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THE MANY JOURNEYS IN JANE AUSTEN'S *PERSUASION*: SOCIAL, GEOGRAPHICAL AND EMOTIONAL CROSSINGS

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THE MANY JOURNEYS IN JANE AUSTEN'S *PERSUASION*: SOCIAL, GEOGRAPHICAL AND EMOTIONAL CROSSINGS

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Resumo

Com apenas seis romances completos, Jane Austen foi capaz de pintar um retrato ímpar da sociedade rural da Inglaterra do final do século dezoito e início do século dezenove. Através da obra de Austen, o leitor é transportado para duzentos anos atrás, entra em contato com os desafios e problemas enfrentados pelas personagens, aproximando-se assim da vida dos ingleses daquele período. O conhecimento minucioso que Austen possuía daquilo que a cercava e a forma como foi capaz de inserir esse mundo em seus escritos são o motor desta tese de Mestrado, que propõe uma leitura de *Persuasão* (1817), o último romance completo escrito por Jane Austen, com foco nas jornadas geográficas, sociais e psicológicas apresentadas; e explorando tais jornadas com o objetivo de melhor compreender a obra de Austen. O trabalho vem dividido em quatro capítulos. O primeiro traz um panorama da vida da Austen e das circunstâncias políticas e econômicas da Inglaterra em que ela viveu. Os três capítulos seguintes analisam *Persuasão*: o capítulo dois discute as principais jornadas sociais apresentadas no romance, com atenção especial ao declínio da aristocracia em contraste com a ascensão do homem empreendedor que "se fez" por conta própria, representados aqui por Sir Walter Elliot e pelo Capitão Frederick Wentworth, respectivamente. O capítulo três viaja com os personagens pela Inglaterra e explora os lugares que eles visitam, priorizando os dois locais mais proeminentes para a história visitados por eles, a cidade costal de Lyme Regis, e a cidade turística de Bath, investigando – com a ajuda de acadêmicos especialistas em Austen como Maggie Lane e John Whiltshire – o impacto desses locais nas personagens e no modo como influenciam seus movimentos. O capítulo quatro analisa as jornadas pessoais das personagens, com atenção especial para as mudanças de espírito e humor em Anne Elliot, através do texto "Luto e Melancolia" de Sigmund Freud, objetivando compreender o que acontece com a personagem, e como ela supera o luto, recupera sua vivacidade e encontra seu caminho. Ao final deste trabalho, espero que as considerações aqui apresentadas possam contribuir, através do uso dessas "lentes de viagem", para o conjunto de análises críticas sobre *Persuasão*, pois jornadas são mais do que apenas movimentos físicos de um local a outro: elas podem ter efeitos profundos e permanentes.

Palavras-chave: 1. Literatura inglesa. 2. Jane Austen. 3. *Persuasão.* 4. Jornadas Sociais 5. Jornadas Geográficas. 6. Jornadas Emocionais.

Abstract

With only six complete novels, Jane Austen was able to paint a unique portrait of the genteel society of England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Through Austen's works, the twenty-first century reader is transported two hundred years back in time, gets in touch with the trials and tribulations of her characters, and gains an insight into the lives of English people during that time. Austen's thorough knowledge of her surroundings, and how she expertly inserted them into her writings, are the motors of this thesis. This Master's Degree Thesis proposes a reading of *Persuasion* (1817), the last complete novel written by Jane Austen, considering the geographical, social and psychological journeys presented, exploring said journeys in order to better comprehend Austen's final novel. This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first contextualizes Austen's life and the social and political circumstances of the England she knew. The three ensuing chapters analyse *Persuasion*: chapter two discusses the main social journeys found in the novel, with special attention to the decline of the aristocracy and the rise of the self-made-man, here represented by Sir Walter Elliot and Captain Wentworth, respectively. Chapter three travels with the characters around England and surveys the places they visit, with focus in the two most prominent locations in the novels, the seaside town of Lyme Regis, and the watering resort of Bath, exploring – with the help of Austen scholars such as Maggie Lane and John Wiltshire – the impact of those places on the characters, their relationships with said places and how they face their movements. Lastly, chapter four delves into the main characters' personal journeys, focusing on Anne's shifting states-of-mind, utilising Sigmund Freud's text "Mourning and Melancholy" to understand what happens to her, how she overcomes her mourning, regains her bloom and finds her way back to Wentworth. At the end of the work, I hope to shed light on the importance of the "travel goggles" when it comes to analysing literary texts, *Persuasion* in particular, as I believe that journeys are more than just trips undertaken to get from one place to the other physically: they can have deeper and ever-lasting effects.

Keywords: 1. English literature. 2. Jane Austen. 3. *Persuasion*. 4. Social Journeys. 5. Geographical Journeys. 6. Emotional Journeys.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

William Shakespeare, ***Sonnet 116***

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AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY[1]

"Anne had not wanted a visit to Uppercross, to learn that a removal from one set of people to another, though at a distance of only three miles, will often include a total change of conversation, opinion, idea."

Jane Austen, ***Persuasion*.**

The twenty-first century has barely begun and it has already proved itself a century for crossing frontiers. Every year, travelling becomes more accessible. People who had never before considered the real possibility of leaving their home country are now facing new cultures and different forms of thinking; and because people are in constant movement around the globe, we do not have to go very far from home to encounter differences in thought and beliefs. The journey we embark on, when travelling, however, is not only a geographical one, for when we spend time abroad – or away from what we know as 'home', we notice changes in ourselves, as we are affected by our surroundings and by the people who populate them. Travelling does not only confront the travellers with new sights and cultural diversity, it puts us in a condition of foreigners, enhancing our sense of place and of who we are.

With only six complete novels, Austen was able to paint a unique portrait of the genteel society of England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Austen's works transport the twenty-first century readers two hundred years back in time and allowing them to get in touch with the trials and tribulations of Austen's characters, and to gain an insight into the lives of English people in the early nineteenth century. The more one learns about that society, the more one understands a character's actions and the direction the story might be

[1] The title of this introductory section brings a reference to J. R. R. Tolkien and his work.

taking. Reading Austen requires from the reader a specific type of knowledge – even if it is possible to read Austen without understanding nineteenth century sensibilities, being acquainted with the rules of a place so distant in time and space enables us to better understand and interpret what we are reading. The more we travel back and forth between that fictional universe and our hectic present-day life (be it through research, discussions, or repeated readings), the more the fictional experience becomes palpable.

In the present work I present my reading of *Persuasion* (2003), the last complete novel written by Jane Austen, considering the geographical, social and psychological journeys presented in said work. The option for Jane Austen comes from the fact that in the last few decades, the popularity of this author has reached unprecedented peaks. Film and television adaptations have brought Austen back to spotlight, and Austen enthusiasts are no longer just consuming her works, they are producing works of their own based on Austen's creations. Jane Austen has travelled far beyond her quiet English village, and her face is now on mugs, t-shirts and all sorts of memorabilia. There are various elements in Austen's two-hundred-year-old novels that significantly attract the present-day public, and perhaps that is why Jane Austen has been the focus of so many academic works and fan adoration in the past years: the world she portrays in her novels is quite different from the world we have come to know in our lifetime, which makes her work all the more appealing.

Austen's fans often claim they would like to live in Austen's times, and television and film adaptations are partially responsible for this nostalgia toward a past we never knew: in these, we are never shown the gory and unpleasant parts about life two centuries ago: it is all dances, floral dresses and dashing heroes. Romanticised versions of the past make the public forget that life was not as glamourous as television makes it look, and that things were much harder for everybody back then, especially for women and children, who had little to no rights, and were "owned" by men. Not only did women have very few political and social rights in the nineteenth century, they were forced to live up to an idea of perfection and wifely duties that saw its culmination with the "angel of the house"[2], the perfect saintly woman, in Victorian times. The overwhelming protection of women's sensibilities was already present in Regency England, for example, with women not being allowed to attend funerals – Cassandra, Austen's

[2] Poem by Coventry Patmore, first published in 1854. Term also mentioned by Virginia Woolf in the essay "Professions for Women", read in 1942.

sister, and their mother were not at Jane Austen's funeral, but her brothers were. Those women who came from decent families did virtually no travelling alone in the nineteenth century, as it was seen as inappropriate – travelling was the domain of men, and few women braved those waters.

Austen, despite having travelled little, was knowledgeable of her terrain, and used it as much as she could in her favour. There is something very comforting for Austen's readers in learning that much of what she talked about in her works regarding places is still in existence, even if they are, as said before, very different from what they used to be. The Cobb in Lyme Regis still attracts visitors, and Bath is still an important destination in England and its waters are still used – if not to cure ailments, for relaxation. Both places are key in Austen's novels, especially in her last novel and focus of this thesis, *Persuasion*. There is a sense of permanency in Austen's novels, as if things never changed, and therefore can be trusted, which is more than appealing for the twenty-first century reader, who is bombarded with news on a daily basis, and to whom technology is ever changing. Austen's novels are an escape into the past and people are attracted to them for many reasons, amongst which is the fact that novels such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* take the reader to a simpler time. Austen's novels are a good example of life in Regency England – romanticised life, but life nonetheless – and we can rely on them for information of what it was like to live in those days. Austen was able to direct her reader to where she wanted her story and characters to go, and to how situations and people should be perceived, at the same time as always being true to life as she knew it. It is no different when it comes to Austen's keen eye and dedication to detail in her writing: the novelist is always precise concerning the journeys undertaken by her characters, even if she does not describe them in never ending detail – her characters

> all take the right amount of time to reach their destinations. The number of miles that could be accomplished in an hour was roughly seven, but it could take two days to cover a hundred over hilly terrain. Travelling from Dawlish to Bath, for example, would involve an overnight stop and daytime meals at coaching inns, plus at least six changes of horses. The novelist's rigorous attention to routes and journey times ensured that her readers were never diverted from the road she intended them to follow. (JONES, 2014, p. 18)

In Austen's novels geographical journeys prove important not only to the development of the plot, but especially to the development and growth of the protagonists. This is

particularly clear in *Persuasion*, the last and most mature of Austen's works, written after the Napoleonic Wars and during the illness that would cause her death. Every journey taken by its characters is reported in detail to the reader, for these journeys are turning points in the plot and essential to the maturing process of the characters. It is predominantly through Anne Elliot's eyes that we perceive the changing scenarios in *Persuasion*, and as the journeys happen and the story progresses, so does our insight into Anne's thoughts and feelings. She starts without a voice, and *Persuasion* depicts, amongst other things, Anne's journey towards regaining her voice, and therefore, finding happiness, which only happens because social and physical movements unleash psychological changes – and vice versa. In a time where travelling is second nature to many people, I believe that returning to Austen in order to analyse how her characters respond to these geographical, emotional and social journeys might be of great significance for the twenty-first century readers to better comprehend the processes said characters are going through.

The second and more personal reason for my choice to work with Jane Austen is that Austen has been a strong presence in my life for over ten years and her influence has contributed to my growth as a human and as a reader. Being an Austen enthusiast – and now academic – has enhanced my experience in England, from where this thesis is being written. Being able to visit Austen related places, as well as participating in events such as the Jane Austen Festival[3], have given me new perspectives from which to approach Austen's works, and have been of invaluable importance to this research. This thesis is closely linked to my subjectivity and passion for Jane Austen and the British Isles, and it is my intention to approximate my personal experience as a traveller and as a reader, to the elements analysed in *Persuasion*. My academic plunge into the research will be aided by my travels and wanders in Austen' country - the places I visited, the photographs I took and the books I read during my travels have changed me, and have given me tools and inspiration to produce this work. Travelling through the United Kingdom has been invaluable to my perception of the works produced there, and it has made me face the many differences between what I had imagined through novels and what was indeed 'real'.

The plots of Austen's novels gain new colours when read accompanied with "Travel

[3] An annual encounter in Bath that brings together Austen fans from the highest academic echelons to those who are just interested in how the lake scene in the 1995 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* was filmed.

Goggles". *Persuasion* is the corpus of the present work due to its being her last completed novel, in which one would assume we could find Austen's style in its most developed form. Travelling, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, was not as simple as it is today: it required more time, and willingness to put up with a number of inconveniences. Covering what would for us be a short distance was, for Austen's characters, a long journey – in *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, it takes up to two days to reach London from Hertfordshire[4], a journey that today would take less than an hour. We take most journeys lightly now, especially those that do not even involve being on an aeroplane, but it was different for Austen's characters – and for Austen herself – as travelling involved various forms of preparation. Perhaps for that reason the narrator mentions every movement, and the characters are so much affected by changes of scenery and company. *Persuasion* comprises different types of journeys undertaken by its characters. My intention is to better comprehend the effects these movements have on the characters and on the plot. Travelling is to be taken both literally and as a metaphor, for life comprises all sorts of journeys that influence the way we face it. Novels are also journeys in themselves; Literature does not only mimic life, it also intertwines with it, predicts and forges it. Reading means diving into and analysing somebody else's experiences, learning about someone else's journey and, therefore, enhancing our experience.

The main aim of this work is to perform a reading of *Persuasion,* exploring the meanings implied in the concept of journey and posing some considerations on the weight this has on the contemporary rekindling of interest in Austen's fiction. Through the analysis of the characters' movements in *Persuasion*, I mean to examine how much said movements contribute to the development of the plot and to the emotional movements undergone by the characters, and establish a comparison between the functions exerted by travelling in the nineteenth century and in the present day. The concepts of travelling and journey will be taken as metaphors for personal development. Literature, in this study, will work as a source of experience where the reader travels and grows with the characters. Anne Elliot's incursions into different areas of the English social pyramid, as well as the connections involving several other characters in the novel, allow us to investigate the notions and practices involving class and money in the Rural England of the Regency period, as depicted in Jane Austen's fiction. *Persuasion* is a novel about the revaluation of previous experience and about the psychological

[4] Hertfordshire is today part of the London commuter belt, meaning that many people who live there work in London – a testament to the fact that distances have become shorter.

impact of having to reconsider the set of beliefs through which one has made one's choices and opened one's way in life. In this sense, the considerations here will refer to Anne Elliot's journey into her own past, and the ways in which she learns how to learn from experience. *Persuasion*'s story begins with Sir Walter's financial decay, leading him to rent his estate and move to Bath with his family. For Anne, the geographical changes that ensue from her father's decision give way to a much deeper change within herself, and by changing, she allows herself to recapture a number of things that had been lost in the past.

In order to perform the close reading through the travel lens, I will analyse three main types of journeys in the novel *Persuasion*: geographical journeys– the characters' physical movements from place to place and where that leads the development of the story; social journeys – the decadence of the Elliot family in terms of social status as opposed to the rise of Captain Wentworth and his family into a higher social class, the comings and goings of Anne Elliot between wealthy but conceited and poor but earnest environs; and psychological journeys – the changes of heart and ideas of the characters as they go through their personal movements, growing into themselves to find each other again (in the case of Anne and Captain Wentworth). These analyses will be connected with the way we, the readers and travellers of the 21st century, face our journeys, drawing comparisons and pointing out the differences between ours and Austen's time as a way to encompass the contemporary fascination both with the subject of travelling and with Austen's works. Due to my experiences in the British Isles, in addition to and aid of of the close reading, this thesis will include photographs taken by me of places relevant to Austen's life and her works, for these pictures will function as points of reference to *Persuasion* and to the research as a whole, illustrating the ideas here expressed, and approximating the reader to the places I will refer to in this work.

The first chapter, "Austen's Journey", will be supported by historical facts and the information we have today about Jane Austen's life and times. A better understanding of the world and its politics during the period Austen lived and worked will help us understand her novels more proficiently. Roy and Leslie Adkins, in their *Jane Austen's England* (2013), will, amongst others, help to describe the culture and customs of the everyday life in early nineteenth century England, exploring the idea that many people never saw new places and barely travelled at all during their life time, and wondering how things worked for those who indeed had opportunities to go beyond their fences. Concerning Austen's personal life, there is little

left about the novelist, a few letters written by Austen herself, letters written by people who knew her, and an abundant number of works, academic and not, trying to shed light on the writer's life and personality. I will use the material available to me in order to try to comprehend Austen's movements throughout her lifetime. This chapter aims to establish a parallel between Austen's life and her times, and give the reader tools to a more comprehensive understanding of Austen's works.

The reading analysis of *Persuasion* will be divided into three chapters, and I will explore Anne's journey from three different perspectives: "Geographical Crossings", "Social Crossings", and "Emotional Crossings". These chapters will plunge into the close reading of the novel *per se* from the point of view of the journeys and movements performed by the characters. To analyse the geographical journeys in *Persuasion* I will research on criticism related to Travel Literature, especially to essays about the meanings of travelling in Jane Austen's works. Information on the English countryside and places mentioned in *Persuasion* will be used to enhance the comprehension related to distances and the meanings of places. Location is rarely random is Jane Austen's works, and a character's relationship with certain places is telling of their personality and morality. As to social journeys, I will explore the changing times in which the novel was written which are depicted in the novel through its characters, especially through the dichotomy presented by Sir Walter Elliot and his old – now scarce – money, and Captain Frederick Wentworth, and his new and heroically gained riches. As for the psychological journeys, I will pursue them in order to trace the development of the characters in the novel. I will rely on my Psychology degree and on Freudian Psychoanalysis, using predominantly Freud's considerations about *Mourning and Melancholy* (2005) to support my critical reading of *Persuasion* and the development of Anne Elliot's character. I am interested in understanding the process through which Anne goes, from a state close to depression (mourning) to regaining her voice and bloom.

Persuasion was published posthumously in two volumes, dated December 1817, five months after Jane Austen's death, alongside *Northanger Abbey.* On the 8th August 1815, it was announced that Napoleon was to be put on board the Northumberland, to be sent into exile on the island of Saint Helena, 1200 miles west of the south-western coast of Africa; on this same day, Austen started working on what would be her last finished novel, *Persuasion* (LE FAYE, 2006, p. 513). The novel was completed in July 1816, and within three weeks of its completion,

Austen had rejected its two final chapters and written three new ones. By the time of her death, *Persuasion* had no definite title, and it was up to her brother Henry to decide on the name of his sister's last work. It is believed *The Elliots* was *Persuasion*'s working title; Henry, however, settled on *Persuasion* before the publication, clearly the more thought-provoking of the two:

> Three of Jane Austen's novels set up intellectual and moral debate in their titles: two of them are *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*. The third is *Persuasion*. The first two titles have drawn a good deal of comment on the combative arguments displayed; but the difficult debates implied in the title of *Persuasion* have been largely overlooked – indeed the debate nature of persuasion has been oddly ignored. Whereas the earlier novels polarise qualities (sense and sensibility) or set them in awkward juxtaposition (pride and prejudice), Persuasion compresses all the debates within one term. Persuasion is the aim of all rhetoric. It is a double-natured energy, guileful as the serpent, redemptive as reasoned conversation. It is the art of seduction and of enlightenment at once. (BEER, 2003, p. xiv)

When we talk about *Persuasion*, it is almost impossible not to talk about *Northanger Abbey* as well for two reasons: first of all, both novels, as said above, were published together, despite their many differences (one being a satire of the gothic romances of the time, and the other being a mature work in which the things that were laughed about in the past are reason for genuine pain); secondly, in both stories the heroines travel to the city of Bath, in the South West of England, and their accounts of the city, so different and yet so similar, as they see the same things and types of people, but look at them differently, make for an interesting read. *Persuasion* was Austen's last novel, written when she was already feeling signs of the illness that would bring her end, and there is a sadness, almost a depressive quality to the novel, possibly a reflexion of Austen's then current state – Anne Elliot could not be more distant from creations like Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse, there is a sedation about her that was not there before, not even in the quiet and timid Fanny Price. *Northanger Abbey*, on the other hand, was written by a young Jane Austen, a girl full of hopes and dreams, much like her main character, Catherine Morland. It is impossible to say how closely both novels reflect its author's life in different periods, but they certainly have autobiographical shades to them, even if only regarding their tone and Austen's relationship with the city of Bath and the time in which they were written.

According to Deidre Le Faye (2003, p. 279), *Persuasion* is unlike any other of Austen's novels in its reliance on places with which Jane Austen was thoroughly familiar, considering that "since writing *Northanger Abbey*, which gives a visitor's impression of life in Bath, she

had actually lived in that city for some five years, and so in this later work she was able to set her characters in precisely the correct addresses to suit their various stations in life, and to walk with them on their daily business and shopping expeditions” and

> She had also visited Lyme Regis twice, in November 1803 and August 1804, and no doubt passed through Crewkerne en route between Bath and Lyme. As for *Mansfield Park*, her two sailor brothers, Frank and Charles – Frank in particular – were able to provide her with correct information on naval matters and advise on the style of conversation that might be exchanged between naval officers. (LE FAYE, 2003, p. 279)

The heroine of *Northanger Abbey,* Catherine Morland, is a seventeen-year-old girl, the eldest of ten children, who is very fond of the famous – and somewhat scandalous – gothic novels, the best-selling books of the late eighteenth century. Early in the story, the girl is invited by the family's neighbours, the Allens, a childless couple, to go and spend some time in Bath, enjoying balls and dinner parties. Catherine jumps at the chance to partake of the winter season in the fashionable destination. Despite what happens to her throughout the novel, the girl never ceases to look at Bath with approving eyes: she loves the city and what it has to offer, its well-dressed people, balls and shops – there are few places where she would rather be. In *Persuasion*, on the other hand, Anne Elliot is not a young girl anymore – in the beginning of the novel, we encounter this mature and saddened woman of twenty-seven (very young by today's standards, but nearly off the marriage market in Jane Austen's times). Anne has had to face the death of her mother in her childhood and the loss of her true love as a young woman; she does not fit in with her father and elder sister, and is now obliged to leave her ancestral home in her beloved countryside for a city she loathes: Bath. To Anne, the city's attractions are diminished by the people who frequent them, people who go to the theatre to be seen, rather than to enjoy the cultural event. Anne Elliot is not impressed by big balls and titles like Catherine Morland. Anne has learnt that someone’s value should not be measured by the family they belong to or where they are from: true value has to do with honour and friendship. That said, Austen is careful in the use of place to define character, not regarding where they came from, but how they behave when they move or are forced to change places:

> In the novels, the association of character and place – where men and women feel comfortable, where they choose to be – is always significant. Change of location is a test of integrity, calling for adaptation to prevailing social demands while keeping faith with self-esteem and principles. Neither Catherine Morland in Bath, Elizabeth Bennet at Rosings, Anne Elliot in Lyme nor Elinor and Marianne Dashwood in London

> 'perform to strangers'. The same is true of the dependable male characters. Wherever they happen to be, they are essentially what they always were. (…) Farther away from home territory, the other heroines' adventures involve far more than locating suitable husbands through their journeys they learn something of the world and discover where, and with whom, they do and do not belong. *Travel, pleasurable or otherwise, is always an education in Jane Austen's fiction, both practical and emotional*[5]. (JONES, 2014, p. 13-14)

Catherine Morland learns at the end of *Northanger Abbey* what Anne Elliot knows at the start of P*ersuasion*: people are not what they seem; titles are meaningless where there is no heart; all do not achieve happy endings. Their journeys are different, even though both are taken to Bath and the city plays a great part in their character development. My focus in this work is Anne's journeys, and throughout *Persuasion*, she goes to different places, meets new people and re-encounters old acquaintances, unpausing her then quiet and uneventful existence; in the process, she finds herself and learns about places and people that surround her.

This work is an argumentative thesis, in the form of a reading of *Persuasion*, therefore, the discussion of the novel will take place in all chapters of the text. The Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul faculty of Letras has seen many dissertations and theses regarding Jane Austen, but this is the first one in the past few decades to explore Austen's text in depth, as previous works tend to deal with the adaptations derived from the source material. Austen's relevance in the literary canon means that works dedicated to her and her novels are still in demand. This thesis aims to understand how travelling affects characters and plot, as well as, whenever possible, connecting how people travelled in the nineteenth century to how it is done in the present day.

[5] My italics.

1 THE AUTHOR'S JOURNEY – TIME, LIFE AND WORKS OF JANE AUSTEN

"Give a girl an education and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well, without further expense to anybody."

Jane Austen, ***Mansfield Park***

1.1 *NOVEL* TIMES

Our journey started in the late eighteenth century; the year was 1775, well into the Georgian period (1717 – 1830). George III was then king of Great Britain and Ireland[6], when in Hampshire, the south of England, in the sleepy village of Steventon, a few miles away from Winchester, Jane Austen was born, on the 16th of December, to the Reverend George Austen and Mrs Cassandra Austen. Jane Austen was the seventh child of the Austen family, succeeding five brothers (James, George, Edward, Henry, Francis) and one sister (Cassandra), and preceding another brother (Charles).

During her lifetime, Jane Austen would never leave England, but would, on the other hand, explore her surroundings like few before her, and travel more than most women of her times (ADKINS & ADKINS, 2013, p. xvii). The eighteenth century started a transition that would be complete only – if at all – two hundred years later with the First World War. Austen witnessed said transition during her lifetime: the beginnings of changes that would transform the world into the place we know now, both socially and economically. Despite claims that her writing is never placed in time, Austen would register with subtlety the changes around her,

[6] All factual information cited here were taken from *Eavesdropping on Jane Austen's England: How Our Ancestors Lived Two Centuries Ago* (2013), unless specified otherwise.

leaving it to the well-informed reader to gather the meanings behind her characters' actions.

> [Austen's] travels took her through fourteen counties, some of them repeatedly; she knew three cities intimately, and she was acquainted with many stretches of the English coastline. It can be said that the whole of southern England was her territory. Farms, villages, country estates, market and coaching towns and seaside resorts were known to her in great number. And this was at a time when every place had more local flavour – in terms of agricultural produce, building materials and the character and function of each town – than today. (LANE, 1996, p. 12)

The aim of this chapter is to explore the times in which Jane Austen lived both in a grand scale (what was happening in the British political and social scenes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) and in a micro scale (Austen's personal life, her small town surroundings, people with whom she crossed paths and who influenced her both personally and professionally). Not much is known concerning Austen's life, especially when compared to other nineteenth century writers and how much information we have about them to this day. Many scholars and writers, however, minutely discuss what we do know, for Jane Austen seems to attract a lot of attention – more so in the past twenty years than ever before. The known unknown regarding Austen's life provides a lot of room for speculation, as writer after writer has used the material we have – the six main novels, unfinished works, letters, family descriptions – to infer as much as possible as to what Austen's life was like and what she was like as a person. The facts, however, are few, and we are left with little information and a lot of conjecturing – the second perpetually fuelling the first.

The study of Jane Austen's life and times is not here a means of speculating about her life, but an attempt to overview the facts that might have influenced her as a writer, trying to establish a connection between her life in the nineteenth century and the life of her characters in her last novel *Persuasion*. More than endeavouring to find unlikely connections and assuming that her writing is closely intertwined with the events in her life, the goal of this chapter is to look at Georgian England and Austen's life as an introduction to the study of her novels, in order to understand the details intrinsic to her times when it comes to social life and politics. Austen's text, contrary to popular belief, is closely intertwined with the world in which she lived, and the study of that world makes itself significant for "the England that Jane Austen knew was the result of a profound change in man's attitude to himself and his environment which had begun some seventy or eighty years before her birth." (LANE, 1996, p. 15). In the early nineteenth century, a new form of thinking was blooming, and with it came a newfound

appreciation for the countryside and the landscapes that shaped it. The new way of thinking both shaped the landscape and offered people the means to appreciate it. As Maggie Lane explains, Austen "grew to consciousness just as these processes reached their full development, so that not only was the countryside at its loveliest, but discussion of it at its most stimulating" (LANE, 1996, p. 15)

> This revolution in thought was the first of the great revolutions which were to propel English life from medievalism to modernity, and the one on which all the others – agrarian, industrial, social and political – depended. It was also, perhaps, the happiest in its effect. It turned man from a miserable creature, dourly battling against the forces of nature, preoccupied by the state of his soul and reliant for his reward in the life hereafter, to one who came to believe that rational happiness was attainable on earth, through the cultivation of his mind and senses, and the educated enjoyment of the world's delights. (LANE, 1996, p. 15).

Of all the revolutions taking place in the eighteenth century, the revolution of ideas is the one of most interest to this work. The Age of Reason was born, and with it came a period of prosperity, despite the wars abroad. It was a time when "the possibilities for the improvement of the human condition, both material and moral, seemed suddenly limitless" (LANE, 1996, p. 15). People were no longer just striving to stay alive, they were enjoying life and all it had to offer: they became more sociable, travelled more, always demanding new experiences and new possessions. As Lane (1996, p. 16) points out, "if one generation welcomed nature into the park palings, the other ventured beyond them to admire those portions of England that would never be cultivated, 'landscaped' or mown. The rage for travel in search of picturesque beauty gained ground".

Life in Hampshire in those days was very different from the life we know now. It was "both more tranquil and less desolate than now, for the human figure was very much a part of the scenery. Amongst the rural working classes most people, men, women and children alike, spent almost all the daylight hours out of doors." (LANE, 1996, p. 18). The twenty-first century countryside, at least in what concerns the south of England, is a result of a process that started in the eighteenth century that resulted in *enclosures*, dividing fields and farms with planted hedgerows. Not only did enclosures provide pleasing visual results with their symmetrical divisions, they also brought about economic gains, as roads were kept in better conditions, facilitating commercial liaisons. Maggie Lane remarks on the fact that the aesthetic and economic gains were not the sole repercussions of the enclosures: along with said positive

results also came social repercussions:

> The loss of common grazing rights coupled with the cost of paying the legal fees of the transfer and hedging the new holdings forced many of the smaller owners to sell out, and the sturdy independence of the yeomen became too often the dependence of the casually employed farm labourer. That was when he was not forced by want to emigrate altogether, to the new industrial towns or to the colonies. For a considerable period, however, the quantity of work generated by enclosure itself absorbed their labour, and a buoyant economy masked the deepening divisions between rich and poor. It was only after the peace of 1815 that grinding rural poverty became a large-scale problem, and later still that massive urban misery reached the consciousness of a perplexed nation. (LANE, 1996, p. 21)

Proving she had a good sense of the goings-on around her, the subject of enclosures is one of the many temporal marks featuring in Austen's novels, noticeably in *Sense & Sensibility* and *Emma.* In *Sense & Sensibility*, “the Middleton family in Devonshire have already enclosed their Barton estate and created a farm at the edge of High-Church Down, while Sir John has laid out new plantations of trees at Barton-Cross and Abbeyland” (LE FAYE, 2014, p. 12). In *Emma*, written twenty years later, “there are references which show that the Donwell Abbey estate, near Richmond in Surrey[7], has been enclosed for some time past, and is presently run as two farms” (LE FAYE, 2014. p. 13). Not only was Mr Knightley’s estate enclosed, but Austen also made Knightley an exemplary landowner, who worried about his tenants, given what we know of his character, it is possible that he would have looked after those under him if the social repercussions of the enclosures affected them negatively.

