

Jane Austen: Revolutionizing Masculinities

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The publication of *Emma* in December 1815 presented the following memorable statement:

“No, Emma, your amiable young man can be amiable only in French, not in English. He may be very ‘aimable,’ have very good manners, and be very agreeable; but he can have no English delicacy towards the feelings of other people: nothing really amiable about him.” (115)

The speaker, of course, is George Knightley, addressing Emma Woodhouse. It is fair to say that one central action occurs here: the construction not only of nationhood but of manhood, that is, in the revolutionary climate of 1815, Knightley contrasts two elements: one is two nations, England and France; the other is two kinds of masculinity, the English and the French. No statement more encapsulates the connection between manhood and nationhood in nineteenth-century fiction than does this utterance of Knightley in *Emma*. I do not wish to rehearse the arguments that Jane Austen was relatively unaffected by the French Revolution. Scholars such as Marilyn Butler and Warren Roberts have long ago settled this question. What I wish to address is the manner in which Jane Austen deploys a revolutionary epoch to effect a cultural revolution of her own—by constructing a new masculinity to correspond with the new politics of revolutionary and post-revolutionary Britain.

It is possible to examine a range of Austen’s works, from *Mansfield Park* to *Emma* to *Persuasion*, to evaluate Austen’s function in this process of constructing masculinities, particularly because this process occurs during the time of the construction of the paradigms of Admiral Horatio Nelson and Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington. One can demonstrate this process not only by examining texts by Austen but contexts created by iconography involving Nelson and Wellington during this period and into the nineteenth century. In this manner, one can locate a new valence of significance for Jane Austen’s novels, that of serving to imprint on the British nation a new conception of masculinity and male subjectivity.

For the last fifteen years or so, the field of Men’s Studies and masculinity theory, drawing on the paradigms established by Feminist theory and Women’s Studies, has begun to interrogate the construction of masculinities in culture. Scholars recognize that the formation of modern ideologies of masculinity occurred precisely at the time of Austen’s formation as a novelist. Peter Middleton, for example, observes:

Modernity is a description usually applied not just to the twentieth century but the great period of modernization and social change since the industrial and political revolutions of the eighteenth century. The impact of this social transformation on men’s lives is obvious. . . . Men have been affected by universal conscription and total war. (154)

In *Sinews of the Spirit*, Norman Vance observes: "The nineteenth century began with heroic acts on land and sea. Wellington and Nelson between them refurbished the age-old tradition of military glory" (1). What Vance calls "the Nelson touch" (9) was to underlie the representation of males in fiction throughout the nineteenth century. In the case of Austen, however, this was much more than a mere touch, for it was via the construction of manliness through Nelson and Wellington that Austen achieved the interrogation of masculinity in the figures of William Price in *Mansfield Park* and of Frederick Wentworth in *Persuasion*. Graham Dawson has outlined the role which works of imagination enact in the construction of masculinity: "Masculine identities are lived out in the flesh, but fashioned in the imagination. . . . An *imagined identity* . . . has real effects in the world of everyday relationships" (118). This is to say that male subjectivity is constructed or, as Kimmel and Messner observe: "Men are not born; they are made" (9). One may cite, therefore, the famous discussion of Knightley with Emma as a key text for the construction of nationhood and manhood in a revolutionary context.

England had declared war on France in May 1803, as Roberts notes, partially in response to the build-up of French military power and to "Napoleon's expansionist actions after the Treaty of Amiens" (81). We know that Austen's brothers, Francis and Charles, had attended the Naval Academy at Portsmouth and that, for Francis Austen, Nelson was a heroic paradigm. For British society, the Battle of Trafalgar, 21 October 1805, was decisive in several ways. The British fleet under Nelson engaged the combined French and Spanish fleets. At the climax of the battle, Nelson died on board the *Victory*. Two immediate consequences resulted: the engagement put an end to Napoleon's scheme for an invasion of England and as a result, British naval supremacy was established for a century. But equally important is the function war fulfills in the construction of masculinity. In her study *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, Kaja Silverman emphasizes "the centrality of the discourse of war for the construction of conventional masculinity" (62).

