

‘What is,’ ‘What Was’ and ‘What Might Be’: Reactionary Metamorphosis of Postwar

Acknowledgement in Romanticism

By: Kelli D. Wilhelm

**A thesis submitted to the Graduate department of English
of Salisbury University, Salisbury, Maryland
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts
2014**

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Abstract

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Thesis directed by Dr. Lucy Morrison

This graduate thesis explores the implications of reactions to the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars upon perceived self and gender roles in the Romantic period as seen in William Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, Lord’s Byron’s *Canto III* of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, Charlotte Smith’s *The Old Manor House* and Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*. Reactions to wartime manifest in nostalgic visions of past and present in which the male poets’ dwell and which the female novelists’ criticize. Interaction between past and present realities are viewed through Jean Baudrillard’s theory of simulacrum in order to connect the authors’ displayed perceptions of reality and track a progression from imagined realities manifesting postwar, as displayed by Wordsworth and Byron, to the recognition of these realities, as displayed by Smith, and finally to a transition away from the past and towards a renewed future, as displayed by Austen.

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‘What is,’ ‘What Was’ and ‘What Might Be’: Reactionary Metamorphosis of Postwar Acknowledgement in Romanticism

“It is claimed,” writes Samantha Vice in “Literature and the Narrative Self,” “that at some deep and ultimate level, experience just is inescapably narrative in structure and that our conception of self and the world in general just is narrative” (93). Through an exploration of narrative self, Vice proposes the idea of a “fundamental confusion between life and art” (94). While I assert that transformed or projected might be a more precise word than mistaken here, Vice ultimately looks at an idea which has long been at the core of literature: authorial expression. From Petrarch’s Laura to the war experiences of writers such as Kurt Vonnegut and Tim O’Brien, personal experiences and opinions of writers find their way into literature. More than simply reflecting or extending experience, however, narratives use experiences to project a specific view of the world, be it a remembered past or a projected future, and to reform the self. Commenting further on narrative constructions of self, Vice notes, “it is sometimes said that in order to live fully, to have a developed sense of self, or in order to be a person, we should think of ourselves in a narrative way; having a different self-conception from one that is narrative” (94). A narrative self-conception, in this way, marks the difference between a ‘real’ or external self and an inner self formed through memory or the possibilities of ‘what might have been.’ Of the inner self, or inner life, Mary A. Favret writes in *War at a Distance*, which is an examination of the permeation of war during the Napoleonic era in everyday life distant from battlefields that also provides a means for understanding war cultivated in the literature of this period, that “recognition of the global sweep of the war lent only new urgency to the cultivation of an interiority which comprehended the interior

spaces of England itself, its cottages and hearths” (25). This urgent interiority of England is in reaction to concurrent wars beginning at the end of the eighteenth century; individuals at home became deeply affected by the wars they could not see, and “the inner life of [these] individuals cannot escape this militarized context” (25). What Favret refers to as a militarized context and an intensely cultivated interiority, I argue is additionally a nostalgic construction of reality.

In wartime the individuals of England to whom Favret refers recalled former experiences, idealisms, and past hopes and possibilities. Looking at male poets and female novelists, William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Charlotte Smith, and Jane Austen, whose works bookend the period of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars at the turn of the nineteenth century, I argue that the male poets’ nostalgic reaction to war constitutes projections and reformations of the self, while the female novelists consider war from domestic third-person viewpoints and address the negative effects of war to be found there. In addition, the two authors writing during early wartime, Wordsworth and Smith, search for a reassertion or reformation of former ideals, while the postwar writers, Byron and Austen, display a search for renewal or discovery of new selves. These connections suggest two points relating war and nostalgia. First, there is a gender difference in which, even as both genders consider the prewar-past and the possibilities for both the present and future, men turn inward to an exploration of self in reaction to war and thus dwell in prewar nostalgia, and women, while stereotypically placed in the domestic sphere, display wartime reaction through depictions of England’s home front in order to criticize prewar nostalgia. Gendered voice, then, in wartime, maintains its stereotypical constraints even as the women writers question social ideals or mentalities

so as to suggest a break from the past for which the men writers search. Women, in these works, are more accepting of change. Wordsworth and Byron recall past conventionalities of childhood and the hero figure, respectively, and attempt to place such past ideals in their present. Meanwhile Smith and Austen recognize conventionalities of the past, but, by presenting them as problematic or unrealistic during wartime, they begin to yearn for and accept, respectively, post-war change. Essentially, stereotypical gender roles in some ways force or encourage these women writers to depict third-person domestic narratives in novel form, while the poets create personalized narratives of self; the narrative perspective is thus gender driven. Austen and Smith, then, display in their novels a readiness to break from constraints of the past through post-war change. The poems, on the other hand, demonstrate, perhaps due to unconscious anxieties over changing roles, a greater adherence to the constraints and ideals of the pre-war past. Secondly, Wordsworth and Smith characterize nostalgia during wartime by a sense of loss and searching for ideals that once were—for Smith these are ideals which rebuke conventionality— but at the opposite end of the wartime period, Byron and Austen use nostalgia, whether maintained or broken, to discover a renewed or recreated reality for the future, although Byron's is based in the past. This transformation over time toward a future reality suggests that the experience of wartime, while traumatic and nostalgic, is an intense period of growth, a forced metamorphosis by which individuals must find a way to adapt to new reality.