To this day, the Georgian Period distinguishes itself for its unique architecture. The estates and houses were supposed to reflect the good taste and education of its owner, raising the standards of the general landscape. The improvement mania, at first only undertaken by a few aristocrats, was soon permeating the whole of the social scale - “the great estates, then the medium, then the relatively humble, were made to fit the Georgian image of themselves” (LANE, 1996, p. 21). Places like Chatsworth, in Derbyshire (Image 01), went through many changes, and had their landscapes redesigned by important gardeners and architects. In the case of Chatsworth, the grounds were improved by ‘Capability’ Brown, and it is the place said to have inspired Mr Darcy’s house, Pemberley, in *Pride and Prejudice*; the house also features in the novel, being one of the places visited by Elizabeth Bennet and her aunt and uncle Gardiner

[7]In the eighteenth century, Richmond was part of the parish of Kingston upon Thames in the county of Surrey; in 1890 it became a municipal borough, and in the 1960s Richmond was incorporated as part of Greater London.

during their northern tour.

IMAGE 01 – Chatsworth House: Mr Darcy's Pemberley?

So much work and effort were put into the redesigning of these places that would eventually become a tourist destination: the Georgians initiated the practise of touring great houses and gardens. Landowners competed amongst themselves for a place in John Preston Neale's *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland*, which was published throughout the nineteenth century. "Rich men who had commissioned costly improvements to their properties wanted to exhibit their wealth and taste to a wide audience, comprising not only their superiors and rivals, but also private gentlemen farther down the social scale and those in the professions" (JONES, 2014, p. 142).

It was also during the Georgian period that towns and villages in England gained personality and distinction, becoming what we now call picturesque. They were charming for incorporating different styles of building, which was a reflection on the different ideas their people had – their uniqueness gave them character. Lane (1996, p. 28) provides us with differentiation between village and town, saying that on the one hand, a reasonably sized village would probably contain a number of rural craftsmen, and perhaps one or two shops that would sell commodities that were not locally produced, such as tea, sugar and tobacco. On the other hand, a small town would be so defined due to its trading, and its people's occupations would not be directly linked to the land – they would get the large bulk of their food from local shops, even though vegetables would be grown in their gardens. "Towns had their inns and their schools, their merchants and their small manufactures, their professional men such as doctors

and lawyers, and perhaps a sprinkling of retired gentlefolk who wanted to live near the amenities it could offer" (LANE, 1996, p. 28).

There were all sorts of towns in the eighteenth century – market towns, cathedral towns, harbours – and yet a new category was added to the existing ones: the fashionable resort of leisure town. Amongst these said leisure towns, the one probably best known to Jane Austen and most famous to this day, was Bath, in Somerset. Its constructions were made to delight and impress, a true reflection of the times in which it was built, the Age of Reason. Medieval Bath was virtually destroyed, and in its place, a statement to Georgian aesthetics was raised.

> Everything, animate and inanimate, was ordered, rational, civilised, correct. Bath's influence on the early Georgian age was immense, smoothing away the boorishness of the aristocracy and the provincialism of the country gentry, regularising conduct, cultivating the social graces, spreading new ideas; while its influence on the townscapes of England was of almost equal importance. (LANE, 1996, 29-30).

One of the many reasons why the Georgian Period is considered so important for "construction" of the world as we know it in the present day is the fact that Georgian leisure towns could be compared to our contemporary amusement/theme parks, where fun is organised and somewhat confined; the Georgians also invented the concept of the holiday away from home: for the first time in history, large numbers of people were going back and forth, travelling for travel's sake, looking for amusements and pleasure, seeking new experiences and the sight of different places. Jane Austen lived in a period known as the "golden age of coaching", as Jones observes: "The end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth were boom years for the private carriage trade and London gained recognition for constructing the best horse-drawn vehicles in Europe." (JONES, 2014, p. 78). There were two main forms of travelling (apart from on foot and on horseback): "in the public stage coach, which one might board or alight from at any point, or in a private vehicle, one's own or hired for a journey, stopping every few miles to change horses at inns along the route." (LANE, 1996, p. 30). According to Jones (2014, p. 107), "when Jane lived in Chawton, the mail coach road between London and Winchester ran past her front door and the turnpike to Southampton and Gosport branched off immediately opposite", leading us to believe that Austen had plenty of opportunity to observe life happening around her, even if, in this situation, in a state of transition.

Despite the increasing social spaces, men and women were still very much segregated,

perhaps more so than before. Balls were one of the few instances of congregation, whereas everyday life held distinct spaces for males and females. Contemporary conception of Georgian men commonly involves thinking of them as having been gentlemen of leisure and nothing more; Austen herself could potentially be blamed for that false idea, given that most of her male characters are members of the landed gentry and have no profession. As Le Faye observes, however,

> in the Georgian period it was acceptable that of the several sons of a family the eldest son inherited the paternal estate intact, and the second son could hope to inherit some land or money from his mother's side of the family. All other younger sons, and the second son if he had no inheritance, would have to make their own way in the world, and would be expected to do so by entering the Navy or the Army, taking Holy Orders, or being called to the Bar, in roughly that order of choice. Gentlemen could become physicians and surgeons, but apothecaries and attorneys were definitely lower class. To be a banker or a rich merchant – say in the East India Company – was acceptable, but nothing further down the commercial scale would do. (LE FAYE, 2002, p. 73-74)

Le Faye's statement tells us that there were indeed men of no profession, in the contemporary sense – even though their *occupation* was to manage their estates – but the greater number of Georgian gentlemen had occupations, and they are also mentioned by Austen in her novels, such as Captain Wentworth and Edward Ferrars, who are only two of the many featured in her works.

> In English, the word 'profession' has since the 16th cent. been applied to a limited number of occupations in which a specific body of knowledge is used to solve problems for clients. By the 18th cent. these involved a social status well above that of trade and handicraft and included the upper ranks of law, medicine, the church, and maybe the military. (MASON, 1993, p. 775)

Having established that, when they were not working, Georgian men were pursuing different activities, which were largely comprised of field sports, mainly hunting and shooting. Horseracing and fishing were also among the favoured activities. In London, young men would take fencing and boxing lessons from professionals, while near the coast, swimming and rowing were popular.

For women, however, things were different: "Respectable young women could have no profession except matrimony, hence girls were expected to marry as soon as possible after they made their debut into society in their late teens" (LE FAYE, 2003, p. 113). When one's end goal is attracting a man and *being married* to him, it comes as no surprise that mainly all of

what women did during their lives was a means to an end, and even pleasurable activities could be turned into accomplishments – for instance, reading, speaking other languages, painting and drawing became subjects in which to excel, as it would enhance one's chances of making a good match. Because women had no profession and little or no money to their names, life for them was never completely safe, with or without marriage. If, like Jane Austen and her sister, they ended up not married, they would most likely have to depend on a kind wealthier male relation to survive – again, like the Austen women did. On the other hand, marriage tended to bring a degree of security, even though the prospects of married life could be daunting, what with the death of young women in childbirth being common, and the possibility of an early death of the husband meaning the woman would have no place to go if nothing had been previously provided for her[8], meaning that once again she would depend on the kindness of a relation.

The eighteenth century was prolific in many aspects, and the developing of the arts saw, amongst many other things, the birth of what we know today as the *novel*. Not only was the novel born, it brought with it a wave of talented writers and their respective works to the surface: Daniel Defoe and his *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Jonathan Swift with the adventures of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1749), Henry Fielding's scandalous *Tom Jones* (1749), amongst so many others, including one of the first works regarding women's rights, Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Jane Austen took great inspiration from these writers, commenting on many of their works in her letters and even having characters discuss such works in her novels.

> Being part of a family of avid readers, Jane Austen was well acquainted with the books being published, and for the first half of her life she had access to her father's extensive library. One trend for Gothic novels of horror, suspense and the supernatural, which flourished after the publication in 1764 of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. Subsequent successful writers of this genre included Ann Radcliff, William Backford and Matthew Lewis, while other novelists were drawn towards the dilemma of young women finding suitable marriage partners, as in Fanny Burney's first novel *Evelina*, published in 1778, which she followed by *Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796). Maria Edgeworth also wrote popular novels about English society, manners and marriage, most famously *Belinda* in 1801. Such novels were treated with suspicion by many, an attitude that Jane Austen described with amusement in her own works. In *Northanger Abbey* the narrator criticises those who are embarrassed by novels: '"I am no novel reader – I seldom look into novels – Do not imagine that I often read novels – It is really very well for a novel." Such is the common cant. "And what are you reading Miss –?" "Oh! It is only a novel" replies the young lady, while

[8] Marriage contracts were made between the father of the bride and the groom to insure that the bride would be provided for in the event of the man's death.

> she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame. “It is only *Cecilia*, or *Camilla*, or *Belinda*”.' (ADKINS & ADKINS, 2013, p. xix-xx)

Contrary to what the rule was in Jane Austen's times, when women were only allowed to read certain books, Austen herself had a free pass to her father's extensive book collection, and she is known to have made good use of it. Reverend Austen’s bookshelves “were of primary importance in fostering her talent, given that the first impulse to write stories comes from being entertained and excited by other people's” (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 69). This freedom to read whatever she wanted seems to have had an effect on her works – it helped her to learn more about the world she lived in and gave her insights into the minds of people, helping her to understand, and even analyse the characters around her. Austen was lucky, for a woman in her times, to be allowed access to any reading material she might have wanted, as that was a benefit left only to men, and Claire Tomalin (2000, p. 68-69) suggests that “Mr Austen cannot have kept much from her. In this as in his unruffled response to her bold stories, he was an exceptional father to his exceptional daughter”, as she would have been familiar with works such as Samuel Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison* as a young girl, a book whose main subjects centre on adultery and drunkenness. Reverend Austen seemed to have trusted his beloved daughter to read about such matters and not be influenced by them in the slightest – as was believed would happen if women read such stories as this. Jane Austen did not become an adulterer, and neither was she a drunk – as far as we are aware – but having had the chance to read more than most young women of the age gave her material and knowledge to write her own works with greater expertise. Being adept of the philosophy that one should write about what one knows, her knowledge of the human condition was expanded by the reading material available to her. Austen wrote about the English society that she knew well, making her novels and letters a fair portrayal of the time and place in which she lived. Novels were considered cheap entertainment in Jane Austen's time, a form of escapism, in no way realistic, which means that Austen's form of writing, focused on what she knew was very unique for the time she was producing it. Austen even made sure to avoid writing scenes in which men are the only participants, claiming that she did not know what men talked about when women were not present - her focus was the female protagonist.

Jane Austen’s novels are often described as and criticised for being “outside of time”, as they do not overtly convey dates and historical events. In the past few decades, many works have been written that contradict that statement, as Austen’s novels are deeply imbedded within

the world surrounding their writing and their stories. The attentive reader will see beyond the plots and characters, and find precious information about the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century society, concerning not only habits and life style, but also regarding politics and world affairs. Austen's fiction is a portrait of the transitioning English society of the turn of the century, therefore historical aspects cannot be ignored when analysing her works.

1.2 KING GEORGE'S MADNESS AND THE REGENCY

The 1700s brought about, from a global perspective, the American Revolutionary War (1775 – 1783)[9] and the French Revolution (1789 – 1799)[10]; on a seemingly much smaller scale, it saw advances in agriculture, which gave way to the start of a revolution in and of itself, increasing the efficiency of the production of food and manufactured goods (ADKINS & ADKINSs, 2013, p. xix). The late eighteenth century was a time of changes and novelties, both of which are present in Austen's works, even if sometimes they do not seem as obvious or clear to the twenty-first century reader. One would assume, however, that her contemporary readers had an instant understanding of her veiled references.

Austen lived for forty two years, and only twelve of these years were peaceful, as turmoil took over Europe, even if "no fighting actually took place on English soil – men sailed away to war at sea and in other lands" (ADKINS & ADKINS, 2013, p. xviii). Britain's condition as an island meant that it was somewhat unspoiled by wars beyond those few fought amongst the British themselves (such as the Battle of Culloden[11], in 1746).

During Jane Austen's lifetime, she saw only one king on the throne; by the time she

[9] War between Great Britain and thirteen of its former North American colonies, which had declared themselves the independent country of the United States of America.
[10] The French Revolution brought with it social changes based on the Enlightenment principles and marked the establishment of a secular and democratic republic in France, which soon became authoritarian and militaristic.
[11] The Battle of Culloden was the final confrontation between the government (in favour of King George) and the Jacobites (defenders of the reinstitution of the Stuart line). The government forces annihilated the Jacobites, the Scottish Highlands were virtually destroyed and the use of tartan was banned for decades, until the English felt it was safe to use such symbols in daily life again.

died, in 1817, George III, the first Hanoverian monarch to be born in England[12], was still the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, even though it was his son, at the time Prince Regent, who was fulfilling the monarch's duties, as the king was not fit to rule any longer. George III had a reputation for being a good man, loving husband and fair ruler. Two facts marked his reign: the loss of the American colonies after the American War of Independence and his illness, or as it is commonly known, his madness. Both these facts have deeper and more complicated explanations, and it seems unfair to remember George III only as the mad king who lost the American colonies, or alternatively, to think of him as “the mad king” and nothing else.

According to The Official Website of the British Monarchy, George III's direct responsibility for the loss of the colonies was not great, seeing as “he opposed their bid for independence to the end”, even though he failed to develop policies that had been approved by the parliament and that could have led to a different result. The carrying out of said policies became a problem “due to the financial burdens of garrisoning and administering the vast expansion of territory brought under the British Crown in America, the cost of a series of wars with France and Spain in North America, and the loans given to the East India Company (then responsible for administering India)" (The Official Website of the British Monarchy, accessed on 25 January 2016).

> When George III came to the throne in 1760, the provinces of Quebec and Montreal, in what is modern Canada, had just been wrested from French settlers, so much of the eastern side of North America came under British control; however, the Spanish-American empire stretched from California to Argentina, and the West Indian islands were constantly changing hands between the Spanish, French, British and Dutch. The costs of driving the French and Spanish out of the Atlantic side of North America had been met by the British taxpayer, and the thirteen American colonies on this eastern seaboard had contributed nothing. The British government decided that the time had come for the Americas to pay for their own defence, and that this money should be raised by local taxation, as was the practice in England. The Americans, who did not have any members of Parliament to argue on their behalf in the House of Commons, took the view that there should be no taxation without representation.
>
> Disagreements and demonstrations rumbled on for the next few years, until the American colonists took arms against the British in 1773 in the War of Independence. The situation was at first something of a stalemate – as the Americans had no fleet, they could not stop the British from landing wherever they wished on the eastern seaboard, but Britain equally could not provide or supply an army large enough to put down the rebellion. (LE FAYE, 2003, p. 45-46).

[12] His predecessors George I (1714 – 1727) and George II (1727 – 1760) were both born and raised in Germany, which did no favours for their popularity.

In 1776, the Declaration of Independence was published with the help of the Dutch, Spanish and French, as the Americans forced the British to surrender. The loss of the American colonies did not make George hugely unpopular at the time, for he was a great defender of what he considered ‘national interests’. The prospect of war with revolutionary France appeared to have made him more popular than ever, for even though the ideas brought by the French Revolution and its republican government were at first attractive to many Britons, it was soon believed that “the motto of *‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité’* was nothing but a bloodstained mockery as the paranoid revolutionary leaders massacred and guillotined without trial anyone whom they declared to be an enemy of the state” (LE FAYE, 2003, p. 47).

Even though their connections to the American colonies and the West Indies were slim, the Austens would have been keen to know as much as possible about the uproar in France, for not only was France just across the channel, it was also home to Eliza de Feuillide, Jane Austen’s cousin. Eliza’s husband, Comte de Feuillide, was one of the many who lost their heads during the first years of the French Revolution. Eliza escaped to England, “and was able to make a new home in London for herself and her little son, Hastings; but the Comte’s cruel death brought the horrors of the revolution right into the peaceful rooms of Steventon rectory, leaving Jane with an abiding hatred of republican beliefs” (LE FAYE, 2003, p. 47).

With the death of the French King Louis XVI in January 1793, the new French Republic declared war on Britain, which led to a series of battles fought throughout the globe by all European nations. The beginning of the nineteenth century saw a brief period of peace, as the Revolutionary Wars came to an end, and the young Corsican soldier Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in France, assuring Britain that he too wanted said peace.

> The English started to demobilise their armed forces, and both Frank and Charles Austen signed off from their respective ships and were able to join their family in Bath for some months. Napoleon, however, used the time for rearming and declared war again in the spring of 1803, putting the south coast of England once more under threat of cross-Channel invasion – a threat not finally lifted until Admiral Nelson defeated the combined French and Spanish fleets in the battle of Trafalgar in the autumn of 1808. The war in Europe continued until Napoleon’s forced abdication in 1814, followed by a brief flare-up in the spring of 1815 that was finally quenched on the midsummer battlefield of Waterloo. (LE FAYE, 2003, p. 48)

The Napoleonic Wars were constant conflicts between 1808 and 1815, and one of the

only historical events that feature heavily in Austen's works; *Persuasion*, the novel that will be analysed in depth here, takes place in the months after the peace in 1815, and amongst its main characters are sailors and naval officers who fought in the war. The Napoleonic Wars were the main cause for European turmoil during the early 1800s, and were also responsible for a great number of people – mainly young gentlemen – abandoning the popular and formative European Grand Tours for a tour of the British Isles, which helped to advance the popularity of touring stately homes and castles.

The troubles faced by George III during his reign took their toll on his health. For over twenty years, he had constant bouts of illness, and in the last decade of his reign, he was considered unfit to rule. "His illness had traditionally been called manic-depressive psychosis simply because it came in attacks during which he was excited" (Malcapine, Hunter & Rimington, 1968, p. 7), however, the specificity of his symptons were not fully taken into consideration. His madness is now known (or at least attributed) to have been a side effect of another illness: porphyria[13], as explained here:

> George III's malady was not "mental" in the accepted sense, in whatever old or modern terms it may be couched. His long and sorrowful illness in which he suffered severely from his affliction, pitifully from his treatments, and miserably from his management, takes on a new importance in the annals of medical history as the first description of a rare metabolic disorder not even to-day fully understood. (MALCAPINE & HUNTER, 1966, p. 70)

George III being declared unfit to rule meant that his eldest son, George Augustus Frederick, the Prince of Wales, would act as regent in *lieu* of his father. The year 1811 saw the start of the period Jane Austen is famous for having lived in (despite representing only the last few years of her life): the Regency. The Regency was a time of changes, of war, of uncertainties. The period's popularity comes, in great part, from the literature and artistic works produced during that time, namely the poetry by those we know today as the Romantic poets, the famous naval paintings by William Turner, and the novels written by Jane Austen herself, which were all published, if not written, between 1813 and 1818.

The Prince Regent, later George IV, was never extremely popular with his people due to his exorbitant lifestyle and unattractive public image. The Prince posed a stark contrast to

[13] Porphyria is, due to Bram Stoker's creation, *Dracula*, associated to vampires due to its main symptoms.

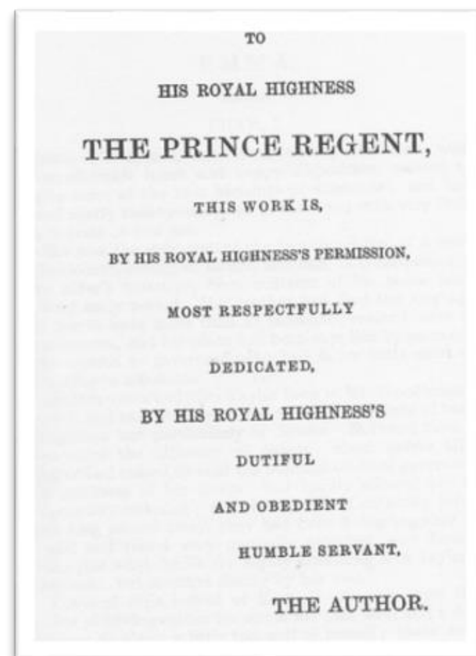
his father, who, despite madness and war, was liked and viewed as a good man and king. Gambling, fancy clothes and other unnecessary expenses are a few of the many frowned upon attitudes constantly practised by the Regent. He was known for spending far more than he should, eating more than he could stomach and dressing like a dandy. Not all was frivolity, however, as George IV turned out to be a great patron of the arts, acquiring several important works (now part of the Royal Collection) and building the Royal Pavilion in Brighton (Image 02), with its mixture of styles and influences.

IMAGE 02 – Brighton Royal Pavilion

The Prince Regent was the closest connection Jane Austen ever established with a member of the royal family, even though the term 'connection' is here being used loosely to mean that there was an acknowledgement on the part of the Regent concerning Jane Austen's works. The story goes as follows: in 1815 Jane's brother Henry was very ill, causing an uproar in the family. He was living in London at the time, and one of the doctors called in was a court physician. According to Claire Tomalin:

> When the crisis was over, he told Jane that the Prince Regent was an admirer of her novel, and reported to the Prince that she was in London. The result was that the Prince's librarian, James Stanier Clarke, was told to call on her and invite her to visit the library at Carlton House. This she did on the 13 November. She remained entirely silent on the subject of its splendours and equally so on her feelings about the visit; but Mr Clarke was also deputed to convey to her that she might dedicate her next book to the Prince. The result appeared at the front of *Emma*. [Image 03] (TOMALIN, 2000, P. 249)

Being given permission to dedicate a book to the Prince should be, and was, understood as an order. Claire Tomalin (2000, p. 250-251) draws attention to the prolific use of the term “Royal Highness”, and claims the contents of the dedication were not Austen’s idea. It was John Murray, her then publisher, who suggested what she had to say and who had final word in the matter. The Prince Regent never wrote a thank you note for the dedication nor did he acknowledge having actually read *Emma* – it was not required of him, being the Prince. His librarian did send Austen and her publisher a note on behalf of the Prince thanking them both for the copy received – once again, no mention to the words written for his master. One wonders how Jane Austen coped with having to dedicate one of her beloved children to a man for whom she had little respect.



TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE PRINCE REGENT,

THIS WORK IS,

BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S PERMISSION,

MOST RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED,

BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

DUTIFUL

AND OBEDIENT

HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

IMAGE 03 – Dedication to the Prince Regent

> We know that Austen 'hate[d]' the Prince Regent but could 'hardly forgive' his wife, Princess Caroline, 'for calling herself “attached & affectionate” to a Man whom she must detest' (16 February 1813). In an 1814 scathing, personal letter to her husband, which was afterwards made public, Caroline repeatedly addressed her husband as 'His Royal Highness.' (SHEEHAN, 2006)

Austen's lack of respect for the Prince Regent was in agreement with what most of her contemporaries thought. Unbeknownst to the Prince, the novel being dedicated to him had as

one of its central themes what it meant to be a true gentleman, represented by the characters of Mr Knightley, Mr Elton, and Frank Churchill, all very different, especially concerning their respectability and personalities. This fact is amusing, considering the Prince's reputation as a youth and how he failed to live up to it.

> The Prince was tall, fair and handsome, universally agreed to be charming, witty and intelligent, and in later life became a patron of literature, music and the arts; he was also irresponsible and deceitful, gluttonous and drunken, squandering his princely allowance on fine clothes, an expensive mistress and grandiose building projects at Carlton House in London and his seaside residence, the Pavilion at Brighton. In his youth he was nicknamed 'The First Gentleman of Europe', but as years of over-eating led to gross obesity, cartoonists would depict him as 'The Prince of Whales'. (LE FAYE, 2003, p. 44)

In 1820, when George III died, the Regent was then crowned king, and became King George IV of Great Britain and Ireland and of Hanover. He reigned until 1830, when his bad habits caught up with him, and his health deteriorated completely. Jane Austen never saw George III as King of England, she had only known him as the reckless Regent, as she died in 1817, which was perhaps for the best for she did not approve of him.

1.3 SEARCHING FOR A PLACE

IMAGE 04 – Hampshire, South-East of England

Away from all the noise and drama of the royal family, in the countryside, we find Jane Austen's birthplace. Austen was born in Hampshire in the south east of England (Image 04), and it was there where she spent three quarters of her brief life. This section aims to delve into Jane Austen's life through her journeys, in order to try to understand some of the inspiration behind her works, both in terms of the chosen themes and in terms of the situations in which the characters find themselves. It is important to observe that the attempt to establish causal relationships between the writer's life and her works is an exercise in reading and interpretation, as there is no guarantee that Austen translated life experiences into plots and characters – as much as one would like to think so.

Hampshire was not, however, the ancestral county of the family, as Austen's parents were not originally from there – they too were searching for a place of their own to call home. Reverend George Austen's family had created roots in West Kent, in the area of Tonbridge and Sevenoaks for over two centuries. Le Faye (2014, p. 16-17) affirms that "a distant Kentish cousin, Mr Thomas Knight of Godmersham, then presented George with the living of his Hampshire estate of Steventon, and with this assured position and income, George was able to think of marriage". During his period in St John's College, in Oxford, George Austen met Miss Cassandra Leigh, niece of the Reverend Dr Theophilus Leigh, who was Master of Balliol College. She had spent her childhood in Harpsden, a small village in Oxfordshire where her father was the rector. George Austen and Cassandra Leigh became engaged in the year 1763, and got married in the city of Bath. After their marriage, they settled in Steventon, Hampshire.

To modern sensibilities, it could come as a shock to learn that Jane Austen was born to a family who adopted a usual practice in late eighteenth century England: after a few weeks of a baby being born, he or she was sent to the care of a wet nurse – that is a woman in the nearby village, usually of low means, who was willing to exchange the care of the babies for some sort of income. The exchange would last from a year to eighteen months, and the child would return home sufficiently grown to be more easily managed by the busy parents. This is what happened to Jane Austen (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 5).

> The Austen babies were cared for in the village, fed, washed, encouraged to crawl in a cottage, taking their first steps there and learning their first words from their foster family. When they approached the age of reason and became socially acceptable, they were moved again, back to their original home. From the physical

> point of view, the system worked very well. In an age when few families were spared the deaths of several children, the Austens did not lose a single one; in London at this time, over half the children born died before they could reach the age of five, and although things were better in the country, the mortality rate was still alarmingly high. The Austen children grew up, and grew up healthy. (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 6)

Despite being common practice at the time, nowadays it would be considered a violent act to both mother and child to have them separated at such an early and fundamental stage of development. It is not our place to pass judgement on practices that are not part of our culture and times, which does not prevent us, however, from reflecting and trying to understand habits and traditions different from our own. Exploring the past through literature means we will encounter an alien world at times, and the success of our travels through this different place depends on how willing we are to understand, as opposed to judge, whatever it is we encounter in our path.

Jane Austen's first journey was just after her christening, when she was taken from the only home she had ever known, to a stranger's house. How different was this house? Who were the people who took her in and brought her up for the first months of her life? Many would claim that it is far-fetched to say that a baby will remember an experience like this, but it is not impossible however, that she would have felt its impact throughout her life. When so little is known about a person's life, as is the case with Jane Austen's, it is easy to give yourself in to speculation and theories that will amount to nothing. The less we know, the more blank spaces we have to work with; it is preferable to rely on the few facts known to be true, and only infer where there is room for such, and never too much. However tempting as it may be to say this first separation from her family affected who she was as a person, it is unadvisable. I propose to look at this event purely as one of Jane Austen's first movements in the world.

One of the Austen children never came back to the Steventon parsonage: Reverend Austen and Mrs Austen's second child, George, nearly ten years older than Jane. The boy did not have what was considered a *normal* development – much like what happened to Mrs Austen's brother Thomas, leading one to believe that genetics played its part in this situation. Tomalin (2000, p. 7) points out that it is quite possible that the boy was still in Steventon village in 1776, and therefore "he may have been the first of Jane's siblings of whom she became aware" as she was sent to the village as a baby. Because Jane refers to being knowledgeable of deaf and dumb signs in her letters, it is believed that the boy might have had trouble with spoken language.

> The Austens cared about goodness, but they also cared deeply about success; and their child rearing system worked remarkably well, for all, with the partial exception of George, grew up tough, not given to self-pity, notable for their mutual affection and support. And even George lived to a ripe old age, cared for alongside his uncle Thomas in another Hampshire village, Monk Sherborne; he is rarely mentioned, but survived his elder brother and his sister Jane, and was not forgotten by the others, who contributed to his upkeep. On his death certificate in 1838 he is described as a 'Gentleman'. (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 8)

Jane Austen's "second banishment from home" (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 35) happened when she was just seven years old and was sent away to school. Girls, at the time, were usually taught at home, while boys were the ones sent to school. The Austen family were different in that respect, seeing as Reverend Austen ran a school for boys in his parsonage, resulting in the conclusion that Jane and her beloved sister Cassandra should be the ones to go and get an education separate from boys. The decision to send the girls away to school was partially influenced by loyalty to Mrs Austen's sister, Mrs Cooper, who wanted companions to her daughter in school. Cassandra was the one to go, as she was older; Jane, however, refused to be separated from Cassandra, and insisted she would go to school as well.

> At the age of seven Jane Austen was sent away to Oxford with her sister Cassandra and her cousin Jane Cooper to be taught by a private tutor. In the summer of 1783, after the tutor and the pupils moved to Southampton, all three girls fell ill with typhus, and Jane Austen nearly died. She and her sister recuperated at home and then joined their cousin in 1785 at the Reading Ladies' Boarding School, but were removed at the end of the following year, putting a stop to their tuition. By the time Jane Austen was eleven years old, her formal education was over. (ADKINS & ADKINS, 2013, p. 65-66)

For the next few years, Jane Austen's life seems to have being very quiet, the norm for a child of her station. She did travel, even if she did not go far – it is known that she visited Kent with some frequency, and Winchester, amongst other towns in her immediate surroundings. Very early on she started to develop a taste for the pen, following the examples she had at home: Mrs Austen was a talented poet and James was known as the writer of the family, producing in January 1789 the first issue of his weekly magazine *The Loiterer.* James's magazine lasted for fourteen months, and it is where Jane Austen's first published material

appeared to the public, in mock letters written under the pseudonym 'Sophia Sentiment'[14].

Jane received much intellectual encouragement from her father, who presented her with notebooks and paper in which to write her stories, both of which were expensive items at the time; Reverend Austen also provided Cassandra with drawing paper, and it was she who illustrated Jane Austen's *History of England,* dated just before her sixteenth birthday. The *History* was written for the pleasure and enjoyment of her family for it is full of inside jokes, teases and charades that she would have known her parents and siblings to appreciate. Mr Austen seems to have been aware that these were new times where there was interest in what women had to say, even if an outwardly small interest. No one could ignore the success and demand for writings by women such as Fanny Burney, who had a knack for fine and concise observations of society, and whose first novel[15] was superior to those of the famous male writers of the time (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 74).

By this time, Jane Austen was already working on short tales about young people struggling with matters of love and friendship – a precursor to what she would move on to writing a few years later in her novels. Nowadays, the stories and works from that period of her life are known as her *Juvenilia*, and make for an interesting read. It is possible to detect some of the style that marks her later novels in these short first attempts at describing the world that surrounded her and at storytelling. "At home, she read, wrote and followed her own imagination; outside, among the neighbours, she entered another world that sprang its own surprises and dramas." (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 87). Not unlike the teenagers of the twenty-first century, being a young lady in the nineteenth meant the approach of one's first entry into society, and the Austens were surrounded by all sorts of people, from "clergymen, squires and aristocrats, Members of the Parliament, entrepreneurs, doctors and lawyers, mostly living within a range of about fifteen miles."

That Austen lived in an ever-changing world has been established, but that these constant changes were also due to the faces that surrounded her is yet to be addressed here. Hampshire seemed to be filled with people coming and going, as "there were remarkably few Dashwoods or Darcys, Bertrams, Rushworths or Elliots; Bingley's uncertainty about where he belonged and where he might settle comes much closer to them" (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 87).