For Austen, the period of revolution and war provided an occasion when she not only reinforced but also renegotiated the construction of masculinity. In the figures of Wellington and Nelson there existed a masculine paradigm. Austen's contribution to the construction of masculinity was to appropriate this paradigm and democratize it, that is, to instantiate this paradigm into domestic and quotidian contexts through the construction of William Price in *Mansfield Park* and of Frederick Wentworth in *Persuasion*. By this project, Austen initiates for the nineteenth century the process of renegotiating masculinity itself. The nationalistic as well as gendered valence of this practice, however, is most conspicuously displayed as an ideological program in *Emma*, through the contrast between Frank Churchill and George Knightley, that is, between France and England.

Austen was not alone in this interrogation of national difference in *Emma*. For example, in 1811, the year in which Austen began *Mansfield Park*, William Wordsworth observed:

In estimating the resources of the two Empires [France and England], as to revenue, you appear to make little or no allowance for what I deem of prime and paramount importance, the characters of the two nations, and of the two Governments. (I.432)

Wordsworth then continued, praising Britain:

Now, when I look at the condition of our Country, and compare it with that of France . . . and when I think of the wealth and population . . . which we must have at command for military purposes, I confess I have not much dread, looking at either war or peace, of any power which France, with respect to us, is likely to attain for years, I may say for generations. (I.433)

Wordsworth's reference to the military aligns manhood and nationhood in a markedly conscious construction of nationalistic masculinity.

Throughout *Emma*, Frank Churchill embodies French masculinity, as his Christian name suggests, just as Knightley embodies the masculinity of England and its St. George. It is no accident that in 1815 Knightley constructs Frank Churchill as "proud, luxurious, and selfish" (112). But this is only the beginning of his indictment of Frank's French masculinity:

"We know . . . that he has so much of [money and leisure] that he is glad to get rid of them at the idlest haunts in the kingdom. We hear of him for ever at some watering-place or other. A little while ago, he was at Weymouth." (112)

"There is one thing, Emma, which a man can always do, if he chuses, and that is, his duty; not by manoeuvring and finessing, but by vigour and resolution. . . . [Churchill lacks] the tone of decision becoming a man." (113)

Knightley feels Frank is not "a man of sense" (113). "As he became rational, he ought to have roused himself" (114), Knightley declares. If one considers the equation of rationality with masculinity, Knightley's indictment becomes blistering. He sees Frank Churchill as embodying a despicable form of politics:

"What! at three-and-twenty to be the king of his company—the great man—the practised politician, who is to read every body's character, and make every body's talents conduce to the display of his own superiority; to be dispensing his flatteries around, that he may make all appear like fools compared with himself!" (116)

To Knightley, in this memorable scene, Churchill is a "puppy" (116), marked as "a trifling, silly fellow" (159).

Later, in volume II of the novel, after Emma learns that Frank Churchill went to London to have his hair cut, even *her* allegiance wavers:

There was an air of foppery and nonsense in it which she could not approve. It did not accord with rationality of plan, the moderation in expense, or even the unselfish warmth of heart which she had believed herself to discern in him yesterday. Vanity, extravagance, love of change, restlessness of temper, which must be doing something, good or bad; heedlessness as to the pleasure of his father and Mrs. Weston, indifference as to how his conduct might appear in general; he became liable to all these charges. (157-58)

When Emma comes to discuss Frank's conduct in the novel, his secret engagement and correspondence, her indictment of him must be understood as a nationalistic as well as personal critique:

"It has sunk him, I cannot say how it has sunk him in my opinion. So unlike what a man should be!—None of that upright integrity, that strict adherence to truth and principle, that disdain of trick and littleness, which a man should display in every transaction of his life." (312)

It should be noted that in this observation, Emma specifically links behaviour with gendered paradigm. Then she continues:

"I shall always think it a very abominable sort of proceeding. What has it been but a system of hypocrisy and deceit,—espionage, and treachery. . . . To come among us with professions of openness and simplicity; and such a league in secret to judge us all!" (313)

