

# *A Nautical Reading of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park and Persuasion*

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(Opole)

“[W]ith ships and sailors she felt herself at home”  
(James-Edward Austen-Leigh of his aunt, Jane Austen, *Memoir* 282)

The first sailors found their way into Jane Austen's novels relatively late. The titles in question are *Mansfield Park*, conceived and written between February 1811 and July 1813 (published a year later), and *Persuasion*, completed between August 1815 and August 1816 (posthumously published in the autumn of the following year). This late debut of her maritime settings and naval characters could only in part be due to some technical difficulty that writers normally encounter when they begin to tread on a new territory. We will remember in this context that Jane Austen modestly described her own province as a writer, as “such pictures of domestic Life in Country Villages as I deal in” (Austen 1996: 312). Regarding the sea, however, she had been familiar with this element even before she started writing her first books in the last decade of the preceding century. As early as the summer of 1783, Jane, aged seven and a half years, her elder sister Cassandra and their cousin Jane Cooper were taken to Southampton by their school-mistress, one Mrs Ann Cawley. Their first impressions of the sea could not have been favourable though, the girls falling ill of diphtheria and narrowly escaping death which claimed the life of Mrs Cooper who arrived to take them home. In the spring of 1786, Jane Austen's brother Francis-William, aged twelve and a year elder than herself, entered the Royal Naval Academy in Portsmouth leaving it two and a half years later to sail to India on board His Majesty's frigate, the “Perseverance”. He survived a long and perilous war-time service in the Royal Navy, reaching the advanced age of nine-

ty-one and the rank of Admiral of the Fleet (the highest in the British Royal Navy) as well as Commander-in-Chief of the North America and West India stations. Jane Austen's younger brother Charles-John followed Frank to the same Academy in Portsmouth in 1791. He left it three years later to enter on an equally brilliant naval career, crowned with a Rear-Admiral's ensign and the command of East India and China stations, a career eventually terminated by death in active service in the Far East in his 74<sup>th</sup> year of life (for details of their distinguished service cf. naval biographies by Marshall 1831 and O'Byrne 1849).

Even though Frank and Charles Austen's naval service lasted so long and took them to distant quarters of the globe, they remained spiritually close to their sisters – Jane and Cassandra – exchanging letters with them and visiting the family parsonage at Steventon whenever their ships brought them to an English port on the southern coast of the island. It was also owing to Frank and Charles that Jane Austen got to know a number of their naval acquaintances, from midshipmen to admirals, who provided an additional source of information on maritime affairs for the future writer (she claimed later she had not forgotten her “gratitude as an author” to one of them, Captain James Deans; Austen 1996: 274). Another opportunity to get nearer to the sea appeared at the end of 1800 when Jane's father, the Reverend George Austen, decided to retire and thus vacate the Stevenson parsonage for his eldest son James, an Anglican clergyman like himself. The family – including Mr and Mrs Austen and their two unmarried daughters – moved to Bath from where they explored several sea-side resorts and ports. Jane's two visits to Lyme (Lyme Regis at that time) on the coast of Dorset in November 1803 and September 1804 proved to be of particular interest and literary consequence. Following the death of Mr George Austen in 1805, the widowed Mrs Austen and her daughters took lodgings in Frank's small house in Southampton where they continued to stay until 1809. In a contemporary letter mailed from Southampton, Jane refers to their “increasing acquaintance” mentioning by name a couple of naval officers, Captain Francis Austen's friends, who were frequent visitors in their house (Austen 1996: 115, 117). Jane also took advantage of the fact that Southampton was only 18 miles away from Portsmouth – one of the biggest British naval ports – and inspected it thoroughly.

In July 1809 the three Austen ladies moved into Chawton Cottage (not far from the Steventon Parsonage) which became Jane's second and last home. Her critics and biographers observe (cf. Grosvenor Myer 1999: 181-5) that this move inaugurated a new creative period in her life crowned with the composition of the ‘mature’ three of her six great novels (sketches of the earlier three had come into being at Steventon, before the family moved to Bath in 1800). The gap of time between the

two periods certainly deepened the writer's knowledge and understanding of the sea and the navy. Nevertheless, the entry of nautical settings, and especially of British sailors, into Jane Austen's later novels must be directly related to the long French war that broke out in the winter of 1793 and continued until the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815.

This war can be divided into two major stages: the first fought by Britain against Revolutionary France from 1793 to 1802, and the second against Napoleon Bonaparte from 1802 to 1815 (he took authoritarian control of France as the "First Consul" in 1799 and then assumed the title of emperor in 1804). Britain was committed to go to war due to her treaty with Holland that had been attacked by France. More important than that, the capture of the Netherlands immensely built up French naval strength which began to threaten Britain's commercial interests worldwide and even the safety of the island itself. Another threat were the very principles of the French Revolution – *liberté, égalité, fraternité* – that might stir up immeasurable trouble both in Britain and in her overseas colonies. Once the hostilities began, British army suffered a succession of humiliating land defeats in Europe (Flanders) as well as in the West Indies. The prospect of a French invasion from across the Channel soon became imminent and the task of saving the island fell to the Royal Navy. This was brilliantly performed to the relief of the entire nation. In 1797 Admiral Jervis destroyed the Spanish fleet (a French ally) at Cape St Vincent (off the south-west coast of Portugal) while Admiral Duncan scored a decisive victory over the Dutch at Camperdown (in the North Sea). The following year Admiral Horatio Nelson slaughtered Napoleon's navy in Aboukir Bay (Abū Qīr) in the estuary of the Nile, and three years later he proceeded to shatter a strong Danish fleet (another French ally) in the Baltic. The result of those victories on the public opinion in England was "almost idolatrous rapture" involving universal gratitude to the navy and the beginning of what can be described as the cult of Nelson (cf. Plumb 1963: 201-4).

History almost repeated itself during the second, that is Napoleonic stage of the war. The fragile Peace Treaty of Amiens, concluded in the spring of 1802, lasted only a few months, after which Napoleon's Grand Army engaged in preparations for the invasion of England. The safety of the country, again, depended on the navy. In the decisive Battle of Trafalgar (cape on the Atlantic coast of Spain at the entrance to the Straits of Gibraltar) fought on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1805, Nelson annihilated the combined Franco-Spanish fleet, though his 27 line-of-battle ships were outnumbered by 33 of the same rate on the side of the enemy. His stunning victory and heroic death in action became one of England's everlasting military glories, strengthening

a popular conviction that the British Royal Navy was unconquerable. "Ten further years of struggle remained, but it was Trafalgar that made all the further victories on land possible" (Kemp 1971: 145). Having given up the plan of invasion, Napoleon attempted to starve the English by cutting off their sea-borne trade. Britain retaliated by blockading French ports and preventing all neutral shipping from trading with France and her allies. This brought about a half-hearted war with the United States of America which lasted two years and consisted mainly in the British blockade of American ports and in individual encounters at sea (at the outset of the war, the US had only 16 warships and did not pose any serious threat to Britain's fleet of 686; cf. Callender 1925: 223). Between Trafalgar and Waterloo, the Royal Navy successfully engaged in more large-scale maritime operations in the West Indies under Admiral Duckworth (1806), in the Baltic again – this time under Admiral Gambier who captured 70 Danish vessels of war as well as seized their island of Heligoland (1807), and in the Peninsular War in which the navy made a major contribution to Wellington's victories on land – first in Portugal and then in Spain (from 1808 onwards).