[14] There is debate considering the authorship of these letters, but the parallels with Austen's earlier Works are too abundant to be just a coincidence.

[15] *Evelina: Or the Story of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, 1779.

Despite the lack of an imposing stately house, the Austens were amongst the few with some roots in the place, and even they were not originally from there. Their neighbours, much like the world they lived in, were in constant change, perpetually shifting, and as Tomalin (2000, p. 102) observes, they certainly "look[ed] like a great rich slab of raw material for a novelist to work on."

> In fact, their lives were far too rich and heterogeneous for Jane Austen's adult purposes. She was attentive to them, as her letters show; but military heroes, forced marriages, mad earls and bastards sprigs of the aristocracy make no appearances in her novels; nor do ruined squires, brilliant factory owners of foreign origin, or village girls, foster sisters of the rector's children, who grow up into enterprising women. What Jane Austen wanted from the life around her, she took and used, finely and tangentially. (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 102).

In 1785, the Austens, and particularly Jane, found themselves in the society of a young Irish gentleman called Tom Lefroy. He features in a few of her letters to Cassandra, from one of the periods when they were apart, with special notice to the description of a ball she had attended the night before. New in the neighbourhood, Tom was a young Irish law student related to one of the Hampshire families with whom the Austens were acquainted.

> Tom Lefroy was a visitor to Hampshire, not one of the dancing partners she and Cassandra had known most of their lives, but someone quite new. He was fair-haired and good-looking, clever and charming; he had completed a degree in Dublin and was about to study for the bar in London, and was just taking a few weeks' holiday over Christmas with his Uncle and Aunt Lefroy at Ashe parsonage. After this first mention, Tom Lefroy keeps putting in more appearances in Jane's letter. In fact she can't keep him out, this 'gentlemanlike, good-looking, pleasant young man', as she covers the sheet of paper so cheerfully, dipping her well-sharpened pen into the little ink bottle at her side. (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 115)

Her relationship with Tom Lefroy is target for much speculation to this day. It is widely known that Cassandra burnt most of Austen's letters when she passed away, and all of the potentially compromising ones are gone. What we can infer from the remaining letters[16] is that some sort of flirtation and possibly infatuation did happen between the two, but it is virtually impossible to pinpoint how deep her feelings for "her Irish friend", as she used to call him, were. As he is one of the few potential love interests found in what we know of Austen's life,

[16] The letters used in the present work were taken from Deidre Le Faye's 2014 edition of *Jane Austen's Letters* and will be cited with their number and year they were written.

it is not surprising that their relationship attracts such curiosity. Some biographers are of the opinion that she was really in love with Mr Lefroy, although it is hard to tell to what extent. Films like *Becoming Jane* (2007) connect her relationship with him to her writing of *Pride and Prejudice*; now that is something worthy of analysis, which has been done by Ana Iris Marques Ramgrab (2013) in her thesis “Meet Jane Austen: The Author as Character in Contemporary Derivative Works”. The film *Becoming Jane* is based on a book by Jon Hunter Spence titled *Becoming Jane Austen* (2003), in which, even though he romanticises Austen’s life, he does not go as far as the film adaptation does in attributing the writing and creation of characters in *Pride and Prejudice* to her personal life. As stated by Deirdre Lynch in her article “See Jane Elope”:

> In the book, Spence does identify Tom Lefroy as the love of Austen's life and her relationship with him as the origin of her genius. But he never suggests that there was an aborted elopement (much less subsequent reading sessions with any of Lefroy's children). And [Spence] is careful, as the filmmakers are not, to clarify that in speculating about Austen's romantic experience he is reading between the lines of the family records and of the three rather opaque Austen letters that are his principal sources. (LYNCH, 2007)

Her following letter to Cassandra mentions what would be considered inappropriate behaviour with Mr Lefroy, conducted in front of people, such as sitting down too close to each other and their way of dancing. Soon afterwards, it was time to say goodbye to her friend, and she made light of the fact in her next letter to her sister: “the Day is come in which I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy, & when you receive this it will be over – My tears flow as I write, at the melancholy idea” (Letter 2, 1796, p. 4). It is a joke, certainly, but it is also a defence mechanism, a form of dealing with the fact that she cannot have what she desires. Heartbreak is tough on everyone and not less on a young woman – especially when it is her first one. Jane Austen and Tom Lefroy never saw each other again after his visit in 1795; and even when he visited his family in Hampshire in the following years, he made sure to stay away from the Austens. In 1798, Lefroy went back to Ireland and was married there, a year later, to an heiress, and ended up having seven children. As an old man, Lefroy confessed to his nephew to have been in love with Jane Austen in his youth, but called it a “boyish love”.

Claire Tomalin's conclusion regarding this story is not a happy one, but it is hopeful. Tomalin’s view of the incident is that it was “a small experience, perhaps, but a painful one for Jane Austen, this brush with young Tom Lefroy. What she distilled from it was something else

again" (TOMALIN, 200, p. 122), and she adds that,

> From now on she carried in her own flesh and blood, and not just gleamed from books and plays, the knowledge of sexual vulnerability; of what it is to be entranced by the dangerous stranger; to hope, and to feel the blood warm; to wince, to withdraw; to hope for what you are not going to have and had better not mention. Her writing becomes informed by this knowledge, running like a dark undercurrent beneath the comedy. (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 122)

Austen's background as a reader means that by the time she met Mr Lefroy she had already come across virtually all sorts of feelings known to a person; it is only, however, when she experiences them first hand, in this case falling in love, that she starts to comprehend their magnitude. I would never go as far as to say, however, that this brief interlude with Lefroy taught Jane Austen all she would come to know about love. If her novels are anything to judge her by, it is possible to say that she was a great observant of people, and that she knew how their minds and hearts worked, with or without Lefroy's influence. Nonetheless, having been infatuated with him, she had a chance to feel for herself sentiments she had observed in others (like in Cassandra for *her* Tom) and read about in the many books that populated her childhood and teenage years. Austen's brief interlude with infatuation – and love? – was followed by an inspired creative streak: "In October 1796 she began on *First Impressions* (later renamed *Pride and Prejudice*); this was completed in about nine months, by the following summer. Then around November 1797 she returned to *Elinor and Marianne* (published as *Sense and Sensibility*), having decided that the letter form did not suit her purposes well enough" (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 122), which is not to say that these two events are necessarily related as cause and effect, but maybe there is a degree of relation between the two. This creative streak might have followed her brief relationship with Tom Lefroy, however how much of said relationship and the feelings it produced are actually reflected in her novels are only for Austen herself to know.

A few years after the Lefroy incident, when Jane Austen was about to turn twenty five years old, in December 1800, Reverend Austen decided he would retire and move his family to Bath, in Somersetshire – an unwelcomed birthday surprise to their youngest daughter. Jane Austen loved the countryside, she loved her home and the work conditions she had created for helself at Steventon, especially now that her father was not teaching young boys any longer and she had more freedom around the house, therefore she did not welcome the idea of moving.

The move to Bath "was not only the greatest change that her life had ever known, but a change which was unwelcome in its nature" (LANE, 1996, p. 85). Austen had been to Bath in the past, but always as a visitor (much like Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*), never as a resident (as she would portray Anne Elliot to be in *Persuasion*). What followed the move were five years of uncertainty and at times sadness. "Jane Austen was an unwilling inhabitant of Bath for five years of her life" (LANE, 1996, p. 73), and as consequence, very little is left of Austen's time in the city, a few short works and *The Watsons* unfinished manuscript amongst them. The period is known as the quiet years, as her writing stalled during her time there. Austen's unwillingness towards the city might have had to do with her knowing at least one of the reasons behind the decision to retrench there. Bath had not only been the place where her parents got married, but it was also a place for "husband hunting" (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 174), which would have made the young novelist resent even further the stay in the city. She was not happy in Bath, she did not want to be there, and years later, these feelings would be projected in one of her most famous creations: Anne Elliot.

Austen's stay in Bath first as a visitor and then as a resident reminds us that there is a world of difference between holidaying in a place, and actually living there. It also brings to mind the difference between going away from home and being forced away. If the lack of material produced in the Bath years and Austen's general dislike of Bath are anything to go by, her moving to Bath was not a choice: she was forced away from Steventon:

> The ejection from Steventon made severe practical difficulties for her; it also depressed her deeply enough to disable her as a writer. Depression may be set off when a bad experience is repeated, and it seems likely that this is what happened here. First as an infant, than as a child of seven, Jane had been sent away from home, frightening and unpleasant experiences over which she had no control and which required periods of recovery; (…) (TOMALIN, 2000, p.175).

The Austens lived in several different places in Bath, descending in social status (and geographical location) as they moved. They "arrived in Bath in May 1801, and took a short lease on No. 4, Sydney Place, a small terraced house facing Sydney Gardens, on the newer eastern side of the city" (LE FAYE, 2003, p. 28). They spent nearly three years in said house, and every summer they would go to the seaside – Austen was particularly fond of Lyme Regis and the neighbouring Charmouth, making it a memorable setting in her last novel.

Austen's time in Bath was not all despair, as it saw herself and her sister Cassandra, the two young ladies, travelling the countryside and visiting friends and family with frequency. During one of those visits, Jane Austen became engaged to be married – even if for less than a day. In December 1802, during a visit to two good friends, Alethea and Catherine Bigg, their brother, Harris Bigg-Wither asked Jane Austen for her hand in matrimony.

> Jane, no doubt very fond of her friends' brother, whom she would have danced with when he was a child, accepted his proposal. The discrepancy in their ages was only five years, nothing of any moment; Eliza was ten years older than Henry. The entire Manydown household was delighted. The evening was passed in congratulations, and everyone went to bed rejoicing. (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 182-3)

What followed was a sleepless night for Jane Austen, and the decision that she did not wish to marry Harris. She esteemed and respected him, but realised those two things were not enough to marry him. Had Austen gone through with the marriage, she would have become the mistress of a large Hampshire house, not far from her beloved birthplace; not to mention that she would have been in a position to help her parents and siblings financially; she would have had children of her own perhaps, and lived a happy family life. On the other hand, had she married, it is likely she would not have written, let alone publish, her novels, for in her times, a woman working was a disservice to the men around her, as it told society that those men were incapable of providing for *their* women. Had Jane Austen become Mrs Bigg-Wither, we would have no Miss Austen now. We cannot possibly know the details of why she decided not to marry Harris, we can only assume it was lack of love (perhaps the memory of her time with Lefroy was still fresh on her mind?), and possibly the fear of being denied the thing she loved most: writing.

Back in Bath, there is evidence of some production on Austen's part: she starts working on *The Watsons*, a story about four unmarried women in a difficult financial situation. As the lease of their house, No. 4 Sydney Place, expired, in 1804, for the Austens income did not allow it to be renewed, they moved to No. 3 Green Park Buildings, nearer the centre of Bath. "Within three months of the move to Green Park Buildings, Mr Austen died, in January 1805. He was 73." (LANE, 1996, p. 35). Mr Austen's death was sudden, following no more than two days' illness. His death was a blow both emotionally and financially, and the Austens were not financially prepared to lose his income. Mrs Austen's funds, now as a widow, were considerably reduced. The death of Reverend Austen was followed by the abandonment of *The*

Watsons, as fiction came too close to life[17].

The months that followed Mr Austen's death were composed of a short stay in a lodging house in Bath, No. 25 Gay Street (next to where The Jane Austen Centre now is), and of innumerable visits to family and friends in the south of England. It had been decided that the Austen women would spend the summer with their loved ones, and return to a rented accommodation in Bath for the winter. "The Austen ladies, and Martha[18], returned to Bath in the spring of 1806, and lodged for the time being in Trim Street (LE FAYE, 2002, p. 30). Soon afterwards, in the summer of 1806, the Austen women left Bath for good, not yet to a place of their own, but to another round of family visits. Jane describes leaving Bath as an escape, from which it can be assumed she was pleased to go back to the countryside, even if her future (and that of the women who lived with her) was still unknown.

Austen's time in Bath was not all bleakness. She did take pleasure from walks through the countryside and villages surrounding the city of Bath, but from all we know, that sums up all that was good about that place to her eyes. Like the most vigorous of her heroines, Austen was an avid walker, and famous for covering great distances on foot. Despite being an enthusiast of the countryside, according to Jones (2014, p. 184), "not all of Jane's walks in and around Bath were to picturesque villages. She spent a number of days trudging the streets house-hunting and also took an interest in the technological developments of the time". Jones adds that,

> Jane's walking activities continued, sometimes with her sister, sometimes with her mother, throughout her stay in Bath. In one respect, this was the best place for women without a carriage, or a man to accompany them. Neither was a necessary accessory in Bath. The Austen ladies carried on their round of visits and outings after Mr Austen's death; they strolled about in front of the Crescent on Sundays, and took short walks to local rambles, although other people's understanding of a long walk invariably fell short of her own. (JONES, 2014, p. 184)

After Bath came the Southampton years, where the Austen ladies stayed from the autumn of 1806 to the spring of 1809. Austen was back in Hampshire, but she could not completely settle, as there was always the feeling that she was in someone else's home; not

[17] In *The Watsons*, Mr Watson is a clergyman who is at death's door, leaving behind poor unmarried daughters.
[18] The Lloyds were friends with the Austens, and after the passing of Mr Austen and Mrs Lloyd, the four remaining women – Mrs Austen, Cassandra and Jane, and Martha Lloyd decided to combine households for economy's sake.

only that, she might have been in the county of Hampshire, but she was in a town, and her heart belonged to the countryside. In Southampton, "she lived not only with her mother and sister, but with her brother Frank and his new wife, Mary, and with Martha Lloyd, recently rendered homeless by the death of her mother. The idea was to lessen all household expenses by sharing them, and to provide companionship for Mary when her husband was away at sea" (LANE, 1996, p. 142).

Towards the end of 1808, Austen's brother, Edward, in a very comfortable life situation since he had become a member of the Knight family and adopted their surname, came into his inheritance and was able to offer his mother and sisters a house in the small Hampshire village of Chawton, near the town of Alton. The Austen women accepted the offer to live in the house before they saw it, confident it was the place they had been hoping to have. For Austen, it was the perfect house, "like her own Anne Elliot, since leaving Steventon, her private wishes had always centred on 'a small house in their own neighbourhood'. Chawton Cottage, seventeen miles south-east of Steventon, was almost exactly that." (LANE, 1996, p. 155). Shortly after arriving in Chawton, Austen wrote in a letter to her brother Frank (Letter 69D, 1809, p. 184) which included an ode to their new home:

Our Chawton home how much we find
Already in it to our mind;
And how convinced that when complete
It will all other houses beat
That ever have been made or mended
With rooms concise or
Rooms distended.

Chawton Cottage received changes to ensure the comfort of the Austen women, gaining bookshelves and wallpaper. "As a woman and as a writer, Jane Austen could find complete fulfilment only in the country. It offered both 'animation' and repose" (LANE, 1996, p. 155). From what is left of Austen's time in Chawton, it is possible to assume that she was back to her element, to her county, and to her writing. In Chawton, Austen revised *Northanger Abbey*, *Elinor and Marianne*, later to become *Sense and Sensibility*, and *First Impressions*, published as *Pride and Prejudice*. She also worked from beginning to end on her three last completed novels, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, and *The Elliots*, published posthumously as *Persuasion*. In

Chawton, Austen found a home.

IMAGE 05 – Chawton Cottage, Hampshire

Austen spent the final eight years of her life, from 1809 to 1817, in the cottage (Image 05). During those years, she saw herself, with the help of her favourite brother Henry, become a published author, successful enough to attract the (undesired) interest of the Prince Regent. Trips to London for meetings with her publisher became part of Austen's life, although she kept very much to herself and her own. Edward was staying at the great house near the cottage, and the Austen women would frequently be invited to dinner there, which constituted most of her social commitments, as they rarely ventured into balls and such when at Chawton.

> The Chawton years were the settled, fulfilling, productive years – but the years and the travels that had preceded them were not wasted. All that she had seen and read, all that she had learnt to feel for the English landscape, was there for her to draw on now that she had found the right conditions in which to exercise her genius. (LANE, 1996, p. 162)

In the year of 1816, Austen "began to feel unwell in some unspecified way" (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 259). During this period, she was working on *Persuasion*, which would become her last completed novel. *Persuasion* had a different tone to all her other novels, which is perhaps due to the knowledge she did not have long left. Her illness is reflected on *Persuasion*'s pages, be it in the novel's bleakness, or in the character's moods. In reading her last novel, it also becomes apparent that her illness interfered with her genius, as she leaves

loose ends and unresolved situations, which is out of character for someone so meticulous. *Persuasion* is a mature novel, written by a mature woman, who has seen more of life than the one who wrote Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, but it also carries traces of weariness, as if its writer were eager to have it finished, perhaps because she knew she did not have long.

Austen's illness took her to Winchester, more specifically, to College Street, to be closer to the assistance of doctors and physicians. Cassandra accompanied her sister to her final home, and "they set off on the 24 May. Henry rode the sixteen miles from Chawton beside the carriage in which his sisters sat." (TOMALIN, 2000, p. 269). From the 24 May until the middle of July, Austen spent her days in Number 8, College Street, between bouts of severe illness, and feeble improvement. On the 18 July 1817, Jane Austen passed away in her bed, Cassandra by her side.

At the time, her disease was unknown; today, however, it is believed Austen suffered from Addison's disease[19]. As Tomalin (2000, p. 289) remarks, "two hundred years after her death, any diagnosis must be tentative", as there is little left for a comprehensive analysis and certain diagnosis. For example, some of her symptoms, along with the progress of her illness, are not a match for Addison's disease, but it is impossible to rule anything out, as there is no differential diagnosis. Again, according to Tomalin, it is possible she suffered from a form of cancer, a lymphoma, which would account for symptoms unexplained by the Addison's disease theory. All that is left for us is mere speculation, given that our only source of information relies on letters written by Austen's family and friends describing her symptoms, and the medical records of the time, even if still available to us, lack details.

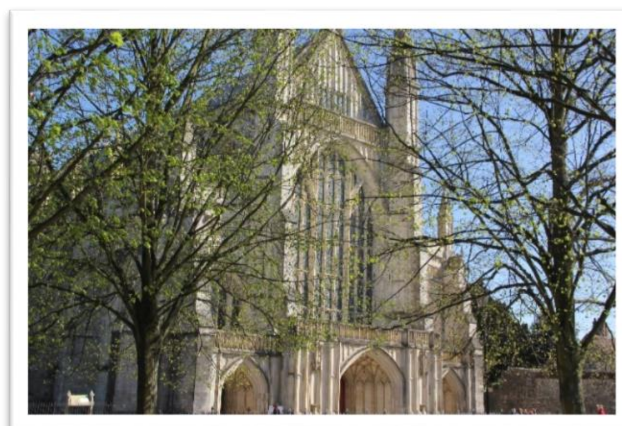


IMAGE 06 – Winchester Cathedral

[19] A disease characterised by anemia, general weakness, low blood pressure. It happens because the body is secreting hormones indadequately.

Austen was buried in Winchester Cathedral (Image 06), and her grave stone (Image 07) makes no mention of her being a writer. It reads:

In Memory of
JANE AUSTEN,
youngest daughter of the late
Revd. GEORGE AUSTEN
formerly Rector of Steventon in the County
she departed this life on the 18th July 1817,
aged 41, after a long illness supported with
the patience and the hopes of a Christian

The benevolence of her heart,
the sweetness of her temper, and
the extraordinary endowments of her mind
obtained the regard of all who knew her and
the warmest love of her intimate connections.

Their grief is in proportion to their affection
they know their loss to be irreparable
but in their deepest affliction they are consoled
by a firm though humble hope that her charity,
devotion, faith and purity have rendered
her soul acceptable in the sight of her
REDEEMER

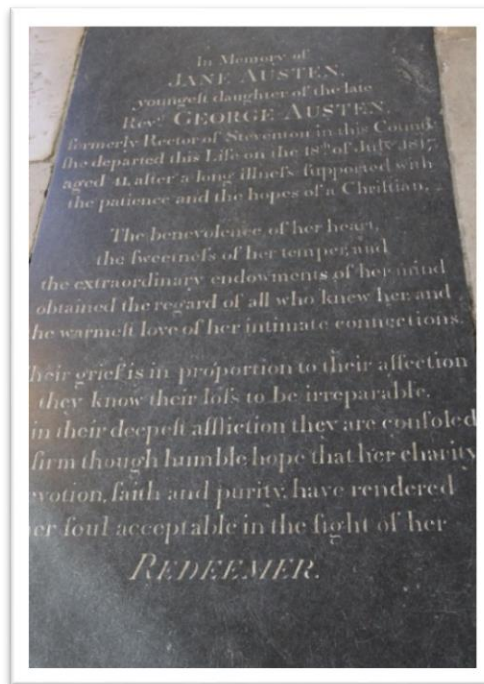


IMAGE 07 – Jane Austen’s grave stone, Winchester Cathedral

To this day, Chawton village is bucolic and quiet; there is not much there, apart from a few houses, a couple of pubs, the church (St Nicholas Church, where Austen and her family used to attend services, and where her mother and sister are buried), and then Edward's big house, Chawton House. Chawton Cottage itself is a time machine, taking visitors back to the nineteenth century and telling them about Jane Austen's life. When we have so little information about an author as we do about Austen, every titbit is a delight and seems to bear a world of detail about the person behind the novels. From the Austens' garden, where Mrs Austen used to tend to the flowers and whatever grew there, to the kitchen, to Jane Austen's bedroom – visiting Chawton Cottage is an experience of giving life to this author's character, who in research and in fans' minds can easily become an entity, and not a real person. More importantly, Chawton Cottage Museum, is a testament of Austen's power and influence with her admirers. The house was put up for sale in 1947, and it was only due to Austen fans that it has become what it is today.

> After an appeal in The Times by the Jane Austen Society, the cottage was bought by Mr. T.E. Carpenter who turned it into a Museum dedicated to the life and works of Jane Austen. Mr. Carpenter presented the house to the nation in 1949, in memory of his son Lieutenant Philip John Carpenter who fell in the battle in Lake Trasimene in June 1944. The Museum has been open to the public ever since.
>
> The Museum today reflects the comfortable family home that the Austen women created while telling the story of their lives and Jane's work." (JANE AUSTEN MUSEUM, digital source)

Not only does the cottage gather items that belonged to the Austen family and Austen herself (from the famous topaz crosses gifted to Jane and Cassandra Austen by their brother Francis, which inspired Fanny Price's brother to give her a topaz cross of her own in *Mansfield Park*, to the locks of Austen's hair, jewellery that belonged to the family, a patchwork quilt made by the Austen women, amongst others), it also collects Austen's novels from all over the world, in every imaginable language – books that are donated, full of love and gratitude to Austen herself, as if they were a gift to the novelist. Austen's reach and influence is such that people want to give back, and what better form to do so than furnishing her house with books? Furthermore, Chawton Cottage displays selected costumes from the film and television adaptations of Austen's works. One of the most important pieces of furniture in the house has to be the famous little table where Austen is said to have worked on all her major works, from revising *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, to writing *Emma* and *Persuasion*.

IMAGE 08 – St Nicholas Church, Chawton village

The walk between Chawton Cottage and the church the Austen family used to attend is the closest fans and enthusiasts will get to a walk in Jane Austen's footsteps, as it was a route often taken by Austen and her companions. Next to St Nicholas Church (Image 08) is Chawton House Library (Image 09), where the Austen women would have spent much of their time, visiting the Knights. The difference between the two houses is astounding, the cottage is so simple compared to the manor, and that difference must not have gone unnoticed by the Austen ladies. Chawton Cottage was, however, the closest Austen would ever be to Steventon and her beloved home, which leads us to question how much of a foreigner she was in her own house, a house that did not belong to her, where she had to hide her writing whenever someone was at the door. Biographers and letters tell us that she was indeed happy at Chawton, and perhaps she really was, especially after the bad experiences in Bath. Nevertheless, it never belonged to her, for she was there as a favour, she was the poor relation who needed to call for others' support.

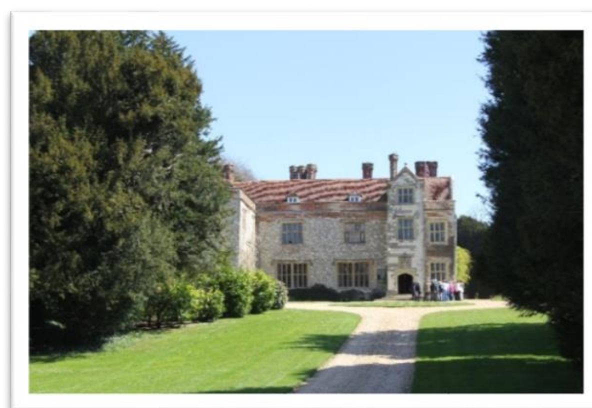


IMAGE 09 – Chawton House Library, Edward Knight's house

Jane Austen's experiences helped to form the writer who produced *Persuasion*, and in reading her last completed novel one cannot but think that it reflects the novelist's life to a greater extent than her other works. That being said, parallelisms are not always due to a cause and effect situation, and our wish to gain a greater comprehension of this writer about whom we know so little can lead us to infer as much as possible from her novels, connecting life and works in such a way that one is a mirror to the other. The study of Jane Austen's life is an added tool in pursuit of a fuller understanding of her works, and that is why this section is dedicated to her personal life. There is danger, however, in solely relying on Austen's life to analyse her novels, and that is the reason why her personal experiences are here relayed and explored, but not used on their own to perform a close reading of her last completed novel.

Hampshire boasts with Austen pride, but the same could be said about all the places and towns that have a connection with the writer, especially Bath. Despite what Jane Austen is said to have thought about Bath, Bath is proud of its Austen connection. Not only do they have a festival in her name (the Jane Austen Festival, held annually and bringing together academics, enthusiastic fans, and admirers alike), but also made her the theme of walking tours through the city, and gave her a place of her own, the Jane Austen Centre (Image 10), celebrating Jane Austen's time in Bath and her two novels set there, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. The Centre is always busy and alive with people from all corners of the world, all trying to learn more about a woman who wrote a handful of novels two hundred years ago. From the exhibition itself, to the people who work there, it is noticeable that there is great concern in doing justice to Austen's ordinary life and its extraordinary posthumous developments. The exhibition is an ode to Austen's passage through Bath, her pilgrimage from house to house, the decline of her family's means, and the death of Reverend Austen. In the gift shop, countless editions of her novels share shelves with candles inspired by the great houses inhabited by her characters, bookmarks and mugs, amongst so many others Austen-themed objects. The centre is, much like the festival, for both academics and fans alike, as it resonates with people for different reasons, as Austen's works do – reading Jane Austen for either the romance or the social commentary does not make you more or less of an admirer, and still creates common ground for discussions and the exchanging of ideas.

IMAGE 10 – The Jane Austen Centre, Bath

Jane Austen lived in a few different houses in Bath, and oddly enough for a place that celebrates its connection with the novelist to such an extent, only one of those houses is marked as having been inhabited by Austen, No. 4 Sydney Place (Image 11). It is now a luxury hotel, and it has been comprehensively refurbished.

IMAGE 11 – No 4 Sidney Place, Bath

The first decades of the twenty-first century see Austen as the centre of discussions and debates like never before. Chawton Cottage has become a museum in Jane Austen's memory,

and it attracts thousands of visitors every year. Bath's Jane Austen Centre, dedicated to the author's Bath years and her two novels set in the city, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion,* is one of the principal conversion points for *Janeites*[20] coming from all over the world wishing to learn more about Jane Austen, her life, and her works. Every single place that can claims its connection to Austen, so much so that a "Jane Austen Trail" has been created in England, allowing enthusiasts, fans and academics from all over the globe to follow in the writer's footsteps, going on a journey of their own in an attempt to understand Austen's journey. More than ever, Jane Austen is read, adapted, and discussed. It would seem Jane Austen's place is nothing short than the world itself.

[20] Term coined by Rudyard Kipling in homonymous short story, first published in 1926. *Janeites* is used to designate Jane Austen readers and fans.

2 SOCIAL CROSSINGS

"This peace will be turning all our rich Navy Officers ashore."

Jane Austen***, Persuasion.***

This chapter proposes an analysis of the novel from the perspective of the social journeys undertaken by the characters, focusing primarily on the restructuring of the relations of class and power in the early nineteenth century, and how *Persuasion*'s characters navigated these changes. This can be felt, for instance, in the decadence represented by Sir Walter Elliot, a proud baronet, against the rising fortunes of the navy officers (who had been regally rewarded after the end of the Napoleonic Wars), as is the case with Admiral Croft and Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion*.

Austen's novels have often been accused of being outside of History, not about her times specifically – *a temporal*. Granted that the majority of her works refrain from mentioning real events and places, even though there are many indicators of where and when they take place. A profound analysis - or an attentive reader – will find hints of the world Austen lived in her books, hints beyond manners and codes, historical markers. We have established that Austen wrote about what she knew, and being an educated woman, the current events of her time would not have escaped her. "The events of her novel are woven tightly round these vast political and cultural upheavals, for as is so often the case in Austen, public actions burden the apparently private, familial decisions made by her characters" (MORRISON, 2011, p. 3). It is safe to say that of her six major works, *Persuasion* is the one with the most History to it, in which the historical events are mentioned without disguise – from the famous Napoleonic Wars, to the slow but steady change happening in England at that time: the decline of the aristocracy and rural gentry, and the rise of a new social class, in this novel, represented by the navy.

2.1 *BARONETAGE* vs. THE NAVY LIST

Persuasion was completed on 8 August 1815, having been produced during a period when Austen's brother was severely ill and Austen herself was beginning to feel the symptoms of the disease that would come to take her life. It was a turbulent time not only for Britain as a whole, but for the Austens as well. Because the novel deals with members of the navy and makes references to a war from which they have just returned successful, the fact that the novel takes place during the period of the Napoleonic Wars is made evident.

Captain Frederick Wentworth, Anne's long lost love, is the biggest representative of the navy in the novel, although he does not do the job alone, and Austen sheds light to the navy and its good people mainly through the captain's family and friends. We are first introduced to the captain's sister and her husband, Mrs and Admiral Croft, who become Sir Walter's tenants. The couple rents Kellynch Hall to spend a time of rest on shore. From being no one, they have now made a decent fortune during the war (much like Captain Wentworth), such is the case that now they have the means to let the property of a baronet – who is, on the other hand, in great need of money. "*Persuasion* debates the question of who will, and who deserves to win the peace after the ending of the Napoleonic Wars" (SALES, 1996, p. 171), those who stayed inland, keeping the old order in its place, or those who fought on shore for everyone else's survival. The novel never clearly points to a decided "winner", leaving it up to the reader – and to History – to decide. The novel, however, *persuades* us towards a moral choice concerning who we want to see thrive.