Knightley summarizes the nature of Frank's masculinity by observing: "He is a disgrace to the name of man" (334). In other words, Frank is *not* a man, *not* masculine, at all by any British paradigm. He is the Other: whether that be ethnic other or national other. One recalls Knightley's remark about Churchill's handwriting: "I do not admire it. . . . It is too small—wants strength. It is like a woman's writing" (230). Churchill to Knightley is gallant only in a debased manner: "These letters were but the vehicle for gallantry and trick. . . . This gallant young man . . . seemed to love without feeling, and to recommend himself without complaisance" (272).

George Knightley, on the other hand, constructs for British culture the English male. Knightley specifically is "good-natured, useful, considerate [and] benevolent. He is not a gallant man, but he is a very human one" (172) states Emma to Mrs. Weston. Knightley speaks "in plain, unaffected gentleman-like English" (352) with Emma at the novel's conclusion. In the famous excursion to Donwell Abbey, Knightley IS England, as Emma recognizes when viewing the estate:

It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive. (282)

This is much in contrast with the European—identified Frank Churchill who wishes to go to Switzerland, the man who can state in the same chapter: "I am sick of England—and would leave it to-morrow, if I could" (286).

Knightley's superiority correlates the man with the mansion, all being Donwell. On one occasion, Emma notes "his tall, firm, upright figure" (254). Knightley, as a practising farmer, wears "thick leather gaiters" (222). The Abbey symbolizes British masculinity:

She felt all the honest pride and complacency which her allegiance with the present and future proprietor could fairly warrant . . . the Abbey [with] its abundance of timber in rows and avenues, which neither fashion nor extravagance had rooted up. . . . It was just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was—and Emma felt an increasing respect for it, as the residence of a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding. (280)

In other words, Churchill desires to leave the very thing Knightley embodies.

Knightley is the first great character in nineteenth-century fiction constructed as masculine by the paradigm of St. George. As patron saint of England as well as the Order of the Garter, St. George appeared in many manifestations throughout the country. In *Scouting for Boys*, as late as 1908,

Baden-Powell declared that St. George was “the patron saint of cavalry and scouts all over Europe” (225). At St. George’s Chapel, Windsor, solemn mass was celebrated on the Saint’s day, 23 April. Painters and sculptors exhibited images of St. George at the Royal Academy throughout the era. In 1898, Henry Fehr exhibited his statue of *St. George and the Rescued Maiden*. Most powerful of these constructions is Solomon J. Solomon’s *St. George* of 1906. The paradigm of St. George was invoked by Henry Newbolt, the poet who constructed the masculine paradigm *homo newboltiensis*. In his *St. George’s Day, Ypres, 1915*, written in 1918, he linked the soldiers of the First World War with this masculine topos. If George Knightley constructs St. George as a paradigm of masculinity during the Napoleonic wars, this model imprinted masculinity as Newbolt and Baden-Powell demonstrate, for at least a century.

The practice of Austen in *Emma* maps the ideology she will deploy and display through the concept of Horatio Nelson in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. In *Emma*, Austen reconfigures the masculine by inscribing in a recognizable English context the ideology associated with the heroic saint. This nationalistic inscription of masculinity occurs in a revolutionary context, much as does the construction of the masculinity represented by William Price and Frederick Wentworth.

Austen demonstrates the culture renegotiating masculinity specifically because of the trauma of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Her contribution to the construction of masculinity is precisely in assimilating either icons such as St. George or heroes like Nelson and Wellington to the quotidian, the masculinity constructed via the representation of English culture in a fictional text. Jane Austen began *Mansfield Park* around February 1811, according to the memorandum of her sister Cassandra, finishing it soon after June 1813. It is precisely prior to and during these years that the model of Nelson becomes constructed in culture as paradigmatic of the masculine.