Reality takes different forms in the works of each author throughout the wartime period of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. In order to more definitely separate these realities, I apply Jean Baudrillard's well-known postmodern theory of the

simulacrum to each version of reality. As a part of this theory, Baudrillard writes, “When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning” (6). Baudrillard is referring here to the final stages of his theorized simulacra, to a re-creation of a reflected, yet lost reality. Moving away from the abstraction which characterizes postmodern theory, much can nonetheless be taken from this single line of text. First, what is the real? The problem of defining the real is among the most difficult that arises from Baudrillard’s theory, and there is no certain answer, only supposition. Conceptually, the ‘real’ of Baudrillard is a time and space bereft of signs, simulations, imitations, reflections, and anything which acts to create or substitute the real; it almost sounds like something pure, like truth. However, Baudrillard does differentiate between the real, the imaginary, the true and the false. The real cannot then be equated with truth, but rather with the idea of a condition of the world *before* it became masked and enclosed by a build-up of the modern world’s simulations, which Baudrillard refers to as “profound reality” (6). The focus on a former pre-sign state suggests attention to time, specifically the past. The very mention of nostalgia gestures toward the past, whether Baudrillard meant it to or not.

In considering the real as a former, perhaps even idealized world, the next question becomes what does it mean to disrupt or change the “reality” of the past, and, more significantly, of what form, in more concrete terms than “simulacra,” does the full meaning of nostalgia consist? Change to the past, or rather change to a continuity of norms and ideas which makes the past past throughout history, can be traced to war. Literature, art, the economy, social norms, and gender roles (to name a few), portray significant changes in postwar periods. Baudrillard acknowledges the significance of war,

specifically to historical change. For example, when turning to the subject of history in *Simulacra and Simulations*, he immediately refers to war, specifically the period between WWII and the Cold War. Considering that Baudrillard's attention to history is specific to war, it seems reasonable to view war or revolution as a part of history acting to disrupt the real. War and revolution in a sense cause reality, at least the reality of present, to no longer exist and recede into the past. It is in this instance of disrupted and shifting reality that nostalgia may exist, may assume meanings, ranging from newly projected selves and memories, hope for a past defined history or rejection of an idealized past that nostalgia has brought into the present.

According to Baudrillard, nostalgia's full meaning of the twentieth century is seen in the form of cinema, "the golden age of despotic and legendary resurrections as representations of the real" (29). For Baudrillard the medium holds "the lost referential" of history which humans look to for a form of the "real" as generations live within "the march of history" (29). In the face of this resurrection of history, however, only nostalgia endlessly accumulates. Baudrillard cites periods following WWII and the Vietnam War as he views the rise of nostalgia postwar through film's sentimental reflection upon and recreation of history, thus emphasizing the connection between disruptive wartime and the development of nostalgia for the past. Also, in presenting cinema as a manifestation of nostalgia, Baudrillard indicates that nostalgia assuming its full meaning requires more than simply dwelling within the past. Full meaning can be found when something is made or formed from nostalgia, be it cinema, a new idealism, a rebellion against the present or a realization of the past's implications.

Despite Baudrillard's commentary specifically on cinematic representations, the precise meaning which nostalgia assumes is, I believe, highly variable, and as such has been presented in various constructions throughout history, namely through literature. Nostalgia, though, it must be remembered, is the result of a disrupted reality, a changed past. During the war-filled period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, reality was continuously being disrupted and reformed through nostalgia, creating simulacrum of different orders. In describing the phases in which an image or a known reality transitions from reflection to a full simulacrum, a reality once based on but no longer resembling a former reality, Baudrillard writes,

Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum. Such would be the successive phases of the image:

it is the reflection of a profound reality;
it masks and denatures a profound reality;
it masks the absence of a profound reality;
it has no relation to any reality whatsoever;
it is its own pure simulacrum.

In the first case, the image is a good appearance - representation is of the sacramental order. In the second, it is an evil appearance - it is of the order of maleficence. In the third, it plays at being an appearance - it is of the order of sorcery. In the fourth, it is no longer of the order of appearances, but of simulation. (6)

The Prelude represents a reality of the first order simulacrum as it idealizes childhood and thereby reflects reality, while *Child Harold's Pilgrimage* considers alternate possibilities of reality, complicating the known present and constituting the second order. Finally, as both *The Old Manor House* and *Persuasion* display wartime simulations of

reality that mask the absence of the lost pre-war reality in their narratives, the novels characterize third order simulacra.