Persuasion opens with Sir Walter Elliot, Anne's father, admiring his name on the *Baronetage*, the book that registers him as a baronet:

> Sir Walter is a fading Regency dandy, born just two days before the Prince Regent, and utterly invested in the traditions and inherited dignities of the aristocratic system that the French Revolution put under such severe pressure. Elizabeth is similarly hidebound, wholely uninterested in the state of the nation and still insistent that any marriage proposal must come from "baronet blood", even as her thirtieth birthday and the realities of spinsterhood press down upon her. Yet as Austen makes exhilaratingly clear in *Persuasion*, the world enshrined in the Baronetage is beginning to collapse. (MORRISON, 2011, p. 14)

The title of baronet was a relatively new one in the early 1800s, for it was first created

in 1611 by King James I, who was in need of funds and used the sale of the titles to finance an army in Ulster (Northern Ireland). Therefore, not only is the Elliot baronetage a new one, it is also a low rank, considering that it is below the rank of baron and above the rank of knight – Sir Walter would not even be entitled to a seat in the House of Lords. Despite all his pride in his title, Sir Walter was not as far above everybody else as he would like to believe, but that fact seemed to have never interfered with his great admiration of himself; his title, lowly as it might have been, was still more important than his children, and keeping up good appearances was essential. Austen describes the Elliot house as being filled with 'looking glasses' – and, as we see in the novel, whereas his looks might have been great, his situation was not so, at least not any more. Sir Walter represents the titled gentry; his title may be a less important one, but it is still a title and he values it above all things.

> "Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; there he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest patents; there any unwelcome sensations, arising from domestic affairs, changed naturally into pity and contempt. As he turned over the almost endless creations of the century – and there, if every other leaf was powerless, he could read his own history with an interest which never failed – this was the page at which the favourite volume always opened:
>
> *ELLIOT OF KELLYNCH HALL. Walter Elliot, born March 1, 1760, married, July 15, 1784, Elizabeth, daughter of James Stevenson, Esq of South Park, in the country of Glouscester; by which lady (who died 1800) he has issue Elizabeth, born in June 1, 1785; Anne, born August 9, 1787; a still-born son, Nov. 5,1789; Mary, born Nov. 20, 1791.* (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 5)

In these opening paragraphs, Jane Austen lays out, in a few words, the structure of this branch of the Elliot family. Moreover, from the start we have a question mark on Sir Walter's character: his description puts the reader *en garde*: we are doubtful about this man who only ever reads one book, especially as we discover that said book is about himself. At the same time, it is not difficult to pity a man whose only solace is in knowing that his name is in a book – not one he wrote himself, but one in which he is mentioned for something that was not *achieved* by him. The narrative voice in *Persuasion*, and indeed in all of Austen’s previous works, is certain that the reader will share with it a set of morals and values; the description of a man such as Sir Walter, therefore, is expected to cause some level of dislike, for the narrator trusts that most readers will not sympathise with him, we know better. Sir Walter Elliot might

be the first character we are introduced to, but we have to be clever enough not to associate with him, and Austen's powerful narrative voice makes sure that happens.

This first passage of the novel also gives us some clues about events that are never mentioned: firstly, Sir Walter seems to have married below his station, as Anne's mother was untitled, although her father was a gentleman ("esquire"). Knowing Sir Walter's character, this fact means one of two things: either young Sir Walter had to marry for money – perhaps the baronetage was not the only thing inherited in the Elliot family – or he married for love. Whatever the case might have been, Sir Walter's careful addition of the date of her death seems to speak of some sort of affection. If it was of the romantic kind we cannot possibly know, however. There is also a mention of a stillborn child, a *son*. Important events in the novel would not have taken place had Sir Walter issued a male child, someone to inherit his title and property – the financial problems would be reduced knowing that once he died, his two unmarried daughters would be taken care of, and that he would be replaced by his son, and not some estranged cousin. Once again, there is room here to wonder if his apparent shallowness is but a façade covering the suffering caused by the loss of both his wife and potential heir.

The introduction to Sir Walter is followed by the revelation of the name of the heir presumptive: William Walter Elliot. The reader is presented with his name as the novel begins, but it is only later on, when the majority of the characters are in Lyme Regis, that we learn more about him. Austen is very careful in her placement of 'game pieces', even if they are not always followed by immediate explanation: we are told of the existence of a certain Mr Elliot, but at this stage, we do not know which part he will play in this unfolding drama. It is part of the reader's job to keep track of who has been mentioned and place them when needed. Mr Elliot turns out to be one of the key characters in *Persuasion*, even if his presence is only constant in the second volume of the novel, the idea of him – of the heir – is there throughout.

> In Sir Walter's version of the family history the men are the centre of meaning, even when stillborn; the women are simply 'all the Marys and Elizabeths they married'. His understanding happily accords with the values of his favourite reading, the published Baronetage. Baronets are relatively minor hereditary members of the aristocracy, though not if your only point of reference is the Baronetage. Anxiety sets in, however, with his last handwritten addition: 'Heir presumptive, William Walter Elliot, Esq., great grandson of the second Sir Walter". One organising plot of *Persuasion* concerns Sir Walter's efforts to corral this heir presumptive within his immediate family, thus keeping the book and the family *neat*, uncontaminated. (BEER, 2003, p. xix)

What comes next, still in the first chapter of the novel, is a precise, if short, description of Sir Walter's character and lifestyle. True to Austen's style, it verges on the comical:

> Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character; vanity of person and of situation. He had been remarkably handsome in his youth; and, at fifty-four, was still a very fine man. Few women could think more of their personal appearance than he did; nor could the valet of any new lord be more delighted with the place he held in society. He considered the blessing of beauty as inferior only to the blessing of the baronetcy; and Sir Walter Elliot, who united these gifts, was the constant object of his warmest respect and devotion. (AUSTEN, 2003, p.7)

"Vanity was frequently censured in contemporary political and moral tracts and in ways that clearly suggest Sir Walter's shortcomings" (MORRISON, 2011, p. 35n17). Much like the Elliot patriarch in pride and vanity were his two daughters, Elizabeth, the oldest, and Mary the youngest. Elizabeth was the one most like himself, therefore, considered to have more value and with whom Sir Walter had the best of relationships. Elizabeth replaced Lady Elliot in Sir Walter's life, being the Lady of Kellynch – "following her mother's death, Elizabeth would be regarded as Sir Walter's lady, meaning that she would preside over his dinner table, superintend the running of his household, and accompany him to social events" (MORRISON, 2011, p. 37n21).

Sir Walter's second daughter, Mary, has only really become worthy of mention for having married Mr Charles Musgrove. Although she was vain like her sister and father, her vanity was slightly different, as she worried less about physical appearance and more about her place in the world – Mary prided herself for having married before her elder sisters[21]. Anne, on the other hand, the middle child, who had "an elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody with her father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way; - she was only Anne" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 8). It strikes as obvious that Austen is there telling the reader that Anne is the one to be liked, not the other two sisters and their father: she has an elegant mind and a sweet temper, which should recommend her to anyone with sense. This beginning establishes the values with which we will look at and judge all the characters that will feature in the story: vanity is to be frowned upon, whilst decency, humility and intelligence are to be

[21] It was customary that the eldest sister married before the younger ones. Sir Walter was not a complete fool, and was probably aware that denying Mary the opportunity to marry because her eldest sisters were unmarried could result in three "spinsters".

praised and wished for.

It is virtually impossible to imagine these vain people having to be prudent with money and reducing their expenses, especially since their situation in life is one of the reasons why they are so vain – title has brought with it vanity. At the same time, it is due to Sir Walter's incautious form of dealing with money that the Elliots' finances are in shatters – so much so that Sir Walter Elliot finds himself having to let his property, Kellynch Hall, for his income is not covering his expenses. Even though he hates the idea of renting his ancestral home to anyone, the thought of renting it to someone who not only is untitled, but who is not considered a gentleman by the standards of the time is appalling. Sir Walter ends up persuaded that renting is the better option, given that reducing his standard of living would be unfathomable, and moving is the only solution that allows him to maintain his lifestyle. He feels outraged for having to step down so much, but is appeased by the idea of retrenching to Bath, centre to rich and important people, where he will see and be seen.

> Sir Walter was not very wise; but still he had experience enough of the world to feel, that a more unobjectionable tenant, in all essentials, than Admiral Croft bid fair to be, could hardly offer. So far went his understanding; and his vanity supplied a little additional soothing, in the Admiral's situation in life, which was just high enough, and not too high. 'I have let my house to Admiral Croft," would sound extremely well; very much better than to any mere Mr. ----; a Mr. (save, perhaps, some half dozen in the nation,) always needs a note of explanation. An admiral speaks his own consequence, and at the same time can never make a baronet look small. In all their dealings and intercourse, Sir Walter Elliot must ever have precedence. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 25)

Despite the changing times, it would be foolish to disagree with Sir Walter in this instance: for the time being, he would still have precedence over any admiral of His Majesty's Navy. Precedence in title, however, does not mean precedence in means, and a quick look at the situation will tell us that Admiral Croft is 'winning' this battle, considering he is the one renting a great house, when its owner has to go and live somewhere else in order to make ends meet. Sir Walter chose to ignore that fact, as for him all that mattered was rank and physical beauty, and in that instance, he strongly believed himself to be 'winning'. Despite having agreed to having a naval officer living in his home, Sir Walter was not amongst the defenders of the navy:

> "Yes; it is in two points offensive to me; I have two strong grounds of objection

> to it. First, as being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of; and secondly, as it cuts up a man's youth and vigour most horribly; a sailor grows old sooner than any other man; I have observed it all my life. A man is in greater danger in the navy of being insulted by the rise of one whose father, his father might have disdained to speak to, and of becoming prematurely an object of disgust himself, than in any other line." (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 20)

Being fair to Sir Walter, "a sailor's health and welfare were often severely undermined by the harsh circumstances of navy life, from disciplinary floggings, poor diet, and excessive physical labour to a wide-ranging number of diseases" (MORRISON, 2011, p. 54n7). He seemed to be more inclined, however, to mourn the sailors' loss of physical beauty than their actual health. When Sir Walter sounds concerned about the orange tone of Admiral Croft's skin, Mr Shepherd, Sir Walter's agent and Mrs Clay's father rushes to explain: "Admiral Croft was a very hale, hearty, well-looking man, a little weather-beaten, to be sure, but not much; and quite the gentleman in all his notions and behaviour (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 22).

> Sir Walter dislikes sailors because, both socially and physically, they are nobodies[22]. The profession plays havoc with a man's complexion. Anne gives her father a brief description of distinguished Croft's career: he fought at the Battle of Trafalgar (1805) and was stationed in the East Indies. Sir Walter is more interested in complexion than in courage: "Then I take it for granted', observed Sir Walter, 'that his face is about as orange as the cuffs and capes of my livery'. The wordplay makes Sir Walter appear unpatriotic as well as ridiculous. Trafalgar is the name of the cape near to which the great naval battle was fought. A battle sometimes retained the word cape in its name, as for instance it does in the Battle of Cape Saint Vincent (1797). Admiral Croft spent the war years fighting, or cuffing, the enemy at various capes. Sir Walter spent them admiring the 'cuffs and capes' of his livery. There are other examples of this kind of wordplay. Sir Walter notices the wreckage of personal appearance in others, whereas the naval officers inhabit a world in which ships are wrecked and lives are lost. (SALES, 1996, p. 175)

Sales also poses the idea of a winner to the recently conquered peace: England might have defeated Napoleon (at least temporarily); however, it now faced a social battle between the old and entitled aristocracy, and the heroic and now rich sailors. Austen seems to side with the sailors in her writing, but she is never radical in her views, and even Anne is able to see the benefits of belonging to the aristocracy. Nonetheless, if *Persuasion* is anything to judge by, the naval officers were indeed more appealing to Austen, be it in character or in dignity – and even perhaps in appearance, contrasting their well-lived faces to the stale expressions of Sir Walter.

[22] Not unlike Sir Walter's own daughter, Anne, who is a nobody to him.

Austen never states that one is better than the other, but her storytelling makes it quite obvious, and it is through Anne Elliot's eyes, and the treatment she receives from both sides, that we see the differences between aristocrats and sailors. By means of Jane Austen's clever writing, she makes us root for the navy, as if in a competition for the most deserving of the peace. The creation of such endearing characters as the naval officers in *Persuasion*, as opposed to the vain Sir Walter and Anne's even more self-important sister Elizabeth, makes it easy for the reader to understand, early in the novel, where the narrator's loyalties lie – and where ours are supposed to.

We learn, early on in the novel, that Anne was persuaded by her godmother and family friend Lady Russell to break her engagement with the then lowly Frederick Wentworth, who at the time was nothing more than a sailor with very few prospects. A wounded Wentworth left Anne, off to the war at sea, off to make a name and a fortune for himself. "A few months had seen the beginning and the ending of their acquaintance; but not with a few months ended Anne's suffering from it" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 28), she never forgot him, and her regrets for having let him go put an end to her brightness and youthfulness – to her "bloom".

Throughout the seven years that they spend apart, Anne Elliot follows Frederick Wentworth's journeys through the Navy Lists, she knows he has been made Captain and of his good reputation and fortune. It would be fair to say that Lady Russell had Anne's best interests in mind when she advised her not to be with Wentworth: he had nothing and Anne was an heiress, his life was about to take him far away, to dangerous places, whilst Anne had always been in the same place, had always been safe and comfortable. It would also be a fair claim that not only did Lady Russell think of Anne's welfare, she also thought of what it would look like to society having the daughter of a baronet, her goddaughter, married to a nobody, a sailor of no fortune and no name.

> Captain Wentworth had no fortune. He had been lucky in his profession; but spending freely, what had come freely, had realized nothing. But he was confident that he should soon be rich: full of life and ardour, he knew that he should soon have a ship, and soon be on a station that would lead to everything he wanted. He had always been lucky; he knew he should be so still. Such confidence, powerful in its own warmth, and bewitching in the wit which often expressed it, must have been enough for Anne; but Lady Russell saw it very differently. His sanguine temper, and fearlessness of mind, operated very differently on her. She saw in it but an aggravation of the evil. It only added a dangerous character to himself. He was brilliant, he was headstrong. Lady Russell had little taste for wit, and of anything approaching to imprudence a horror. She deprecated the connexion in every light. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 27)

Another reason might be behind Lady Russell's action in persuading Anne: "herself a widow, she is worried that if Anne marries Wentworth, the continuation of war and the demands of his profession will lead to his death in the line of duty, leaving Anne a widow as well" (MORRISON, 2011, p. 63n7). In the fourth chapter of this work, I will explore the psychological and emotional motivations behind the characters' main actions, however, the idea of Anne as widow has as many social repercussions as emotional ones. "As a young woman in Regency England, Anne would have felt considerable social and moral pressure to conform to the wishes of her father and Lady Russell" (MORRISON, p. 63n8); had she not agreed to terminate the relationship with Wentworth, she might have been cast off from her family. Had Wentworth then died at war before making his fortune, she most likely would have been left alone with little to no means to fend for herself.

Anne chooses to yield to her father and friend's persuasion, and does not marry Wentworth. He goes off to war, and it does not take long for Wentworth to make something of himself: "He had, very soon after their engagement ceased, got employ; and all that he had told her would follow, had taken place. He had distinguished himself, and early gained the other step in rank – and must now, by successive captures, have made a handsome fortune." (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 29). Wentworth's rise is yet more noteworthy because "promotion through the naval ranks was very often a matter of having friends – or friends of friends – who were government ministers, powerful landowners, or high-ranking members of the admiralty. Wentworth, however, has 'no connexions' and so must make his way on merit" (MORRISON, 2011, p. 63n4).

When Wentworth comes back to spend time with his sister and brother-in-law, who are now renting Sir Walter Elliot's property, it must be a shock to see that the man who they once belittled and considered too inferior to be part of the Elliot relations is now a Captain of His Majesty's Navy, rich and looking for a wife. The contrast between what he was and what he has become is striking, and it also works as a means to depict the changes in the world during the beginning of the nineteenth century. What was before the aristocracy's territory is now changing hands, passing on to those who previously had nothing, and were barely worth of mention. This new world is a place in which naval officers are financially able to rent a member of the aristocracy's property; where it would be more beneficial to marry a rich sailor than a struggling member of the aristocracy.

With war come changes, leading people to go through different movements, interfering in people's life journeys be it for better or worse. It is no different after the Napoleonic Wars: the world then was facing many alterations and seeing its people being displaced and replaced. Social movement is one of the strongest themes in *Persuasion*, and it is present throughout the novel in different forms – though all very much gravitating around the same issue: the new and the old order. Sir Walter's move to Bath does not mean only that he decided to move house for economy's sake; moreover, it is a testament to a changing world.

2.2 THE CLASH OF GENERATIONS: OLD vs. NEW

At the same time that we witness the social confrontation in *Persuasion* between aristocracy and navy, headed by Sir Walter on one side and Captain Wentworth on the other, there are smaller movements, subtler but not less important, also speaking of change and reluctance to give way to it. From Kellynch Hall we journey on alongside Anne to Uppercross, and enter the world of the Musgroves. In Uppercross, we are introduced to two instances of generational differences: the first between Mr and Mrs Musgrove and their daughters, Louisa and Henrietta; and the second one between Mr and Mrs Musgrove *senior* and Mr Charles and Mrs Mary Musgrove. The Musgroves are the first in the novel to take any notice of Anne – they treated her warmly and actually appreciated her presence, even if in the grand scheme of things, Anne was once again put in the position of listener, the 'go-between', doing very little talking of her own, but in constant movement.

Attempting to understand how characters journey through their differences, this section will address the generational differences between the old Mr and Mrs Musgroves and their young and lively daughters, Louisa and Henrietta. It will also discourse about the relationship between the old Musgrove couple and the new – Mary (née Elliot) and Charles. The differences here might not be as clear as the ones in the section above, but they also speak of a changing world, in which old traditions start being replaced by modern ones, where name and position are now second to money.

In the narrator's description of Uppercross and its architectural style, we spot hints of change, of something that used to be and is now different, being slowly replaced by the new. The paragraph opens with, "Uppercross was a moderate-sized village, which a *few years back* had been completely in the old English style; containing only two houses superior in appearance to those of the yeomen and labourers" and then moves on to explain that Charles's marriage had changed things, since due to his union with Mary, Uppercross "had received the improvement of a farm-house elevated into a cottage, for his residence, and Uppercross Cottage, with its viranda, French windows, and other prettiness, was quite as likely to catch the traveller's eye, as the more consistent and considerable aspect and premises of the Great House, about a quarter of a mile farther on" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 35).

> The Musgroves, like their houses, were in a state of alteration, perhaps of improvement. The father and mother were in the old English style, and the young people in the new. Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove were a very good sort of people; friendly and hospitable, not much educated, and not at all elegant. Their children had more modern minds and manners. There was a numerous family; but the only two grown up, excepting Charles, were Henrietta and Louisa, young ladies of nineteen and twenty, who had brought from school at Exeter all the usual stock of accomplishments, and were now, like thousands of other young ladies, living to be fashionable, happy, and merry. Their dress had every advantage, their faces were rather pretty, their spirits extremely good, their manners unembarrassed and pleasant; they were of consequence at home, and favourites abroad. Anne always contemplated them as some of the happiest creatures of her acquaintance; but still, saved as we all are by some comfortable feeling of superiority from wishing for the possibility of exchange, she would not have given up her own more elegant and cultivated mind for all their enjoyments; and envied them nothing but that seemingly perfect good understanding and agreement together, that good-humoured mutual affection, of which she had known so little herself with either of her sisters. (AUSTEN, p. 38-9)

The first pair, Mr and Mrs Musgrave and their daughters Louisa and Henrietta seem to have a good relationship, but their differences do not go unnoticed. As Austen herself says, they lived in the "old English style", whereas the two girls lived in the new. Despite being friendly and warm, the old Musgroves lacked elegance of mind or manners; their daughters, however, were modern in thoughts and actions, being livelier and more outspoken. Austen here remarks on the set of accomplishments Louisa and Henrietta gained in school, and anyone in Austen's times would be aware that the only use of being proficient in sewing and dancing, amongst other things, was to increase one's chances of finding a husband. As Morrison (2011, p. 78n17) reminds us, "these 'graces' were acquired, not primarily for their educational value, but because they markedly improved a woman's chances in the highly competitive marriage market", which enabled them to prove that they would be good wives, interesting to their

husbands-to-be.

In *Pride and Prejudice* we learn of Austen's aversion to said "accomplishments" that treat young women as vessels to be filled with information and knowledge few care about, but which somehow distinguish them from other young girls who might not know as much. Like many artists before and after her, Austen was ahead of her time when it comes to her views on women. Jane Austen never openly defended women's rights, and calling her a feminist would be incorrect and anachronistic. Some of her ideas were, however, akin to concepts debated in today's feminism. Austen shared some of Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas on women and the education allocated to them. Before *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's views on the education of women were already taking shape, and in *Catherine*, part of Austen's *Juvenilia* and produced almost at the same time as Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Jane Austen states with irony her views on the matter, talking about Camilla Stanley's years of education:

> Mr and Mrs Stanley were people of large fortune and high fashion. He was a Member of the House of Commons, and they were therefore most agreeably necessitated to reside half the year in Town; where Miss Stanley had been attended by the most capital masters from the time of her being six years old to the last spring, which comprehending a period of twelve years had been dedicated to the acquirement of accomplishments which were now to be displayed and in a few years entirely neglected. She was elegant in her appearance, rather handsome, and naturally not deficient in abilities; but those years which ought to have been spent in the attainment of useful knowledge and mental improvement, had been all bestowed in learning drawing, Italian and music, more especially the latter, and she now united to these accomplishments, an understanding unimproved by reading and a mind totally devoid either of taste or judgement. Her temper was by nature good, but unassisted by reflection, she had neither patience under disappointment, nor could sacrifice her own inclinations to promote the happiness of others. All her ideas were towards the elegance of her appearance, the fashion of her dress, and the admiration she wished them to excite. She professed a love of books without reading, was lively without wit, and generally good humoured without merit. (AUSTEN, 2014, p 219)

Austen was aware that years of learning how to dance, sing and sew would hardly teach young women how to think, and few ended up capable of critical thought – which was probably the intention behind such practical education. Back to *Persuasion*, Louisa and Henrietta are two of those women who despite their many accomplishments were not taught great critical thought, a subject much in discussion in Austen's times, even though it was still considered by many not to be the domain of women. Mary Wollstonecraft, in her *Vindication of The Rights of Women* discusses those aspects of a lady's upbringing that are considered of importance, and despairs that dancing and painting tables are given preference as opposed to bringing up a

critical mind.

> For Wollstonecraft, 'accomplishments' are another name for weakness, and in the *Rights of Women,* she argues passionately that the traditional education of women enslaves them by turning them into dolls who must simper and scheme in order to attract a man, whereas a system of education that recognised that women – like men – were possessed of reason and virtue would render them multidimensional human beings who were fully capable of carrying out their duties as mothers, wives and citizens. (MORRISON, 2011, p. 78n17)

Despite having a good relationship with their parents, Louisa and Henrietta wish to see the world, while Mr and Mrs Musgrove are more than happy to stay where they are. There is a thirst for the new in *Persuasion*, a strong characteristic of the Georgian Period and the Enlightenment, and it manifests itself primarily in the young characters. Life aboard of a ship is attractive to the young women, while their parents almost seem to fear what is beyond Somersetshire.

The second generational clash in *Persuasion* comes through Mary and Charles Musgrove. Being the eldest male child, Charles is the heir to Uppercross, but while his father is still alive, Charles does not get to enjoy the benefits of his place, and he still comes second in the hierarchy of the Musgrove family. Mary, a baronet's daughter, is not happy to come second wherever she is, and she does not mind creating awkward situations to claim her position as first, even if she is first only to join a dinner party. Mary stretches their differences to the extent that a coexistence is made quite challenging – and from the start, Anne's job is to *listen* to all parties and try to establish some peace, although nobody really listens to her, all they want is someone who will listen to what they have to say. Mary claims to hate sending the children to the Great House, though their grandmamma is always wanting to see them, for she humours and indulges them to such a degree, and gives them so much trash and sweet things, that they are sure to come back sick and cross for the rest of the day". At the same time, in the Great House, Mrs. Musgrove does not miss her first chance of being alone with Anne to complain about her daughter-in-law: "Oh! Miss Anne, I cannot help wishing Mrs. Charles had a little of your method with those children. […] It is a pity you cannot put your sister in the way of managing them. They are as fine healthy children as ever were seen, poor little dears, without partiality; but Mrs. Charles knows no more how they should be treated" and she goes as far as saying, contradicting Mary, that their bad behaviour is a repellent, and it prevents her from "wishing to see them at our house so often as I otherwise should. I believe Mrs. Charles

is not quite pleased with my not inviting them oftener; but you know it is very bad to have children with one, that one is obliged to be checking every moment, "don't do this, and don't do that;"; or that one can only keep in tolerable order by more cake than is good for them" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 42). Anne is caught in this unspoken war between mother and daughter-in-law, but the parties do not wish to hear her opinions and thought on the matter, for all they desire is to be heard.

The differences between Mrs Musgrove and Mrs Charles Musgrove go beyond their treatment of the children – opinions which they do not share with one another, but are more than happy to make Anne a vessel where to deposit all of their complaints. Mary's high opinion of herself and her family mean that those around her end up suffering the consequences of what she believes to be her right by rank, and that means insisting on displacing Mrs Musgrove in precedence, which is nothing short of rude.

> Again*; it was Mary's complaint, that Mrs. Musgrove was very apt not to give her the precedence that was her due, when they dined at the Great House with other families; and she did not see any reason why she was to be considered so much at home as to lose her place*[23]. And one day, when Anne was walking with only the Miss Musgroves, one of them, after talking of rank, people of rank, and jealousy of rank, said, "I have no scruple of observing to you, how nonsensical some persons are about their place, because all the world knows how easy and indifferent you are about it; but I wish anybody could give Mary a hint that it would be a great deal better if she were not so very tenacious, especially if she would not be always putting herself forward to take place of mamma. Nobody doubts her right to have precedence of mamma, but it would be more becoming in her not to be always insisting on it. It is not that mamma cares about it the least in the world, but I know it is taken notice of by many persons." (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 44)

Being younger than Mrs Musgrove, she takes precedence only for being part of the aristocracy, even if that means leaving her husband behind, as Morrison (2011, p. 84n5) explains: "If all things were equal, Mary – as the younger woman, would give precedence to Mrs Musgrove. But all things were not equal. Mary is the daughter of a baronet, and so, as rank counts for more than age, she should lead into and out of the dining room, even when they are in Mrs Musgrove's home". Mary need not insist upon these rules, as they were amongst family, and the fact that she did speaks of a desperation to maintain and mark her position, even if she married below herself when it comes to rank.

The Musgroves find it hard to like Mary because she is constantly creating new sources

[23] My italics.

of difficulty between them, perhaps so she can differentiate herself from them. Mary sees herself as superior, as if she were not aware that her family are in financial difficulties – or as if those difficulties were irrelevant when one has a title. As much as she insists on her precedence over Mrs Musgrove, there is no denying that the big house in Uppercross is not yet hers, she is the lady of the cottage, not of the large property. Mary, much like her father and eldest sister, lives in a world of illusions, when reality is that a changing environment surrounds them.

The Musgroves, not being part of the aristocracy, might struggle with the changes ahead, but they do not oppose them: Mr and Mrs Musgrove learn to journey through the novelty, which is reflected in their daughters, Louisa and Henrietta, who are very impressed with the sailors, but do not spare many thoughts for the well-dressed Mr Elliot. Mary, on the other hand, part of the same generation as Louisa and Henrietta, is much more concerned about status, hanging on to old values, much like Sir Walter and Elizabeth. The Elliots, Anne excluded, believe themselves to be living in a crystallised pre-war England, and even Mary, who persistently claims she and as her husband should share childcare responsibilities, struggles to see that being the daughter of a baronet does not set her apart as it once did. Therefore, the generational clash featured in *Persuasion* is not only to do with age, but also class.

2.3 STATION vs. WARMTH

Austen threads carefully when the subject is money, especially when she talks about those who have very little of it. Austen is *kind* to the poor, and her clever narration always leads the reader to despise characters who are mean to those of little income. In *Emma*, Mr Knightley reprimands Emma for being sarcastic and conducting herself badly towards Miss Bates, someone who used to enjoy wealth, but is poor when the narrative takes place. Rich and beautiful Emma should know better, and use her privileged place in society – and in the eyes of Miss Bates – to help Miss Bates, and not diminish her in front of her friends. In Austen, characters who are good to those below them socially are worthy, decent people, and it is with

them the reader is asked to side.

One of the ways of knowing someone’s value in Austen is to look at how they treat their inferiors, and how –or if – they change when their situations in life change. As mentioned before, *Persuasion* reflects the changing world at the beginning of the nineteenth century, its characters and the interactions between them represent these changes on a small scale. I have discussed the delusional world the Elliots still live in, a world in which they are the be all, end all of polite society. The Elliots – Sir Walter, Miss Elizabeth Elliot and Mrs Mary Musgrove (née Elliot) – still believe their minor title separates them from others, and that speaks volumes for who they are. Mary, for example, married money, and not title, and by marriage, the Hayters became her relatives.

> Mrs. Musgrove and Mrs. Hayter were sisters. They had each had money, but their marriages had made a material difference in their degree of consequence. Mr. Hayter had some property of his own, but it was insignificant compared with Mr. Musgrove's; and while the Musgroves were in the first class of society in the country, the young Hayters would, from their parents' inferior, retired, and unpolished way of living, and their own defective education, have been hardly in any class at all, but for their connexion with Uppercross: this eldest son of course excepted, who had chosen to be a scholar and a gentleman, and who was very superior in cultivation and manners to all the rest.
>
> The two families had always been on excellent terms, there being no pride on one side, and no envy on the other, and only such a consciousness of superiority in the Miss Musgroves, as made them pleased to improve their cousins. Charles's attentions to Henrietta had been observed by her father and mother without any disapprobation. "It would not be a great match for her; but if Henrietta liked him, -- and Henrietta did seem to like him. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 69)

The thought of furthering that connection was appalling to Mary, and she becomes a strong advocate of a match between Henrietta and Captain Wentworth – “but it would be shocking to have Henrietta marry Charles Hayter: a very bad thing for her, and still worse for me; and therefore it is very much to be wished that Captain Wentworth may soon put him quite out of her head, and I have very little doubt that he has” (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 71).

Another connection the Elliots do not wish to see deepened is the one between Anne and her old school friend Mrs Smith. In the next chapter, I will look at Bath’s *ups and downs* and the inhabitants of those places high and low. For now, I will dwell on Anne’s relationship with her friend. Mrs Smith is *Persuasion*’s version of *Emma*’s Miss Bates: someone who, if not wealthy, led a good life and did not have to worry about money. Mrs Smith’s

characterisation, however, is not that of a comical figure, as is Miss Bates', but that of a woman in pain, suffering and having her suffering furthered by her lack of financial means. It is a testament to Anne's character that she was willing to rekindle an old friendship with someone who, once an equal, was now much below her, even when considering the Elliots' reduced means.

> Miss Hamilton, now Mrs. Smith, had shewn her kindness in one of those periods of her life when it had been most valuable. Anne had gone unhappy to school, grieving for the loss of a mother whom she had dearly loved, feeling her separation from home, and suffering as a girl of fourteen, of strong sensibility and not high spirits, must suffer at such a time; and Miss Hamilton, three years older than herself, but still, from the want of near relations and a settled home, remaining another year at school, had been useful and good to her in a way which had considerably lessened her misery, and could never be remembered with indifference.
>
> Miss Hamilton had left school, had married not long afterwards, was said to have married a man of fortune, and this was all that Anne had known of her, till now that their governess's account brought her situation forward in a more decided but very different form.
>
> She was a widow, and poor. Her husband had been extravagant; and at his death, about two years before, had left his affairs dreadfully involved. She had had difficulties of every sort to contend with, and in addition to these distresses had been afflicted with a severe rheumatic fever, which, finally settling in her legs, had made her for the present a cripple. She had come to Bath on that account, and was now in lodgings near the hot baths, living in a very humble way, unable even to afford herself the comfort of a servant, and of course almost excluded from society. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 141-2).