The outline of the French wars at sea seems greatly important to me in the context of Jane Austen's later novels. In the first place it can be treated – to some extent at least – as a record of her brothers' naval service in both stages of this war. Frank Austen began it as a lieutenant and within six years was promoted to the rank of commander, and after two more to post-captain (1800). He took part in the operations in the Mediterranean, in the Baltic, in the amphibious Peninsular campaign as well as in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. In the climax of the war in 1805, he commanded a frigate of 80 guns called the "Canopus" and gained esteem of Admiral Nelson. His ship was engaged in the blockade of the formidable Combined Franco-Spanish Fleet at Cadiz. Towards the end of September, Nelson ordered Capt. Austen to supplement provisions at Gibraltar and then escort a British convoy bound for Malta. Hearing that the enemy had left Cadiz, Frank hurried back to join the main British force, but adverse wind delayed his arrival at Trafalgar. In a letter to Mary Gibson, his future wife, he wrote that he could not put up with this late arrival and grieved over the death of his admiral (the letter is quoted by Grosvenor Myer 1999: 138). His younger brother Charles Austen went to war just after completing instruction at the Royal Naval Academy in Portsmouth. He started his naval career as a midshipman and became post-captain ten years after Frank. His service took him to the Mediterranean, North America and the West Indies. The last two stations kept him away from England seven long years without cease. In

later years he commanded two of Nelson's famous battleships (the "Swiftsure" and "Bellerophon") that had been engaged in the memorable Battle of Trafalgar.

Secondly, the progress of the French war and the story of Jane Austen's two brothers who fought in it as sailors, is important in the context of her 'maritime education'. Nowhere in her letters, or on the list of her favourite writers in prose and in verse provided by Jane's nephew, James-Edward Austen-Leigh in his *Memoir* of 1869, can be found any nautical authors. It is a fact that true father of the English sea novel, Captain Frederick Marryat, was still unavailable to Jane Austen in print as he was serving in the Royal Navy – just like her own brothers – at the time we are referring to. Capt. Marryat became a popular and prolific novelist only after he retired from active service in 1830, by which time Jane Austen had been dead for more than a decade. Nevertheless, she might have reached for the works of some recognized predecessors in the field of nautical fiction, such as Tobias Smollett and his autobiographical Roderick Random (1748) or Peregrine Pickle (1751). One of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century's Big Four, Smollett served in the navy between 1740-41 as a surgeon's second mate, and in that capacity took part in the grossly mismanaged naval and army expedition sent to capture the stronghold of Cartagena situated on the coast of Colombia in South America from the Spaniards. However, while Jane Austen knew the other three of the Big Four, she never showed or hinted that she had read the one in question. There is little sense in further speculation as to what other writer or book she could possibly lay hold of and derive her nautical inspiration from (though one might go on with the task and point to such titles as Jane's favourite poet William Cowper's *Castaway*, or the gift of a book that she made to her seven-year-old nephew James-Edward in 1806, in the shape of *The British Navigator*, or, a *Collection of Voyages made to Different Parts of the World*). My idea is that Jane Austen's knowledge of the sea, ships and sailors was gained above all from her brothers and that she used this knowledge in the writing of her mature novels. She continued to see Frank and Charles when they stepped ashore, and corresponded with them unremittingly when they were afloat, ever since they left the family parsonage to go to sea (cf. Błaszak 2002). Her seaside visits, contacts with other officers of the Royal Navy, and possibly her reading only complemented the store of information she obtained from her seafaring siblings.

My next thesis is that Jane Austen incorporated her nautical knowledge into her later novels not merely because she needed time to prepare as an artist for the novelty of the material, but primarily because the hard-won victory in the long and economically devastating French wars was due to the competence, gallantry and sacrifice of the men and officers of the Royal Navy. The feeling of admiration and

respect for the navy became universal, similarly as the conviction and the awareness that “it was England’s maritime shield which had saved the world and received the tempestuous rain of Napoleon’s blows” (Callender 1925: 224). The French Emperor himself, whom the English regarded as a brilliant military commander and feared at the same time as an arch-aggressor and tyrant, paid an unwilling tribute to the service when he stated in his captivity: “In all my plans I have always been thwarted by the British fleet” (225). Jane Austen whose two brothers did so well in the navy during this glorious period of its history, could not remain insensitive to the popular feeling and, possibly, indifferent to some market implications as an author (one remembers the problems she had finding publishers for some of her earlier works). The fictional effect of those circumstances and considerations were two novels in which honest sailor complemented the writer’s masculine ideals typified by the figures of a conscientious Anglican clergyman and responsible landowner.

*Mansfield Park* was completed in the summer of 1813. The first sentence of the novel begins with the adverbial phrase “[a]bout thirty years ago” which fixes the temporal setting of the novel in 1783, the year in which Miss Maria Ward of Huntington marries Sir Thomas Bertram of *Mansfield Park* (Austen *Mansfield Park*, henceforth abbreviated to MP, 41). Halfway through the first page, the action quickly shifts by another “half a dozen years”, that is to 1789, the date in which Miss Ward’s other two sisters follow her example: the eldest marries the Reverend Mr Norris who is promptly offered a parsonage at *Mansfield Park* while the third and the youngest, Miss Frances, degrades and thus offends her rich relations by marrying a Marines lieutenant, a man without fortune or connections. The following eleven years cut off all communications between Mrs Frances Price and her sisters (thus  $1789 + 11 = 1800$ ). However, when she prepares to give birth to her ninth child, Mrs Price is pressed by circumstances to seek a renewal of mutual relations. She asks Lady Bertram to relieve her by taking care of her eldest son, “a fine spirited fellow who longed to be out in the world” (MP 42). “Within a twelvemonth” (i.e.  $1800 + 1 = 1801$ ), Sir Thomas and his wife make up their mind – at the instigation of Mrs Norris – to assume responsibility for the upbringing and future welfare of Mrs Price’s eldest daughter, a nine-year-old girl named Fanny. The girl is brought to *Mansfield Park* at the age of ten (i.e.  $1801 + 1 = 1802$ ) while her elder brother William, the spirited boy who wants to see the world, determines to be a sailor. They separate for the next seven years – or slightly more when we consider the following clues: William comes back to England after a long war-time cruise in the navy and is referred to as “a lad [...] before [...] twenty” while Fanny is said to be a

“young lady of eighteen” (MP 241, 245). This moves the temporal setting to 1810. In the final chapters of the novel, Sir Thomas sends Fanny on an extended visit to Portsmouth where she spends three months with her close relations from February to April. This must be the first quarter of the new year, as we learn earlier that Fanny turned eighteen in the month of July. With the Portsmouth section then, the temporal setting stretches to 1811, the year in which Jane Austen began the novel.