Even during the eighteenth century, however, Nelson was already becoming heroized through visual iconography. In 1781, John Francis Rigaud painted him at the age of 18 wearing a captain’s full dress uniform. Nelson stands before one of the Spanish forts he captured on the River San Juan in Central America in 1780. In 1798-99, Lemuel Francis Abbott painted *Nelson as a Rear Admiral* in undress uniform after the Battle of the Nile, wearing the diamond *chelengk* or turban decoration given him by Sultan Selim III of Turkey for defeating the French. He is wearing the stars of a Knight of the Order of the Bath, the Neapolitan Order of St. Ferdinand and of Merit, and the Turkish Order of the Crescent. Nelson is shown without his right arm, lost at Santa Cruz, Tenerife, in the Canary Islands in 1797. In 1798 Guy Head painted the armless Nelson, as did William Beechey in 1801. Fuger’s *Nelson* of 1800 shows the man in civilian dress, assimilating him to the ordinary, accessible masculine paradigm. The following year, 1801, John Flaxman completed his bust of Nelson: here Nelson is in Rear Admiral’s full dress uniform with his orders and medals.



Lemuel Francis Abbott: *Rear Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson*,
1798-99; oil on canvas; 30" x 25"; by permission of
the National Maritime Museum, London.

It was of course Nelson's death at the Battle of Trafalgar, 21 October 1805, which transformed him from man to virtual deity. In 1806, Benjamin West completed his *Death of Lord Nelson*, showing Nelson on the quarterback of his ship, the *Victory*, with Captain Hardy holding the dying hero. Nelson actually died of his wounds several hours later below deck, in the ship's cockpit. West recognized his falsification of the historical records, but stated:

There was no other way of representing the death of a Hero but by an Epic representation of it. It must exhibit the event in a way to excite awe & veneration . . . all that can shew the importance of the Hero. . . . To move the mind there should be a spectacle presented . . . [of] the highest idea conceived of the Hero. (222)

Then, to bring home the imprinting function of this iconography, West added:

No boy would be animated by a representation of Nelson dying like an ordinary man. His feelings must be roused & his mind inflamed by a scene great and extraordinary. A mere matter of fact will never produce this effect. (222)

In 1808, West depicted Nelson dying in the cockpit of the *Victory*. Next to him stands Smith, the assistant surgeon, who hears his dying, heroic words:

"I have done my duty—I praise God for it." This picture was completed for engraving in *The Life of Admiral Lord Nelson* in 1809, written by James Stanier Clarke and John M'Arthur, the former well known for his correspondence with Jane Austen regarding the dedication of *Emma*.

The death of Nelson was of course central to the construction of his apotheosis. In Arthur William Devis's *Death of Nelson* of 1805-07, Nelson is shown in the cockpit, the surgeon Beatty holding his wrist while Hardy stands at the rear. Denis Dighton's *The Fall of Nelson* shows the hero, gravely wounded by a musket shot from the *Redoubtable*'s mizzen top. For Clarke's *Life of Nelson*, Richard Westall completed a number of canvases used as the basis of engraving for the 1809 biography. One depicts *Nelson's Encounter with a Spanish Launch, 1797*. Another shows *Nelson Receiving the Surrender of San Nicolas*. Another canvas depicts *Nelson and the Bear*, an episode showing the young midshipman during his Arctic voyage in 1773. A final painting by West shows *Nelson Wounded at Tenerife, 24 July 1797*. All of these were completed around 1806. Artists were continually attracted to the figure of Nelson during the period immediately prior to the composition of *Mansfield Park*. In 1807, Benjamin West completed *The Apotheosis of Nelson*, showing Nelson in a winding sheet supported by the sea god Neptune as an angel offers a trident to Britannia. John Flaxman worked on his *Monument to Nelson* from 1807 to 1818, while Pierre Legrand completed yet another *Apotheosis of Nelson* in 1817. Reproductions of these images and their circulation prepared for the reception of William Price of *Mansfield Park* and particularly for Frederick Wentworth of *Persuasion*.