When given the choice between meeting and socialising with her titled relatives or spending time with her old friend, Anne is quick to make a decision, and to the chagrin of her father and eldest sister, Anne rejects the pompous Lady Dalrymple for her lowly friend of common name Mrs Smith[24]. Anne's choice shows her as someone who, unlike the rest of her family, is capable of seeing beyond social status, and is unwilling to let someone's station in the world determine their character. There is symbolism behind Anne's journey from her father's house in Camden Place to Mrs Smith's lodgings in the poorest part of town: it is not just physical movement, it denotes a choice for friendship and companionship, as opposed to social status and shallow preoccupations.

Anne is beyond her time, giving more importance to kindness than to money. Not that

[24] Smith is the most common of surnames in the United Kingdom, and Anne's choice to spend time with a Smith – virtually a nobody – in detriment of a countess is shocking. It is Anne's way of saying she would have rather be with virtually *anyone* than her obnoxious family.

things have evolved much, and people are not snobbish, but in those days, association between different classes was unlikely, and it is only with the changes taking place in the world that people start mixing with others not of the same station, for the barriers between aristocracy and commoners were starting to dim. The gap between social differences is, to this day, far from being bridged, but Anne shows her worth as an Austen heroine and ignores the differences despite what everyone else says.

We are rarely able to comprehend the world around us and in which direction it is going while it is changing and moving. It is only in hindsight that we get a glimpse at the bigger picture. Jane Austen was certainly very knowledgeable of the world surrounding her, and she understood the subtle changes that were taking place – perhaps she was not aware that those modifications would have so much repercussion and that they would be so permanent, but she knew they were happening. In *Persuasion* these changes are not obvious, but they are a strong undercurrent throughout the novel.

How the balance of power is changing is represented in the novel, by these two opposites, the aristocrats and the naval officers, but smaller interactions are also relevant for the comprehension of the bigger picture. The narrative takes place in a period of peace after years of incessant war in the continent. The peace is relative, however, for another war is boiling inland – a war that does not involve guns and death: a war of the old aristocratic society, who inherited their possessions, against the rising rich men, who earned what they own. Austen's family contemplated both sides, as she had brothers in the navy, who had to make a living for themselves, and on the other side, she had Edward, who inherited the Knights' properties – reason for which the Austen women had a home in Chawton. Jane Austen seems to make it very clear which side she wants her reader to take, openly complimenting the navy, and attributing vanity and self-importance to the aristocracy. Nevertheless, it would be unwise to assume that Austen herself was a defender of the rising classes in detriment of the old, seeing as she only had a home during the last years of her life due to the kindness of a brother who inherited old money.

3 GEOGRAPHICAL CROSSINGS

“Anne had not wanted this visit to Uppercross, to learn that a removal from one set of people to another, though at a distance of only a few miles, will often include a total change of conversation, opinion and idea.”

Jane Austen, ***Persuasion***

Persuasion follows Anne Elliot as she learns about the world around her and about who she is. One of my readings of the novel consisted of paying close attention to every movement made by its characters in the course of the story. Watching their comings and goings allowed me to understand certain meanings behind their actions, such as why it was shameful for Mary Musgrove, Anne’s younger sister, to be seen in the company of the Hayters; or why Sir Walter and Elizabeth despised Anne’s connection to a poor friend from school. The characters’ geographical – physical – movements put colour to the social and emotional meanings behind them. From Kellynch-Hall and the vain Elliots, to the warm and bubbly Musgroves at Uppercross; from Lyme Regis and the decent and hospitable sailors, to Bath and its society of appearances, *Persuasion* is a portrayal of the English society of Austen’s times, and a reflection of what this society was facing in the early nineteenth century.

Cars, buses, trains and aeroplanes dominate the twenty-first century transport scenery. In Jane Austen’s times there were carriages and other types of horse-drawn vehicles, but walking was the most common means of transport – even for ladies. People still walk nowadays, but mostly as a form of exercise or to cover very short distances. For Jane Austen, her family, and her characters, walking was the easiest and most independent means of getting where one wanted to be, even if not the most dignified.

> Walking was the most common means of transport, often over considerable distances and in miserable conditions. Thick, squelching mud was the bane of all travel, exhausting to walk through and a hazard for horses and wheeled vehicles alike. At Steventon, in Hampshire, Jane Austen and Cassandra would certainly walk ‘when the

> roads were dirty', wearing pattens[25] to raise their shoes above the mud. When conditions outside were bad, most middle – and upper – class ladies avoided travelling on foot altogether (…). (ADKINS & ADKINS, 2013, p. 238)

Austen is famous for her love of walking, which she transferred to several of her characters. Walking is frequently featured in Jane Austen's works, as it was one of the main forms of getting places, and it allowed characters to explore their surroundings. Even though we do not walk nearly as much as some of Austen's characters, as often or as far as people would in the nineteenth century, we can still understand it, for it is an activity we still perform, even if in a different fashion and often for different reasons. Horse riding, however, is not nearly as frequent in the twenty-first century, except as a sport, as it was in the early nineteenth century.

> The majority of the population travelled on foot if they travelled at all but, for those of Jane Austen's level of society and above, men in particular, a horse was an essential possession, for business and for pleasure. Mr Bennet's horses do double duty, on the farm and harnessed on the carriage; working horses were not taxed, so this experience saves him money and was common practice. (JONES, 2014, p. 60)

Most of the characters in Austen's novels walk, especially the heroines – as to ride or to be on mostly any other form of nineteenth century transport one would need to be accompanied, preferably by a male. Walking, as Sally Palmer agues (2001, p. 154) is an activity that "promotes and advances social relationships, develops aesthetic sensibilities, and leads to proper understanding of correct behaviour and thinking", meaning that Austen's insistence on having her characters walking comes as no surprise, since the activity can be this enlightening. In *Persuasion*, we follow Anne's movements from home to home (she lives in five different places throughout the novel), and a lot of them are done on foot.

Not unlike characters' attitudes to places, their attitudes towards their possessions – or lack thereof – are telling of their values and personalities. Sir Walter's interest in how the Crofts arrived in Bath tells the reader that he is more worried about looks than well-being. On the other hand, *Emma*'s Mr Knightley's preference for walking makes him worthy of the reader's admiration, as he does not care for looking the part of a gentleman, rather than being a

[25] A form of heels added to footwear in order to keep them off the mud or any other soil condition that might damage people's shoes – especially women's shoes, as they were flimsy.

gentleman in his treatment of people and business.

Horses were expensive to keep, and required attention from their owners. They were mostly ridden by men, not only as a symbol of physical stamina, but also of prosperity. As Jones (2014, p. 60) reminds us, "horse ownership is a good indicator of income, an excess or lack of it", and Austen marks the importance of horses in her novels, which are indicators of people's social status.

> One of the markers of Mr Coles' elevation to the first circle in Highbury society is his possession of carriage horses; Emma herself notices them twice. The first sight of Mr Bingley in a chaise-and-four[26] adds interest to Mrs Bennet's calculations. Sir Walter Elliot must relinquish his two pairs because he cannot afford to keep them, but he ensures that they herald his entry into Bath before parting with them. The first question he asks Anne on the Crofts' arrival is whether *they* had made the journey from Kellynch with four horses. The irony that they can afford such an expense but would never consider parading their wealth in this way completely passes him by. General Tilney's chaise is drawn out of Bath by four very smart animals and accompanied by a number of outriders. Mr Knightley has no spare money to keep carriage horses, he invests his money in improving his land and prefers anyway to walk or ride. (JONES, 2014, p. 60-61)

Horses were not the only symbol of social status when it came to means of transportation. "The end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth were boom years for the private carriage trade and London gained recognition for constructing the best horse-drawn vehicles in Europe" (JONES, 2014, p. 78), meaning that people of importance and high social status wished to boast of their very fine carriages, and drive around London to show them off. Once again, like many other possessions and people's attitudes towards them, carriages are telling of their owners' morality and values in Jane Austen. A clear example of this is in the choice of vehicle made by the Crofts, as Jones explains (2014, p. 84), "[they] purchase a gig for their jaunts around the Kellynch lanes. They could afford something better, but this unostentatious mode of transport suits their habit of dawdling away the days in each other's companies, and their style of driving provides an insight into their easy-going relationship". On the other hand, we see characters that care little about practicality, and are more interested in the status their choice of transport will provide, such as Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice*, and General Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*.

It is almost an Austen trademark that what her characters have and how they react to

[26] Closed four wheeled carriage drawn by four horses.

world goods is a form of inferring their values. Those who care very little about their possessions seem to be the ones we can trust the most. In Pride and Prejudice, Caroline Bingley is portrayed as dangerous, for all she cares about is fashions and status; Mr Bingley on the other hand is generous and kind, and sees beyond the Bennets' lack of means. In Austen, people who require nothing but strength to move about in the world, people who choose to walk as opposed to depend on horses and carriages, are always held in higher esteem: Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Knightley amongst them. In *Persuasion*, Anne is at first too weak to walk long distances – which provides Captain Wentworth with a chance to help her – but as the novel progresses, as she recovers her bloom and stamina, her step becomes more lively: in Bath, Anne walks the length of the city, going from its highest point, her father's house, to the lowest, Mrs Smith's dwellings.

Before I analyse the geographical movements of the novel in depth, it is necessary to know the geography of the place we are talking about, where these characters walked and rode through, even if some of the places in the novel are not real, their general location is. The events in *Persuasion* take place in England; wars abroad are mentioned, but the main story takes place in the south west of England, more precisely, in the county of Somerset and the Bristol area.

> Somerset is a mild, moist, green county, with small limestone and sandstone hills divided by hidden narrow valleys, the hills in some areas rising above peat marshes crisscrossed with drainage ditches and lanes lined with willow trees. Even today there are still many beautiful and unspoilt stone-built villages, blue-grey or golden, with farmhouses and cottages dating back from the sixteenth century, and large stone barns resulting from centuries of rich farming. Many of the parish churches benefited from this richness and were rebuilt at the same time. Spires are rare, but the county is noted for its fine church towers. The village of Kellynch is said to be fifty miles from Bath and three miles from the next village of Uppercross, with Crewkerne being the nearest town; as ever, Jane Austen is careful not to be too precise about her locations, but both Kellynch and Uppercross – and, later in the story, Winthrop – are all probably somewhere in the rectangle between the genuine small towns of Ilminster, South Petherton, Crewkerne and Chard. (LE FAYE, 2002, p. 279-281)

Le Faye affirms that Austen had a location in mind when she placed the Elliots and the Musgraves in the Somersetshire environs, even if her designated places for this part of the story to take place were invented – Kellynch and Uppercross are fictional locations. Austen demonstrates a good knowledge of the area, especially when it comes to Bath, a city where she lived for a few years of her adult life against her will, much like her character Anne – this is one of the many circumstances in this novel in which fiction could be said to be imitating life.

Also visited in the novel is the seaside town of Lyme Regis. Lyme is where Anne recovers her bloom – it is symbolic that the sea is what brings youth back to Anne's face, the sea where she might have spent the past years with Wentworth if their relationship had not been broken, the sea that her father believed to make a man lose his youth and beauty. The sea carries strong symbolism in literature, and it is no different in *Persuasion*: Wentworth goes to sea and comes back *worthy* of Anne; Anne visits Lyme and rediscovers herself.

According to Le Faye, "the route from Crewkerne to Lyme is via Clapton, Three Ashes, Blackdown, Marshwood, Uplyme and so on downhill coastward, on what is now the modern B3165 road – and which, in real life, would have been the road taken by the Austens when they travelled there from Bath in November 1803 and again in the summer of 1804" (LE FAYE, 2002, p. 288), which means that Austen must have known those roads well, or at least well enough for them to feature in her novels and be certain that she was describing to the reader as it is in reality. When in Lyme, places and roads are named, the famous Cobb is recognised as the central part of the town – and it becomes central to the narrative.

> In present-day Lyme, the Lion Inn (now Royal Lion) is still in Broad Street, but the building which housed the original Three Cups was burnt down in the mid-nineteenth century. The name of the Three Cups was then transferred to a newer building – in Jane Austen's time known as Hiscott's Boarding House – which is also in Broad Street, opposite the Royal Lion. The Assembly Rooms lingered on until the early twentieth century, being used at the last as a cinema, but were pulled down in 1927 and the site is now a car park at the end of Broad Street. The pleasant walk around the curve of the little bay to the hamlet at the base of the Cobb is still there, as is the Cobb itself, though it has been frequently repaired and rebuilt since Jane Austen's time. The last of the several original flights of steps leading from the Upper to the Lower Cobb still survives - uneven blocks of stone jutting out of the wall and nicknamed locally 'Granny's Teeth' – and if this cannot be proved to be the site of Louisa's accident, at least it is now the best place to gain impression of the event. In 1824 a great storm swept away or damaged most of the Cobb hamlet, so it is not possible to identify the cottage in which Jane Austen places the Harvilles. (LE FAYE, 2002, p. 290)

Bath is one of the main locations of *Persuasion*, almost a character of its own accord. One by one the characters seem to converge there, starting with Sir Walter Elliot and Miss Elliot; Anne follows and a succession of people end up there, including the Crofts and Captain Wentworth. The city is, today, much similar to what Austen would have known, mainly due to the stone that covers every building in town. Bath is a hilly city, and both in real life and in Austen's fiction, its ups and downs have special significance, for as Bath rises, also do its inhabitants – the higher you are physically in the city, the more important you are. It comes as

no surprise, therefore, that Sir Walter wanted nothing more than a good Bath address, a *high* address. Being in the low parts of the city meant you were unimportant in the grand scheme of things, at least in the eyes of those above you – and that is where we find Mrs Smith. The huge gap between Sir Walter and Mrs Smith is breached without second thought by Anne, to whom social standing is by far less important than good and decent company.

> Milson Street is still one of the smart shopping streets of Bath, though No. 2 is no longer the premises of Mollands, the pastry-cook and confectioner. In the Bath of Anne Elliot's time, Captain Wentworth may have bought his brand-new umbrella at Ashley's shop, No. 11 Bond Street; the gunsmith where Charles Musgrove has an appointment is evidently William Smith in New Market Row; and the printshop in Milson Street where Admiral Croft is looking in the window may be No. 28, the premises of Archibald Sharp, landscape painter. Admiral Croft is alone, as he explains to Anne, because his wife 'has a blister on one of her heels, as large as a three shilling piece.' The three-shilling piece was a silver token, not a coin, issued only between 1811 and 1816, as a temporary measure to combat the shortage of small change while the creation of a new silver coinage was under discussion, this new coinage being introduced on 18th January 1817. The three-shilling piece had a diameter of nearly one and a half inches, which makes poor Mrs Croft's blister a very large one. (LE FAYE, 2002, p. 296)

According to Le Faye (2002, p 196), "the visitor to modern Bath can follow in Anne Elliot's footprints nearly all the way through the novel, the main difference being the disappearance of the White Hart, which was demolished in 1867 and rebuilt as the Pump Room Hotel". It is interesting to confirm, through Le Faye's work, that the England Jane Austen knew and talked about in her novels is not so different from the England we know today, at least when it comes to places frequented by the people she created. Austen understood her England from several perspectives, and a decent knowledge of geography was certainly fundamental for her placing of her characters in her stories. Granted, it is possible to read one of her works oblivious to the places she is talking about, however, knowledge of the geography enhances the possibilities of analysis, for when we look at the journeys taken by her characters (where they went, how they liked it, the place's function in the story), we understand them and their surroundings better.

Places permeate her novels, even though she rarely describes them with precision and detail – it is as if she does not have to: Austen, or the narrator in this case, assumes the reader is familiar with the places mentioned, and therefore can picture this or that town with no need for an in-depth description. Despite creating fictional places, Austen always located them near real ones, and perhaps that is the reason why her creations always feel realistic, as if those

villages she mentioned in her novels could exist: “places feel very real because they are located geographically in relation to actual towns and cities: Highbury, in Surrey, is sixteen miles from London, seven from Box Hill, nine from Richmond; […] from Lyme to Uppercross, where the Musgroves live, is seventeen miles; […]” (JONES, 2014, p. 25-6).

Following her rule of writing about what one knows Austen never placed her characters in places which were unknown to her – “many of her chosen locations were either familiar to her from personal visits, or from books. She gathered information from friends, acquaintances and relations for those about which she knew little” (JONES, 2014, p. 26). If a set of characters is heading somewhere she did not know, her story would follow a different set going to a place with which she was familiar.

3.1 FROM KELLYNCH TO UPPERCROSS: AWAY FROM HOME

The first big movement in the novel is not an actual movement, but the prospect of one, that is, the discussion about the renting of Kellynch-Hall and the search for a new place. It is at this stage that we are introduced to the Shepherds – Mr Shepherd, Sir Walter’s lawyer, and his daughter, Mrs Clay. Sir Walter is presented with three possibilities when faced with having to let his property: moving to London, Bath, or to another house in the country. "All Anne’s wishes had been for the latter. A small house in their own neighbourhood, where they might still have Lady Russell’s society, still be near Mary, and still have the pleasure of sometimes seeing the lawns and groves of Kellynch, was the object of her ambition." (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 14). Anne’s father and eldest sister, however, were of a different mind, and London was their first choice. The Elliots’ lack of financial means meant that London was an unlikely possibility, and with a little persuasion from Lady Russell – who did not hide her preference – and Mr Shepherd, Bath was the chosen place for their move – and unfortunately, it was the place Anne liked the least. Much like the Prince Regent, who retired to Brighton, another watering place, “in an equally vain attempt to try to control his debts” (SALES, 1997, p. 174), Sir Walter accepts the move to Bath as opposed to London for many reasons, amongst which were “its more convenient distance from Kellynch, only fifty miles, and Lady Russell's spending some

part of every winter there; and to the very great satisfaction of Lady Russell, whose first views on the projected change had been for Bath, Sir Walter and Elizabeth were induced to believe that they should lose neither consequence nor enjoyment by settling there" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 15). Sir Walter's decision served Lady Russell well, obliging her to go against Anne's wishes for a smaller house in the countryside, and as the narrator reminds us "it would be too much to expect Sir Walter to descend into a small house in his own neighbourhood. Anne herself would have found the mortifications of it more than she foresaw, and to Sir Walter's feelings they must have been dreadful". Lady Russell was very fond of Bath, and Anne's dislike of it, in her conception could be easily overcome, and she "considered it as a prejudice and mistake, arising first from the circumstance of her having been three years at school there, after her mother's death, and, secondly, from her happening to be not in perfectly good spirits the only winter which she had afterwards spent there with herself" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 14).

> Lady Russell was fond of Bath in short, and disposed to think it must suit them all; and as to her young friend's health, by passing all the warm months with her at Kellynch-lodge, every danger would be avoided; and it was, in fact, a change which must do both health and spirits good. *Anne had been too little from home, too little seen*[27]. Her spirits were not high. A larger society would improve them. She wanted her to be more known. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 15)

In this passage, we learn that Anne had not done much travelling in her life, and that Lady Russell had, once again, Anne's best interests in mind when she suggested Bath would be a nice place for the Elliots to live, even if contrary to Anne's wishes – just as when she stopped Anne from being with Frederick Wentworth. Lady Russell's own interests are also at stake, however, as she seems genuinely to enjoy the Elliots' company, and having them move to Bath meant that she could still be part of their lives.

Very early on, the narrator draws attention to the fact that Anne has not seen much of the world. Having been sheltered her whole life – even in her condition of least favourite, she was still a baronet's daughter – she has seen little outside of Kellynch, her only venture beyond Somersetshire being during her time at school in Bath, where presumably she was also protected. It is well established at the end of the novel that Anne has seen more than she had at the beginning, and more than many of Austen's other protagonists. Not only does Anne travel, she is also exposed to different people, different ideas and different ways of living during the

[27] My italics.

course of *Persuasion*, and when she leaves Kellynch for Uppercross in chapter 6, the reader is presented with the insight that somewhat guides the narrative:

> Anne had not wanted this visit to Uppercross, to learn that a removal from one set of people to another, though a distance of only three miles, will often include a total change of conversation, opinion, and idea. She had never been staying there before, without being struck by it, or without wishing that other Elliots could have her advantage in seeing how unknown or unconsidered there, were the affairs which at Kellynch-hall were treated as of such general publicity and pervading interest; yet, with all this experience, she believed she must now submit to feel that another lesson, in *the art of knowing our own nothingness beyond our own circle*[28], was become necessary to her. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 40)

If the lesson of "knowing our own nothingness beyond our own circle" was a difficult one for Anne to learn, she who is one of the most cultivated and well-educated of Austen's heroines, one can only imagine how hard it would be for Sir Walter and Elizabeth to stop looking at their own trials and tribulations, and make room for other people's. Anne's relationship with her father and eldest sister is so difficult because, not only are they very different to her in character, they also fail to see her for who she is, too busy worrying about their own problems – or their appearance, as the case might be. Moving for Sir Walter and Elizabeth seems to be nothing more than a very long holiday, whereas it is left to Anne to mourn the loss of Kellynch, but especially, to mourn the memories of her mother the place holds.

> Anne moves from Kellynch to Uppercross, Lyme and Bath, she considers what home constitutes for others. For the social Musgroves it is cheerful noise and bustle, open house and everyone welcome. Generations of Musgroves have inhabited the Great House; they are solid, respectable and contented with who and where they are. More transient, but no less happy homes form a contrast: the Harvilles in their cramped lodgings in Lyme, the Crofts at Kellynch and in Bath. Despite scant financial resources and want of health, Captain Harville's ingenuity transforms an unpromising temporary space into a home for his wife and children. Anne recognises the influence of Harville's profession on his habits, her head and heart respond to 'the picture of repose and domestic happiness it presented'. (JONES, 2014, p. 36-7)

The Elliot family's upcoming move to Bath sees Anne staying with her godmother Lady Russell for a while, in Kellynch Lodge, so she can settle her father's business in that area, and get the house ready for the new lodgers, delaying her move to Bath at the same time, which suits her fine. Anne is responsible for settling the Elliot family's affairs, dealing with tenants

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[28] My italics.

and such, which primarily is her father's responsibility – failing that, Miss Elizabeth Elliot, having assumed the post of Lady of Kellynch, should be the one to help conduct business. Anne never complains of having to do her father's job, and she does not ask for any sort of recognition – all she wants is more time in the place she loves, more time at home, even if it means having to work. Once again, Anne proves her worth by dealing with other people's problems, and being perhaps the reason why the Elliots have not gained such a bad reputation: Anne makes sure her father *looks* like a good property owner.

Anne's comfort is that the Crofts could not be better tenants. They seem very happy together, they suit each other. Mrs Croft signed up for the life of a wanderer, always going from place to place on a ship, not having a fixed home, renting when on shore, knowing the sea might call at any moment – she will accompany her husband, wherever he goes, he is *home* to her. The Crofts' place seems to be with one another, as opposed to a physical place: no matter where they are, it will be home for them, for they have found each other – their marriage is their home, they are not bound to land or property. Certainly a striking contrast to Sir Walter's necessity to possess worldly goods, to have his house in a fashionable part of Bath – even if not as fashionable as he would have liked. For the first time in years, and at least until the next war starts, Admiral and Mrs Croft will use Kellynch-hall as their resting place, and will take care of it as if it were their own.

> *Persuasion* considers the domestic virtues of the well-travelled naval men back on dry land; men with no fixed addresses, no estate, no pretentions to inheritance. A keen sense of what home means to them permeates the fabric of the novel. Admiral and Mrs Croft are at home wherever they are. At Kellynch, they effect small improvements for their own and the servants' benefit, take an interest in their livestock and acquaint themselves with the immediate area. For them, home is wherever they happen to be together, whether on-board ship, on a country estate, or in a Bath lodging house. (JONES, 2014, p. 37)

The Crofts are one of the only genuinely happy couples in Austen's works, and I refer here to the couples who surround the heroines, as opposed to the ones formed in the course of the novels, as it is virtually impossible to determine what happens to those in their 'happily ever after'. Their happiness is obvious, but not ostentatious, explaining why they are so endearing and why they serve as Anne's example of what a happy relationship should be like.

As much as the idea of staying with Lady Russell is appealing to her, Anne's stay in Kellynch Lodge is short-lived, for her younger sister Mary is ill and needs Anne around to help

with the children – or that is what she claims. Mary, much like her father and oldest sister, worries more about appearance than about disposition, and even though she had to marry beneath her (the Musgroves have no title, but Charles is the heir to their worldly goods, making him decent husband material), she is still very snobbish and class conscious.

Anne's arrival at Uppercross makes her realise how only a few miles journey can bring about great change of ideas and opinions. This thought, as mentioned before, is a motor to this thesis, for it is made clear from the start that Anne is very aware of her surroundings and of the people with whom she interacts – Anne is a listener, and never is that characteristic more tested than when she is at Uppercross. In the Great House in Uppercross there is warmth; differently from what she knows in Kellynch Hall, the Musgroves are always very kind to Anne – in Uppercross, she is not "just Anne", she is someone with whom they all enjoy spending time, even if just to have her listen to their problems. Even though it is not her house, she seems to be more at home there, possibly because her presence is appreciated as opposed to being considered a nuisance who does not fit their beauty ideals.

At Uppercross, Anne finds herself in between two houses: the main house, inhabited by the senior Musgroves and their two daughters, and the smaller one, where her sister and brother-in-law live with their two sons. The two houses are important not only for being two of the main locations of the novel's first half, but also because of the way Anne is treated in each. In the Great House, everybody cares about Anne, they respect her opinions – at least more than her own family do – and enjoy her company; in Mary's house she is just an extra pair of hands to help deal with the children – and considering that she is usually better at it than their parents, it is not surprising that Mary and Charles like having her around. Despite their different treatments of Anne, her most important characteristic for the inhabitants of both houses was that of being a good listener – she is the outsider with whom they can share their complaints about one another: "She could do little more than listen patiently, soften every grievance, and excuse each to the other; give them all hints of the forbearance necessary between such near neighbours, and make those hints broadest which were meant for her sister's benefit" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 44).

So far, we have seen that Anne is not herself with her father and eldest sister, nor is she herself with her godmother, whom she loves, but whose meddling resulted in years of heartbreak. Mary sees Anne almost as a maid, and Charles Musgrove is very kind to her, but he seems to spend as much time as possible away from the house, and when he is around, he is

more than happy to give in to Mary's abuse of Anne. She is appreciated for who she is by the senior Musgroves, but they do not know her heart. It would seem that when we meet Anne Elliot, she has not yet found the place where she belongs, and throughout *Persuasion* we will see Anne experimenting with people and places, getting to know herself better, broadening her horizons and finding her way "home", wherever – or *who*ever – home may be.

It is during her stay at the Musgroves that we first see Captain Wentworth. Anne manages to delay their first meeting, but not for long. Wentworth and Anne's first reunion in many years finally takes place, and what they both see is different from what they remembered. Frederick Wentworth went from being a lowly sailor to a being a respected captain in His Majesty's Navy, he has made himself a decent fortune and, not surprisingly, he is looking for a wife[29]; Anne, on the other hand, has grown old and unhappy, and the Captain himself admits, to Anne's mortification, that he would not have known her.

> Her eye half met Captain Wentworth's, a bow, a curtsey passed; she heard his voice – he talked to Mary, said all that was right; said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing: the room seemed full – full of persons and voices--but a few minutes ended it. Charles shewed himself at the window, all was ready, their visitor had bowed and was gone; the Miss Musgroves were gone too, suddenly resolving to walk to the end of the village with the sportsmen: the room was cleared, and Anne might finish her breakfast as she could. […]
>
> Soon, however, she began to reason with herself, and try to be feeling less. Eight years, almost eight years had passed, since all had been given up. How absurd to be resuming the agitation which such an interval had banished into distance and indistinctness! What might not eight years do? Events of every description, changes, alienations, removals – all, all must be comprised in it; and oblivion of the past--how natural, how certain too! It included nearly a third part of her own life. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 56)

There might be peace for England, but there is no such thing for Anne. Eight and a half years had dissolved in seconds the moment her eyes met the Captain's: "she found, that to retentive feelings eight years may be little more than nothing" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 56). Anne's apparent calm and tranquillity are challenged by the whirlwind of feelings in front of her. "Anne's love for Wentworth has to break through such false peace and tidy chronology into the stir and roar of a messier, potentially traumatic history" (FAVRET, 2010, p. 162). Not only was Anne thrown away from the comfort and safety of her well-known surroundings, she now

[29] "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a great fortune must be in want of a wife", as Austen cleverly puts in the now proverbial opening lines of *Pride and Prejudice*.

has to face her past and future, seemingly without a safe harbour where she could rest and recharge.

With the reappearance of Captain Wentworth, the dynamics of the story start to shift. The Musgroves love him; Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove take to the Captain and waste no time in including him in all sorts of activities; Charles Musgrove befriends the man instantly, and Mary looks up to him. Alongside Wentworth come Admiral Croft and his wife Sophia (née Wentworth), the new lodgers of Kellynch Hall, where the Captain is also staying. Anne's home does not belong to her any longer, at least for the time being, and its occupants could have been her family members, had she married Wentworth. It must be strange for Anne having the man with whom she once had such a special connection to be living in her ancestral home, even if she is not there any longer. In the end of the third chapter, when she learns who the new lodgers will be, she has a moment of reflection thinking about what it would be like to have the Captain walking through her home, living a life no longer intertwined with hers. Now he is there, at her house, belonging there like she, perhaps, never did.

3.2 LYME REGIS: A WALK DOWN THE COBB

The arrival of Captain Wentworth brings about a succession of geographical movements, starting with what starts as a simple walk around Uppercross. It is a difficult moment for Anne Elliot, as she sees herself as the odd one out, as if the walk was a micro representation of what happens in her daily life, "Anne's object was, not to be in the way of anybody, and where the narrow paths across the fields made many separations necessary, to keep with her brother and sister" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 78). She tries to find pleasure in the walk itself, but it becomes particularly hard when she cannot help but overhear Wentworth's interactions with Henrietta and mostly with Louisa Musgrove, flirting with the girl so much so that one cannot but think he meant to be heard and make Anne jealous – which he succeeds in doing.

Much information is passed on in *Persuasion* through overhearing. Anne and Wentworth barely interact at all at during the group's walk around Uppercross, which does not stop Anne from learning about the new man Wentworth has become, and how their previous

relationship affected his feelings. Heard by Anne, and with the aid of a hazelnut – one of the rare discourse aids in Austen – Wentworth explains his wishes for someone who will not yield to persuasion.

> 'Here is a nut,' said he, catching one down from an upper bough, 'to exemplify: a beautiful glossy nut, which, blessed with original strength, has outlived all the storms of autumn. Not a puncture, not a weak spot any where. This nut,' he continued, with playful solemnity, 'while so many of its brethren have fallen and been trodden under foot, is still in possession of all the happiness that a hazel nut can be supposed capable of.' Then returning to his former earnest tone – 'My first wish for all whom I am interested in, is that they should be firm.' (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 81).

