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Austen and Osterhammel

The Transformation of the World and the Novel in the Nineteenth Century

1.

There is an embryonic theory of the novel in a letter Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra on 4 February 1813, in a sentence where Austen, with habitual irony, discusses *Pride and Prejudice*:

The work is rather too light, and bright, and sparkling; it wants shade; it wants to be stretched out here and there with a long chapter of sense, if it could be had; if not, of solemn specious nonsense, about something unconnected with the story; an essay on writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparté, or anything that would form a contrast, and bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness and epigrammatism of the general style.¹

The novel, Austen suggests, forever fails to coincide with itself; it is either too much of something, that is not the novel itself, or too little of it. It follows that the novel is relative to begin with, failing to supply an *idea* of the novel. As it is, the novel can only be outstripped by light and brightness and sparkle, indeed, by the Enlightenment. Also, this may be why Austen associates »long

With a focus on J. Austen's concept-novels (*Sense and Sensibility*; *Pride and Prejudice*; *Persuasion*), I argue that *Persuasion* binds them into a trilogy. In *Persuasion*, the Napoleonic Wars are to the novel what Mr. Darcy is to Elizabeth Bennet: a foreign body that the novel learns to accommodate in terms of education, intimacy and eroticism until the novel itself, or the novel's self, has been given up for the relation it has forged. It is thus not merely to history that Austen relinquishes the education of the novel in *Persuasion*; it is to the history of revolution, or history as revolution. Austen implies that global history in the 19th century may have no other viable rationale, and that the novel is how this rationale, as well as the rationality that subtends it, is negotiated.

1 Austen: *Letters*, p. 299–300.

chapter[s] of sense« with shade: she implies that light is always also engaged by the Enlightenment as excess and enjoyment, as delight – a condition to which the novel contributes a kind of psychoanalysis. In fact, what Austen calls style may be but a name for a crisis embedded in the Enlightenment, which seeks to define itself against philosophy (»a long chapter of sense«) even as it invites a residual, unattached wit of the novel that is relative and not conceptual. Philosophy can hardly accommodate this residue, but the novel can; this is why the novel may be as indispensable to an understanding of the Enlightenment as is philosophy. When D. A. Miller identifies style as »the first principle, the a priori«² of Austen's fiction and Austen as *stylothete*, he actually alludes to the novel as a precursor to psychoanalysis; it is only that, rather than taking style as the first principle of her novels, Austen shows how the first principle and the a priori (concepts suggestive of philosophy) are taken up as style – nowhere so explicitly as in the famous first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*.³

Austen's first published novel, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), is another case in point. Ostensibly named after two concepts, as if in an attempt to pass for a philosophical essay, it works towards dismantling the conflicted concepts (sense and sensibility) into a sustained narrative relation and assonance, which is how philosophy is given up for style without losing sense or sensibility. The same is true of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). Not only does the novel work towards dismantling the conceptual rift between pride and prejudice into a sustained narrative relation and assonance, but, by foregrounding pride and prejudice, the novel also points to a likely *excess* in the intellectual processes and to an *overvaluation* of consciousness, to which style supplies operative, if transitory, reparation.

Austen thereby hones the novel into an exercise in empiricism, so much that the novel may be where empiricism finds its exemplary articulation in the nineteenth century; Austen's fiction may be how empiricism is ushered into the nineteenth century, and reconstituted in the novel. Gilles Deleuze asserts that empiricism is like the English novel: »[i]t is a case of philosophizing as a novelist, of being a novelist in philosophy«.⁴ This is supported by the fact that Austen's first published novels were concept-novels (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*), as if to suggest that the novel served the purpose of undoing concepts into relations, a narrative machine no less.

