was most likely aware of this horrific massacre at the time he composed *Ivanhoe* because Scott was widely read in English medieval literature. An editor of a subsequent edition of *Ivanhoe* and Charles Olcott have acknowledged the tie between the Castle of York setting in Chapter 34 in which Prince John hosted the Norman De Bracy and other nobles after the fall of Torquilstone Castle and Clifford's Tower, the scene of the Jewish massacre (Perry 383; Scott 250). Also, in his article "Sir Walter Scott's Treatment of Jews in *Ivanhoe*," Ibn Warraq states that Scott was "acutely aware of the plight of the Jews in 12<sup>th</sup> Century England" (para 13). Correspondingly, in Chapter 6 of the novel, the narrator says, "His [Isaac's] doubts might have been indeed pardoned; for,



except perhaps the flying fish, there was no race existing on the earth, in the air, or the waters, who were the object of such an un-intermitting, general, and relentless persecution as the Jews of this period” (81).

In Chapter 34, Rebecca faces a similar situation. Like the Jews trapped in Clifford’s Tower, Rebecca is imprisoned at Templestowe (the established headquarters of the Knights Templar) because the Templars had accused her of witchcraft. Rebecca searches for someone to save her. She faces death by being burned alive, similar to the threat facing the York Jews. Brian de Bois-Guilbert attempts to convince her to elope with him, explaining that in return he will rescue her from death and adorn her with imperial power. He says, “Thou shalt be a queen, Rebecca—on Mount Carmel shall we pitch the throne which my valour will gain for you” (432). Bois-Guilbert essentially demands that Rebecca sacrifice her virtue in exchange for her life. But, instead of “converting” and succumbing to Bois-Guilbert’s authority, she turns to her faith. Even later in Chapter 43, when Rebecca waits to see if she will be burned at the stake, she clings resolutely to her faith, waiting to see whether God will send her a deliverer (486). Rebecca rejects all persuasion to compromise her religious virtue and instead chooses to face her fate. The fate of the treasonous Scots, as a result of their participation in the rebellions of 1689, 1715, and 1745, was just as brutal as that of the Jews at York and the torture that awaited Rebecca if she were unable to prove her innocence (Cooper 27-8).

The Templars single out Rebecca, sentencing her to death and regarding her as alien because of her Jewish traditions and creed. Similarly, even after the Union, the British remain intolerant of the Highlanders, disliking not only their active participation

in the rebellions of 1689, 1715, and 1745, but also viewing the Highlanders' way of life prejudicially, as being at odds with English mores. The English identification of the Scot as Highlander, as Peter Womack has observed, started long before Scott and a few years before the Union (16). According to Womack, Daniel Defoe's portrayal of a Scot in his poem, "The True Born Englishman" (1701), for example, distinctly demonstrates that from an Anglo-centric viewpoint, "the image of a Highlander gets interestingly mixed up with that of the Scot in general"; moreover, "Highland insignia, such as the bagpipes, early acquired a role as identifiers of any Scot" (16). Also, as Womack notes, the Highland Society of London elected to dress in tartan at its assemblies because they wanted to assert Scottish identity (145). In the English mind, the conflation of Highland and Lowland Scotland had become typical by the mid-eighteenth century. Womack concludes: "[t]hat all Scots wear Tartan, are devoted to bagpipe music, are moved by the spirit of clanship, and supported Bonny Prince Charlie to a man—all these libels of 1762 live on as items in the Scottish tourist package of the twentieth century" (145, 20).

Many historians have indeed pointed out that nationalism is a slippery concept in Scottish history, nineteenth-century Scotland seeming to be unique in its noticeable lack of any clearly delineated nationalist urge. Even though Scotland met the criteria regarded as "theoretical prerequisites for nationalism (such as progressive industrialism, a thriving middle class, and what could be regarded as an imperial oppressor)," as D'Arcy underscores, "nineteenth-century Scotland failed to produce an effective or recognizable nationalist movement" (19). Nationalism says Keith Webb, was not in the forefront of the political life of Scotland between 1750 and 1850 (50); similarly Tom Nairn says,

“between 1800 and 1870 . . . there simply *was* no Scottish nationalist movement of the usual sort” (77-8, 83).