It is beyond doubt that the figure of William Price was inspired by Jane Austen's sailor brothers, and that Fanny's relationship with William closely reflects the writer's own relationship with Frank and Charles Austen. Even before their long separation at the beginning of the novel, Fanny makes it clear she loves William better than anybody in the world, not excepting Edmund Bertram whom she later marries. “It was William whom she talked of most and wanted most to see. William, [...] a year older than herself, her constant companion and friend; her advocate [...] in every distress” (MP 52). At the age of ten, the heroine is invited to join her rich relations at *Mansfield Park*, which means that William goes to sea in his 11<sup>th</sup> year of life (“soon after her removal”, MP 57). During their seven-year-long separation, Fanny praises her brother as a regular correspondent thus defending him against Mary Crawford's censure of all brothers, and men in general, as reluctant letter-writers. “When they are at a distance from their family’, said Fanny, colouring for William's sake, ‘they can write long letters’” (MP 90). The nostalgic sister keeps in her room at Bertrams' manor-house, hung over the mantle-piece, a small sketch of her brother's ship – H.M.S. “Antwerp” – sent to her from the Mediterranean. Obviously, Fanny is not only concerned about William's safety, but also justly proud of him: “her voice was animated in speaking of his profession, and the foreign stations he had been on, but she could not mention the number of years that he had been absent without tears in her eyes” (MP 91). Her enthusiasm for the King's service is shared by the honest Edmund who confirms that “[i]t is a noble profession”, though the corrupt Miss Crawford says “it is not a favourable profession of mine. It has never worn an amiable form to me” (MP 91).

Jane Austen's brother Frank, a year elder than herself, went to the navy – like William Price – shortly before his 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her younger sibling Charles was at one point separated from the family for seven years altogether, from 1804 to 1811. One of the ships that he commanded was called “Namur” (vide William's “Antwerp” – both named after historic towns in Flanders, now in Belgium). Like Fanny Price in the discussed novel, its authoress carried on liberal correspondence with her sailor brothers at sea, worrying herself about their lot and praising their courage and professionalism. In one of her letters she writes of her “concerns in distant

quarters”, in another she tells Cassandra of the “extravagant terms of praise” bestowed on Charles in his North Atlantic station, in still another she pays Frank a gallant compliment: “You are as great a Captain as Elizabeth was a Queen” (Austen 1996: 84, 161, 214). There are also quite a few letters in which Jane Austen praises the patience and the style of her sailor brothers as letter-writers.

Midshipman William Price’s ship finally casts anchor at Spithead and the so-long absent and dearly loved brother hurries to Northamptonshire (where Mansfield is) to give a clear, simple, spirited account of his service comprising “imminent hazards and terrific scenes”, “shipwrecks and naval engagements” in the Mediterranean, the West Indies and the Mediterranean again (MP 244-5). Spithead is the name of a traditional anchorage and assembly point in the Solent between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. Most landsmen would find it difficult to locate Spithead on the map of England, however Jane Austen was familiar with it thanks to her residence in Southampton and the fact that she saw Frank’s naval base at the nearby Portsmouth. The order of William Price’s naval stations in the novel corresponds, in turn, in the main to that of Charles Austen’s during the French wars. Also his gift of an amber cross brought from Sicily and presented to his sister Fanny (the only ornament in her possession) must be related to a real occasion. In a letter mailed in 1801, Jane Austen informed Cassandra that Charles had bought them two gold chains and topaz crosses for his hard-earned prize money, adding that “he must be well scolded” for this act of lavishness (Austen 1996: 91).

William’s meeting with Fanny brings to light an interesting detail that links naval history with ladies’ fashion. Approaching his sister in the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of the novel, he stretches his hand towards Fanny’s head saying: “Do you know, I begin to like that queer fashion already, though when I first heard of such things being done in England I could not believe it, and when Mrs Brown, and the other women, at the Commissioner’s, at Gibraltar, appeared in the same trim, I thought they were mad; but Fanny can reconcile me to any thing” (MP 244). The key-words in the passage quoted seem to be “queer fashion” and “trim”. I think they may possibly relate to a popular fashion in ladies’ dress and caps that spread in England after Nelson’s brilliant victory over the French fleet at the aforementioned Battle of the Nile (1798). One of the unexpected consequences of this naval feat was that English ladies began to wear items of clothing and ornaments suggestive of Egypt (such as a fez) and of Nelson (a cap or hat adorned with Nelson-style rose feather). It was a fashion not only familiar to Jane Austen, but also one that she herself observed. In a letter to Cassandra dated 1799, she communicated: “I am not to wear my white satin cap tonight after all; I am to wear a Mamalouc cap instead, [...] – It is all the fashion now,



worn at the Opera, and by Lady Mildmays at the Hackwood Balls” (Austen 1996: 33).

One of the most interesting, socially-related issues in *Mansfield Park* is Midshipman William Price's lingering promotion. On his return, he describes himself as a “poor scrubby midshipman” and complains to Fanny of “[t]he Portsmouth girls [who] turn up their noses at any body who has not a commission [i.e. is not an officer]. One might as well be nothing as a midshipman” (MP 253, 256-7). The Gregory girls, for instance, will hardly speak to him because one of them is courted by a lieutenant. More seriously, William claims that “[e]very body gets made [i.e. is promoted] but me” (MP 257). In his survey of English social history, an eminent historian, G. M. Trevelyan, writes that during the French wars the majority of naval officers were the sons of gentlemen of modest means (cf. Trevelyan 1945: 499). Nelson himself was a poor parson's son (like Jane Austen's sailor brothers). Those men could hardly hope for promotion without adequate sponsors or family connections. Plumb claims that “[p]romotion [in both the army and the navy] rarely went by merit” (Plumb 1963: 200), and Captain Marryat in one of his nautical short stories published in 1840, but set in 1790, describes the passing for lieutenant of a rather silly midshipman called Jack. His sponsor, one Admiral Teophilus Blazers, arranges everything for him assuring Jack's parents that “a turkey and a dozen of brown stout sent in the boat with him on the passing day, as a present to each of the passing captains, would pass him, even if he were as incompetent as a camel to pass through the eye of a needle” (Marryat 1896: 226). In Fanny's opinion, William should accept his situation as one of the hardships of the service – like bad weather or hard living – and hope that Uncle Thomas will do every thing in his power to secure his promotion. Quite unexpectedly though, it is effected by Henry Crawford who has become enamoured of Fanny and who is eager to help her brother in order to win her affection. Henry's uncle, Admiral Crawford, happens to be acquainted with the Secretary of the First Lord of Admiralty who requests his superior to sign William Price's commission as second lieutenant of His Majesty's sloop called the “Thrush” in the 31<sup>st</sup> chapter of the novel.

Jane Austen had first-hand knowledge of naval promotions. Towards the end of 1798, her father wrote to Admiral Gambier asking him to kindly forward the advancement of his elder son Frank (who had now served six years as a lieutenant) as well as the transfer of the younger one, Charles (who had complained of “ill-usage” on board the “Scorpion”; Austen 1996: 26). We need to explain that Admiral Gambier was distantly related to the Austen family: his wife Louisa was a niece of General Edward Matthew whose daughter Anne, in turn, was the wife of Jane Auste-

n's eldest brother James (he was born ten years before Jane and became a priest). Admiral Gambier interceded with the Board of Admiralty both for Frank and Charles Austen, succeeding in the promotion of the first to the rank of commander and his appointment to the "Petrel" sloop, as well as in the removal of the second to the "Tamar" frigate (in her correspondence Jane Austen misspells both the names as "Petterel" and "Tamer" respectively). The writer knew about Admiral Gambier's intercession, she knew by name the First Lord of the Admiralty (Lord Spencer) as well as commanders of the respective fleets and overseas naval stations. For her own part, she even advised Charles to approach on this occasion Captain (later Admiral) Sir Thomas Williams, the Austens' old acquaintance who married their cousin Jane Cooper at Steventon, and who was later Charles's superior officer on several ships.