2 Miller: *Jane Austen*, p. 8.

3 »It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.« (Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 3)

4 Deleuze/Parnet: *Dialogues II*, pp. 40–43.

(Deleuze comments that empiricism may never have had another secret, and that is thinking with *and*, instead of thinking *is* and thinking for *is*.) It is only later that Austen would publish name-novels (*Mansfield Park* in 1814, *Emma* in 1816, *Northanger Abbey* in 1818), where the name serves the purpose of keeping relations together short of generating concepts.⁵

Tellingly, Austen's last completed novel, *Persuasion* (1818), is again a concept-novel. However, the concept it engages, persuasion, is less of a concept than a relation to begin with. Also, persuasion implies that philosophy residual to sense and sensibility, even to pride and prejudice, is given up for rhetoric, even for a kind of psychopolitics, over and above what Austen's first novels promise as psychoanalysis. What persuasion ultimately flaunts is precisely style, over and above philosophy *and* psychoanalysis, which – paradoxically – is also how style is orphaned into a precarious historical circumstance. Finally, persuasion is how sense, sensibility, pride and prejudice are brought together into a sustained assonance, as if to suggest that *Persuasion* binds Austen's three concept-novels into a trilogy, and is this trilogy's conclusion.⁶

2.

It is therefore logical that *Persuasion* should be the novel where Austen carries her theory of the novel to the extreme, until theory has been given up for the novel and betrayed. If *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* were to play against long chapters of sense, *Persuasion* is put together, scrupulously, around what Austen in 1813 called »solemn specious nonsense, about something unconnected with the story« – the history of Bonaparte. It is only that the »solemn specious nonsense« is now intimately connected with the story, so that *Persuasion* seems to be tasked precisely with eman-

- 5 When J. L. Austin, between 1948 and 1959, gave a series of lectures entitled *Sense and Sensibilia*, published posthumously in 1962 (a seminal work of ordinary language philosophy), this was clearly with Austen in mind, as if to recover a philosophical argument from a novel that sought to dismantle sense and sensibility as concepts. What he also dismantled was name as a placeholder of authority and authorship: *Sense and Sensibilia* is not a name so much as a relation being traced to *Sense and Sensibility*. The same applies to Austin, no longer a name so much as a relation it traces to Austen.
- 6 *Persuasion* was published in December 1817 (together with *Northanger Abbey*, as a four-volume set), with 1818 on the title-page; Austen died in July 1817 (see Southam: *Jane Austen*, p. 269). While *Northanger Abbey* was one of Austen's early novels, published in 1817 after revisions, reviewers note as early as 1821 that *Persuasion* »is more strictly to be considered as a posthumous work« (ibid., p. 109).

cipating the novel from a theory of the novel, the novel itself becoming an instrument of emancipation.

Indeed, *Persuasion* is pointedly historical, unlike Austen's other novels, where historical details and dates, if there are any at all, are scarce; in the words of Claudia L. Johnson, »*Persuasion* is a calculated tangle of years and dates«. ⁷ Dates proliferate and circulate, and eventually amount to a temporal excess in which the story is overdetermined, so that the narration needs to work extra hard for the novel to make sense. In *Persuasion*, narration is overtaken, like a machine pushed to the point of breakdown. Because the history thus engaged is one of Bonaparte, a history Austen identified in 1813 as alien to her narrative intelligence (a contrast no less), the novel is now in a position to accommodate the French Revolution and its Napoleonic aftermath as Elizabeth Bennet ultimately accommodates the offensive Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. In *Persuasion*, writing history is to Austen's novel what Mr. Darcy is to Elizabeth Bennet: a foreign body that the novel learns to accommodate in terms of education, intimacy and eroticism until the novel itself, or the novel's self, has been given up for the relation it has forged. (The novel as narrative grammar is in *Persuasion* increasingly given up for the novel as narrative syntax; the novel's intelligence, Austen implies, is syntactical.)