It could not be made more obvious that Wentworth's speech is an attack at Anne – even if he does not know she can overhear them, he sounds like a wounded man, and in his words we can read anger and a degree of despair. Louisa then reveals to Wentworth – and to the reader – the story of Anne's refusal to marry Charles, who supposedly proposed to Anne, had his offer met with a refusal, and then some time later, made an offer to Anne's youngest sister Mary. According to Louisa, Anne's refusal was due to Lady Russell's intervention. Be as it may, the news that Anne is not married to another man because Lady Russell persuaded her not to is bound to have an effect on the Captain.

Despite having spent the duration of the walk flirting with Louisa, and proclaiming how, in his opinion, being led by someone else's persuasion is close to a character flaw, the arrival of his sister and brother-in-law in their gig prompts Wentworth to think of Anne, and even though she denies it, he *notices* her, and is able to tell how tired she really is. While the others will make their way back on foot, Wentworth helps Anne onto the vehicle, and she makes her way home with the Crofts. Anne's time on the gig with the Crofts allows her to observe them, and their successful marriage. The Crofts are not completely bound by gender roles unlike most of the English society at the time: "Unlike many a contemporary husband resenting his wife for reading a map and implying that he might be lost, the Admiral happily shares the reins with his cool-headed wife and thus arrives safely at the right destination" (AUERBACH, 2004, p. 242-3), complementing that "by coolly giving the reins a better direction herself, they happily passed the danger; and by once afterwards judiciously putting out her hand, they neither fell into a rut, nor ran foul of a dung-cart; and Anne, with some amusement at their style of driving, which she imagined no bad representation of the general guidance of their affairs, found herself safely deposited by them at the cottage (AUERBACH, 2004, p. 242-3)."

Of all Austen's couples, the Crofts are, probably, the best matched one, at least from a contemporary perspective. There is not hierarchy between them – they are a partnership, and that makes all the difference. Their place in the world is with each other, and that knowledge allows them to be equal. Despite being a very manly character, the Admiral has no need to dominate his companion, and he and Mrs Croft are able to share power. Their relationship is Anne and Wentworth's example on how to lead a successful life: a relationship should not be about the strong protecting the weak, it should be about partnership and equality.

The second main event caused by Wentworth's presence is the group's trip to Lyme Regis, a coastal town in Dorset, in the south west of England. The two last chapters of the first volume of *Persuasion* describe the trip to Lyme, and they are a turning point in the novel for the majority of the characters involved. "The Lyme scenes in *Persuasion* are beautifully positioned between the long autumnal exposition in the country and the winter denouement of about equal length and weight in Bath. The narrative takes us to Lyme for only one night and the best part of two days" (LANE, 2003, p. 31). Captain Wentworth wishes to visit some friends in the area, and a trip is organised amongst the inhabitants of Uppercross. It gives everybody the opportunity to have a change of airs, to get in contact with the sea, and most importantly, it gives Anne a chance to meet Captain Wentworth's navy friends, people who would have been her friends, had she stayed with him. Lyme Regis, much like other places in Austen's fiction, was well known to her. Austen does not include many descriptions of the appearance of people and places in her novels, Lyme, however, is worthy of a full page.

> After securing accommodations, and ordering a dinner at one of the inns, the next thing to be done was unquestionably to walk directly down to the sea. They were come too late in the year for any amusement or variety which Lyme as a public place, might offer. The rooms were shut up, the lodgers almost all gone, scarcely any family but of the residents left; and as there is nothing to admire in the buildings themselves, 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. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 89)

In 1803 and again in 1804, Austen herself spent family holidays there, walking, dancing, bathing, and keenly observing both the landscape and the people" (MORRISON, 2011, p. 137n1). Her knowledge of the town allowed her to write about it in detail, as the passage above makes clear; Austen knew the geography of the place and its surroundings well, Austen's time in Lyme Regis can be thought to have been particularly good for it was an interlude to her time in the city she was not too keen on, Bath. "For the modern visitor to Lyme, sauntering on the Cobb, exploring the narrow streets of the old town, and enjoying the natural beauty of the cliffs and shore, it is easy to see how the place captured her imagination" (LANE, 2003, p 1). Austen's views on Bath might have been dubious, but when it came to Lyme, her descriptions were heartfelt, as she went on to make the seaside town one of the most important places in the bulk of her works, as says Maggie Lane (2003, p. 1), "only two chapters of that novel are set in Lyme, yet they are two of the most memorable chapters in the whole body of her work, in terms of both action and feeling."

Like many other places in England, Lyme Regis claims its connection to Austen, dedicating a section of their local museum to the writer. Austen left a mark wherever she went, and the twenty-first century reader has the opportunity to follow in her footsteps. Lyme Regis is one of the most important places in Austen's fiction, as it clearly held a special place in her heart as well. Like the locals, she calls it just "Lyme" in *Persuasion*, probably because the use of "Regis" was not in fashion during her time there.

> Lyme Regis (meaning King's Lyme) dates from 1284, when Edward I gave it a royal charter. This was not a special honour – it was one of eight granted in the same year – but a strategy to make money for the crown. In return for certain trading privileges and their own minor courts, these towns had to pay an annual rent and taxes to the royal exchequer, administered and collected by the King's Bailiff. Lyme was also entitled to send two members to Parliament, a practice that became increasingly hard to justify as the town shrank in national significance but which endured right up to the great Reform Act of 1832." (LANE, 2003, p. 7).

In 1803, the Austens went on holidays during the autumn, and through letters it is possible to conclude that they were in Lyme as late as November 5th. "This November holiday would at least have shown Jane Austen how genial the climate can be even so late in the year,

giving her confidence to set *Persuasion* out of doors at Lyme in November 1814 – and even to have her character Mary Musgrove, no stoic, bathe then" (LANE, 2003, p. 25-28). When Austen began *Persuasion*, in August 1815, she was probably aware that her chances to see the sea ever again were very small – her last seaside holidays had been in 1805. Maggie Lane (2003, p. 31) explains that "Jane Austen's thoughts seemed increasingly to focus on the sea. In the last two novels published in her lifetime, it was the sea itself which had made Portsmouth bearable to Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*, while the heroine of *Emma* lamented that she had never seen the sea – a deficiency to be remedied on her honeymoon". It is no surprise, therefore, that the sea played such a great part in her last novel, in which "a passage set in a real seaside place was to form the pivot". Her longing for the sea she would never see again is a major part of the unfinished *Sanditon,* which "took as its very subject and setting the development of an imaginary seaside resort" (LANE, 2003, p. 31).

IMAGE 12– Lyme Regis

No other place in Austen's fiction received such praise as Lyme Regis (Image 12). Not only was the seaside town commended for its environs, its people are also some of the best in Austen's works. We are here introduced to more members of the navy, and their hospitality and friendship are amongst the many reasons why Austen esteems the naval officers so highly. It is not surprising that she placed the honourable sailors in one of her favourite towns – and here, once again, residence speaks of character, and Lyme recommends the Harvilles.

The Harvilles are most welcoming, and Anne feels at home with them, even though she is not blind to their less than ideal living conditions, proving that not everyone succeeds financially in the navy, “Captain Harville had taken his present house for half a year, his taste, and his health, and his fortune all directing him to a residence unexpansive” (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 91), and there he settled with his wife and children. Their house is modest, not to say poor, but there is warmth in it, and the sight and company of such delightful people soon makes Anne forget their living conditions were far from perfect.

> On quitting the Cobb, they all went indoors with their new friends, and found rooms so small as none but those who invite from the heart could think capable of accommodating so many. Anne had a moment's astonishment on the subject herself; but it was soon lost in the pleasanter feelings which sprang from the sight of all the ingenious contrivances and nice arrangements of Captain Harville, to turn the actual space to the best possible account, to supply the deficiencies of lodging-house furniture, and defend the windows and doors against the winter storms to be expected. The varieties in the fitting-up of the rooms, where the common necessaries provided by the owner, in the common indifferent plight, were contrasted with some few articles of a rare species of wood, excellently worked up, and with something curious and valuable from all the distant countries Captain Harville had visited, were more than amusing to Anne: connected as it all was with his profession, the fruit of its labours, 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. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 92)

With the Harvilles, in the crammed house, lived Captain Benwick, an excellent young man, according to Captain Wentworth, who

> had been engaged to Captain Harville's sister, and was now mourning her loss. They had been a year or two waiting for fortune and promotion. Fortune came, his prize-money as lieutenant being great; promotion, too, came at last; but Fanny Harville did not live to know it. She had died the preceding summer, while he was at sea. Captain Wentworth believed it impossible for man to be more attached to woman than poor Benwick had been to Fanny Harville, or to be more deeply afflicted under the dreadful change. He considered his disposition as of the sort which must suffer heavily, uniting very strong feelings with quiet, serious, and retiring manners, and a decided taste for reading, and sedentary pursuits. To finish the interest of the story, the friendship between him and the Harvilles seemed, if possible, augmented by the event which closed all their views of alliance, and Captain Benwick was now living with them entirely. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 90-1)

Captain Benwick and Anne Elliot form a bond over literature. He is very fond of poetry and reads Byron like he drinks water. Considering his state of mourning, Anne believes the romantic poets are not the right choice of reading material for the young man, and goes on to

recommend “a larger allowance of prose in his daily study” (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 94), for which the Captain seemed grateful, even if he did not believe any amount of books could ameliorate his current state of mind and heart. The intellectual connection formed between the two of them through literature can be misleading, for it is possible to think Benwick has some interest in Anne beyond friendship, which, as we find out later on in the novel, does not seem to be the case. Nonetheless, people make certain assumptions due to seeing them together, and Captain Wentworth tastes some of his own medicine, for now he is the one having to endure the person he loved being admired by another.

It is Anne’s first time staying at an inn. The Regency’s version of hotels were very busy in the early nineteenth century. It is interesting to notice that Austen places her heroine in a transition place, rather than at the Harvilles’ home, for example, where nobody stays for long, but, at the same time, a place where many people visit, even if for a short while. Inns, much like hotels, are some sort of ‘no man’s land’, as far from home as they could possibly be. They had a choice between the two principal inns in Lyme at the time, “The Golden Lion and the Three Cups” (MORRISON, 2011, p. 138n6), and to this day there is much debate on which of the two was chosen by the Musgroves and Mr Elliot. Evidence points to The Three Cups, for it was supposedly the more fashionable of the two, but it is impossible to know for certain (LANE, 2003, p. 41-2). Most likely, Austen took inspiration from those places to create her own fictional inn.

The Lyme air brings youth back to Anne’s cheeks, and not only does she feel rejuvenated, she attracts the attention of the opposite sex: first, Captain Benwick shows his interest in her, even if not a lasting one, and then she attracts the eyes of a certain gentleman, later revealed to be Mr William Elliot, the heir presumptive of Sir Walter Elliot, both of which do not go unnoticed by Captain Wentworth. The latter happens when Anne, Henrietta, Louisa and Captain Wentworth are walking along the Cobb.

> When they came to the steps leading upwards from the beach, a gentleman, at the same moment preparing to come down, politely drew back, and stopped to give them way. They ascended and passed him; and as they passed, Anne's face caught his eye, and he looked at her with a degree of earnest admiration which she could not be insensible of. She was looking remarkably well; her very regular, very pretty features, having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion, and by the animations of eye which it had also produced. It was evident that the gentleman (completely a gentleman in manner) admired her exceedingly. Captain Wentworth looked round at her instantly in a way which shewed his noticing of it. He gave her a momentary glance, a glance of brightness, which

> seemed to say, 'That man is struck with you, and even I, at this moment, see something like Anne Elliot again.' (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 97)

The change of scenery does Anne good, and one has to acknowledge the significance of the sea air bringing her bloom back. Wentworth's sea: would her life at sea have been better than the sheltered and lonely existence with the Elliots? There is danger in the sea, but there is also danger in a life not lived, and Anne's rosy cheeks by the sea are probably testament to the life she has inside her, waiting to bloom, a life that is awoken by the sea.

Lyme Regis is all happiness and rosy cheeks, but it also happens to be where tragedy strikes. Trying to prove herself strong-minded, Louise Musgrove plays a dangerous game on the steps of the Cobb (Image 13), a famous spot in Lyme to this day, jumping so Captain Wentworth can catch her. If the premise of the game does not sound good, it is not surprising that the results are even worse: during one of her jumps, she miscalculates the distance, and the Captain is caught by surprise, resulting in Louisa's dramatic fall and uproar of the whole group. It is a decisive moment, a turning point in the narrative, as it is the moment when Wentworth realises the dangers of flippant flirtation and of determination that does not yield to reason.

> There was too much wind to make the high part of the new Cobb pleasant for the ladies, and they agreed to get down the steps to the lower, and all were contented to pass quietly and carefully down the steep flight, excepting Louisa: she must be jumped down them by Captain Wentworth. In all their walks he had had to jump her from the stiles; the sensation was delightful to her. The hardness of the pavement for her feet made him less willing upon the present occasion; he did it, however. She was safely down, and instantly to shew her enjoyment, ran up the steps to be jumped down again. He advised her against it, thought the jar too great; but no, he reasoned and talked in vain, she smiled and said, "I am determined I will": he put out his hands; she was too precipitate by half a second, she fell on the pavement on the Lower Cobb, and was taken up lifeless!
>
> There was no wound, no blood, no visible bruise; but her eyes were closed, she breathed not, her face was like death. The horror of that moment to all who stood around! (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 101-2)

Captain Wentworth despairs at the sight of Louisa, believing her current condition was his fault, as he in the past encouraged her strong willed mind. He turns his eyes to Anne, the only one who keeps calm and does not panic at the sight of Louisa, getting people under control, assigning them roles in order to fetch help. Anne proves herself superior and enlightened, and for the first time in eight years, Wentworth sees her value, as all "look to her for directions"

(AUSTEN, 2003, p. 103).

IMAGE 13 – The Cobb steps, from where Louisa jumped

Louisa's fall has been target of many interpretations along the years. Two of the most interesting ones come from Christopher Gillie (1994) and John Wiltshire (1992). The former reminds us of the common view of the scene as being the most Austen is capable of doing when it comes to real drama; according to Gillie, however, "it illustrates a virtue of her realism and not a weakness in her imagination: in secure circumstances of life it is precisely such an episode – a flighty young girl taking a foolish risk – that does bring tragedy", and he adds that the incident has double significance: "the risk that Louisa takes of jumping into Wentworth's arms before he is ready for her is symbolic of the risk Anne did not take when she refused Wentworth's first offer" (GILLIE, 1994, p. 158). Secondly, Louisa's fall results in the perfect opportunity for Anne "to show the real strength of her character for the first time; it is she who keeps her head and sees what needs to be done, while the other two women respectively faint and scream hysterically, and the men are shocked into immobility" (GILLIE, 1994, p. 158).

Wiltshire's take on the incident is different, albeit not exclusive of the first one. According to him, the accident is a reminder that human beings are not just minds, but are also bodies, bodies that can be broken at that. More than that, the event also serves to illustrate the psychopathology of the everyday life:

> Louisa's escapade can readily be seen as a partly unconscious aspect of her courtship of Wentworth since it invites him to confirm the self-image he has helped to create, and because she is inspirited by his presence (as by the weather, the occasion, and her own bodily vitality): and his failure to reciprocate can be read erotically too. He is not feeling and responding as she is feeling: their missing each other's hands at 'the fatal moment' is a sign that he cannot 'attach himself' to her, which he already unconsciously knows. (WILTSHIRE, 1992, p. 187-8)

Both interpretations add to this analysis, and a union of both sheds light to the events of the novel. Louisa was trying to live up to the image of herself she created with the help of Captain Wentworth: that of a very determined young woman. Her determination went too far, and he was not ready to face the consequences of what he believed to admire above all things. Louisa heeds no one, and takes the plunge when Wentworth is not expecting it. Had Anne done the same, there is no telling what could have happened to her.

Louisa's point is more than a turning point in the story itself, it also changes the characters, or rather, it opens their eyes. Anne seems to have lost all hope in getting Wentworth's affections back, just when he is realising that his love was just dulled, not finished. His reaction to learning that Louisa is not dead and will likely be fine is telling, to Anne's eyes, of deep affection. Wentworth's reaction was, however, nothing more than relief, as we learn later, for his life could now go on as he wished, as he would not be obliged to an invalid. To Anne, on the other hand, her chances of happiness with the man she loves were compromised, because all in their party believed that Louisa and Wentworth had reached some sort of agreement[30]. Despite the looks and plead for help from the Captain, Anne does not hold on to hope.

The party breaks, as decisions are made concerning who will stay in Lyme with Louisa, and who will go on ahead to tell the Musgroves of the accident. Wentworth makes it clear he believes Anne is the right person to stay with Louisa, as there is "no one so proper, so capable as Anne" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 106). Mary, however, insists that if anyone is staying it should be her, as she is part of Louisa's family. It is then decided that Anne will escort Henrietta back to the Musgroves, accompanied by the Captain, while Charles and Mary stay behind with Louisa. "They got on fast. Anne was astonished to recognise the same hills and the same objects so soon. Their actual speed, heightened by some dread of the conclusion, made the road appear

[30] To say a gentleman and a lady have reached an agreement was close to saying they were in a relationship, of which marriage was the final point.

but half as long as on the day before" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 106).

During their journey back to Uppercross, Anne has a chance to reflect on the happenings of the last couple of days, even if Wentworth's presence was disturbing to her peace of mind. Anne is more secure of herself, more confident that she has been doing the right things, making the correct decisions. For the first time we have access to thoughts that do not regret the past, but are reconciled with it, so much so that she does not question her actions, but his.

> Anne wondered whether it ever occurred to him now, to question the justness of his own previous opinion as to the universal felicity and advantage of firmness of character, and whether it might strike him, that, like all other qualities of the mind, it should have its proportions and limits. She thought it could scarcely escape him to feel that a persuadable temper might sometimes be as much in favour of happiness as a very resolute character. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 108)

Thus ends Volume 1 of *Persuasion*, after a whirlwind of events. Most of what is to come seems to have started at Lyme, where Wentworth returns after delivering the news of the accident to the Musgroves. Henrietta is now safely at home, and Anne starts preparations for her move to Bath. From this point onwards, the narrative takes place in its entirety in Bath, but it is not the last we hear of Lyme Regis.

3.3 BATH AND BEYOND

Bath in the early nineteenth century was a place to see and be seen, and a place Jane Austen knew well – both as a visitor and as a resident. Differently from *Northanger Abbey*'s Catherine Morland, for whom Bath held all sorts of entertainment and novelty (she was, after all, nothing more than a tourist in the city), for Anne Elliot (and for Austen herself) Bath was as far from her heart's desire as a place could be. Anne's view of Bath reflects Austen's view of the city when she moved there with her family in the early years of the nineteenth century – from being an occasional visitor to the city, she became its resident, which changed her views of the place. It is a known fact that there is a big difference between being a visitor and a local,

and Austen knew that well, having encountered herself in both situations before starting to write *Persuasion*.

> That Bath played a significant part in the life and work of Jane Austen is beyond question. Leisurely visits to the city in the 1790s, and five years residence there from 1801 to 1806, extended her experience and enriched her understanding of contemporary society. This bore fruit in the fiction published between 1811 and 1817. In two of the six novels, Bath provides a specific setting which not only assists the progress of the plot – gives her characters something to *do*, in other words – but helps reveal where they stand on a scale of moral values. Jane Austen could depend upon Bath, its customs and topography, being familiar to her readers. Second only to London, the importance of Bath to the national culture during her lifetime is evident from the fact that none of her novels is without reference to the city, whether the story takes us there or not. (LANE, 2003, p. 5)

As mentioned before, Bath features in all of Austen's six main works; however, it is *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* that are known as the "Bath novels", for a lot of the action in both takes place in the city. The use of the city as background suited Austen twofold: not only did she know the city well, her readers at the time would be familiar with the place as well. Austen's contemporary readers would have known the Bath she was talking about in her novels, as it was one of the most famous cities in England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

To the twenty-first century reader, a quick internet search will result in pictures of the city, built entirely with the famous Bath stone[31], giving it an air of uniformity, and in the Georgian style of straight columns and rounded ceilings, which gives it a distinctive and unique appearance. Bath is known to this day for the Royal Circle and Royal Crescent, both testaments to Georgian architecture. More importantly than its architectural appearance for this work is the fact that Bath worked as a mirror of Georgian society and its values, being, therefore, a superb location for two of the main works of the Regency's principal writer. Due to its historical importance, Bath became, in 1987, a World Heritage Site[32].

> The significance of Bath, both as product and a promulgator of Georgian ideas and aspirations can hardly be exaggerated. The city played a unique part in facilitating the new eighteenth century pursuits – of pleasure, of polished manners, of social contacts, of correct taste. Provided they had a certain amount of education, leisure and

[31] The Bath Stone is an oolitic limestone found in the south west of England, mainly in Somersetshire.

[32] World Heritage Sites are places listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as being of special relevance.

> money to spend, people from all levels of society could mingle and learn from each other, enjoy civilised pleasures, and feel free to improve themselves – in many senses of the word. It was this sense of freedom, this provision of the conditions required for a (relatively) socially mobile population that Bath contributed to the national good. The existence of Bath prevented a build-up of such social unrest as a repressed and frustrated emergent class is likely to generate. […] (LANE, 1996, p. 74)

The prosperity of Bath was great during the first half of the eighteenth century, but the increasing pressure and presence of lower classes in the city led to the wealthier and aristocratic residents to take their fashions and connections elsewhere. At the same time, as the gentry took over the top layer[33] of the city's inhabitants, they started aiming for more private affairs, giving priority to private parties and exclusive affairs – much like Sir Walter and Elizabeth, who due to their reduced funds rarely gave parties, but were always more than happy to attend exclusive events.

Yes, Bath was a place to see and be seen, but primarily, it was also famous for its medicinal waters. "Whatever other attractions drew visitors to Bath through the course of the eighteenth century, it was in quest of a cure for their many ailments that they first came, and that they continued to come in great measure even in Jane Austen's day" (LANE, 2003, p. 41). Although the waters were at first the main attraction, soon things started to change, and "health very soon became a mere pretext, and that society and amusement were what they really sought from Bath." (LANE, 2003, p. 41). In fairness to Austen's characters, most of them did seem to have visited Bath to benefit from the waters. As Maggie Lane wisely remarks, "it was often friends and relations of the invalid who found themselves provided with a fine excuse for a few weeks in Bath, and who swelled the ranks of the idle pleasure seekers".

Throughout the years, Bath suffered a series of transformations, and the Bath in *Northanger Abbey* is not quite the same as the one in *Persuasion*, beyond their characters' impressions of the place. With the abundant economic changes in the early nineteenth century, it is not surprising that the public who frequented cities like Bath were also changing. Albeit still very popular, Bath was no London, and people of real importance would not choose the city as their holiday destination, they would go to London, which was as good as the centre of the world at the time.

[33] In London, Sir Walter would have been another lowly aristocrat, with a title that did not hold much value. In Bath, on the other hand, he was at the top of the social scale, which proves that, to him, Bath was the right choice of place to retrench.

> Jane Austen observed some of the later stages of this transformation for herself, and it has often been remarked with accuracy and sensitivity the two portraits of the city given in *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* reflect the social, moral and cultural changes which had taken place in the 17 or 18 years between the writing of these two novels, the first and the last which she completed. The two portraits, both equally valid, also present two quite different functions of the city in terms of fiction. To Catherine Morland, Bath represents a pleasurable education; to Anne Elliot an unwelcome uprooting. Their different experiences are beautifully in tune with the different moods of the city Jane Austen captures, evidence at once of her perfect mastery of her material, and her fidelity to real life. (LANE, 2003, p. 10)

As noted in Chapter One of this work, Austen was taken to Bath against her wishes, as she, much like her Anne Elliot, preferred the countryside to the city. Anne, however, was not as lucky as Austen herself, or even Catherine Morland, for we never hear of her leaving the city behind for walks through the surrounding countryside, which Austen did with frequency, and on which Catherine is taken by her friends: "[…] Anne has no opportunity to ramble beyond the city. It really is physical as well as social constriction to her" (LANE, 1996, p. 85). Anne does walk in Bath, and she does it quite a lot it by herself, which was not approved of by all. The feeling of constraint never alleviates, however, as she is not only trapped by the place, she is also trapped by people – "there is in the Bath scenes of *Persuasion* the constant feeling of being surrounded and hemmed in by crowds of people, and not only in the formal social gatherings" (LANE, 1996, p. 85).

The Austens moved to Bath in 1801, and it could be argued that they never really settled there, for given their financial situation – not wealthy even before the death of Reverend Austen – during their Bath years, they moved from house to house in the city. This constant moving cannot but have helped to increase Austen's dislike of the city and, at the same time, to augment her knowledge of the place. Despite not being very fond of it, Jane Austen knew Bath very well, meaning that she was able to locate her characters in places that would be revealing of who they were. Unlike the Austens, the Elliots, on the other hand, had a fixed house in the city, which, nevertheless, was not home to Anne.

Austen's arrivals in Bath had always being under rain and bad weather; when she arrives to make it her home, however, there is sunshine, although her description of it would not make one think so, being more a reflection of her state of mind than of the place itself: "[…] it was all vapour, shadow, smoke and confusion" (Letter 35, 1801, p. 86). Anne Elliot's first impressions of Bath at her arrival are not dissimilar to those of her creator, but very

different from those of her travel companion, Lady Russell.

> Everybody has their taste in noises as well as in other matters; and sounds are quite innoxious, or most distressing, by their sort rather than their quantity. When Lady Russell, not long afterwards, was entering Bath on a wet afternoon, and driving through the long course of streets from the Old Bridge to Camden Place, amidst the dash of other carriages, the heavy rumble of carts and drays, the bawling of newsmen, muffin-men, and milk-men, and the ceaseless clink of pattens, she made no complaint. No, these were noises which belonged to the winter pleasures: her spirits rose under their influence; and like Mrs. Musgrove, she was feeling, though not saying, that after being long in the country, nothing could be so good for her as a little quiet cheerfulness.
>
> Anne did not share these feelings. She persisted in a very determined, though very silent disinclination for Bath; caught the first dim view of the extensive buildings, smoking in rain, without any wish of seeing them better; felt their progress through the streets to be, however disagreeable, yet too rapid; for who would be glad to see her when she arrived? And looked back with fond regret to the bustles of Uppercross and the seclusion of Kellynch. (AUSTEN, 2003, 126-7)

It is not Anne's first time in the city, for as a young girl she had attended school there, and made friends; amongst these friends is Mrs Smith, now a sickly woman of little means, but whose company Anne welcomes back into her life. Bath sees the congregation of all the main characters in *Persuasion*, and it is the place where the plot unfolds and resolves itself. It is in Bath that Anne finally meets Mr Elliot officially, learning his true nature; it is where she rekindles her friendship with an old school friend, which does her good; and, most importantly, Bath is where Anne reencounters Captain Wentworth, where they speak what is on their minds and in their hearts, finding their way back to each other. Meanwhile, Lady Russell, who accompanied Anne to town, is keen to join Sir Walter, Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's companion Mrs Clay, in their social engagements and in the cultural activities Bath provides.

Bath in *Persuasion* can be seen as a microcosm of the English society of the time, a small, and not as important, version of London, perhaps. Anne transits from the company of one of the most important people in Bath – Lady Dalrymple, an Irish relative of the Elliots – to one of the least important people, or the poorest – Mrs Smith, Anne's old school friend – like few people could, and in fact, like few do. Contrary to what is expected of Anne, she prioritises Mrs Smith when given the choice between her friend and the "important" relation, as Anne cares more about the quality of her company than their social position.

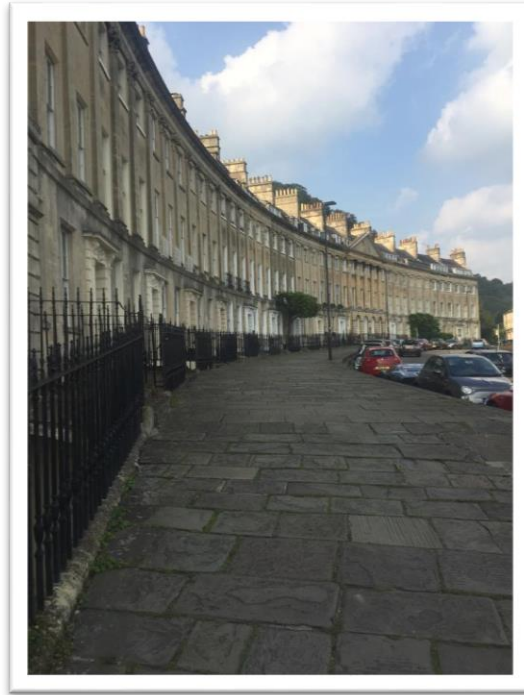

IMAGE 14 – Camden Crescent, very near the Elliots' Bath address

The Elliots have taken lodgings in Camden Place (Image 14), in the north part of the city, and despite the apparently good location, Morrison (2011) reminds us that looks can be deceiving, as Camden Place was badly planned and never completely finished, mostly due to unstable grounds, which is very symbolic for Sir Walter's choice of dwelling. Such precise choice could only have been made by someone expert in the city, which was Austen's case, having moved from house to house with frequency when she was in Bath: "The amount of time spent by Jane Austen in house-hunting and discussing various locations in Bath bore fruit when it came to place all her characters in appropriate addresses; but the choice of Camden Crescent, with its subtle yet glorious symbolism for Sir Walter Elliot, is surely unsurpassed" (LANE, 2003, p. 40). It would seem that his position in the world was threatened in more ways than he originally believed.

> Sir Walter had taken a very good house in Camden Place, a lofty dignified situation, such as becomes a man of consequence; and both he and Elizabeth were settled there, much to their satisfaction.
>
> Anne entered it with a sinking heart, anticipating an imprisonment of many months, and anxiously saying to herself, "Oh! when shall I leave you again?" A degree of unexpected cordiality, however, in the welcome she received, did her good. Her father and sister were glad to see her, for the sake of shewing her the house and furniture, and met her with kindness. Her making a fourth, when they sat down to dinner, was noticed as an advantage. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 128)

The positioning of the Elliots is more than just an address, as it is very symbolic of the social differences in the novel. Anne's friend, Mrs Smith, lives in Westgate Buildings, in the lower part of the city, a reflection of their different social status. Even the Musgroves and Crofts' choice of place to stay, a fictional inn called the White Heart, is telling, since given Austen's descriptions, the inn was near the Roman Baths and the Pump Rooms, making them neither low nor high – they are in between: not so low to be ignored by Sir Elliot, but still not high enough to be considered his equals. Austen once again points us to the fact that position, be it social or geographical, is a reflection of character, and social position can be very deceptive – as we know, Sir Walter's finances are in tatters, and his house is on unstable grounds. Arguably Austen and her contemporary readers might not have known the estate of the foundations of Camden Place, but this knowledge is here used for the purposes of analysis, and I will assume that Austen, if not most of her readers then, knew about it, as she was extremely meticulous about what she put in her novels.