Mansfield Park, published in 1814, that is before Waterloo, is transitional in Jane Austen's process of constructing the masculine. Both actual and fictional events conspired to mark *Mansfield Park* as a novel of the revolution, as Warren Roberts observes:

Austen was certainly familiar with wartime suffering, most evidently through the death of her sister's fiance. The resulting sorrow must not have been unlike that of Fanny Price and Jane Fairfax [of *Emma*] the former because her father, a lieutenant in the marines, was disabled while on active service, the latter because her father, also a lieutenant, was killed in action abroad. The injury of Lieutenant Price reduced the family to such hardship that Fanny's mother swallowed her pride and wrote to her sister. (98)

The construction of Nelson's heroic paradigm by Clarke's *Life* of 1809 and by Southey's *Life of Nelson* of 1813 (the latter of which impressed Francis Austen) and by pictorial imagery influences the presentation of Fanny Price's brother William in *Mansfield Park*. The entire catalyst of *Mansfield Park*, therefore, is the damaged masculinity of Fanny Price's father, a masculinity the novel then reconstructs.

Early in the novel Edmund Bertram refers to the navy as "a noble profession" (47). Fanny's room at Mansfield Park contains "a small sketch of a ship sent four years ago from the Mediterranean by William, with H.M.S. Antwerp at the bottom" (116). When William arrives at Mansfield Park in volume II, he is already constructed as heroic:

Young as he was, William had already seen a great deal. He had been in the Mediterranean—in the West Indies—in the Mediterranean again—had been often taken on shore by the favour of his Captain, and in the course of seven years had known every variety of danger, which sea and war together could offer. With such a means in his power he had a right to be listened to. (178-79)

As if to reinforce this point, Austen then records Henry Crawford's response to this naval, heroic masculinity, so much in contrast to his own gendering and acculturation:

To Henry Crawford [these events] gave a different feeling. He longed to have been at sea, and seen and done and suffered as much. His heart was warmed, his fancy fired, and he felt the highest respect for a lad who, before he was twenty, had gone through such bodily hardships, and given such proofs of mind. The glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance, made his own habits of selfish indulgence appear in shameful contrast; and he wished he had been a William Price, distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune and consequence with so much self-respect and happy ardour, instead of what he was! (179)

Austen clearly demarcates the renegotiation of masculinities occurring as a result of the Napoleonic wars in this crucial juxtaposition of a self-indulgent masculinity with one daring, physical, and arduous. Mary Crawford has a low opinion of the Navy, having noted earlier: "It is not a favourite profession of mine. It has never worn an amiable form to *me*" (47). The word amiable and its misconstruction here clearly anticipates the famous statement by Knightley in *Emma*. That both Crawfords ultimately disdain the Navy marks them as morally retrograde in the post-war ethos of *Mansfield Park* and its aggressive construction of masculinity.

Despite his success, William feels the difficulty of not being a lieutenant:

"The Portsmouth girls turn up their noses at any body who had not a commission. One might as well be nothing as a midshipman. One *is* nothing indeed. . . . The Gregorys . . . will hardly speak to *me*, because Lucy is courted by a lieutenant." (189)

Fanny replies:

"It is not worth minding. It is no reflection on *you*; it is no more than what the greatest admirals have all experienced. . . . You must think of that; you must try to make up your mind to it as one of the hardships which fall to every sailor's share." (189)

It is beyond doubt that Fanny Price is thinking of the apotheosized Nelson.

Through the offices of Crawford's uncle, the Admiral, William is eventually "made," as Henry informs Fanny:

"My uncle, who is the very best man in the world, has exerted himself, as I knew he would after seeing your brother. He was delighted with him. . . . *Now* I may say that even *I* could not require William Price to excite a greater interest, or be followed by warmer wishes and higher commendations, than were most voluntarily bestowed by my uncle after the evening they passed together." (227-28)

The only heroism Henry Crawford can appropriate is stated by his sister: "For as to secrecy, Henry is quite the hero of an old romance" (273). In *Mansfield Park* Austen interrogates the norms of masculinity of her time. It

is fair to say that few novels so starkly convey the transitional nature of the redefinition and reconstruction of masculinity following the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras as does *Mansfield Park* in its juxtaposition of William Price and Henry Crawford.