To come back to *Mansfield Park*, the moment William Price assumes the post of second lieutenant on the "Thrush", he begins to make conjectures about naval actions involving his new ship, which "supposing the first lieutenant out of the way – and William was not very merciful to the first lieutenant – was to give him the next step as soon as possible" (MP 369). The supposition that the first lieutenant might be killed in action, leads him to the pleasing idea of his next quick advancement – from the position of the second to that of the first lieutenant of the "Thrush". This kind of thinking was actually well grounded in the realities of war-time service. Oliver Warner, a prominent historian of the British Royal Navy, refers to Capt. Marryat's memorandum of his services sent to the Admiralty at the conclusion of the First Burmese War, justifying his claim to post-captain's commission on the grounds that casual promotions into death vacancies occurring during the war were normally confirmed by the Lords of Admiralty (cf. Warner 1953: 74). Again, this circumstance was known to Jane Austen who speculated early in 1801 on Capt. Williams's possible transfer from the frigate "Endymion" to a line-of-battle ship, in which case his first lieutenant should be promoted to commander, thus vacating his own position for Charles Austen (cf. Austen 1996: 75).

Among several other nautical and naval references contained in the discussed novel, I should like to deal with Sir Thomas Bertram's voyage to the West Indies. This happens in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter when Fanny reaches the age of sixteen, which locates the action in 1808. Her uncle undertakes the long and perilous voyage "for the better arrangement of his affairs" in Antigua, vaguely affected by "some recent losses" and consequently yielding him "such poor returns" (MP 59, 64–65). To elucidate the hint at the "recent losses", one must go back to the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Britain sent troops to the West Indies to seize the rich French sugar is-

lands. Those amphibious operations led to the capture of Martinique, St Lucia and Guadeloupe, though they claimed the lives of some 40.000 English troops. The Treaty of Amiens was largely indecisive in as much as that both sides preserved their possessions in the Caribbean (Antigua had been a British colony since 1632 while France kept Mauritius and Trinidad). In the summer of 1805, the French and Spanish squadrons commanded by Admiral Villeneuve sailed to the West Indies, touching at Antigua and damaging British trade in the area. Things got even worse for the local planters when Napoleon issued the so-called Berlin Decrees in late 1806, trying to implement a blockade of Britain's overseas trade. His fleet had little chance to succeed in an open confrontation with the Royal Navy, nevertheless the campaign against the British merchant marine had "a considerable nuisance value", particularly in the West Indies (cf. Kemp 1971: 147). This seems to me the essence of Sir Thomas's problem involving his Antigua estate (plantation) in *Mansfield Park*. It is also not by accident that his account of a passage back to England features "the alarm of a French privateer" (MP 196). Similarly, it is not by accident that Fanny declares "I love to hear my uncle talk of the West Indies" (MP 212), as her brother William (vide Jane Austen's own brother Charles) was stationed there at the time specified, and that she even musters up enough courage to ask Uncle Thomas about the slave trade. French colonists in the West Indies infected the local black slaves with the slogans of the Revolution – liberty, equality, fraternity – so that they fought British soldiers with fixed resolve until the government under Prime Minister Charles Fox abolished the slave trade from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1808. Unrest among black servants (labourers) in Sir Thomas's estate in Antigua could well be another underlying cause for his anxiety.

Shortly before Sir Thomas's return from the West Indies, during a ball organized at Mansfield, Tom Bertram addresses the Reverend Dr Grant, a local parson, making a brief unexpected comment on "[a] strange business this in America" and asking his interlocutor's opinion on this "public matter" (MP 145). Their conversation is interrupted at this point by Aunt Norris who insists on Tom joining the ladies at a (card) game of rubber, and by the young man himself who suddenly springs to his feet to join the dancers in order to be excused from the boring game. Since Fanny's first ball takes place in the autumn, in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of her life, this "strange business in America" must have occurred in the second half of 1810 and, indeed, must be related to the recent developments in the naval warfare between Britain and Napoleonic France. In the preceding paragraph we have mentioned Bonaparte's Berlin Decrees (soon complemented by the Emperor's Milan Decrees) and the beginning of a long and economically devastating blockade of Britain's shipping routes.

The English retaliated by launching the reciprocal Orders in Council which authorized the Royal Navy to search and capture all vessels attempting to supply the markets of France and her continental allies. This measure affected harshly neutral shipping, in the first place that of the United States which had conducted flourishing business with Europe from the beginning of the war. Callender claims that the blockade and the accompanying hostilities reached their maximum intensity in 1811 (Callender 1925: 223), to result in the declaration of war on Great Britain by the US Congress in June 1812. In this light, Jane Austen's hint at some trouble with America must have been occasioned by one of numerous incidents at sea of which she was currently informed by her brother stationed in the Atlantic and directly involved in the sealing of America's eastern sea-coast.

In the final chapters of the novel, Fanny spends three months with her closest family in Portsmouth. Here she learns that her younger brother Sam, a boy of eleven years of age, is to commence his career of seamanship on the "Thrush" (to which their elder brother William has been newly posted as a second lieutenant). A few pages later Fanny makes a laconic reference to her third sailor brother (it is not quite clear whether his name is John or Richard) who is a midshipman on board an Indiaman (i.e. an armed merchant ship in the service of the British East India Company). Most important of all, however, is the fact that during her prolonged stay at family home Fanny makes the famous tour of Portsmouth, covering the High Street and the dock-yard, the Garrison chapel and the town ramparts from which she catches a glimpse of warships lying at Spithead (cf. MP chapters 41-42). Realism and accuracy of this description won praise from one of Jane Austen's naval acquaintances, Capt. Edward Foote, whom she had treated to dinner (serving a boiled but underdone leg of mutton) when the Austen ladies were living in Southampton. The writer was so careful about ships in Portsmouth harbour that in one of her letters to Frank, who commanded H. M. S. "Elephant" in 1813, she asked him if she could use the names of his ships in the discussed novel (the "Canopus", "Elephant" and "Endymion"; cf. Austen 1996: 217).

By the way, it seems very likely that the name of William Price's ship, the "Thrush", was inspired by Capt. Francis Austen's first command, the "Petrel": both are sloops, that is relatively small sailing ships with one central mast and a limited number of guns. It is striking that Jane Austen's own inventions in the novel – the "Thrush" and the "Cleopatra" – also comply with Capt. Marryat's theory of proper names in the navy which he put in the mouth of Boatswain Chuck in one of his masterpieces entitled *Peter Simple* (publ. in 1834). Chuck makes a humorous observation that simple and common names such as Thrasher or Badger are good

enough for gun-boats and the like (light) craft, whereas “all our dashing, saucy frigates have names as long as the main-top bowling, and hard enough to break your jaw – such as Melpomeny, Terpischory, Arethusy, Bacchanty – fine flourishers, as long as their pennants which dip alongside in a calm” (Marryat 1984: 126).