Anne's arrival in Bath brings back a lesson learned in the early chapters of the novel, that of knowing our own nothingness beyond our own circle. Anne arrives in Bath with a head full of Lyme Regis and Uppercross, of Louisa and her fall, and Crofts in Kellynch-hall. Her father and sister, on the other hand, care nothing about her concerns, and all they talk about is Bath: "They had no inclination to listen to her. After laying out for some compliments of being deeply regretted in their old neighbourhood, which Anne could not pay, they had only a few faint enquiries to make, before the talk must be all their own. Uppercross excited no interest, Kellynch very little: it was all Bath" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 128). Doing justice to Sir Walter and Elizabeth, Anne also cares little for what they had to say, for her head and heart lay somewhere else.

It is not surprising that Anne is taken with her cousin Mr Elliot when they meet, for he too is willing to talk about Lyme, especially due to the fact that they were both there at the same time. Contrary to her father and sister's assumptions, William Elliot seems more interested in Anne than in Elizabeth, another proof that the sea did Anne good, and that her gain of confidence after Bath brought inner changes to outside appearance. Mr Elliot's attentions flatter Anne, and also give her hope that her stay in Bath will not be as dreadful as she expected. Despite Mr Elliot's real intentions, his interest in Anne seems to be genuine from the start.

> He sat down with them, and improved their conversation very much. There could be no doubt of his being a sensible man. Ten minutes were enough to certify that. His tone, his expressions, his choice of subject, his knowing where to stop; it was all the operation of a sensible, discerning mind. As soon as he could, he began to talk to her of Lyme, wanting to compare opinions respecting the place, but especially wanting to speak of the circumstance of their happening to be guests in the same inn at the same time; to give his own route, understand something of her, and regret that he should have lost such an opportunity of paying his respects to her. She gave him a short account of her party and business at Lyme. His regret increased as he listened. He had spent his whole solitary evening in the room adjoining theirs: had heard voices, mirth continually; thought they must be a most delightful set of people, longed to be with them, but certainly without the smallest suspicion of his possessing the shadow of a right to introduce himself. If he had but asked who the party were! The name of Musgrove would have told him enough. 'Well, it would serve to cure him of an absurd practice of never asking a question at an inn, which he had adopted, when quite a young man, on the principle of its being very ungenteel to be curious.' (AUSTEN, 2013, p. 134)

Once again in Austen, characters' feelings towards a place speak of their own morality and virtuosity. Bath is one of the main barometers of decency in Austen's *Persuasion*, and as readers we must be attentive to that, because it is never openly said that whoever likes Bath is "bad", and who dislikes it is "good". There is a pattern, however, amongst her characters and their level of decency in relation to their sentiments for the city. As Maggie Lane (2003, p. 95-96) reflects, "attitudes to Bath are a moral barometer. Sampled moderately, and in the right, unselfish spirit, Bath promotes friendship, cultural development and social maturity". There are many characters who, on the other hand, approach Bath for doubtful reasons: "not only the Elliots and the Thorpes, but characters from the four novels which are not set in Bath. In these books, Bath, lurking in the background as it were, really does seem an evil influence". Bath sees the seduction of Eliza Williams by John Willoughby before the story begins in *Sense and Sensibility*; it is also Wickham's place of escape from his marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*.

The narrator of *Persuasion* lets us know that, despite thinking himself above everyone else, Sir Walter mentions the connection with the Crofts, who are, to his eyes, below him, more often than the Crofts mention their connection with the baronet. There is a subtle note of desperation there: to a man of Sir Walter's pride, constantly mentioning the connection to a sailor – albeit an Admiral – is telling, once again, of the changing times in which the story takes place, where the baronet values the connection with an Admiral more than the Admiral values the connection with a member of the aristocracy.

Anne Elliot, not unlike Austen herself, defies propriety and goes on walks around the

city by herself. She is not the only character in Austen whose independent streak translates into long walks – Marianne Dashwood, in *Sense & Sensibility*, and Elizabeth Bennet, in *Pride & Prejudice*, are well acquainted with their surroundings due to frequent walks alone in the countryside. Anne's perimeter is the city of Bath, and she does not venture beyond it, unlike, as mentioned before, Austen herself and Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*. Anne Elliot ventures to different parts of the city, however, going as low as Westgate Buildings, to visit her old school friend. In the nineteenth century, most women of Anne's station would not go out without company or without a carriage. Anne does both, for like Elizabeth Bennet, Anne finds peace when walking by herself, and it is during these walks when she learns the most about her surroundings and the people who live there. Furthermore, they increase her knowledge of self, of who she is and of her place in the world.

Anne's reunion with Mrs Smith, sickly and poor, is bound to put things into perspective for Anne, and Mrs Smith's situation, her illness and inability to take care of herself due to her weakness are bound to remind Anne of how lucky she is for being her own person. Had Anne married Wentworth, and had he died at sea, who is to say she would be in a better situation than Mrs Smith?

The streets of Bath come alive in *Persuasion*, and it is on the streets of the city that a lot of the action happens. During her walks, Anne meets people and hears news from those she left behind in Kellynch and Uppercross. Anne goes from place to place with confidence, and she does not allow a little rain, for example, to spoil her time walking. Against her father's wishes, she goes from higher Bath to one of the lower – and least prestigious – parts of the city. It is not that Anne is unaware of social dictates, but she will not let them stop her from living her life *once again*.

It is on the streets of Bath that she encounters old friends and acquaintances, it is where she hears of Louisa and Captain Benwick's engagement; while out, she sees Wentworth for the first time since they separated at Uppercross, and the supposedly anonymous streets bring to her knowledge a suspicious encounter between Mrs Clay and Mr Elliot. Information, in the second half of the novel comes mainly through people on the streets or via post. Epistolary novels are a characteristic of the eighteenth century, but Austen still retained some of the old traditions in her works, and letters change hands constantly.

In *Northanger Abbey* the narrator says that if adventure does not come to a heroine, she

must seek it abroad, a sentence that rings as true to the first as to the last protagonist of Austen's major works. Very little happens to Anne Elliot in Kellynch-Hall; when she is in Bath, she finds excitement and news anywhere but at her father's new house. *Adventure and change are in the movements* – at the concert hall, in Molland's, at the White Heart, and on the streets. In the neutral territory of the Musgroves' lodging in the White Heart, Anne is able to voice her thoughts to Captain Harville, and overhearing her is Captain Wentworth, who is encouraged by what she says to be open about his feelings towards her in a letter. The busy main streets of Bath then give way to the quiet now famous Gravel Walk, behind the Royal Crescent, where the lovers, away from prying eyes, are able to reconnect and rekindle their relationship.

Characters come and go to Bath, and when there, they move around considerably. Sir Walter and Elizabeth are the first to arrive there, but are soon followed by Mr Elliot, with whom they rekindle their connection, then Anne and Lady Russell. The Crofts are also amongst the new arrivals in town, arriving shortly after Anne, and followed suit by Captain Wentworth. Harville and the Musgroves are also visitors to the city. Austen gives all her characters in *Persuasion* reasons to be in Bath. If Lyme Regis is *Persuasion*'s turning point, Bath is the place where the plot resolves itself.

Jane Austen's descriptions of Bath are of one who knows the city well, once again proving that she wrote about what she knew. Anne navigates the city with the dexterity of somebody who is familiar with its streets and alleys. She defies propriety by walking everywhere by herself, much like Austen would have done, and in her journeys across the city she encounters old friends and acquaintances, goes from the high circles to the poorer areas and, in the process, learns about herself and about those who surround her.

4. EMOTIONAL CROSSINGS

"But I hate to hear you talking so like a fine gentleman, and as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures. We none of us expect to be in smooth water all our days."
Jane Austen, *Persuasion*

Much has been said about Jane Austen's novels, and many reviews and critical approaches in existence remark on the fact that her novels are, intrinsically, coming-of-age stories. *Bildungsroman* is a German term to refer to stories that follow a character's development – it is defined in Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (BALDICK, 2008, p. 35) as "a kind of novel that follows the development of the hero or heroine from childhood or adolescence into adulthood, through a troubled quest for identity". It has also been said by many that most of Austen's novels, *Persuasion* being one of them, could not be considered *coming-of-age stories* for we do not follow the heroines from their younger years, as the novels tend to start when the protagonists are young adults. I stand with the first group of critics, and find it virtually impossible not to look at Jane Austen's works as journeys of self-discovery and personal growth, as coming-of-age narratives even if not from infancy. The coming-of-age in her novels relate to the transformations her heroines face, transformations that for most of them – certainly to Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* – could be attributed to, amongst other things, their comings and goings, how the places they go to and people they meet broaden their horizons and expand their self-knowledge. In this chapter, therefore, I intend to explore the emotional journeys the main characters of *Persuasion* go through, focusing on Anne, as it is her story.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, it is only when Elizabeth travels to the north of England with her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner, that she finally sees another side to Mr Darcy, and knows her opinion of him to have been harsh and unfair; travelling enables her to see beyond not only the England she knew, but also the people she thought she understood. In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland's trip to Bath and then onto Northanger Abbey itself teaches her that there

is a real world beyond the one she imagines in her head and reads in her beloved books; she seeks adventure abroad, as the narrator tells us, and in those adventures she makes friends, learns about people and falls in love. *Sense and Sensibility* starts with a journey as the Dashwood sisters are thrown out of the house where they grew up, facing from the start a new environment and being surrounded by different people. In *Mansfield Park* Fanny is taken from her parents as a young girl to live with her Aunt and Uncle Bertram; she longs to belong somewhere – when in Mansfield Park, she wonders about her brothers and sisters, but when she returns to visit her family in Portsmouth, she realises she does not belong with them either. Handsome and rich Emma Woodhouse, in *Emma*, has everything, but has never left Highbury, and the resolution of the plot brings with it a trip to the sea – as she grows up and better understands her own heart, she is able to leave the world of which she is the centre in order to go to unknown places.

What all these characters have in common is the fact that they are young adults when we meet them, all in their late teens or early twenties. What is different with Anne is that, unlike the other heroines, she is no longer a young lady, or at least, she is not a young lady by the standards of nineteenth century England. At twenty-seven, she is considered to be past her bloom, having little to no chance left of finding a husband. Anne's life seems to have stopped since her relationship with Captain Wentworth was broken. She lives for other people, always doing her best to help and please everybody, agreeing to do whatever they suggest, putting them first. That is how we meet her in the beginning of *Persuasion*, when she has no voice of her own – so much so that we only hear her speak for the first time in Chapter IV.

> From the opening of the novel, Anne Elliot is positioned as 'nobody': 'her word had no weight… – she was only Anne'. Her speech is never listened to, her private feelings never find an auditor. Even conversation with her friend Lady Russell is inhibited by a veritable 'elephant in the room', the unspoken fact of Anne's broken engagement. And, as Ann Gaylin writes, 'The narrative style conspires with the fact that Anne has no listener or confident except herself (and the reader)'. The novelist's technique mirrors the family's neglect. She is the unspeaking 'attentive listener' as the family's prospects are discussed; her contributions are often obliquely indicated, or taken for granted, as if they would be of little account to the reader as to her sisters and father. When she seeks to make her views about Mrs Clay known, her words are not given, only her sister's long and angry repudiation of her right to make any contribution. Anne, far more intelligent and cultivated than the people in her imprisoning environment, has an inner life unknown to them. (WILTSHIRE, 2014, p. 148).

This chapter, therefore, aims to journey through *Persuasion*'s characters' emotional

growth and changes, focusing on the protagonist Anne and how she went from quiet and mousy to full of bloom and agency. As we have seen so far, Anne is the only character able to transit freely amongst social classes and different generations from the start of the novel. It is only as the story progresses, however, that she learns how to travel within herself, and become an improved version of herself.

4.1 FINDING ANNE ELLIOT

Anne starts the novel organising the financial mess made by her father and elder sister in Kellynch-Hall. No one pays her attention, although it is safe to say her family would miss her help were she not there or not taking care of what is other people's responsibilities. Anne sees her father and sister off to Bath, and she then hopes to have some quiet time with her godmother and friend Lady Russell, but her hopes are short-lived as she is summoned to help her younger sister Mary to take care of her children, while Mary plays the sickly woman, who is miraculously better as soon as an invitation to dinner arrives. At the beginning of *Persuasion* Anne does not yet stand up for herself, and her voice is rarely heard; as the novel progresses, so does Anne's strength, and it is as if she found herself again.

Anne's family are not the only ones to take advantage of her kindness, as she acts as the listener to most of those who surround her wherever she goes – be it at Uppercross Manor, the Cottage or Kellynch: everyone uses Anne as a vessel, not hoping for her opinion, but just unloading their burdens on her. The people who surround Anne seem to know they can abuse her, for instance, when Anne plays the piano so the others can dance, Louisa tells the Captain that Anne never dances, that she *prefers* to play. As true as it might be that Anne has chosen to play, her choice is telling of both her will to please others and make herself as invisible as possible, and her "retirement" from the marriage market, as dancing was an indicator of someone's availability[34].

> She played a great deal better than either of the Miss Musgroves; but having

[34] Amongst the many purposes of dancing, such as fun and exercise, it was also a powerful indicator of compatibility, for dancing well with a partner was a sign of a well-matched pair. Not dancing meant that one was out of the marriage market; therefore, Anne's choice to play instead of dancing told Wentworth that she considered herself "off the market".

> no voice, no knowledge of the harp, and no fond parents to sit by and fancy themselves delighted, her performance was little thought of, only out of civility, or to refresh the others, as she was well aware. She knew that when she played she was giving pleasure only to herself; but this was no new sensation: excepting one short period of her life, she had never, since the age of fourteen, never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste. In music she had been always used to feel alone in the world; and Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove's fond partiality for their own daughters' performance, and total indifference to any other person's, gave her much more pleasure for their sakes, than mortification for her own. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 44)

Anne's invisibility and her position of constant carer of others cannot be attributed to anyone but herself, for Anne has found in hiding behind the piano and in caring for others and their needs a way of occupying her mind and time. Her caring for others is almost a shield that prevents her from having to care for herself, and make her wishes known. When she agrees to take care of her injured nephew so Mary can go to the dinner party at Uppercross manor, it is not just a selfless act, it is a defence, a way of avoiding the inevitable re-encounter with Captain Wentworth.

> Anne was now at hand to take up her own cause, and the sincerity of her manner being soon sufficient to convince him, where conviction was at least very agreeable, he had no farther scruples as to her being left to dine alone, though he still wanted her to join them in the evening, when the child might be at rest for the night, and kindly urged her to let him come and fetch her; but she was quite unpersuadable; and this being the case, she had ere long the pleasure of seeing them set off together in high spirits. They were gone, she hoped, to be happy, however oddly constructed such happiness might seem; as for herself, she was left with as many sensations of comfort, as were, perhaps, ever likely to be hers. She knew herself to be of the first utility to the child; and what was it to her, if Frederick Wentworth were only half a mile distant, making himself agreeable to others! (AUSTEN, 1917, p. 54-55)

Of course, her offer to take care of the child so the parents can enjoy their evening is taken up by Mary with no second thought for Anne's well-being, which shows how selfish Mary can be. Charles is no saint himself, as he was not willing to relinquish his dinner plans for his child's sake in the first place, and he does not seem to care who does so as long as he is not the one who has to do it. Mary and Charles were lucky that Anne was more than willing to stay behind; it could also be said that Anne was lucky her sister and brother-in-law are not the best of parents, which allowed her to delay an encounter she was dreading.

Overhearing plays a great part in many of Austen's works: it is how characters learn things that were not meant for them, but end up being used by them. In *Emma*, for example, overhearing reflects the proximity in which all the characters find themselves – the story takes

place in a small English village, where secrets are rare, and easily uncovered when they exist. In *Persuasion*, on the other hand, Anne's constant overhearing speaks of how distanced she is from the others, a distance that is not only physical, but also emotional. Her overhearing as opposed to actually being an active participant in conversations is also due to her invisibility: those around her care little for what she has to say, and often seem to forget she is in their presence, talking amongst themselves and not including her. "Anne often just hears patches or fragments of conversations, not only because the speakers are standing or walking a little away from her, but more importantly also because her own feelings impede or intercept the incoming communications" (WILTSHIRE, 2014, p. 148). Many Austen scholars believe Anne suffered from some sort of depression, a sign of it being Austen's interest "in the way that depression interferes with modalities of both hearing and sight", Wiltshire says. At the beginning of the novel, there is little will in Anne, she deals with the outside world without fully registering it – she goes about her daily chores but her heart is not in it. "*Persuasion* is concerned with such states of self-absorption, internal reverie, introspective musing, half-absence and grieving, and then, in the course of the novel's action, with their gradual alleviation, the returning of the self to occupy the world" (WILTSHIRE, 2014, p. 145).

According to Wiltshire (2014), Anne's chronic depression[35] is due to unresolved grief. Anne is not only grieving for her lost love, she suffers also due to the loss of her mother, to whom, so we are constantly reminded, Anne was very similar. Years might have passed, but Anne has not yet processed the losses in her life, especially considering that she has nobody who will listen to her: she is filled with unspoken emotions and memories. She could have been a great speaker, had she had anyone who would listen. When we meet her, in the beginning of *Persuasion*, she is about to face yet another loss: that of her ancestral home. She takes all of her father's responsibilities as landlord upon herself as yet another form of defence, for engaging with practical problems means she does not have to think about the loss ahead of her – and those in her past. Anne's depression was probably caused by her inability to elaborate her feelings and the events through which she has been. Austen does not allow Anne to have inner soliloquies dwelling on her losses, and "this is not only because Anne is conceived as a strong and self-controlled figure, but because such long-enduring grief is by its nature inexpressible", affirms Wiltshire (2014), and he adds that, "depression is so entrammelled with lassitude that allowing the character to articulate it even to herself would betray the condition". As the story progresses, we witness Anne regaining her voice, making herself heard, and that

[35] Modern diagnosis.

is what this section will explore.

If we take Sigmund Freud's words into account, one could claim that Anne's depression was indeed a deep form of mourning, for although it extends for nearly a decade, it never stops her from going about her daily duties, or from interacting with those people who surround her. By the time we meet her at the beginning of the novel, Anne is subdued, with hardly any voice, and that is due to the fact that her inner world is bustling with feelings and thoughts, but nobody really cares. In his work "Mourning and Melancholia", Freud explains the differences between melancholia (a form of deep depression) and mourning:

> Melancholia is mentally characterised by a profoundly painful depression, a loss of interest in the outside world, the loss of the ability to love, the inhibition of any kind of performance and a reduction in the sense of self, expressed in self-recrimination and self-directed insults, intensifying into the delusory expectation of punishment. We have a better understanding of this when we bear in mind that mourning displays the same traits, apart from one: the disorder of self-esteem is absent. In all other respects, however, it is the same. Serious mourning, *the reaction to the loss of a loved one*[36], contains the same painful mood, the loss of interest in the outside world – except as it recalls the deceased – the loss of ability to choose any new love-object – which would mean replacing the mourned one – turning away from any task that is not related to the memory of the deceased. We can easily understand that this inhibition and restriction of the ego is a manifestation of exclusive devotion to mourning, leaving nothing over for other interests or intentions. The only reason, in fact, why this behaviour does not strike us as pathological is that we are so easily able to explain it. (FREUD, 2005, p. 204)

Anne's symptoms are, therefore, explained by mourning. She first lost her mother, then the man she loved, and as we meet her, she is about to lose the only place she knows as home. Even if not a happy one, it is still a place filled with memories of her beloved mother, and she cherishes it. Anne is not melancholy, but in mourning and struggling to process her losses. Depression and melancholia might appear as symptoms, but not as the malady itself. All Anne does has to do with others, as if the more she takes upon herself, the less she will have to deal with her own feelings. Despite having splashes of streams of consciousness, a good portion of the first half of *Persuasion* revolves around the protagonist trying to ignore her feelings. It is only when she allows herself to feel, that Anne starts to recover – so much so that the idea of marrying Mr Elliot is no longer preposterous, and she even considers it as something she could potentially do, even if she dismisses it soon afterward. Moreover, it is only when Anne gets in touch with her feelings that she starts to stand up for herself again, doing as she pleases for the

[36] My italics.

first time in her adult life. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Anne comes to terms with her decision of years ago: she accepts she did the right thing, that not marrying Wentworth when she was a young woman was for the best.

> I have been thinking over the past, and trying impartially to judge of the right and wrong, I mean with regard to myself; and I must believe that I was right, much as I suffered from it, that I was perfectly right in being guided by the friend whom you will love better than you do now. To me, she was in place of a parent. 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; and for myself, I certainly never should, in any circumstance of tolerable similarity, give such advice. But I mean that I was right in submitting to her, and that if I had done otherwise, I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement than I did even in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my conscience. I have now, as far as 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 a woman's portion. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 230-231)

Persuasion is a novel filled with journeys, and Anne's path to finding herself again and regaining a voice of her own is the main one. In the beginning of the novel we barely hear her – and no one else does: Anne does not talk unless she is talked to; she hides from life behind the piano, choosing not to dance; she helps others so she does not have to deal with the turmoil inside her. Through her comings and goings, she broadens her horizons and gains further knowledge of human nature: she is the first to question Mrs Clay's intentions, for example.

Judith Terry (1993) in her essay "The Slow Process of Persuasion" discusses Anne's character and how it affects the readers' reactions to the novel as a whole. One's appreciation – or lack thereof – of *Persuasion* is intrinsically connected to the fact that Anne starts off as a quiet and mousy figure – much like *Mansfield Park*'s Fanny Price in that sense. When we look at Austen's former novels, it is clear from the start who the heroine is and to which characters we should pay the most attention. In both *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, the story opens with an introduction to the main character's parents: in the latter, it takes Mr and Mrs Bennet only a few paragraphs to single Elizabeth out as the daughter on whom we should keep our eyes open. *Persuasion*'s heroine is, on the other hand, not as easy to spot:

> Her name is mentioned first merely as an entry in Debrett, in birth order, sandwiched between her sisters, either of whom might equally well be the heroine. It is not until the third page that the narrative focuses upon her, and then only for a mere half-page before shifting back to Elizabeth for four pages. The half-page description is scant and provides nothing of Anne speaking or doing – nothing of her in action, that is. (TERRY, 1993, p. 226-227)

The narrator describes her with flattering words, but as we do not see her in action, those words are close to being empty, and no guarantee that we are reading about the main character. As Terry points out that "although these flattering words alert us to the probability that she is indeed the central character, they are quite without vivid associations. Whereas we already have technicolour images of Sir Walter and Elizabeth, Anne is pale" (TERRY, 1993, p. 227). For a few chapters afterwards, the evidence of Anne's protagonism is still small, as she barely has a voice at all, and when she voices her opinion for the first time, talking about the navy and its achievements, it happens quickly and it is also quickly supplanted by Lady Russell's views, twice as long in the number of lines they occupy, and twice as loud in their repercussions.

Anne's paleness is directly related to her mourning. As the novel starts, the world around her is too much to take part in, as she is almost a recluse. Anne plays her part in society, and goes even further, taking over her father's responsibilities, but it is as if she were doing it all in a sequence of muscle memories, and not because she wishes to. Anne is all alone, and her actions in the first third of the novel are merely a response to the world around her: "she adopts approved virtues in a rather mechanical, joyless way because she has little alternative" (WALDRON, 2004, p. 138). Waldron also suggests that Anne "has adopted a negative and passive view of life in which she allows herself to be either ignored or used for other people's convenience" (WALDRON, 2004, p. 139).

Anne's mourning, especially in what concerns the loss of Wentworth eight years previously, brings about different reactions in the readers, and many tend to blame Lady Russell for the advice that caused Anne's prolonged suffering. Austen's contemporaries, however, would have most likely sided with Lady Russell, and despaired at Anne's unwillingness to let go of the past. "Anne contents herself with defusing the petty disagreements between her sister and her husband and in-laws and indulging the often selfish demands of her more positive companions", says Waldron (2004, p. 143), and she is too caught up in her own pain to have much agency. Anne believes there is nothing to be done, nobody can help her out of her mourning, due also to the fact that nobody looks at her, so they do not know she is suffering. Anne's "attitude is summed up in her physical response to life – why has she abandoned dancing in order to accompany others?" (WALDRON, 2004, p. 143): Anne hides behind her sense of duty, justifying her lack of enthusiasm for life with her responsibilities to others, stopping herself from living.

It is only as the novel progresses that we see Anne come to life in colours – perhaps not in the bright colours of Elizabeth Bennet or Emma, but in a palette that speaks of Anne's singularity, to which colours are constantly being added. Austen has not done this with any of her previous protagonists – Fanny Price is the closest to Anne Elliot in terms of personality, but Fanny is from page one the undisputed heroine of *Mansfield Park*, whereas Anne grows to play that part, which sees its culmination in the incident in Lyme Regis, during which Anne takes control of the situation like a *captain*, and the reader is left with no doubt that not only is Anne the protagonist, she also deserves that status.

There is a shift in the narrative during the group's trip to Lyme. Surely, we witness signs of Anne regaining enthusiasm before that, but it is in the seaside town that those changes become known, and where new ones take place. We as readers cannot ignore Anne, and the characters who surround her have to bow to her superiority of character. On the way to Lyme, when Anne learns from Captain Wentworth about Captain Benwick and his loss, she indulges in self-pity and reckons herself as the one who suffers most, thinking to herself that "'he has not, perhaps, a more sorrowing heart than I have. I cannot believe his prospects so blighted for ever. He is younger than I am; younger in feeling if not in fact; younger as a man. He will rally again, and be happy with another'" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 91).

The Anne who arrives in Lyme is not quite the same as the one who leaves it. Only a couple of days are enough for her to bloom again. The sea air brings colour to her cheeks and to her life: Anne's "second spring begins" (WALDRON, 2004). The sea air, the warmth of the Harvilles and the new found connection with Benwick help Anne to resurge, even if she is reluctant to see it. The short sojourn by the sea helps Anne to leave behind her Byronic characteristics, and shows not only the others, but also herself, that she still has strength to make her voice heard. Lyme is also witness to the beginning of the reconnection between Anne and Wentworth: when Anne is the only one calm enough to help Louisa, Wentworth sees Anne as an equal for the first time in eight years – even more than equal, he sees her as a partner, for together they have to make sure Louisa receives all the care available. They are on the same team again, even if briefly.

When Anne arrives in Bath, she is changed. Her family, on the other hand, are not, which means the changes in her require action to be recognised. Sir Walter and Elizabeth, in the second half of the novel, are the same as they were at its opening: selfish and proud. If anything, Bath has made them worse, for even if they are living with reduced means, in Bath

they are amongst the most important people, something they never fail to remind everyone who is willing (and unwilling) to hear. We have seen Anne thrive away from her father and sister, away from the place she knew as home, but will she be able to keep it up once in Bath and with her family?

The answer to that is yes. Anne is on the process of leaving her mourning behind, and finding herself again, and this time she will make herself heard, even if she needs to do so with actions, and not just words. Austen's dislike for Bath is famous, and so is the fact that it was transferred to Anne, it is in Bath that we see Anne at her most independent. She might not enjoy the city and what it has to offer, but that does not stop her from coming and going, visiting Mrs Smith in the lowest part of the city, visiting the Musgroves, and bumping into Admiral Croft. It is as if Anne is back from eight years of stupor, and there is agency to her actions and speech like never before in the novel. Anne stops hiding behind other people's requests and desires, and starts acting upon her own.

4.2 GENDER SWAP

In *Persuasion*, Austen puts overhearing to good use. Much is learned by listening into other people's conversations, and that is especially true for Anne's character, whose overhearing but rarely speaking her mind once again signals to her sadness and incapability to act in her current state. Not only does she overhear, she also listens to everybody's problems, from her hypochondriac sister to Mrs Musgrove, without ever being given the chance to talk back. Anne's position of subdued listener is more than just a reflection of her mental condition, but is once again an illustration of her times, and of what was expected from women in her position: something that will culminate in the Victorian ideals of women and femininity. There is a striking contrast between Anne's personality and that of Wentworth. They seem to be polar opposites, and that is because they are here representing two very different ideals: that of being a *lady*, and that of being a *hero*. While Anne rarely speaks, Wentworth is outspoken; Anne overhears conversations, Wentworth is their centre; the Captain is physically fit and strong, while Anne can barely manage a long walk. Wentworth has the freedom of the seas, Anne is

trapped in her family. Anne comes across as family-oriented, always helping those around her, but it could be argued that she just has not managed to escape her stifling family yet, nor was she able to escape her grief. Wentworth is the epitome of the free male, with the world at his feet.

> As the isolated, helpless, dependent listener, Anne Elliot is enacting an aspect of her conventional gender position as the superfluous, unentitled spinster. She might also be read as an egregious version of the early nineteenth century of genteel femininity propagated by pre-Victorian arbitrations of social ideals. Her circumstances have assigned to her the usual spinster roles, depicted serially: Anne is by turns confidante, adviser, piano accompanist, baby-sitter and nurse; most frequently of all, the listener, whether preoccupied or attentive. She is powerless and assumed to be sexless. After all, she is still single at 27. She sits, listening. In contrast – a contrast more marked than in any other of Austen's novels – the hero Wentworth incarnates or models both the masculine role and virility itself. Like all gentlemen, he travels around on horseback or by carriage, able to go where he pleases, whereas ladies, like Jane Austen herself, must wait until a suitable lift in another's vehicle (or in this book, a passage in his ship) presents itself. Like the other men of his class, too, Wentworth is a sportsman, keen to be taken out shooting with Charles Musgrove. More importantly, he is the bearer of a professional identity. Wentworth is the embodiment of that amalgam of personal life with professional role that Nietzsche defined as a nineteenth century masculine phenomenon. This tendency for men to take their sense of selfhood from their occupation can be seen in the other novels, from Darcy's acute consciousness of his 'character' as powerful landlord, to Edmund Bertram's utter commitment to his vocation as clergyman. The difference between Wentworth and the other men is that his profession, effectively, is his whole life; it provides him not only with a livelihood, but with a circle of male friends and acquaintances, like those that Admiral Croft constantly acknowledges as he walks the streets of Bath, life-long comrades such as Captain Harville and Benwick, men who have shared the excitements and dangers of his career. And his own professional courage and skill (and in addition, as he candidly acknowledges, good luck) honourably earn him the fortune that creates him a gentleman. (WILTSHIRE, 2014, p. 153-154)

When they meet for the first time in the novel, Anne and Wentworth are not ready for reconciliation, as they are not yet equals. Anne needs to resolve her grief, come to terms with her choices, and most importantly, she needs to regain her voice, so she can be heard for a change. Wentworth, on the other hand, needs a lesson on the dangers of too much confidence, of how a mind that is not willing to yield is as vulnerable to mistakes as one that is easily convinced by persuasion. Anne's process of coming into herself again takes place throughout the story, having the trip to Lyme Regis as a catalyst – it is in Lyme that she recovers her bloom. Bath, so dreaded by our heroine, could have been the worst of prisons if Anne were not already escaping; as much as Anne dislikes Bath, it is where she finally finds closure, where she gives voice to her wishes again. Wentworth's changes, on the other hand, come from Louisa's fall off the Cobb: one near-death experience tells him of the disadvantages of too strong a will, and his eyes are opened to Anne's superiority of mind and character once again. It would seem that

much like the ideals of masculinity and femininity Wentworth and Anne represent, the processes through which these two characters change is also a reflection of gender-attributed characteristics: a long insightful process for Anne; a rational quick event for Wentworth.