Yet, already in the nineteenth century, the essentially subjective nature of the idea of nationhood or nationality had been stressed by Ernest Renan: “A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle . . . Man is a slave neither of his Race nor his language, nor of his religion, nor the course of rivers nor the direction taken by mountain chains. A large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm of heart, creates the kind of moral conscience which we call a nation” (19-20). The symbols of the Scottish past, especially the “kilt, bagpipes, thistle, whisky and clan” came to have a special significance to the Scottish community notwithstanding several centuries of being without a state, as Webb observes:

In the popular mind the Scots had a common past, a history and a heritage which all could share, sufficiently colourful and distinctive to insure the symbols of Scotland’s international recognition. These symbols of the past, pre-eminent among them kilt, bagpipes, thistle, whiskey and clan, were things to be proud of, differentiating the Scot lion from the English bulldog. This *historical mutation reaffirmed the identity of Scotland as a unique entity in spite of the Union and provided a past to which all Scots could relate* [emphasis added]. (49-50)

Besides conflating Lowland and Highland Scotland, the English began to adopt the Scottish Highlander as a romantic figure rather than a despised and outcast group as they were initially after the rebellions in 1689, 1715, and 1745. James Macpherson’s Ossianic poems in the 1760s and 1770s gained extraordinary popularity with the literary audiences of Britain and Europe (D’Arcy 25). Moreover, “English tourists had become delighted with the gorgeous sights of Scotland from the 1760’s onwards, at least 40 years before Scott publishing fiction narratives about his country” (D’Arcy 25). The impact that the

mixture of Ossianic literature and tourism had on persuading public opinion inspired Byron to identify himself as a Highlander, as noted by Andrew Rutherford, because “already by 1806-7, the Highlander had come to seem a romantic figure instead of what he had been for centuries in Lowland Scotland as well as in England—an object of hatred, fear, ridicule and contempt” (48).

The victories of the Scottish Highland regiments in the Napoleonic Wars also necessarily led to a revision of attitude towards these heretofore undomesticated Scots. Neil Davidson has noted that although initially disdained as a danger to the British state, the Highlanders were increasingly critical to its military efforts, and their triumphs assisted in overcoming prejudices against both Highlanders and Lowlanders in England (118-9). The Highlanders could also be proud of their achievements, which all Scots could share, so that within decades of Culloden, Highlanders were regarded along with Lowlanders as an essential part of the Scottish nation (Davidson 118, 119).

But, notwithstanding the fact that the heroic participation of the Scottish Highlanders in the Napoleonic wars caused them to be seen more positively by the British than they had been in the years after 1707, they were still regarded as the “other” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Prejudice against them was still demonstrated. This is evident in Boswell’s account of his journey to the Hebrides in 1773 with Samuel Johnson. In one instance, Boswell (Scottish) tried to explain to Johnson (English) their joint experience of sitting on a green turf-seat and being surrounded by a circle of Highlanders, who spoke no English, as comparable to being encircled by a tribe of Indians (Boswell 250). In Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language* published in

1819, the definition of “Oats” makes a disparaging comparison between the “English” and the Scots: “a grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland, supports the people” (403). The fact that these very signs of Scottish otherness had come to be seen as integral parts of the British imperial enterprise through the involvement of the Highland regiments in British wars did not entirely dispense with the remnants of British discrimination against the Highlanders that still existed in 1819.

Similarly, although public reception was extremely favorable towards the outcast Rebecca, the British public did not forget her status as a Jew. With regard to Rebecca’s popularity with the British public, Duncan notes that they still saw her as the other as a consequence of her possession of certain Jewish qualities and talents: “They command purity of faith, magical goods (such as *Ivanhoe*’s armour), and the arts of healing. Their response to Christian persecution is to cleave all the more resolutely to their traditions” (xxiii). Moreover, in Britain in 1819, the Jews did not possess full civil liberties.

Although by the eighteenth century, some rights for Jews had been reinstated, such as the right to own property, complete emancipation of the Jews with the right to be a member of the parliament was not granted until 1858 (Katz 240-1, 384-8).