Marilyn Butler makes much of the fact that Austen was an anti-Jacobin author whose conservative partisanship is revealed in a »striking thing about her novels«, that »they do not mention the French Revolution and barely allude to the Napoleonic Wars«. ⁸ By casting the Napoleonic Wars in her last finished novel in the role of Mr. Darcy, and the novel in the role of Elizabeth Bennet, Austen subjects her very authorship to the scrutiny to which the novel's intelligence was subjected in *Pride and Prejudice* – only to find out that her authorship suffers the same kind of undoing, and education. While authorship is thereby divested of uncontested authority, in favor of constitutional authority (as is the case with Elizabeth, the focalizing consciousness in *Pride and Prejudice*), Austen the author seems to be guillotined in the process. Miller laments Austen the stylothete turning »suicidal« ⁹ in *Persuasion*, along with »that godlike authority which we think of as the default mode of narration in the traditional novel«, of which »Austen may well

7 Johnson: *Jane Austen*, p. 147.

8 Butler: *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, p. 294.

9 Miller: *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style*, p. 69.

be the *only* English example«;¹⁰ Butler reluctantly concedes to *Persuasion*'s being ideologically »ambivalent«.¹¹

In short, it is not merely to history that Austen relinquishes the education of the novel in *Persuasion*; it is to the history of revolution, or perhaps to history as revolution. Austen implies that history in the nineteenth century may have no other viable rationale, and that the novel is how this rationale, as well as the rationality that subtends it, is negotiated. It is in this sense that *Persuasion* is also Austen's shrewd, if suicidal, comment on »[o]ne vital fact« about her authorship: »that almost all her novels were drafted, revised, and published in the 22 long years that Britain was at war with France, first with Revolutionary France (1793–1799) and then with Napoleonic France after Napoleon Bonaparte became the nation's de facto ruler (1799–1804) and then emperor (1804–1814, 1815)«.¹²

If this is why *Persuasion* is fundamentally a historical novel, and a nineteenth-century novel, it is also how the novel engages »a critique on Walter Scott«, another point Austen identified in 1813 as »solemn specious nonsense« which is alien to her narrative intelligence; on her way to being guillotined as author, Austen drops a hint that Scott's historical novels are not rational, or justified, insofar as the history they engage is not necessarily one of revolution. In *Persuasion*, Austen explicitly references Scott twice,¹³ both times in order to remove her novel from what she perceives to be self-serving historicism and »sentimental reflexion«,¹⁴ and towards radical historicity.¹⁵

3.

The story of *Persuasion* begins »in the summer of 1814«,¹⁶ after Bonaparte's abdication, and feeds on the navy officers returning to England after the war. Yet, the financial and political spoils of the Napoleonic Wars that they are bringing to England are reshaping fast the very England their war

10 Ibid., p. 31.

11 Butler: *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, p. 294.

12 Johnson/Tuite: *30 Great Myths about Jane Austen*, p. 93. See Roberts: *Jane Austen and the French Revolution*, Sponberg: *Jane Austen, the 1790s, and the French Revolution* and Russell: *The Army, the Navy, and the Napoleonic Wars* for Austen in the historical context of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

13 Austen: *Persuasion*, p. 107 and 166.

14 Ibid., p. 166.

15 See Bobinac (*Uvod u romantizam*, pp. 202–204) for Scott's historical novel as a literary template in which empiricism is somewhat unexpectedly invoked, only to be betrayed.

16 Austen: *Persuasion*, p. 7.

effort was to preserve and enforce; this is how England, paradoxically, is caught in the very revolution it was trying to fend off. In *Persuasion*, Austen's proverbial irony is all on the side of history: it is in England that the French Revolution appears to persist as a game-changing historical and politico-economic transformation. The revolution seems to be spreading like a plague, a pandemic no less; it does not seem to rely on willing agents or full-fledged revolutionary subjects (on narcissism, political or otherwise), but on relations of proximity and contiguity, whose logic is ensconced in metonymy.

Drawing on a strict analogy between epidemics and democratic writing, Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse single Austen out as an author whose »style of writing contains what might otherwise become infectious forms of social contract«, with relationships that observe »the procedures of a biopolitical fantasy being implemented in Europe at that time«;¹⁷ in a comment on *Pride and Prejudice*, they conclude that »two centuries have passed without producing a novelist nearly as capable of producing a heroine who seems so disciplined because her democratic tendencies are so strong«. ¹⁸ *Persuasion* seems to address this very condition, by emphatically cultivating pathology; there is hardly a character in *Persuasion* not tasked with negotiating an illness, even if it is only aging. The overwhelming suggestion is that the novel itself is falling ill, a spectacle of compromised immunity. It shrinks to two volumes (in contrast to the three volumes of *Pride and Prejudice*, or *Sense and Sensibility*); its story takes place over a period of only six months, between September 1814 and February 1815 (in contrast to full seasonal cycles in Austen's first two concept-novels).