The material setting in *Mansfield Park* is not limited to Portsmouth town and harbour. As she strolls along the ramparts, Fanny looks around and admires the lovely spring seascape:

The day was uncommonly lovely. It was really March; but it was April in its mild air, brisk soft wind, and bright sun, occasionally clouded for a minute; and every thing looked so beautiful under the influence of such a sky, the effects of the shadows pursuing each other, on the ships at Spithead and the island beyond, with the ever-varying hues of the sea now at high water, dancing in its glee and dashing against the ramparts with so fine a sound, produced altogether such a combination of charms for Fanny, [...]  
(*MP* 401)

This longer passage is quoted not just to demonstrate that Fanny is sensitive to natural beauty, but to point to the inspiration that Jane Austen drew from Gilpin and the idea of the picturesque. Her brother Henry, in the posthumous *Notice* of the writer, stated that “[s]he was a warm and judicious admirer of landscape, both in nature and on canvass. At a very early age she was enamoured of Gilpin and the Picturesque” (1987: 32-3). Indeed, the seascape presented above conforms to Gilpin’s insistence on the plain natural beauty of an inspiring and artistically successful landscape as well as to his favourite artistic means including light and shade effects or nearness contrasting with distance (cf. Sinko 1978: 23–43). In this context, it is not perhaps a coincidence that Fanny’s room at Mansfield manor house is decorated not only with the sketch of her brother’s ship, but also with three transparencies made for the three lower panes of the window, “where Tintern Abbey held its station between a cave in Italy, and a moonlight lake in Cumberland” (*MP* 174). More generally, in a critic’s opinion, *Mansfield Park* is the first of the last three novels whose “most obvious feature is the greater substance of the settings” (Gillie 1986: 154).

Concluding our discussion of the novel, we will observe that of all the young gentlemen who appear in it, the authoress clearly favours Sir Thomas’s younger son, Edmund Bertram, and Fanny’s sailor brother William Price. The first proves to be “uniformly kind” (*MP* 53), gentle, caring and sensitive, and his decision to take holy orders is sincere and well considered – and not merely motivated by the right of primogeniture according to which Sir Thomas’s estate will go over to Edmund’s elder brother Tom. As for William Price, he is meant to be the other model

of manly virtue in the novel: he is both a protective elder brother and a true friend to Fanny, and their relationship in a sense elevates the fraternal tie even above the conjugal. On his arrival at *Mansfield Park*, William captivates Sir Thomas as “a young man of an open, pleasant countenance, and frank, unstudied, but feeling and respectful manners” (*MP* 243). It is meaningful that both Edmund and William oppose marriage without love, and consequently do not blame Fanny for her rejection of the marriage of convenience offered by Henry Crawford. In contrast to Edmund and William, the authoress endows the remaining young men with major deficiencies; thus, Tom Bertram is an egoist “born only for expense and enjoyment” (*MP* 54), and his debts impair Edmund’s future prospects. A young neighbour and wealthy landowner, Mr Rushworth of Sotherton estate, has little common sense to say the least. Of the last two young gentlemen, Tom’s friend the Honourable John Yates, the younger son of a lord, displays “habits of fashion and expense” (*MP* 147), and at the end of the novel, he and Julia Bertram elope to Scotland impairing the reputation of her family. The worst corrupt young man, Henry Crawford, first shows himself to be a leading actor in the immoral play to be staged at Mansfield during Sir Thomas’s absence; then, failing “to make a hole in Fanny’s heart” (*MP* 239), he successfully seduces Maria Bertram, now married to Mr Rushworth, who deserts her husband and runs away with her lover.

Commenting on the contrast between Edmund and William on the one hand, and the other young gentlemen in the novel, it is also interesting to remark on the different reactions to Edmund’s account of his seven-year-long war-time service in the Royal Navy. The ‘positive’ characters generally remain attentive, expressing admiration and respect both for the young officer and the navy. Sir Thomas Bertram, for example, finds in William’s recitals “the proof of good principles, professional knowledge, energy, courage, and cheerfulness – every thing that could deserve or promise well” (*MP* 245). Fanny radiates enthusiasm which is largely shared by Edmund. By contrast, the unfeeling and indelicate Aunt Norris disturbs the talker and his audience, fidgeting about the room in search of her needlework “in the midst of her nephew’s account of a shipwreck or an engagement”, while the only comment made by the inert and debilitated Lady Bertram is “[d]ear me! how disagreeable. – I wonder any body can ever go to sea” (*MP* 245). Animosity towards the naval profession felt by the depraved Mary Crawford has already been referred to; we shall now add that William’s story opens the eyes of her own double-dealing brother Henry – at least for an instant – to his own meanness and egoism: “The glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance, made his own habits of selfish indulgence appear in shameful contrast; and he wished he had been a William Price,

distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour, instead of what he was!" (MP 245).

With Fanny Price, the respect for the navy also assumes the form of admiration – almost adoration – for her brother's uniform. Indeed, when William fails to appear in it during his ten days' leave of absence in Northamptonshire, Fanny complains of the "cruel custom" which prohibits the young officer from wearing it except on duty; fortunately, she does not have to wait long to see him "in all his glory, in another light" (MP 363). Several days later, finding herself in Portsmouth, Fanny eventually sees her brother in his lieutenant's uniform – "all the taller, firmer, and more graceful for it"; all that she can do now is to gaze at him "in speechless admiration" and then "throw her arms round his neck to sob out her various emotions" (MP 377). In this context one of the critics notices the authoress's preference for the navy over the army, referring to the negative associations with the army uniform in such novels as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey*. In the first of these in particular, the foolish Mrs Bennet and her younger daughters display "wistful fondness for 'a red coat'", thus bringing disgrace to the army uniform itself (Copeland and McMaster 1997: 122). Nevertheless, the social historian G. M. Trevelyan adds that Wellington's victory at Waterloo in June, 1815, made the army popular at home "as it had never been before" (1945: 500).

The temporal setting of *Persuasion*, Jane Austen's sixth great novel, which followed *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*, is fixed in 1814. The novel itself was begun in September, 1815, and finished almost exactly a year later. From an entry in Sir Walter Eliot's favourite book of England's baronetage in chapter 1, it appears that his eldest daughter Elizabeth was born in June, 1785, and a few pages later she is said to be twenty-nine. In the spring of 1814, after the capitulation of Paris, Napoleon Bonaparte was forced to abdicate and sent into exile to the island of Elba. Thus, the action of the novel is played out during the Vienna Congress, before the French emperor made one last attempt to seize power in March, 1815 – a move that led to his ultimate defeat at Waterloo a hundred days later. This description of the novel's time limit is corroborated by Sir Walter's lawyer, one Mr Shepherd, who lays down a newspaper at the beginning of chapter 3, observing that "This peace will be turning all our rich Navy Officers ashore" (*Persuasion*, henceforth abbreviated to *P*, 47). Of course, the actual temporal framework allows for a couple of naval references of an earlier date.