It has been suggested that Rebecca in *Ivanhoe* was inspired by Rebecca Gratz, a preeminent Jewish American educator and philanthropist who was the first Jewish female college student in the United States. According to an article in *Century Magazine*, Scott met Washington Irving in the fall of 1817 at Scott’s home in Abbotsford and a warm friendship developed. Irving, who was a close friend of the Gratz family, drew Scott’s attention to Rebecca. An article, titled “The Original of Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*,” which

appeared in *Century Magazine* in 1882, documents this claim, and a contemporary critic characterizes Rebecca Gratz as a “good girl” just as Rebecca is depicted in *Ivanhoe* (Cagdiemetrio 20).

Only one of Scott’s letters illustrates Scott’s attitude towards Jews, which indeed was prejudiced, especially with regard to his characterization of Jews as “money-makers and money brokers.” In a letter dated July 24, 1817, he states: “I think Miss Edgeworths last work delightful though Jews will always be to me Jews. One does not naturally or easily combine with their habits and pursuits any great liberality of principle although certainly it may and I believe does exist in many individual instances. They are money-makers and money brokers by profession and it is a trade which narrows the mind” (*The Letters of Sir Walter Scott* IV.478). Undoubtedly, Scott’s relationship with Washington Irving altered Scott’s opinion, thus resulting in Scott’s favorable portrayal of Rebecca. Irving was engaged to Matilda Hoffman, the daughter of Judge Ogden Hoffman in whose office Irving had studied law and a friend of Rebecca Gratz. Irving came to know Miss Gratz whom he described to Scott.<sup>1</sup> Gratz herself referred to Scott’s Rebecca as “just such a representation of a good girl as I think human nature can reach,” and she noted that *Ivanhoe*’s insensibility to her results from his prejudice, “a characteristic of the age he lived in” (*Letters of Rebecca Gratz* 59).

Scott’s depiction of Rebecca’s father Isaac still builds on the negative stereotypical view of Jews as overly concerned with money-making. Therefore, in

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Gratz, *Letters of Rebecca Gratz*, ed. by Rabbi David Philipson, D.D. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society 1929), p. 59.

Chapter 44 of the novel, Scott importantly depicts Rebecca as rejecting the wealth that comes from the commercial activities of her father, choosing instead to help the less fortunate: “tending the sick, feeding the hungry, and relieving the distressed” (501). This contributes to Rebecca’s character as a perfect model for Scott’s ideal of an independent nation because she is neither greedy nor vain. When Rowena requests that Rebecca stay with her, telling her she will be like a sister, Rebecca replies that she may not change “the faith of her fathers like a garment unsuited to the climate in which I seek to dwell” (501). Rebecca’s faith is more important to her than the wealth that she would have enjoyed as a result of her father’s commercialism and her inheritance.

Scott’s ironic duality, both on a personal and societal level, is evident in his treatment of the so-called rejection of Rebecca from the community; because it can be argued that Scott purposely desired to denote her “separateness,” the novel’s hidden structure implies analogies to an independent Scottish nation. Rosenberg recognizes this, finding that the Jewish group stands naturally apart from the Anglo-Norman conflict that provides Scott’s ostensible theme. He says, “for the first time in English literature the Jews alone are right and everybody else is wrong, so that the outcast defines the community: the scapegoat indicts the king” (Rosenberg 90). According to Rosenberg, Scott uses the incident in which Isaac agonizes over Rebecca’s abduction to contrast Isaac’s basic loyalty to his daughter with the familial dysfunctions that triumph against the Saxons, whose leader, Cedric, has disinherited his son, so that it is no longer the Jew’s daughter who leaves home but the Christian’s eldest son. Rosenberg says that because the Jews are equally at the mercy of both the Normans and the Saxons, they

become a “kind of critical norm, the yardstick by which Scott can measure the abnormities and abnormalities of their oppressors” (89). By analogy, a new spiritual Scotland that will not reject its own unique heritage and that has faith in its own domestic virtues must set a standard by which the “abnormalities” of British imperial culture can be measured.