Intervening between the publication of *Mansfield Park* and the beginning of the composition of *Persuasion* in August 1815 was of course the battle of Waterloo on 18 June 1815, at which Wellington defeated Napoleon. Jane Austen's awareness of the war and of Wellington is indicated by her remark in a letter of 6 November 1813 following Wellington's victory at Vittoria: "What weather! & what news!—We have enough to do to admire them both.—I hope you derive your full share of enthusiasm from each" (372). Austen's engagement with the war was partially from her reading of Sir Charles William Pasley's *Essay on the Military Police and Institutions of the British Empire* written in 1810, in which Pasley celebrated the power of a British standing army. Pasley argued that Britain had to become "a military nation" to confront the threat from France. Austen read the book in 1813, admiring the "extraordinary force & spirit" with which it was written (292).

Without denying the powerful modelling impact of Nelson on the construction of masculinity in *Persuasion*, there can be no doubt that the figure of Wellington, so overwhelming during the period 1815-1816, figures in Austen's final construction of masculinity with Frederick Wentworth, whose very name indicates the trial, endurance, and testing she associated with the new masculine paradigm. As with Nelson, so with Wellington this focus is anticipated by the construction of Wellington in art prior to and during the composition of *Persuasion*. After the Battle of Talavera in July 1809, Wellington became a national hero.

Robert Home's 1804 oil of the future Duke of Wellington shows him with his right hand thrust into his tunic, in Major-General's uniform. John Hoppner's *Arthur Wellesley* finished in 1806 shows its subject in the uniform of a major general with the ribbon and star of the Bath. Sir Thomas Lawrence painted Wellesley in 1814, the year he was created Duke of Wellington; here he is shown wearing the ribbon of the Garter. In 1815 Lawrence portrayed the Duke at the Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul's held on 7 July 1814 during the summer after Napoleon's exile to Elba but before the battle of Waterloo. The Duke is shown holding aloft the Sword of State, wearing the ribbon and collar of the Garter and other orders. In 1818 Lawrence completed an image of the Duke dressed as he had been at Waterloo, mounted on his horse Copenhagen. He flourishes his hat to urge his army forward. This equestrian portrait links Wellington with equestrian statues of the Roman emperors and of Renaissance victors. Walter Scott, the future admirer of Austen's *Emma*, completed his poem *The Field of Waterloo* in 1815. In the Conclusion he evokes "Gallant Saint George, the flower of chivalry" (line 39), linking the Duke with this other famous construction of British masculinity.

The two elements of the posthumous fame of Nelson and the actual triumphs of Wellington inform the reconfiguration of masculinity in *Persuasion*. As Roberts notes, "Austen's most direct statement about the war is in *Persuasion* . . . the only finished novel that was written at the end of

hostilities" (100). We note that Wentworth had originally proposed to Anne Elliot in 1806. The novel begins in the summer of 1814, after Napoleon's exile and before Waterloo. As the juxtaposition of William Price with Henry Crawford contrasted two types of masculinity in *Mansfield Park*, here the contrast between Frederick Wentworth and both Sir Walter and William Elliot demonstrates Austen's renegotiation of masculinity. The novel is filled with naval characters: Admiral Croft, Captain Benwick, Captain Harville, and of course Wentworth, all in England as a result of the Treaty of Paris, 30 May 1814.

When Kellynch Hall is to be rented, Anne Elliot is eloquent about the prestige of the Navy:

"The navy . . . who have done so much for us, have at least an equal claim with any other set of men, for all the comforts and all the privileges which any home can give. Sailors work hard enough for their comforts." (16)

Sir Walter is not so impressed:

"The profession has its utility, but I should be sorry to see any friend of mine belonging to it. . . . It is in two points offensive to me. . . . 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." (16)

The future tenant, Admiral Croft, had been in Trafalgar and in the East Indies, Anne informs her father. Sir Walter then proceeds to draw his famous distinction between the Wentworths and gentlemen:

"You misled me by the term *gentleman*. I thought you were speaking of some man of property: Mr. Wentworth was nobody, I remember." (19)

When Frederick Wentworth reappears after an absence of eight years, he is described as having "a more glowing, manly . . . look" (48).