The central male character in the novel is Captain Frederick Wentworth, a country curate's brother, who was made commander as a consequence of the action off San(to) Domingo in 1806. This reference, made at the beginning of chapter 4, in-

evitably brings to mind Captain Francis Austen whose elder brother James became a curate of Overton in 1790; more important of course is the fact that Jane Austen's sailor brother took part in the defence of British colonies in the Caribbean, including the very same Battle of San Domingo, in which Admiral Duckworth's squadron destroyed the whole of the French fleet from Rochefort commanded by Admiral Leissegues. As a consequence of this victory, the fictional hero obtained his first command of a sloop, called the "Asp", in which the Admiralty ordered him to the West Indies. Capt. Wentworth's ship was hardly fit for service, but he realized he was lucky enough to get her "with no more interest than his" (P 90), that means without any protection. The "Asp" made it possible for the hero to capture enemy privateers and earn enough prize money to reappear at Kellynch and Uppercross ready to resume his suit for the hand of Anne Elliot. With his very handsome fortune of 25.000 pounds, he succeeds in having Sir Walter withdraw his former objection to their marriage. The motive of taking prizes and making prize money is fairly frequent in Jane Austen's correspondence with her sailor brothers, it is enough to mention in this context the famous gift of a gold chain and topaz cross which she received from Charles, and which was bought with the prize money (cf. Austen 1996: 91, 57, 169). Capt. Francis Austen was also obliged – like Wentworth – to wait until he had earned enough prize money to marry, in 1806, the woman (Mary Gibson) he had been engaged to since 1803.

During Capt. Wentworth's visit at Uppercross, it turns out that Mrs Musgrove's son, Dick (Richard), who had perished at sea, served at one time six months under Wentworth's command in His Majesty's frigate the "Laconia". In his letters mailed home, Midshipman Dick Musgrove spoke well of his captain, calling him "a fine dashing fellow, only two [too] particular [particular] about the school-master" (P 78). This had naturally endeared Capt. Wentworth to the rest of the Musgrave family who were eager to show their gratitude to him for his kindness towards their son and brother. This nautical detail in the novel is part of Charles Austen's personal history. When he was 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant on the "Endymion", he took care of the son of Lord and Lady Leven, winning their esteem and thankfulness. In one of her letters, Jane Austen proudly informed her sister Cassandra of a visit she paid to the Levens and her "pleasure of hearing Charles's praises twice over" (1996: 105). Later on, in his capacity as captain of the "Namur", Charles Austen helped young Thomas Kendall who was not "forward enough to be what they call put in the office" (241) and whom he consequently placed under the school-master, that is an officer on board responsible for the proper theoretical training of midshipmen.



Another nautical detail involving Capt. Wentworth in *Persuasion*, and apparently corresponding to Jane Austen's younger brother, occurs in chapter 8 when Admiral Croft tells the hero that the previous spring he was expected to give a passage home from Lisbon to Lady Mary Grierson and her daughters. The noblewoman's name is invented, but the circumstance conforms in the main to Charles's cruise to Lisbon in the "Endymion" which transported a couple of royal passengers with the Duke of Sussex and Lady Augusta Murray. One major difference between the two transports is that Frederick Wentworth declares in the novel he is glad he missed the privilege of rendering the said service to the lady in question, whereas Charles Austen did the service and was satisfied to find his royal passenger "jolly and affable" (Austen 1996: 80).

The next important character in the novel is Admiral Croft. In chapter 3, he is introduced as rear-admiral of the white (that is 4<sup>th</sup> rank in admiral's scale of seniority at that time, counting from the lowest rank, i.e. that of rear-admiral of the blue) who took part in the memorable Trafalgar action of 1805, and had been on active service in the East Indies ever since. These circumstances point to, roughly speaking, Capt. Francis Austen's record of naval service on the one hand, and to the writer's thorough familiarity with military ranks in the Royal Navy on the other. In chapter 8, Admiral Croft regrets the war is practically over, and ten chapters later repeats that "the peace has come too soon" (P 94, 180). These remarks should not be taken too literally – he is not a hawk of war, a militant-minded man and officer; what the admiral means to say is that war enables socially underprivileged "youngsters" – such as Wentworth was – to seek their promotions and fortunes. Jane Austen knew well enough what an interim peace or lull in the fighting meant in terms of naval officer's financial situation. When she was living in Southampton, her brother Frank continued on half-pay for some time after the Battle of San Domingo, waiting for his next appointment (to the "St Albans" frigate) early in 1807, and in the meantime knotting fringes for the drawing-room blinds (cf. Grosvenor Myer 1999: 152).

One trait in Admiral Croft's character has been apparently borrowed by the writer from her naval acquaintance, Capt. Edward Foote mentioned above. The hearty and open admiral who can not recollect the first name of Louisa Musgrove, declares his preference for simple Christian names: "I wish young ladies had not such a number of fine christian names. I should never be out, if they were all Sophys, or something of that sort" (P 181). This is just in the manner of his prototype in real life, of whom Jane Austen once observed: "Captain Foote is a professed adversary to all but the plainest [names]; he likes only Mary, Elizabeth, Anne, & c. Our best chance [for the name of his newly-born baby daughter] is of Caroline" (1996: 115).

The remaining two officers of the navy in the discussed novel are Wentworth's close friends, Capt. James Benwick and Capt. Harville. There is a melancholy thread in the private life of the first which affords a sad parallel with the life of Charles Austen. Capt. Benwick had been engaged to Harville's sister, Fanny, and lost her while seeking opportunities for promotion and prize money at sea. This misfortune accounts for his quiet, serious and retiring manners in the novel. Drawing this figure, I think, Jane Austen must have had her younger sailor brother in mind. He married an attractive seventeen-year-old girl (meaningfully: Frances, i.e. Fanny Palmer) on the British island of Bermuda during his long service in the North Atlantic and the West Indies. He was able to bring her home and introduce her to his family only four years later. In September, 1814, Fanny died in her 24<sup>th</sup> year of life, just a week after giving birth to their baby daughter (which survived the mother only by another week). A similar melancholy story was the share of the Austens' old acquaintance, Capt. Sir Thomas Williams, whose wife, Jane Cooper, was the writer's cousin unhappily killed in a road accident in August, 1798.

As regards Capt. Harville, his little home by the sea at Lyme, visited in the novel by a large party of guests, the unaffected hospitality and genuine friendliness of the master and mistress of the house – were probably inspired by the image of Frank's little home in Southampton which accommodated at one time his own family plus the widowed Mrs Austen and her two daughters, and additionally played host to other members of the family. Biographers and critics also remark that Capt. Francis Austen believed the novel's Capt. Harville to be based on himself (cf. Gillie 1986: 169, Grosvenor Myer 1999: 125).

Among the other characters in the novel, the admiral's wife has "been almost as much at sea as her husband" without missing the usual comforts of life ashore; she actually declares that "[w]omen may be as comfortable on board, as in the best house in England" (P 74, 93). This fact may have been suggested to Jane Austen by the circumstances of her younger brother's life: having returned to England after seven-years' service on a foreign station, Charles did not have enough money to rent lodgings in town – consequently his wife and their two daughters were living with him on His Majesty's Ship the "Namur" of which Charles Austen was captain. Coming back to Mrs Croft, the admiral's wife, she is said to be "a great traveller" (P 94). Indeed, she has crossed the Atlantic four times and has also seen Lisbon, Gibraltar as well as the East Indies, which actually stirs up a mixture of admiration and envy on the part of the stay-at-home Mrs Musgrove. The authoress of *Persuasion* expressed similar feelings in her correspondence with Frank Austen who was sailing in the Baltic towards the close of the French wars. She told him that se-

ing new places is one of the considerable “douceurs” of his profession – as opposed to some of its “privations” – and that it “must be real enjoyment” and “great pleasure” to him (Austen 1996: 214).