While Anne is going on a journey to find her voice again, Frederick Wentworth is going on a path of his own to accept Anne's past decisions, and to forgive her. For someone who has seen different and distant corners of the world, Wentworth's journey is one of acceptance of what he left on shore eight years ago. He is at times selfish and childish during the novel: as a man of means, he comes and goes as he pleases, and he inflicts jealousy on Anne because he wants to hurt her as much as she did him. Wentworth is full of resentment and anger, and his journey will require him to overcome those feelings in order to be able to look at Anne for who she really is again. Part of his journey involves opening his eyes to the Anne who is in front of him in the present time, and leaving behind old regrets.

Captain Wentworth was not wounded at war, his pain comes from before, from Anne's rejection. We hear his voice persistently in the first part of the novel. While Anne can do nothing but overhear conversations and play so others can dance, Wentworth seems to be living life to the fullest. Throughout Volume 1, Wentworth drinks, talks, laughs and dances, while Anne is quiet and demure. He barely looks at her, and he hardly ever addresses her directly. Anne avoids his presence, but with their families not knowing – or choosing to ignore – about their shared past, excuses run thin, and they are constantly put in each other's presence.

In two scenes Anne and Wentworth share a fleeting moment of intimacy: the first happens when he rescues her from Mary and Charles's youngest son, and the second when he notices how tired she is and helps her to the Crofts' gig. The first one is preceded by minutes of uncomfortable silence among Anne, Wentworth and Charles Hayter, who at this point is likely jealous of the Captain for flirting with Henrietta. Little Walter jumps on Anne's back, and neither her pleading, nor Hayter's, is enough to make him stop. It is Wentworth, who with action and not words, physically moves the boy off Anne: Walter's "little sturdy hands were unfastened from around her neck, and he was resolutely borne away, before she knew that Captain Wentworth had done it" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 74). What follows is the description of the wave of feelings that take over Anne, who is so speechless and grateful for Wentworth's help that she fails to thank him.

> Her sensations on the discovery made her perfectly speechless. She could not

> even thank him. She could only hang over little Charles, with most disordered feelings. His kindness in stepping forward to her relief, the manner, the silence in which it had passed, the little particulars of the circumstance, with the conviction soon forced on her by the noise he was studiously making with the child, that he meant to avoid hearing her thanks, and rather sought to testify that her conversation was the last of his wants, produced such a confusion of varying, but very painful agitation, as she could not recover from, till enabled by the entrance of Mary and the Miss Musgroves, to make over her little patient to their cares, and leave the room. She could not stay. It might have been an opportunity of watching the loves and jealousies of the four -- they were now all together; but she could stay for none of it. It was evident that Charles Hayter was not well inclined towards Captain Wentworth. She had a strong impression of his having said, in a vext tone of voice, after Captain Wentworth's interference, "You ought to have minded me, Walter; I told you not to tease your aunt"; and could comprehend his regretting that Captain Wentworth should do what he ought to have done himself. But neither Charles Hayter's feelings, nor any body's feelings, could interest her, till she had a little better arranged her own. She was ashamed of herself, quite ashamed of being so nervous, so overcome by such a trifle; but so it was, and it required a long application of solitude and reflection to recover her. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 74-75)

In this instance, Wentworth's actions dominated the encounter. Anne is unable to say thank you, and he probably does not want to hear it. This scene is the first sign that he is very much aware of Anne's presence and even aware of her needs, even if they barely communicate, verbally or otherwise. As much as Wentworth denies to himself, Anne's presence affects him as much as his presence affects her, and his awareness and willingness to go out of his way to help her early on in their re-encounter is proof of that.

The second scene takes place while they are returning home from their long walk, and Anne is clearly exhausted. After a bit of persuasion, Anne agrees to accompany the party on their walk, but she dreads the outing from the start, not for being taxing, but for the company, as her focus was on Wentworth and the Musgrove girls, even if she tried telling herself there were other things in which to deposit her attention.

> Anne's object was not to be in the way of anybody; and where the narrow paths across the fields made many separations necessary, to keep with her brother and sister. Her pleasure in the walk must arise from the exercise and the day, from the view of the last smiles of the year upon the tawny leaves and withered hedges, and from repeating to herself some few of the thousand poetical descriptions extant of autumn, that season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness, that season which has drawn from every poet, worthy of being read, some attempt at description, or some lines of feeling. She occupied her mind as much as possible in such-like musings and quotations; but it was not possible, that when within reach of Captain Wentworth's conversation with either of the Miss Musgroves, she should not try to hear it; yet she caught little very remarkable. It was mere lively chat, such as any young persons, on an intimate footing, might fall into. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 78)

Never was the contrast between place and that of Wentworth as clear as when we read

about his animated conversations with the Musgroves, while Anne quietly follows and unwillingly overhears it all. Furthermore, as she notices they are diverging to another path, she inquires if that is the way to Winthorpe, to which nobody answers, for it is likely that nobody heard her. During this walk, Anne's overhearing means she learns much about Wentworth's feelings: he is openly flirting with Louisa, and openly discussing his ideas with the young woman, and the things he says makes one wonder if he knows Anne can hear their conversation – Wentworth is ruthless in his anger and hatred for weakness of character:

> It is the worst evil of too yielding and indecisive a character, that no influence over it can be depended on. You are never sure of a good impression being durable; everybody may sway it. Let those who would be happy be firm. Here is a nut," said he, catching one down from an upper bough, "to exemplify: a beautiful glossy nut, which, blessed with original strength, has outlived all the storms of autumn. Not a puncture, not a weak spot any where. This nut," he continued, with playful solemnity, "while so many of its brethren have fallen and been trodden under foot, is still in possession of all the happiness that a hazel nut can be supposed capable of." Then returning to his former earnest tone -- "My first wish for all whom I am interested in, is that they should be firm. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 81)

Aware of Anne's listening or not, Wentworth is certainly aware of her later in the chapter, as they are making their way home. In a group which everyone is concerned about their own problems, Captain Wentworth *sees* Anne, and notices how tired she is. When the party encounters the Crofts in their gig, they stop for a brief chat, and Wentworth whispers something to his sister, and "the something might be guessed by its effects" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 84). What follows is an offer from Mrs Croft to take Anne home, as she looks tired and they have room for one more. As Anne begins to decline, "the admiral's kind urgency came in support of his wife's: they would not be refused; […] and *Captain Wentworth, without saying a word, turned to her, and quietly obliged her to be assisted into the carriage*[37]". Once again, his actions and awareness of her needs overwhelm Anne, and she "owned it to his perception of her fatigue, and his resolution to give her rest". There is still a strong connection between the former lovers, and their awareness of one another is always present in the novel.

> This little circumstance seemed the completion of all that had gone before. She understood him. He could not forgive her, but he could not be unfeeling. Though condemning her for the past, and considering it with high and unjust resentment, though perfectly careless of her, and though becoming attached to another, still he could not see her suffer without the desire of giving her relief. It was a remainder of former sentiment; it was an impulse of pure, though unacknowledged, friendship; it was a

[37] My italics.

> proof of his own warm and amiable heart, which she could not contemplate without emotions so compounded of pleasure and pain, that she knew not which prevailed. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 84-85)

Despite Wentworth's willingness to help Anne with a few scattered actions, there is no evidence that he would listen to her or, to be fair to him, that she is able to say anything at this stage. He is still very much the dominant one; they are not yet equals. Lyme gives Anne back her bloom, and with it comes confidence, which is then required to deal with the events that follow. After Louisa's fall, Anne demonstrates unpaired strength of mind, and her actions are the ones that save the day. She equals herself to Wentworth, goes beyond him. Here we have the first signs of the many changes in Anne and Wentworth's dynamics, a shift that is completed only at the end of the novel.

There is a piece of dialogue in *Persuasion* that illustrates a change in attitude, in which we see women taking over the protagonism from men, sharing it, and it works as a parallel to what happens in Anne and Wentworth's relationship throughout the novel: he needs to learn to listen, and she must raise her voice to be heard. From being a mousy, nearly invisible character in the first few chapters, Anne grows in presence and in confidence. From overhearing conversations and being talked of, she now does the talking; she becomes the mistress of herself, of her mind. At the end of the novel, before its final resolution, Anne is caught in conversation with Captain Harville, and here she has a voice like never before, she challenges his preconceptions, and she defends her ideas. Furthermore, it is at this point that the tables are turned, and from constantly overhearing the boisterous and manly Wentworth, she now talks, and Wentworth, on the other hand, is left with the privilege of listening to what Anne has to say. A sense of balance emanates from this scene, when we finally hear Anne defend her views to Captain Harville – and to Captain Wentworth, who is not part of the conversation but who is close enough to catch every word – it is now Wentworth's turn to overhear.

This is the scene where we see, more than ever, a shift of roles, when Anne has to stand up for herself and make herself heard by Wentworth, even though he is not part of the conversation. Anne declares that "it would not be in the nature of any woman who truly loved" to forget her beloved a few months after his demise, and to Harville's disbelief she says she defends women and their constant love: "Yes. We certainly do not forget you so soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit. We cannot help ourselves." Which she complements with, "*We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us. You are*

forced on exertion. You have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort or other, to take you back into the world immediately, and continual occupation and change soon weaken impressions." (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 218). Still challenged by Harville, Anne goes further:

> "Your feelings may be the strongest," replied Anne, "but the same spirit of analogy will authorise me to assert that ours are the most tender. Man is more robust than woman, but he is not longer lived; which exactly explains my view of the nature of their attachments. Nay, it would be too hard upon you, if it were otherwise. You have difficulties, and privations, and dangers enough to struggle with. You are always labouring and toiling, exposed to every risk and hardship. Your home, country, friends, all quitted. Neither time, nor health, nor life, to be called your own. It would be too hard, indeed" (with a faltering voice), "if woman's feelings were to be added to all this." (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 219)

Anne is yet again confronted, and when Harville claims he "could bring you fifty quotations in a moment on my side the argument, and I do not think I ever opened a book in my life which had not something to say upon woman's inconstancy. Songs and proverbs, all talk of woman's fickleness" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 219-220), she has the perfect response, explaining in what would today be called feminist discourse that "men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything". Despite the friendly argument, Anne proves the value of her character to the reader and to Wentworth (as seen later in the contents of his letter to her) by refusing to make generalisations regarding how men and women feel.

> "I hope I do justice to all that is felt by you, and by those who resemble you. God forbid that I should undervalue the warm and faithful feelings of any of my fellow-creatures! I should deserve utter contempt if I dared to suppose that true attachment and constancy were known only by woman. No, I believe you capable of everything great and good in your married lives. I believe you equal to every important exertion, and to every domestic forbearance, so long as -- if I may be allowed the expression, so long as you have an object. I mean while the woman you love lives, and lives for you. All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one: you need not covet it), is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone!" (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 221)

Not only does Anne stand up for herself and her beliefs, she also makes herself heard and admired. Harville acknowledges her superiority of mind and heart, and her speech defending a woman's constancy propels Wentworth to write about his own feelings in a letter.

Austen staged[38] this scene beautifully, positioning the characters so Wentworth could overhear, without actually being part of the conversation between Anne and Harville. The delivery of the letter is also testament to Austen's skilful staging of her actors, and it has a dance quality to it, as the characters move about trying to be inconspicuous in their endeavours.

4.3 ONE FOOT IN SEA, ONE ON SHORE[39]

For all the contrasts and changes portrayed in *Persuasion*, for all the places explored in the novel, and the characters' relationships with such places, none holds more meaning than the sea, and its opposition to land – in the context of the novel, the sea, and those who earn a living from it are in direct opposition to the land, its great houses and those who occupy them. Most importantly, in *Persuasion*, Austen uses the sea, and more actively the naval officers who made and make their livings braving all sorts of tides. Austen was an admirer of the Navy, and she makes it very clear in her last novel, in which she introduces the Navy not only as heroes due recognition, but also as an alternative to the *status quo*, the introduction of "one system of values to correct the abuses of the other" (POOVEY, 1983, p. 155): the aristocracy, albeit still very powerful for at least a hundred years after Austen was alive, was no longer the be all and end all of society, as people who were not born with money could now make their own fortunes, and were all the more admired for it by many – especially by Anne Elliot in this case. Self-made men also meant that ancestral homes started to lose some of their importance, for now life and fortune were also made outside of the great halls.

> Naval society differs from aristocratic society in that social mobility is possible, wealth and status are attainable, based on merit rather than birth. A gentleman in the navy is one who earns this position; he distinguishes himself by serving his country. As the definition of "gentleman" shifts from one based on the requirements of inherited rank, wealth and property to one based on individual actions and merit, the definition of "home" shifts too: from a place, the inherited family estate, to a condition based on love and affection. When "home" is outside the house, woman achieves greater latitude in defining her place in society. Naval society provides a space for such shifts to occur because it lacks land. Naval society owns the sea. (VORACHEK, 1997,

[38] The use of *stage* and *scene* here is to highlight the dramatic characteristics of this specific part of the novel.
[39] From Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*.

p. 36)

Captain Wentworth represents, as mentioned in Chapter Two, this new emerging class: he has wealth, and his name carries along great deeds for his nation. He is a hero. According to Sarah Ailwood (2008, p. 232), “Captain Wentworth can be interpreted as a synthesis of the male protagonists who precede him”; Ailwood explains that “he combines the awareness and performance of his social and national responsibilities of Edmund Bertram and Mr Knightley, with the depth of passion and romance of Mr Darcy, uniting in one man the essential attributes of desirable masculinity Austen endorses throughout her career”. However, Ailwood also points out that Wentworth is different from the other male protagonists in many aspects, such as the fact that he has a profession and is virtually homeless. Wentworth, unlike the others before him, seems to be averse to domesticity and calm waters. Ailwood claims that these differences reflect “Austen’s desire to establish a new set of criteria against which men’s worth and value should be judged” (2008, p. 233). Not only was Austen proposing a new ideal of man, she was also proposing a new concept of *home*, as Captain Wentworth’s homelessness does not mean he is adrift or alone. Austen’s refusal to give Wentworth a physical house means that she can focus on his relationships beyond the space of the home: “*Persuasion* advances the reform of the English family that Austen began with Mr Knightley in *Emma* by reconstructing masculinity away from relationships of control and subservience that inhered within the conventional household structure” (AILWOOD, 2008, p. 234). A clear example of this reconstruction of masculinity is the relationship between Mrs and Admiral Croft, in which she is as much in control as he is, they share duties and responsibilities, and seem to be all the merrier for it.

According to Vorachek (1997, p 37), “the lack of land or, more precisely, the sea enables another shift in the definitions of the aristocratic society – that of a woman’s role”. Being a woman is much discussed in *Persuasion*, and the role a woman must adopt in this new society is well represented by Mrs Croft and her strong resolve to follow her husband to wherever *their* profession takes them. When talking about women on board of ships, Mrs Croft says she has always been with the Admiral, and reproaches Wentworth when he claims no wife of his would sail with him: “But I hate to hear you talking so, like a fine gentleman, as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures. We none of us expect to be in smooth waters all our days” (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 65). Mrs Croft’s example is a testament to the changing times, to women gaining space and agency, as Vorachek (1997, p. 38) adds, “home is traditionally the

sphere of women in the aristocratic society, this movement from a fixed, internal space to an external space seems to allow women greater movement and an expanded role". Mrs Croft's words are more than just a defence of a woman's strength; it also has a hint of foreshadowing to it, for Anne will not be in calm waters by the end of the novel, for she too will "enjoy greater latitude" (VORACHEK, 1997, p. 40), seeing more of the world, having more independence and agency – guiding her own life.

Persuasion's journeys are plentiful, and small movements cause abundant changes and developments. Anne's greatest journey is her search for a place to call home. Kellynch-hall was only home to her insofar as it held memories of her beloved mother. Uppercross belongs to the Musgroves, and as kind as they are to her, she is not completely herself there. Her father's house in Bath is definitely not home. By the end of the novel Anne still has no home of her own, no physical place to call her own. Anne Elliot is the only Austen heroine whose end prize is not the security of grand walls. Elizabeth Bennet gains Pemberley, Emma has both her father's Hartfield and Mr Knightley's Donwell Abbey; even the protagonists who do not end up in great houses have the safety of a home, like Fanny Price and Elinor Dashwood. Anne's *home* is of a different kind: she gains a family in Wentworth, and in what he brings with him: the navy.

> Anne was tenderness itself, and she had the full worth of it in Captain Wentworth's affection. His profession was all that could ever make her friends wish that tenderness less, the dread of a future war all that could dim her sunshine. She 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. (AUSTEN, 2003, p. 236)

There is not safety in open ships, but there is friendship and comradery. Austen describes Anne as "belonging to that profession", which means that in marrying Wentworth she is now part of the navy herself, worthy of all the praise and admiration so far attributed to those who fight to defend the country. When Austen finished *Persuasion*, she knew what she was setting her Anne Elliot towards: war. Napoleon is not yet defeated at this point, and he will make a return very soon after the end of the story. Anne is not safe; she is, however, loved and appreciated. No matter what happens from this point on, Anne and Wentworth are a unity, and together they can face whatever comes.

Not only does Anne gain a family, she also gains, as a wedding present from Wentworth,

a landaulette, which is cause for envy in Mary's view, for she wants to own as much or more than her older sister. A landaulette was a form of transport, a small four-wheeled carriage, whose top can be thrown open. A short paragraph tells us of the present, but it is full of meaning: Anne now can go wherever she wants, she has freedom to move about by herself. The landaulette is a physical representation of the end of Anne's stagnation – both in life and literal – and the beginning of a new journey.

THERE AND BACK AGAIN[40]

> ***"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."***
>
> **Charles Dickens**, *A Tale of Two Cities*

In 2011, when I first travelled to the United Kingdom, I had no idea how much it would change who I am and what I wish to accomplish in life. It was back then that my passion for Austen fully developed, and when I decided I needed more than to simply read the novels: I needed to explore the places in which they were set, and I needed to read about Austen, not just to read what she produced. It was, therefore, in 2011 when this work began, and in many ways, it will forever be in development, long after this thesis is finished. Books are time machines, and if nothing else, this thesis proved to me that not only do they take the reader back (and forward) in time, they also take us to different places, and show us about new ways of living the same life. Reading is a journey, within which there are several others: those undertaken by the characters.

Now as an Austen academic, it was fascinating and enlightening to learn about the Regency Period in England, their ideals and morals, what was happening in their world, and how they coped with it. For those reasons, chapter one of this work could not have been different. It is possible to read Austen without historical and social background; it is only once we learn about the period in which they were written, however, that we can fully appreciate the background of the stories Austen is telling us – and sometimes even more than the background, as is the case with *Persuasion*.

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[40] Once again I am availing myself of a reference to J.R.R. Tolkien and his *Hobbit*. Tolkien too wrote of journeys.

Jane Austen is often thought of as progressive and ahead of her time, described as a feminist by many, seen as someone who defied society and decided against getting married, in order to be able to write. It is true that Austen opted for remaining single, but how much of it was indeed a choice, and how much was due to not finding a man she could respect and who respected her as his equal is impossible to know. For our sakes as readers and researchers, her not marrying meant that she could write freely, and there is a strong possibility that had she married, the world would never have seen her works. Although Austen did seem to believe in the equality of genders that her times did not perceive as relevant, calling her a feminist (as we apply the term in 2016) is anachronistic. Austen never openly fought for women's rights, but there are clear undertones throughout her works that she was an advocate of intellectual equality, if nothing else. Other than that, Jane Austen was very much a product of her changing times, full of contradictions and new ideas. Born at the end of the eighteenth century, Austen witnessed a time of transitions and war, both of which are reflected in her works – especially in her last novel. One can expect nothing different from such times than a novel of transitions, and as Gene Koppel (1984, p. 48) suggests, *Persuasion* is "a mixture of traditional and modern ideas", and he adds that it "fuses these traditional and modern elements into a conception of the self that manages to be complex, problematic, and hopeful, all at the same time". Cheryl Wilson (2003, p. 56) compares *Persuasion* to the popular dances Austen would have known, claiming that the novel, much like the cotillion, "occupies a space between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the novel both structurally and thematically follows and deviates from eighteenth-century traditions."

Of all of Austen's novels, *Persuasion* is the one that cannot easily be separated from its historical context, and even its ending will not cause as much of an impact if the reader is not aware of what the narrator does not say about Anne and Captain Wentworth's future: another war is on the horizon for the couple, and Austen's contemporary readers knew that – even though Austen spares them this future, ending the novel before giving us a glimpse into the future, allowing her readers to imagine whatever development they might want. *Persuasion* is dotted with political and economic references regarding its times, not to speak of the ever-present analysis of England's gentry and its surrounding social spheres.

The plunge I took in the first chapter of this thesis was, therefore, essential to a more comprehensive understanding of the early nineteenth century and of Austen's personal life, for it provided me with tools to better analyse *Persuasion* in the subsequent chapters. One of the

most fascinating aspects of the Georgian Period is the fact that it is relatively close in time to us, and yet so different to the world as we know it. As Roy and Lesley Adkins (2003, p. xxiv) say, the Georgian period can be as alien to a twenty-first century inhabitant as the Roman or medieval times, for "the basic amenities that we take for granted, like electricity, a water supply and sewerage, were non-existent or just being introduced", and simple daily necessities were by far more laborious and time-consuming. Travelling, the main focus of this thesis was quite different in Jane Austen's times, as "steam engines were transforming some industries, but travel relied on horsepower, manpower and windpower" (ADKINS & ADKINS, 2003, p. xxiv). Furthermore, travelling long distances in the early nineteenth century meant not seeing or talking to loved ones for a lengthy period of time. Georgians did not have the luxury of mobile phones with powerful cameras, and their only means of communicating with those far way was through letters, which is one of the reasons why said letters have such an important role in Austen's novel, conveying the most varying messages, from declarations of love to an account of what was eaten at a social event. The impossibility of seeing a loved one for months at a time meant that some people, especially soldiers and sailors who went away to war, were rendered unrecognisable: "If someone went away for several years, perhaps serving in the Royal Navy, they might not be recognised on their return, because there were no photographs to refresh memories" (ADKINS & ADKINS, 2003, p. xxiv), and not everyone owned portraits and paintings of themselves and their loved ones.

Not only is *Persuasion* Austen's last completed novel, it is also the one that most refers back to her life and thoughts. As seen in the first chapter, Austen's life remains something of a mystery to this day, as most of her letters were burned and the information we are given about who she was has shifted throughout time – as has the portrait painted by Cassandra of her younger sister. Austen's image changes to conform to the times in which she is being studied, and as much as we would like to be right, our views of who she might have been are influenced by our sensibilities and expectations of who a novelist should be. We have been left with very little information on Austen's life, only six novels and a few shorter works, and perhaps for that reason there is so much speculation concerning who she was: we know so little. Through her letters and novels, however, some information can be gathered about the writer, and much is seen in *Persuasion*. Jane Austen's appreciation of the navy, her dislike of Bath, and her love for the seaside are all translated into narrative in her last novel. Regardless of how much of it is a reflection of herself, Austen takes the reader on an adventure through some of England's social and geographical spheres, at the same time as we follow Anne Elliot's journey towards

regaining her life and coming to terms with her past.

Exploring the concept of journey in three of its forms led me to the realisation that they are all intertwined, and it is hard to talk of one without the other. Many times I found myself struggling to separate geographical, social and psychological journeys, as they all seemed to happen concomitantly. *Persuasion* is more than anything the story of Anne's journey towards (re)gaining a voice, being able to follow her heart not only when it comes to romance, but also when it comes to the people with whom she associates. At the start of the novel, we barely hear Anne speak, she is constrained and demure, a "nobody" according to her own family. We meet Anne mourning for all her many losses throughout the years, from her mother – the one she most resembled – to the love of her life. Mourning has made her silent, and it is only as she comes to terms with her past that she starts to make herself heard again.

Anne is unlike any other Austen heroine. When we read Jane Austen's works, we expect to see young women with their whole lives ahead of them, struggling to learn the right path to follow. Anne has the toughest journey to make, as not only is she in mourning, she is also lonely, with nobody to talk to – the topics close to her heart are taboo even with her only friend Lady Russell. As Anne embarks on the whirlwind of events in *Persuasion,* she starts to change, and colour is infused into her world once again. The places she goes – Uppercross, Lyme, upper and lower Bath – all play a part in her development; and so do the people she meets along the way: the Crofts show her a relationship of equals; the Harvilles give her momentarily the family of friends she would have gained had she married; and Mrs Smith reminds Anne of who she was, of her priorities and where her loyalties lie.

In *Persuasion* the characters move in different settings: from rural Kellynch and Uppercross, to the seaside in Lyme, and finally to urban Bath. The first two might be fictional places, but their localizations are always given to us in relation to other places in the novel that are *real* places. In Kellynch we see decadence and its perpetual denial; we watch as a naval officer and his wife have so much economic power that they rent a baronet's estate, for he is not capable of affording it any longer. In Uppercross we witness a more subtle change, that of two generations coexisting. Lyme Regis is where the turning point of the novel is carried out – and that goes beyond Louisa's accident, which is only a device to tell the reader that Anne is the superior creature amongst not only the women, as many critics tend to claim, but also amongst the men present. Anne is the only person able to keep calm and delegate orders: the sea brought her strength back to shore, and it surfaces when it is most needed. The choice for

Lyme as the place for the protagonist's "re-Anne-imation", as Graham (2004) poses, is interesting for many reasons:

> Austen's Lyme out of season lacks the class-consciousness of Bath or the tenant villages surrounding estates like Kellynch and Uppercross. It is a setting suited to the unpretentious amiability of Wentworth's fellow officers, a place where Anne can escape from the hierarchies that constrain her inland, whether she is at home or away – where the idea of romance across classes can be entertained. If Anne can see Wentworth at his best among his peers, the friends who would have been hers had she married him, he can see her at her best in the emergency that calls forth the nerve, zeal, and thought – qualities damped down or repressed in her daily round of country life as visiting spinster or trapped-at-home younger daughter. (GRAHAM, 2004, p. 36)

Following the sojourn in Lyme and the end of the first volume, *Persuasion* takes us to the city of Bath, a place that features in all of Austen's novels in different ways, always giving the reader further information on a character's decency. The choice of Bath is fascinating and precise as the city represents so much both with its geography and with social status. Bath is not flat; in fact, it is quite the opposite: "one must ascend a total of over 80 meters (nearly 270 feet) to reach the highest part of Bath" (PARKER, 2001, p. 168). As I discussed in chapter two, Bath's uphill journey is not only geographical, as it is also social, and as Parker (Idem, p. 168) says "in *Persuasion*, a character, his social rank, and his location go hand in hand with the topography of the city": from the poor and poorly Mrs Smith at the bottom of the social scale, to Sir Walter, at the top, albeit on unstable grounds.

Persuasion is divided into two volumes, and what we see in them is two different Annes. The trip to Lyme Regis marks the turning point not only of the plot, but also of the main characters' development. Anne's ability to stay calm and her confidence to deal with Louisa's situation show the reader that the sea not only brought back her bloom, but it also restored her confidence. Wentworth becomes, for the first time since his return, a listener and he is humbled by Anne's strength of mind. The shift of positions that starts in Lyme culminates with the Captain having to listen to Anne's speech about women's constancy when he is not able to intervene. It is the second main event in the novel, the one pushes Anne to act: she knows she has someone listening close to her words, and she must act, otherwise she might never achieve her heart's desire. As Mary Waldron (2004, p. 152) emphasises: "Desperate measures are required of her – she must speak unequivocally if indirectly through the unremitting interaction of others in which Wentworth cannot fail to understand".

This whole thesis is a tribute to the importance of places in Jane Austen's works; and even though Austen made up many of the famous locations in her novels, we still talk about them as if they existed and were within reach of any traveller. Once again, that is partially due to the film and television adaptations that gave life to Pemberley and Kellynch-Hall. Lyme Park, where the 1995 television adaptation Pride and Prejudice was filmed now has a statue of Colin Firth as Mr Darcy coming out of the lake. The 2005 film adaptation of the same novel used Chatsworth House as Pemberley, and things have taken such a real turn, that the house is now home to the bust of that film's Mr Darcy. Life imitates fiction.

The houses in *Persuasion* are not as important as the houses in Austen's previous novels, such as *Pride and Prejudice* or even *Mansfield Park* – the property itself is in the title here. *Persuasion* is not overly concerned about concrete walls and a roof over your head – despite what the first chapters of the novel seem to suggest. Austen's last novel is about finding your place in life, finding a family outside the one in which you were born, finding yourself and your voice. In *Persuasion*, physical houses are not as important as in Austen's other novels, for in this novel, home is a state of mind more than a concrete place, home is the person you love, and home is your family and friends; home is found in equality between you and your peers, in feeling included and respected for who you are. It comes as no surprise that Anne's final home is with Wentworth and *their* profession, their dwelling is now the sea, constant in its presence and existence, full of adventures and unexplored depths, ever changing and forever there. Albeit tempted by the idea of marrying Mr Elliot and assuming her late mother's place in Kellynch-hall, Anne does not choose her ancestral house: in choosing Captain Wentworth, Anne chooses a life of uncertainties and possible future war – a war that does happen, as Austen knew then and as we know from History; she also chooses a new family in marrying Wentworth, a family whose home virtues were nothing but held in the highest esteem by our novelist.

In our technology-driven world, it is hard to image that carriages and horses were the fastest way to get somewhere only a couple of hundred years ago. When we read Jane Austen and other classical novelists, we are asked to adjust our views of the world in order to accept the world that is being described to us in the pages of those novels. Moreover, reading Austen requires more from the reader than simply understanding that people would walk long distances, or that carriages were the most sophisticated means of transport: Jane Austen used places and possessions to build her characters, and to tell her reader on which side their

allegiances should lie. The understanding of why, for example, Sir Walter's decision to enter Bath in his pompous carriage is frowned upon and should not be admired is only possible when one has a comprehensive knowledge of Austen's times.

Like Anne, we are made of journeys, and journeys make us. There is the world around us, dictating how policies and fashions will develop and be carried out. The places we visit and the people we meet open our eyes to see what is beyond our emotional and literal walls. There are those who surround us and change and influence how we face the challenges ahead of us. Moreover, there is us, who we know ourselves to be and the person we aim to become. Reading is a journey in itself, and in many ways, analysing a novel through its journeys is nothing short of metafictional, linking Austen's works and travelling.

In 2017 not only will the world celebrate *Persuasion*'s 200th publication anniversary, it will also celebrate (and mourn) the 200th anniversary of Austen's death. Two hundred years later, here we are still discussing Austen and her works, more relevant than ever, every year bringing new adaptations of her novels in all the forms available to us: from dramatising her works to suit the stage, to creating modern versions of her characters and have them speak to a camera on social platforms, going as far as continuing Austen's stories in text format – we cannot get enough of Anne Elliot, Elizabeth Bennet, and company. Austen is very much alive in 2016, and it is very hard to escape her, for she is everywhere. The ever-increasing amount of Austen-related content can sometimes fog our glasses, and make us forget to look closely at what started it all: the words she wrote two centuries ago, so fertile that from them bloom a plethora of different materials. I am not here attributing more value to the primary sources as opposed to its derivatives, I am only suggesting a closer look at what initiated it all perhaps better to comprehend what is being produced from it. Perhaps the next step is to plunge into the realms of adaptation, start a new journey from there.

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