When Wentworth recounts his exploits, he sounds like a version of Nelson. He was "sent off to the West Indies" (50); he took "privateers enough to be very entertaining" (51); he voyaged to the Azores and "had still the same luck in the Mediterranean" (52). Wentworth returns rich, confident, assertive, and ready to marry any tolerable woman who can make "a few compliments to the navy" (49).

Austen reinforces this paradigm of the new masculinity in *Persuasion* by replicating it with a different valence in other navy men, especially Captain Harville. At Lyme Regis Anne Elliot meets Harville and his wife. Harville's life has not been an easy one:

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 unexpensive, and by the sea. . . . [He] was a tall, dark man, with a sensible, benevolent countenance; a little lame; and from strong features, and want of health, looking much older than Captain Wentworth. . . . Though not equalling Captain Wentworth in manners, [Harville] was a perfect gentleman, unaffected, warm, and obliging.

(76-77)

Anne is impressed by Harville's ability to make the most of his circumstances,

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 necessities provided by the owner, in the common indifferent light, 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. . . . His lameness prevented him from taking much exercise; but a mind of usefulness and ingenuity seemed to furnish him with constant employment within. . . . Anne thought she left great happiness behind her when they quitted the house.

(77-78)

Austen's point about the new masculinity is confirmed when in the next chapter, Anne is briefly seen by William Elliot, the self-indulgent, scheming, and lascivious cousin who will assume such prominence in the second volume of the novel. The masculine paradigm represented by Harville and Wentworth makes both male Elliots retrograde and unacceptable.

It is from another naval couple, Admiral and Mrs. Croft, that Anne learns about spontaneity and the evil of long engagements. Sophia Croft has "lived as much on board as most women" (54) and has seen the world with her husband:

"In the fifteen years of my marriage . . . I have crossed the Atlantic four times, and have been once to the East Indies, and back again; and only once, besides being in different places about home—Cork, and Lisbon, and Gibraltar." (55)

It is now the fact that couples like the Crofts have the money, unlike the Elliots, who are rapidly becoming dispossessed. The Admiral tells Anne that "We sailors . . . cannot afford to make long courtships in time of war" (72), to which his wife responds: "If Miss Elliot were to hear how soon we came to an understanding, she would never be persuaded that we could be happy together" (72).

At the conclusion of *Persuasion*, Austen summarizes the tenor of Anne's married life with Frederick Wentworth as follows:

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.

The emphasis on both *worth* and *Wentworth* in that first sentence conveys Austen's belief in this renegotiation of masculinity. Particular significant is the manner in which she emphasizes in her final sentence that this new masculinity has both domestic and national implications. This statement

demonstrates her agenda in *Persuasion*: to demarcate an ideal of national heroism in the figures of Harville or Admiral Croft or Wentworth.

As Joseph Duffy has argued, "the whole moral direction of *Persuasion* is toward an embracing of the energetic life and a rejection of the life of leisure" (279). But it is a rejection as well of an enervated, dessicated concept of masculinity and of the gentleman and of men per se. The Navy is composed "of foils to an effete aristocracy, of national heroes who were enthusiastically received in England after the defeat of Napoleon. . . . The navy are realists; they embody life's power and are uncomplimentary and active. On the national level, they are their country's heroic adventurers" (282-83). One may concur with Duffy's assessment that "*Persuasion* seems heavily weighted on the side of the eager, liberal class" (287). It is also a sign of the democratizing process of the nineteenth century, as Duffy contends:

The reconciliation between Lady Russell and Wentworth is insisted upon at the close of *Persuasion*. Anne in bringing about this reconciliation creates life out of paradox: the compromise between the most loved representative of the aristocracy and the most loved representative of the navy is effected not without a realignment of ideas on both sides. (289)

Persuasion, in other words, anticipates the famous pact one designates as the Victorian compromise, the alignment of the aristocracy and the middle class to effect reform.