On the level of material and spatial setting, *Persuasion* offers most of all Jane Austen's novels. Her impressions of the seaside Lyme and Charmouth, and the nearby villages of Up Lyme and Pinny, visited in 1803 and 1804, proved so profound and lasting as to become immortalized in the book under examination. In chapter 11, we learn that the main characters, including Capt. Wentworth and Anne Elliot, Charles Musgrove and his wife Mary (Anne's younger sister), together with two unmarried Musgrove sisters – Henrietta and Louisa – “were all wild to see Lyme” (P 116). Their resolution materializes one day in autumn so that they can eventually admire –

[...] the remarkable situation of the town, the principal street almost hurrying into the water, the walk to the Cobb, skirting round the pleasant little bay, which in the season is animated with bathing machines and company, the Cobb itself, its old wonders and new improvements, with the very beautiful line of cliffs stretching out to the east of the town, are what the stranger's eye will seek; and a very strange stranger it must be, who does not see charms in the immediate environs of Lyme, to make him wish to know it better. The scenes in its neighbourhood, Charmouth, with its high grounds and extensive sweeps of country, and still more its sweet retired bay, backed by dark cliffs, where fragments of low rock among the sands make it the happiest spot for watching the flow of the tide, for sitting in unwearied contemplation; – the woody varieties of the cheerful village of Up Lyme, and, above all, Pinny, with its green chasms between romantic rocks, where the scattered forest trees and orchards of luxuriant growth declare that many a generation must have passed away since the first partial falling of the cliff prepared the ground for such a state, where a scene so wonderful and so lovely is exhibited, as may more than equal any of the resembling scenes of the far-famed Isle of Wight: these places must be visited, and visited again, to make the worth of Lyme understood.

(P 117)

The party soon find themselves on the sea shore, lingering and gazing, “as all must linger and gaze on a first return to the sea, who ever deserve to look on it at all” (P 117). The last sentence seems to imply a relationship with the sea that is intimate and meaningful, involving some sort of reflective initiation. This strain brings Jane Austen's art close to the Romantic ideas of nature, and when the next morning Anne and Henrietta stroll down to the sea before the rest of the company get up, their reactions run along the familiar lines of sentimental-Romantic sensitivity to landscape, thoughtful admiration bordering on devotion, and the like. Thus, the he-

roines: “went to the sands, to watch the flowing of the tide, which a fine south-easterly breeze was bringing in with all the grandeur which so flat a shore admitted. They praised the morning; gloried in the sea; sympathized in the delight of the fresh-feeling breeze – and were silent” (*P* 123). The critic E. Wilson observes that landscape descriptions and tender feelings in *Persuasion* “have definitely a tinge of the romantic”, and that “this last novel is the only one of her [Jane Austen’s] books of which one clearly remembers the setting” (Wilson 1963: 37).

It seems interesting to add that the main female characters in the discussed novel consider the influence of the sea beneficial to health, and that they enjoy bathing in it. Louisa Musgrove, following her critical fall from the Cobb, recuperates at Lyme while her guardian, Mary, divides her time between bathing in the sea and going to church (cf. *P* 144). The admiral’s wife earlier claims she never knew what sickness was at high sea (cf. *P* 95), and Henrietta Musgrove tells Anne Elliot during their solitary walk along the picturesque shore that she is “quite convinced [...] the sea-air always does good”, in proof of which she mentions the example of an ailing Dr Shirley whose stay at Lyme for a month, “did him more good than all the medicine he took; and, that being by the sea, always makes him feel young again” (*P* 123). We will remember in this context the friendly piece of advice that the depraved Mary Crawford gives to Fanny in *Mansfield Park*: “My dear little creature, do not stay at Portsmouth to lose your pretty looks. Those vile sea-breezes are the ruin of beauty and health” (*MP* 407). It is almost needless to add that Jane Austen herself strongly believed in the regenerating power of the sea, and also took pleasure in sea baths. In a 1804 letter from Lyme, she told Cassandra that “[b]athing was so delightful”, and a couple of years later she advised her nephew, James-Edward Austen-Leigh, that “a little change of scene may be good for you, & Your Physicians I hope will order you to the Sea” (Austen 1996: 95, 316).

The naval officers in *Persuasion*, together with their spouses, or spouses to be, present a stronger contrast to most of the other characters in the novel, compared with *Mansfield Park*. D. W. Harding in an essay meaningfully entitled “Regulated Hatred”, suggests that Jane Austen’s criticism of the society’s “crudenesses and complacencies” deserves a stronger term than satire. Since her primary intention was not didactic entertainment (“missionary object”), but genuine resistance to many of the contemporary social and ethical values, the critic professes himself to be one of those readers who turn to Jane Austen as “a formidable ally against things and people which were to her, and still are, hateful” (Harding 1963: 170, 179). In my opinion, one can practically find no better example than the novel under examination to point to the authoress’s models of both human virtues and vices in diffe-

Seen from the more personal perspective, “gentlemen of the navy”, as Mr Shepherd the lawyer styles them, appear to be desirable clients, “well to deal with in the way of business”, because they have “very liberal notions”, that is they are generous with their money, besides being “neat and careful in all their ways” (P 47-8). Thus, Admiral Croft is not only eligible to look after Kellynch Hall, but also proves Sir Walter’s ideal tenant. In contrast to him, Sir Walter lives beyond his income, runs into huge debts and is unable to give up any of his costly habits. To continue with the naval officers, they appear to be true gentlemen, their manners in society are faultless, they are also intelligent and display interests beyond their profession. The hale and hearty admiral is “quite the gentleman in all his notions and behaviour” and so is the younger Capt. Harville – “a perfect gentleman, unaffected, warm, and obliging” (P 51, 119). Frederick Wentworth demonstrates “a great deal of intelligence, spirit and brilliancy”, and on board his ship shows genuine commitment to the schooling of his midshipmen (P 55). Capt. Benwick is “a young man of considerable taste in reading” and Jane Austen makes him the proprietor of “a tolerable collection of well-bound volumes” (P 120-1). This last feature contrasts favourably with Sir Walter who “never took up any book but the Baronetage” (P 35), while the sailors’ gentlemanly behaviour and keen intelligence can be rated even higher in comparison with those of the nobility – for example the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple and her daughter. As Anne critically observes, “[t]here was no superiority of manner, accomplishment, or understanding” in her aristocratic cousins, and the Honourable Miss Carteret, “with still less to say, was so plain and awkward, that she would never have been tolerated in Camden-place but for her birth” (P 162). Following their visit at the Elliots’ residence in Bath, Anne challenges Mr Elliot’s notion of good company, denying Lady Dalrymple and her daughter such a status on grounds of their limited intelligence: “My idea of good company, Mr Elliot, is the company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation” (P 162).