The novel opens to this effect. »Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire«¹⁹ – these being the first words of the novel – is prevailed upon to rent his family estate to Admiral Croft, newly returned from the war, in order to manage the growing debt. The baronet and »pater familias« thus begins by being ousted by an admiral, a self-made man, whose naval rank undermines the very sense of rank and inherited privilege in which the old order is based and to which Sir Walter is inordinately attached (he »never took up any book but the Baronetage«, says Austen).²⁰ Significantly, the Admiral is childless and indifferent to reproduction, as if to amplify the narrative fact, recorded in the *Baronetage*, that Sir Walter's only son, and heir

17 Armstrong/Tennenhouse: *Novels in the Time of Democratic Writing*, p. 30.

18 Ibid.

19 Austen: *Persuasion*, p. 1.

20 Ibid.

to Kellynch Hall, was stillborn. It is equally significant that Sir Walter's son was stillborn in the year of the French Revolution, 1789, so that 1789 makes it to the novel, and to Sir Walter's family chronicle, as the year when heirs are stillborn. Anita Sokolsky calls it »a doubly revolutionary anniversary«, because the heir was still born »on November 5 1789, [...] memorializing Sir Walter's loss of the entail simultaneous with Guy Fawkes day in the opening year of the French Revolution«. ²¹ (Armstrong and Tennenhouse note that »[e]ach of Austen's six major novels opens onto a situation where inherited property is in danger of falling into the hands of strangers«. ²² In *Persuasion*, however, the heir presumptive to Kellynch Hall is not only a stranger but also the novel's chief villain, which is how inheritance is irrevocably compromised in *Persuasion*. His name, moreover, is Walter Elliot, a name he shares with the novel's »pater familias«.)

Anne Elliot, the novel's focalizing consciousness, is Sir Walter's second daughter. At twenty-seven, she is all but past the marrying age; this is how reproduction, and inheritance, is further suspended, now in the very instance that the novel privileges as its mind or intelligence – not so in other Austen novels. Of the three Elliot daughters, Anne is least favored by her father and family, and most easily rejected; her father finds her »haggard«, ²³ a proper »memento mori«, so that Anne, unlike her sisters, comes to signify reproductive junk, and a historicity that is in itself pathological. Anne responds by detaching herself and the novel from paternal authority, and into a kind of full-scale narrative emancipation; as Johnson notes, »[t]he duty of filial piety[...] is nowhere dignified with the status of being at issue here«. ²⁴ It so happens that, in *Persuasion*, fathers are as stillborn as are the sons. ²⁵

The plot itself appears to have died off before it had a chance to begin: as the novel opens, Anne is locked in a stern, melancholy contemplation of the eight years that have passed since she broke an engagement to Captain Wentworth, in 1806. At nineteen, she was persuaded to fear the uncertain future of a marriage to a rash young navy officer; at twenty-seven, she regrets her decision, conscious of the fact that the future is critical and precarious *to begin with*. The focalizing consciousness in *Persuasion*, that is, is moored in the intelligence of melancholia: what Anne already knows as the novel opens is that melancholia is not so much an unhealthy attachment to a

21 Sokolsky: *The Melancholy Persuasion*, p. 138.

22 Armstrong/Tennenhouse: *Novels in the Time of Democratic Writing*, p. 20.

23 Austen: *Persuasion*, p. 4.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 146.

25 See Heydt-Stevenson (*Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 183 and 186) for Anne as »memento mori«.

past loss as an urgent, uncompromising engagement with the present and the future, past the promise of self-interest. Anne appears to adumbrate Freud on melancholia, when Freud observes that melancholic persons have »a keener eye for the truth than other people who are not melancholic«, because they see the self for what it is, »petty, egoistic, dishonest, lacking in independence«. ²⁶