Chapter 29 details the siege of the Norman Front –de- Boeuf’s castle of Torquilstone by King Richard I and Robin Hood and his men, who free the Saxon prisoners and Rebecca and her father. Rebecca remonstrates against Ivanhoe for seeking personal glory as a reward “for life spent miserably that ye may make others miserable” rather than striving for “domestic love, kindly affection, peace and happiness” (316). However, Rebecca’s words may also bring to mind the Napoleonic wars for Scott’s contemporary readers, because they imply the hardship and often futile bloodshed of warfare, in which glory is sought through violence. On April 12, 1814, the day after Napoleon was sent to Elba, Scott wrote: “My own eyes have seen . . . the downfall of the most accursed and relentless military despotism that ever wasted the blood and curbed the faculties of a civilized people” (*Letters* III.428). Certainly for Scott’s nineteenth-century reader, this didactic outpouring from Rebecca may remind them of the vain glory sought by Napoleon and the miseries of the French wars.

Although John Sutherland, one of Scott’s biographers, finds Scott to be prejudiced against Jews because he depicts Rebecca as a dark beauty as opposed to a fair one, Sutherland’s proposition is not credible in light of Scott’s own statements in the “Dedicatory Epistle” to *Ivanhoe*. According to Sutherland, Scott adheres in the early



chapters of *Ivanhoe* to the polygenic theory, as popularized by Robert Knox in the 1830s, rather than the monogenic theory of race, both of which were current in the early nineteenth century:

Monogeny assumed that the human species, in all its national and social diversity, had the same racial origin: one race—the human race . . . It was Knox, a rabid polygenist and a contemporary of Scott's in Edinburgh, who propagated the view that races stood in a hierarchical relationship to each other. The 'lighter' races were superior to the 'darker' races. And within the lighter division, blonds, like the Saxons, were superior to swarthier groups like the Celts. (Sutherland 229)

Rowena has "mild blue eye" and hair "betwixt brown and flaxen" and a pale complexion "exquisite fair" (Sutherland 229; Scott 59). Wilfred has "a profusion of short fair hair" (Sutherland 229; Scott 151). According to Sutherland, "these tints and pigments predict an inevitable marriage between Wilfred and Rowena" (229).

However, this transparent type of prejudice does not seem to fashion the nature of Scott's ambivalence in *Ivanhoe*, because Scott, alluding to Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* in the "Dedicatory Epistle," says that human passions and the sources from which they must spring are generally the same in all ranks and conditions, all countries and ages: "Our ancestors were not more distinct from us, surely, than Jews are from Christians; they had 'eyes, hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions'" (19-20). Therefore, Scott does not depict Rebecca as beautiful but different in order to portray the races standing in a hierarchical relationship to each other; rather, her exotic appearance has a positive connotation, signifying her strengths but also her difficulties in finding her own place in the community.

Like Rebecca, the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert is stateless; however, for him, Jerusalem is an expanse of land to be conquered. As Duncan notes, the differences

between the Templar and Rebecca are encapsulated in the scene in Chapter 39 of the novel in which the Templar confronts the imprisoned Rebecca who is condemned to die if a champion does not come forth to defend her and if that champion is not victorious over Bois-Guilbert. The Templar has been appointed by the Grand Master to represent the Order in the trial by combat. However, because the Templar has territorial designs upon Jerusalem—and likewise has territorial designs on Rebecca—he is the ultimate imperialist. Rebecca rebukes Bois-Guilbert even though he offers to disgrace himself in order to “conquer” her. She compares his fluctuating resolution to her firm spiritual beliefs, which are anchored on the “Rock of Ages” (427). For Rebecca, domestic virtues are necessarily intertwined with the loss of her homeland. With regard to the Jews in *Ivanhoe*, Duncan notes, “The Jewish loss of a homeland obliges them to reconstitute Zion as a purely spiritual property: culture in the absolute degree, unbound by political economy” (xxiii). This is essentially the same situation that Scotland had been forced into, because Scotland was disenfranchised as a result of the union with England.

According to Rosenberg, Rebecca, the Jewess, and *Ivanhoe*, the Christian crusader, ought never to have met historically (87). Scott himself specifically states in his introduction to *Ivanhoe* that such a union would not be historically possible as a result of the “prejudices of the age,” and, because Rebecca’s character “of a highly virtuous and lofty stamp,” is “degraded rather than exalted by an attempt to reward virtue with temporal prosperity” (12). However, Scott’s audience desired that *Ivanhoe* marry Rebecca rather than Rowena (Cadigemetrio 20). In this instance, both Rebecca and Scotland are seen as exotic and gorgeous (*Ivanhoe* is clearly attracted to Rebecca;

Scotland's identification with the Highlanders makes it romantic). However, Rebecca and Scotland remain unable to assimilate. Rebecca as a Jew has to leave the country at the end, and Scotland's position with Britain remains anomalous.