It is also, however, a radical rethinking and reconfiguring of the concept of masculinity itself. If one examines the sequence of ideas about the male from *Mansfield Park* (with its contrast of William Price with Henry Crawford) to *Emma* (with its contrast of George Knightley with Frank Churchill) to *Persuasion* (with its contrast of Frederick Wentworth with William Elliot), it is apparent that Austen's last three finished novels are crucial in any examination of the construction of masculinity during the nineteenth century. Austen draws on the historical paradigms of Nelson and Wellington and the mythical paradigm of St. George to construct a new masculinity in a nationalistic context.

The idea of British maleness constructed by Austen in *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion* was one advanced during the remainder of the nineteenth century. In particular, the construction of the idea of Nelson and Wellington continued through the century. Victorian history painters were drawn to the Napoleonic era to reinforce masculine paradigms when critics at the end of the century felt there was a "crisis of masculinity" in Britain. In Crofts's *Wellington's March from Quatre Bras to Waterloo* of 1878, the Duke is constructed as a heroic paradigm for his troops. Likewise, Nelson was to remain before the public in painting and in sculpture. Edward Baily's *Viscount Nelson* of 1843 surmounts the column in Trafalgar Square. To inspire future acts of exploration, the Pre-Raphaelite John Everett Millais included a print of Nelson in his *The North-West Passage* of 1874. In his poem *Admirals All* of 1892, Henry Newbolt praised Raleigh, Drake, and Nelson. In *Scouting for Boys* of 1908, Baden-Powell devoted several paragraphs specifically to Nelson. He notes that Nelson's "work and that of other great sea captains who served with him completed the supremacy of the

British navy at sea. . . . That power at sea has enabled us to discover new lands for our Empire" (88). Baden-Powell concludes with a paean to a sailor's life to inspire young men. This alignment of the masculine with the national becomes a paradigm.

The imprinting of masculinity via the new masculinity of the naval man, whether William Price or Frederick Wentworth, is strongly illustrated by Thomas Davidson's canvas from the 1880s, *England's Pride and Glory*, in which a mother points to Lemuel Abbott's portrait of Nelson as a paradigm of masculinity for her midshipman son. Above the Abbott portrait one can glimpse a detail of Richard Westall's *Nelson in Conflict with a Spanish Launch* of 1806, previously noted. Just as the masculinity of Nelson imprints the construction of the naval characters in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* at the beginning of the century, so at its end is this masculinity reinforced.

In the figures of William Price, George Knightley, and Frederick Wentworth, Austen constructed British masculinity by appropriating the heroic models—whether Nelson, St. George, or Wellington—and contextualizing them in accessible recognizable texts with the power to imprint a new male paradigm. This result was as revolutionary a consequence of Revolution as one could conceive. Thus, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion* assumed the function of inscribing male subjectivity for the nineteenth century, one of the most crucial elements of their legacy. One may summarize this construction of masculinity by citation of a famous letter:

October 27, [1805] off Tetuan.—Alas! my dearest Mary, all my fears are but too fully justified. The fleets have met, and, after a very severe contest, a most decisive victory has been gained by the English twenty-seven over the enemy's thirty-three. . . . I am truly sorry to add that this splendid affair has cost us many lives, and amongst them the most invaluable one to the nation, that of our gallant, and ever-to-be-regretted, Commander-in-Chief, Lord Nelson, who was mortally wounded by musket shot, and only lived long enough to know his fleet successful. In a public point of view, I consider his loss as the greatest which could have occurred. . . . I never heard of his equal, nor do I expect again to see such a man. To the soundest judgment he united prompt decision and speedy execution of his plans; and he possessed in a superior degree the happy talent of making every class of persons pleased with their situation and eager to exert themselves in forwarding the public service. . . . a day which surpasses all which ever went before. (Hubback 155-56)

The writer is Francis Austen. He—and his sister—knew a revolution when they saw one.

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† The color image has replaced the original black and white image for the on-line edition of this essay. – C. Moss, JASNA Web Site Manager



"Complete in his Lieutenant's uniform" Chapter XXXVII.