The novel proceeds as a function of this knowledge, confronting Anne with a narrative future that is open, urgent and precarious, so that Anne in the end knows little that she did not know as the novel began (in contrast to Elizabeth Bennet). The impression is that the novel can hardly teach Anne anything because the melancholy Anne already knows everything that the novel can teach. If this is how Austen suggests that the intelligence of melancholia is implicit to the novel, it is also how melancholia shows to entail a revolutionary psychopolitics, to which the novel then is instrumental. Therefore, when Captain Wentworth comes to face Anne again in 1814, himself newly returned from the war, what he brings to Anne, and to the novel, is not repetition but the shocking, hurtful knowledge that they meet as strangers – more so than if they were meeting for the first time (this being the true function of repetition). In a remarkable instance of free indirect style, Anne notes that »[n]ow they were as strangers; nay, worse than strangers, for they could never become acquainted. It was a perpetual estrangement«. ²⁷

Put otherwise, what Captain Wentworth brings to the novel is exactly the revolutionary rupture that Anne cannot fully accommodate as the focalizing consciousness. Hence Anne's many and emphatic attempts to »enure herself« to this »new sort of trial on [her] nerves« and »to teach herself to be insensible«. ²⁸ William Galperin observes that »the impendance to joy« – »an index of something missed or bypassed« – is »very nearly a historical imperative« ²⁹ in Austen's novels. Yet, while Galperin proceeds by noting that »*Persuasion* is given over [...] to restoring what was lost in the prehistory of the narrative«, ³⁰ a case could be made that the contrary is exactly the point, and that Anne as the focalizing consciousness is tasked with learning that restoration is not an option. (In fact, Anne anticipates »an unknown woman« of the Hollywood melodrama that Stanley Cavell, drawing on Freud,

26 Freud: *Mourning and Melancholia*, p. 246.

27 Austen: *Persuasion*, p. 62.

28 Ibid., p. 50.

29 Galperin: »*Describing What Never Happened*«, p. 356.

30 Ibid.

takes up as an exemplary figure of modern psychopolitics, and a limit to modern philosophy.)³¹

Wentworth also contributes an alternative family structure to the novel, one that contradicts the Elliots: he is Admiral Croft's brother-in-law, in a family of (naval) brothers and sisters, to which fathers and sons are not a prerogative. When in the end Anne is admitted to this family as Wentworth's wife, she is also admitted to a revolutionary community in which paternal relations are suspended; Deleuze calls it »a society of brothers« in which »alliance replaces filiation« and through which »a new universality« is forged, one he associates specifically with Herman Melville's naval fiction in the nineteenth century.³²

4.

This is also how land lends itself to a new territoriality, whose affinity is with the sea. As the novel progresses, land, closely described, increasingly becomes subject to a kind of navigation, an often hazardous exploration of passages, straights and »the rough, wild sort of channel[s]«³³ in the countryside. Rather than hosting concepts and metaphors, land itself is cultivated as metonymy in *Persuasion*, around relations of proximity and contiguity to which sea is the privileged signifier. (Austen thus seems to address – and unpack – the historical fact that, in Britain, »[a] new round of landscape enclosures, achieved through the planting of hedgerows, helped finance the Napoleonic wars.«)³⁴ The novel responds to these relations by moving the story increasingly away from the land and toward waters. The story begins at land-locked Kellynch Hall in Somersetshire but moves swiftly, and metonymically, to its different neighborhoods and then to coastal Lyme Regis, and to Bath, with its waters; significantly, the story ends not so much with Anne's marriage to Captain Wentworth as with the fact that Anne's marriage is to the naval world where marriage as concept gives way to relations of political uncertainty. This is finally reflected in *Sanditon* (1817), Austen's last, unfinished novel, where the narrative focus is on the coastal geography of the eponymous village, and on the precarious management of its waters.

31 See Cavell: *Contesting Tears*. See Auerbach: *Communities of Women and Dames: Amnesiac Selves* for a rigorous »disconnection from the past« (*Dames: Amnesiac Selves*, p. 40) in Austen's novels.

32 Deleuze: *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p. 84. »Is this Jane Austen – or Melville?«, writes Tony Tanner incisively in a comment on the sea in *Persuasion* (Tanner: *Jane Austen*, p. 230).