The plot's episodic structure culminates in Chapter 35, which details the trial by combat at Templestowe where Rebecca is imprisoned and tried for witchcraft. In legal terminology, the trial by combat is in essence a Wager of Battle, which is a species of trial introduced into England, among other Norman customs, by William the Conqueror. The person accused fought with his accuser under apprehension that Heaven would give the victory to him who was in the right. The trial by combat also has attributes of a Trial by Ordeal, the most ancient species of trial in Saxon and old English law. The Trial by Ordeal supposed that supernatural intervention would rescue an innocent person from the danger of physical harm to which he was exposed. The ordeal was of two sorts—fire or water: the former being confined to persons of higher rank, the latter to the common people (Black 1750; 1246).

In *Ivanhoe*, the punishment for witchcraft would require Rebecca to be burnt at the stake. As several commentators have pointed out, this type of punishment would be anachronistic; it would have been impossible for Rebecca to have been sentenced for witchcraft in 1194 because the Church did not undertake the sentencing and punishing of "witches" until the 1250s. Not until the 15<sup>th</sup> century did death become the typical penalty, and, even under those circumstances, hanging was the form of execution used for convicted witches, burning being reserved for those convicted of petty or high treason. Interestingly, Lucas Beaumanoir, Grand Master of the Knights Templar who is a

Frenchman and a fanatic, proposes this type of punishment. It can be argued Scott desired to depict Beaumanoir as considering himself above the law and entitled to use any form of punishment that he pleased.

Even this mode of judicial redress for Rebecca's trial supplies further evidence of Scott's hidden agenda. First, the concept of supernatural intervention is farcical, and Scott scorns this as a method of achieving justice. In the trial by combat, Ivanhoe is badly wounded, rendering him incapable of being a real champion for Rebecca. The fact that the Templar dies even before the battle begins epitomizes the fact that he could not liberate her because he had to battle his own licentious motives in desiring to possess her. Rebecca must have a champion to represent her because, like the Scots in the "English legislature" after the Union of 1707, she has a diminished voice.

At the end of the novel, Rebecca rejects the materialistic, commercial life of her father Isaac, choosing to remain unmarried and true to her faith. In Chapter 44, Rowena accepts a silver casket containing jewelry from Rebecca, while Rebecca freely bestows it upon her: "Let me not think you deem so wretchedly ill of my nation as your commons believe. Think ye that I prize these sparkling fragments of stone above my liberty? or that my father values them in comparison to the honour of his only child?" (501). Rebecca's refusal reflects Scott's separation from the side of him, as Daiches notes, that once believed in reason, moderation, commercial progress, and material comfort as the symbols of an enlightened nation (Daiches 23). By having Rebecca detach herself from the stereotypical Jewish traits of avarice and wealth, Scott molds her character so that is almost perfect. As Duncan notes, "she trounces a vain Rowena with the weapons of

humility and magnanimity, and leaves Ivanhoe to brood over her memory ‘more frequently than the fair descendant of Alfred might altogether have approved’” (xxvi). As such, Rebecca’s “separateness” becomes the ideal quality for the very reason that she refuses to mold herself to the “status quo” of conversion and acceptance of modern Christian worldliness. Instead, she cherishes her own liberty and her sense of honor.