Some of the most personal traits of character make Jane Austen’s sailors in *Persuasion* still more likeable. Admiral Croft’s “hearty good humour”, “open, trusting liberality”, “usual frankness” (P 60), his warmth and friendliness – win him respect and general admiration in every company. His openness encourages Anne Elliot to spontaneously catch hold of his sleeve when she finds him contemplating a window display in a Bath street, on which occasion the admiral thanks her most sincerely saying “[t]his is treating me like a friend” (P 179). Capt. Harville’s reaction follows basically the same course: as a sensitive man, he tells Anne of sailors’ agitation when they take leave of their families and go on a distant and perilous cruise

without knowing if they will ever meet them again. Finding Anne an attentive and compassionate listener, he calls her “a good soul” and “put[s] his hand on her arm quite affectionately” (*P* 238). The warmth and feeling nature also apply to Capt. Wentworth, similarly as his winsome straightforwardness when, acting on impulse after Louisa Musgrove’s accident on the Cobb, he calls Miss Anne Elliot by her first name. Indeed, the heroine can hardly recover from the emotion of hearing herself so spoken of, as it proves that Wentworth still loves her – eight years after the broken engagement. Such unaffected attitudes, sensitivity to the feelings of others, tact and delicacy are beyond the comprehension of the novel’s establishment. Anne sadly observes on one occasion how the entrance of her haughty father and elder sister “seemed to give a general chill. Anne felt an instant oppression, and, wherever she looked, saw symptoms of the same. The comfort, the freedom, the gaiety of the room was over, hushed into cold composure, determined silence, or insipid talk, to meet the heartless elegance of her father and sister. How mortifying to feel that it was so!” (*P* 230). In chapter 11, Louisa Musgrove goes into raptures over the character of the navy specifically emphasizing their “friendliness, their brotherliness, their openness, their uprightness”. She soon finds the embodiment of these virtues in Capt. Benwick whom she marries, and who presents a striking contrast in this respect to Sir Walter’s heir presumptive. Mr William Elliot speaks most disrespectfully of his own relations at the beginning of the novel, to seek reconciliation with them fifteen chapters later on grounds of the advantages that family connections can give him, and especially of the title that he is supposed to inherit (however, he may lose it if Sir Walter remarries and has a male descendant). Mrs Smith who has known him longer than Anne, confirms her worst suspicions giving the following testimony: “Mr Elliot is a man without heart or conscience; a designing, wary, cold-blooded being, who thinks only of himself; who, for his own interest or ease, would be guilty of any cruelty, or any treachery, [...] He has no feeling for others. [...] He is totally beyond the reach of any sentiment of justice or compassion. Oh! he is black at heart, hollow and black!” (*P* 206). It comes out, among others, that Mr Elliot forsook his former friend and benefactor, Mr Smith, when he had run into financial difficulties, and then cold-heartedly refused to come to the assistance of the latter’s widow.

Anne Elliot’s rejection of Mr William Elliot as a candidate for her husband, and her preference of Capt. Wentworth, point to some more ideals that are exemplified by Jane Austen’s sailors. The ideals in question are closely related to each other and include that of a husband, happy marriage and partnership in marriage. Consequently, the Admiral and Mrs Croft share everything with each other. In chapter 8, the admiral’s spou-

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se assures Mrs Musgrove that the happiest part of her life has been spent on board her husband's ship, adding that "[w]hile we were together, you know, there was nothing to be feared". In fact, the only time that she suffered in body or mind was the winter she spent alone at Deal while her husband sailed the North Seas. "[B]ut as long as we could be together", she stresses again, "nothing ever ailed me, and I never met with the smallest inconvenience" (P 94). When they arrive in Bath ten chapters later, they bring with them "their country habit of being almost always together" and Mrs Croft "seemed to go shares with him [the admiral] in every thing". It is no wonder, indeed, that the couple provide "a most attractive picture of happiness" to Anne Elliot (P 179). Introducing the Harvilles, the authoress emphasizes the fact that the captain's wife displays "the same good feelings" as her husband, and that their little home by the sea presents "the picture of repose and domestic happiness" (P 119-120). Of James Benwick whose beloved died while he was at sea, we learn that it is "impossible for man to be more attached to woman than poor Benwick had been to Fanny Harville" (P 118). In this context, the declaration made by Anne Elliot in a conversation with Capt. Harville becomes fully comprehensible: "I believe you [i.e. sailors] capable of every thing great and good in your married lives" (P 238). By contrast, again, Sir Walter's late spouse, Lady Elliot, herself a sensible and amiable woman, was "not the very happiest being in the world", and her marriage appears to have been the result of "youthful infatuation" on her part which she clearly regretted later (P 36). Similarly, Mr William Elliot is said to have been "very unkind to his first wife", a rich woman of inferior birth, and the reader is also informed that "[t]hey were wretched together" (P 216).

Concluding the article, two of Jane Austen's mature novels – *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* – appear to be underpinned by a solid nautical and naval basis that can be directly related to the French wars at sea and her sailor brothers' honourable careers. The fact that the writer's enthusiasm for the navy was generally shared by the nation at the conclusion of the Napoleonic war, gave her a good opportunity to immortalize in fiction the national importance of the service, and to extol numerous personal and domestic virtues of the men who were engaged in it. Some of those virtues point to serious ethical questions involving, for example, the real worth of human character. Meaningfully, the heroine of *Persuasion* who can be treated as the authoress's mouthpiece in the novel, comes to the conclusion that "they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch-hall had passed into better hands than its owners" (P 141). The authoress thus explicitly deprives Sir Walter not only of his "principal seat" (his splendid residence), but also – symbolically – of his traditional rights and privileges sanctioned by birth and social status. The writer makes it clear, at the same time, that Sir Walter's demotion applies to the class of



landed gentry in particular, and the contemporary social establishment in general. In this light, the fact that Kellynch is taken over by the Admiral and Mrs Croft, and that Capt. Wentworth (and not Sir Walter's heir) takes Anna Elliot for his wife – acquire similar social and economic importance as well as symbolic meaning. We can also repeat after Trevelyan that Lieutenant William Price in *Mansfield Park*, and Captain Frederick Wentworth in *Persuasion* stand for all that was most attractive in the new type of naval officer in the age of Lord Nelson, combining what was best in the traditional rough or “tarpaulin” type of sea captain, notably his extensive experience and vocational training, with the manners and ideas of an educated man (Trevelyan 1945: 499). In her private life, Jane Austen's unflinching trust in the navy made her invest the money she had earned on the sale of her books in the shares issued by the Royal Navy, which proved to be sound judgment on her part, as nine days before her death the writer received £ 15 interest on her investment, losing at the same time the money she had put in her brother's (Henry's) own bank which collapsed in London.

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### *Marynistyczne powieści Jane Austen pt. Mansfield Park i Perswazje*

Artykuł łączy kompozycję dwóch późniejszych powieści Jane Austen z jej rosnącym zainteresowaniem i znajomością okrętów i oficerów Brytyjskiej Królewskiej Marynarki Wojennej w chlubnym dla niej okresie wojen francuskich toczonych w latach 1793-1815. Szacunek i podziw pisarki dla marynarki wojennej podbudowany był osobistym doświadczeniem i wybitnymi zasługami wojennymi jej dwóch ukochanych braci marynarzy, jak również osobistymi znajomościami autorki w tym środowisku, a także jej wycieczkami do angielskich portów i kurortów nadmorskich. Pojawienie się „dżentelmenów z marynarki” w jej dojrzałych powieściach dało również autorce dogodną sposobność do skonstruowania ich licznych cnót z występami ówczesnego społecznego establishmentu.