33 Austen: *Persuasion*, p. 85.

34 Heydt-Stevenson: *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 199.

In terms of territoriality, *Sanditon* begins where *Persuasion* ends: with a radical deconstruction of the land-sea binary into a kind of narratogenic – and political – quicksand.

Austen suggests that this new territoriality is how the modern world is constituted in the nineteenth century, with the novel as its preeminent apparatus. When, in the final paragraph of *Persuasion*, she remarks on the »national importance« of the navy, which is in line with its »domestic virtues«,³⁵ she in fact invokes ›Pax Britannica‹ as a means of forging a *global* history in the nineteenth century – Jürgen Osterhammel calls it »the paradox of an *imperial* nationalism«. ³⁶ As Osterhammel aptly notes, »the British elite had been the first in Europe to learn global thinking«;³⁷ Austen demonstrates how this education was accomplished with the novel as an apparatus, the novel becoming a ›Denkraum‹ of modern psychopolitics in the nineteenth century.³⁸

That a metonymic territoriality, and rationality, was at stake in the world of ›Pax Britannica‹ is again supported by Osterhammel. He notes that »all British governments in the nineteenth century, regardless of their party composition« practiced a »low-commitment policy of managing all kinds of distance«,³⁹ their concept being one of »a country with seemingly unlimited horizons of influence, if not actual rule«. ⁴⁰ Additionally, Osterhammel highlights the role of the navy in this transformation of the world and points out that Britain's was »the only navy capable of worldwide operations«;⁴¹ he also takes note of the »nautical revolution«⁴² inside the navy that made this possible. What ›Pax Britannica‹ involved, however, »was less

35 Austen: *Persuasion*, p. 254.

36 Osterhammel: *The Transformation of the World*, p. 452.

37 Ibid.

38 That the navy catered to the same relations as domestic fiction can be inferred from a contemporary comment, cited by Osterhammel, that »[p]eople nowhere become better acquainted with each other than at the sea. They are practically married« (*Unfabling the East*, p. 110). Even so, »a naval marriage« in *Persuasion*, as Nina Auerbach points out, is »different in kind from any other in Jane Austen's books« (*O Brave New World*, p. 123), because the sea transforms Austen's world »by the influx of a revolutionary force« (ibid., p. 119); or, as Tanner would say, »Anne's ›alarm‹ is indefinite and in the future – an integral part of her happy marriage« (*Jane Austen*, p. 245). In the words of Paul N. Zietlow, »the emphasis« in *Persuasion* is »on the precariousness of marriage« (*Luck and Fortuitous Circumstance in ›Persuasion‹*, p. 189); Jill Heydt-Stevenson notes that »[m]ore widows and widowers appear in *Persuasion* than in all of Austen's novels: out of eighteen adult characters, six have dead spouses« (*Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*, p. 185).

39 Osterhammel: *The Transformation of the World*, p. 457.

40 Ibid., p. 452.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., p. 109.

global maritime supremacy than, as Schumpeter put it, a »global maritime police«⁴³, with Britain standing up »for the principle of *mare liberum*«.⁴⁴ When Osterhammel puts Austen first in the line of the novelists that shaped the narrative of the nineteenth century,⁴⁵ invested as it was in global transformation, he hints in fact at the transformation of the novel that Austen effected between 1811 and 1817, whereby the novel became a privileged site of global thinking and, with its espousal of radical historicity, the vanguard of the very historiography that finds its champion in Osterhammel's work.