Further, though Scott was fascinated with the pageantry of war, he more highly valued domestic peace and cohesion, as evidenced in both the novel and his reaction to the Peterloo Massacre. According to Duncan, “the last stages of the composition of *Ivanhoe* coincided with an escalation of Radical reform agitation and government repression, the most violent event of which was the Peterloo Massacre of August 1819” (xiv). As a Magistrate, Scott was an apologist for the Manchester officials who condoned shooting individuals involved in the rebellion. On August 24, 1819, James Ballantyne, the editor of the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal* (which Scott co-owned), published a letter criticizing the massacre. Ballantyne stated, “We fear the proceedings of the Magistrates will be found to have been ill arranged, and the conduct of the Yeomanry employed to have been rash and precipitate” (McMaster 229). Ballantyne’s disparagement angered Scott, who responded, “I cannot continue a partner where such mistaken views are inculcated at a crisis of peculiar danger.” He went on to defend the actions of the Manchester cavalry, asserting his belief that the gathering of 50,000 people “cannot be assembled for any proper or useful purpose and they are in the case in hand avowedly assembled for the overthrow of the constitution.” He concluded his letter saying, “this seems to involve the great question of whether we shall have peace in our time or a

bloody and remorseless struggle between property and the populace” (*Letters* V.485-7). A few days before sending the private letter to Ballantyne, Scott had sent his public letter under the pseudonym “L.T.” In it, he reiterated his support for the magistrates, declaring them “Guardians of the Public Peace,” stating, “they are not only entitled, but bound, to put down and disperse all assemblies which may tend to a breach of the peace” (Qtd. in McMaster 229).<sup>2</sup> As evidenced here, Scott values peace and domestic security over mob rule.

For this reason, the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 did not initially signify governmental oppression for Scott; instead, it represented the successful prevention of a revolutionary uprising, which he feared was similar to that which had instigated the French Revolution (*Letters* V.486). Although for a brief period of time, from the end of 1819 to the beginning of 1820, he lost his political composure, by February 1820 he was already disbanding the Melrose Sharp shooters—a local militia organized by Scott to keep the peace and had begun mediating between the factioned Whigs and Tories (McMaster 90-1). Moreover, as Duncan observes, *Ivanhoe*’s composition is largely prior to the calamity of Peterloo, and “it is more relaxed and generous than the fierce prognostications to be found in Scott’s correspondence” (xv).

Scott’s outspoken bias in favor of the Magistrates was an anomaly in his usually objective political stance. For the most part, Scott looked on matters insofar as the class struggle—or as Scott called it, “the constitutional question”—between 1815 and 1832

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<sup>2</sup> The image Scott uses in the *EWJ* in his defense of the Magistrates—‘trumpet [sounds] . . . ‘able champion appears in the lists’ may be a hidden allusion to *Ivanhoe* and a hint to Ballantyne of ‘which side is bread is buttered on’; McMaster, p 241.

and even in the period leading up to the Reform Bill with a “fair degree of calm and objectivity and seldom failed to engage with technical problems behind the rhetoric” (McMaster 90). However, Scott continues to criticize the spread of factions in Parliament:

[It] has possessed us all and the more important moral phenomena are treated only as worthy of consideration only in so far as they affect the paltry interest of the existing parties. The Manchester affair was only considered by the Whigs as a good opportunity for getting the popular cry on their side for a season. (Qtd. in McMaster 91)

Similarly, Rebecca comments at the end of the novel that Israel has no place in England, which “has been torn apart by interior factions” (499-500). Both Rebecca and Scotland exist in factionalized states, suggesting another unconscious resemblance between Rebecca’s circumstances and Scotland’s position in a conflict-ridden political environment.

*Ivanhoe* is the first of Scott’s novels not set in Scotland. Prior to publishing *Ivanhoe*, Scott had spent most of his time composing novels, such as *Waverley*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, and *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which dealt precisely with the position of Scotland in relation to its place within Britain. Scott’s preoccupation with the place of Scotland within Britain is unlikely to have deserted him when composing a novel about twelfth-century England. Rather, it appears in a submerged way in the figure of Rebecca. The structure of *Ivanhoe* demonstrates that Rebecca can be viewed as representative of the Scottish nation; her exile at the end of the novel can be seen as manifesting Scott’s sense of Scotland’s disenfranchisement and its alienation within the British state. Scott’s readers, Scottish or English, might or might not see the parallel—the

recognition of the connection by either the reader or the writer is not necessary for its existence. Accordingly, at the novel's end, Scott treats Rebecca as continuing to search for her Jewish homeland, remaining exiled and isolated from English society, while paradoxically maintaining her virtue. Using her to represent the "soul of the nation," as defined by Renan, Scott suggests an analogy to Scotland which must set off Rebecca's quest for a place where she can exercise the virtues of her Jewish customs and way of life.



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