This is also how Austen contributes to the concept of world literature that, at least since Johann Wolfgang Goethe, has informed the project of modernity. Most consistently in *Persuasion*, Austen seems to argue that literature (the novel in particular) is instrumental to global thinking, which is decided in a rationality that is metonymic. This is why the melancholia that Austen claims for her focalizing consciousness in *Persuasion* is not a pathology so much as a metonymic structure in which the modern world is engaged for processing – a position not alien to Freud, one century later, or to critical theory (Walter Benjamin; Carl Schmitt). Austen argues this point expressly in Chapter 23, when Anne Elliot engages in conversation with Captain Harville, a navy officer, and explains melancholia as a formation of affect that serves women to mediate their being excepted from the totality of the world (and into the domestic sphere), *and* from writing. In Anne's words, men »have always a profession, pursuits, business« that takes them »back into the world immediately«, while women »live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us«.⁴⁶ Also: »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.«⁴⁷ While Anne thereby brings literature and the world into a relation, as sense *and* sensibility are a relation, or pride *and* prejudice (Austen suggesting that world literature is not a concept so much as a metonymic composite), melancholia serves to indicate not the exclusion, of women, from this relation, but rather the impossibility of such an exclusion – hence the pain and violence of melancholia. Put otherwise, Austen's melancholia indicates that there is no escaping the world, or literature, in modernity: there is only the trace of an attempt to exclude. If this

43 Ibid., p. 451.

44 Ibid., p. 452.

45 Ibid., p. 19.

46 Austen: *Persuasion*, p. 233–234.

47 Ibid., p. 235.

is why the modern condition is fully revealed in melancholia, it is also why melancholia – and literature – may be political to begin with.⁴⁸

Admittedly, ›Pax Britannica‹ was an imperial project, as Austen was an anti-Jacobin author. Yet, Austen's decision to mobilize her focalizing consciousness in *Persuasion* around melancholia, which is also how the novel triumphs over authorship, suggests that the modern world thus constituted is the world of revolutions, in which empires and authors and style, even the concept of world literature, subsist as semi-functional post-revolutionary fantasies, ones that Freud would attribute to mourning in 1917 (in contradistinction to melancholia). Osterhammel pursues this line of reasoning when he comments that, »[r]ather like the French after the revolution, the British felt themselves to be a kind of universal nation, both in their cultural achievements and in their resulting entitlement to spread them all around the world«. ⁴⁹ What Austen examines in *Persuasion* is the exact structure of the relationship of the British in the nineteenth century, and the French Revolution with its Napoleonic aftermath. Rather than suggesting that the British are like the French after the revolution (a simile, a metaphor), Austen seems invested in showing that the British are metonymic to the French Revolution, which is also how the figural, and intellectual, template of modern revolutions is canvassed in the novel.

Also, with her emphasis on the navy as an instrument of this metonymy, Austen points to a more general, Atlantic constitution of modern revolutions, so that the French Revolution is claimed for a political project that includes the American Revolution, as well as the English Revolution before that.⁵⁰ In a sense, the Napoleonic Wars in *Persuasion* serve to jolt Austen's England from the complacency of post-revolutionary mourning and into revolutionary melancholia, a process already begun by the American Revolution and the loss of the American colonies. Austen may well have anticipated Carl Schmitt's grasp of the English Revolution in her novel: in *Hamlet or*

48 See Benjamin: *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* and Schmitt: *Hamlet or Hecuba* for melancholia as the modern condition. See Bobinac (*Goetheova ideja svjetske književnosti*, p. 11) on Goethe's ›Weltliteratur‹ as a preeminently »political concept« that relates to the French revolutionary wars at the time; Bobinac (*ibid.*, p. 7, 12) also references Goethe's contacts with Scott, among others, as a context for ›Weltliteratur‹. See Hunt (*Inventing Human Rights*, p. 18, pp. 187–188) for women as a signpost of political exclusion after the French Revolution; Lynn Hunt points out that, »[d]espite [the] almost unimaginable extension of political rights to groups previously disenfranchised, the line was drawn at women: women never gained equal political rights during the Revolution« (*ibid.*, p. 150).

49 Osterhammel: *The Transformation of the World*, p. 451.

50 Osterhammel notes that »revolutions« [...], prior to the French Revolution, tended to be associated more with Asia than with Europe« (Osterhammel: *Unfabling the East*, p. 495).

Hecuba (1956), Schmitt claims the English Revolution for the interpellation of political modernity, with Hamlet's melancholia as its ›Denkraum‹ – a position he heralds in *Land and Sea* (1942), where England's espousal of sea over land is discussed, and where Schmitt speaks of ›Raumrevolution‹, »a spatial revolution«.⁵¹ In the words of Eric L. Santner, Schmitt's England progresses »from one order of deterritorialization to another, even more radical one that shifted the center of gravity of political power *from land to sea*«;⁵² Carsten Strathausen stresses that, for Schmitt, the shift from land to sea too was »concentrated on the side of revolution«.⁵³ It is worth noting that Osterhammel cites Schmitt when he critiques the »conflict between continental and maritime powers as a fundamental trait of modern world history«, and argues against »[n]arrow conceptions of ›overseas history‹«;⁵⁴ his counterargument is that Britain »made huge military efforts to prevent the loss of [its] American possessions in the age of the Atlantic revolutions«.⁵⁵ Yet Schmitt, insisting on the deterritorialization that was launched by the English Revolution, seems to have preempted Osterhammel's critique, just as he privileged literary genres (*Hamlet* as an exemplary ›Trauerspiel‹) as a record of radical historicity, which he perceived to be definitive of modernity.⁵⁶

5.

By shaping her focalizing consciousness in *Persuasion* around melancholia, Austen effectively confronted the novel with the conditions of the ›Trauerspiel‹. Her earlier concept novels lead the way: in both, the focalizing consciousness (Elinor Dashwood; Elizabeth Bennet) receives its education by closely studying the melancholy case of a favorite sister and confidante (Marianne Dashwood; Jane Bennet). Even though Anne Elliot, like Elinor Dashwood and Elizabeth Bennet, is surrounded by sisters, she receives little education from them. Instead, Anne Elliot is educated by managing her own melancholia, as if to suggest that the focalizing consciousness in *Persuasion* is shaped by conflating the focalizing consciousness of *Sense*

51 Schmitt: *Land and Sea*, p. 47–49.

52 Santner: *The Royal Remains*, p. 155–156.

53 Strathausen: *Myth or Knowledge*, p. 20.

54 Osterhammel: *The Transformation of the World*, p. 429.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 430.

56 See Kelly: *Carl Schmitt's Political Theory on Dictatorship* on Schmitt's theory of revolution, with a focus on the French Revolution.

and Sensibility, or *Pride and Prejudice*, with its melancholy sororal relation. Her name suggests as much: Anne Elliot is a zone of resonance where El*l*iot amplifies the sounds of Elinor and Elizab*e*th, whereas Ann*e* amplifies the sounds of Marian*ne and Jan*e*. Anne Elliot, in other words, does to the minds of Austen's first two concept novels what *Persuasion* does to their concepts (sense, sensibility, pride, prejudice): to borrow Santner's words, she takes them from one order of deterritorialization, and reterritorialization, to another, even more radical one.⁵⁷*

Austen thereby reveals the novel to be an apparatus instrumental to negotiating the modern condition. Apparently, the novel does to the nineteenth century what the ›Trauerspiel‹ did to early modernity, and invites its own analysis along similar lines. That the nineteenth century, with the novel in tow, may be critical to understanding the modern condition, especially in terms of radical historicity, can once again be inferred from Osterhammel's work. Osterhammel stresses that »[n]o other century was even nearly as much Europe's century« and that the global »history of the nineteenth century was made in and by Europe, to an extent that cannot be said of either the eighteenth or twentieth century, not to speak of earlier periods« – an influence »far beyond the sphere of colonial rule«. ⁵⁸ Rather than press for Europe's centrality, Osterhammel's remarks expose a radical historicity that informs modern Europe, because the idea of Europe is demonstrably confined to the nineteenth century and exhausted by it. Like Austen's novel, Osterhammel's Europe in the nineteenth century forever fails to coincide with itself; it is either too much of something that is not Europe (say, of the Atlantic revolutions), or too little of it – that being how Europe contributes to the modern condition. If Austen's novel, therefore, is this Europe's intellectual template, Aust*e*n is a zone of resonance for Os*t*erhammel, a global historian.

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57 See Jukić (*Jane Austen i roman 19. stoljeća*, p. 18) for names in Austen's concept-trilogy.

58 Osterhammel: *The Transformation of the World*, p. xx.

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