These levels of narrative simulacra are organized in the following thesis first by the male authors who represent predominating ideals of the prewar past in order to contextualize the past the female authors, considered in the second half of the thesis, are breaking from or criticizing. Therefore, my chapter addressing Wordsworth's *The Two-Part Prelude* first considers Wordsworth's collapse of present and childhood selves as he recalls pre-war experiences. Wordsworth's reaction to the French Revolution in *The Prelude* shows a nostalgic change within himself as his turn towards nature and removal of the personal pronoun from the text shows the poet's own re-viewing of his personal reaction to Revolution, therein doubling his nostalgic perspective. Wordsworth, though, does not respond directly to the Revolution, does not significantly criticize nor support the event, as the author "was unsure of what to say his actions in that period meant" (Onorato 180). Rather, *The Prelude* serves as nostalgic description of Wordsworth's experiences in France and subsequent personal, emotional reaction to the event, as the idealisms of the Revolution he once believed ceased to be a reality. The violence of the Revolution shattered this ideal. Wordsworth thus turns to a different ideal, nature, and, at times, childhood. It is here, in the natural and innocent worlds that Wordsworth describes, and more often seems to be idealizing, that nostalgia assumes full meaning, assumes a future reality, for the author.

The nostalgia found in Wordsworth's pairing of description and reaction in *The Prelude* are an emotional reaction to war and, therefore, referred to in sociological terms as the exhibition of the "two sides to a cultural trauma, an emotional experience and an

interpretative reaction” (Eyerman 43). In fact, The French Revolution has been described by literary critic Frank D. McConnell as “the traumatic core of Wordsworth’s mental life and of English Romanticism generally” to the extent that it is “almost completely assimilated into a series of personal responses which frequently obscure what is being responded to” (60). In other words, *The Prelude*, without ever directly indicating as much, acts as a nostalgic response to the French Revolution. I will argue that the French Revolution, and its subsequent failure of Revolutionary idealism, resulted for Wordsworth in a split of perceived selves, which he attempts to reconcile in *The Prelude*. Simply put, war is a personally disruptive occurrence for the poet.

Wordsworth’s response is therefore internal, and similarly, Byron’s response in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, particularly Canto III, is highly personalized. It is generally acknowledged that Childe Harold is a representation of Byron himself, nearly constituting an autobiographical poem. It makes sense then that the war, fighting, and exile of *Childe Harold* are representative of the Revolution and Napoleonic wars of Byron’s time, as well as his self-exile from Britain. The author says of his Childe Harold character that “Yet Time, who changes all, had altered him / In soul and aspect as in age: years steal / Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb; / And life’s enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim” (III. VIII). Pondering such change, such loss, Childe Harold remains a wanderer, consistently dwelling in nostalgia, yet the poem assumes meaning in Byron’s reflection upon possibilities of what he might have become—heroic, a soldier, a ruler. Byron creates through Childe Harold an alternate self through which reality can be projected differently. In thinking of Ianthe, representing his daughter Ada, the author’s nostalgia dually discovers an improved reality for himself as well as for his daughter, as

he views parts of himself within her and wishes for different things, a different procession of reality.

The autobiographical poem then acts not merely to denature reality, but also to provide a literary immortality, which, as a method of controlling the inevitable creation of the past and the residual perceptions of that past, as it falls into present, indicates the presence of power in Byron's poem. Power, considered abstractly and in relation to both politics and religion, is closely tied with nostalgia as a strategy of the real, or rather the recreation of the real. Power, as revolution demonstrates, is connected to terror; terror is necessary for power just as power creates terror. This circular connection explains the terrified awe Wordsworth feels facing the cliff and it explains an image self-formed from anxieties over a war-formed past. Terror caused by war and Revolution lead to these poets' attempts to have power over the present realities they could not face. For Wordsworth and Byron, nostalgic projections allow them to assert power over the changing present, for nostalgia is in itself an act of fear. Anxieties over the present or the future cause nostalgia, an idealization of a past, a need for belief in a "better" time. Baudrillard notes such a use of nostalgia in describing power. He writes that "the only weapon of power... is to reinject the real and the referential everywhere, to persuade us of the reality" (16-17) being projected. Byron, as well as Wordsworth, asserts power by presenting personal nostalgic versions of the real in poetry. However, the use of nostalgia in autobiographical work is in part to convince the poets that their idealized memories of the past are real, and that these memories can take precedence over war-altered reality. Nostalgic power is thus self-reflective as it is asserted by the authors upon themselves through their projections in their poems.

In either case the real, as it becomes past for these male authors, then acts to emphasize a past which they mourn or idealize, a reality which no longer exists. Through their nostalgia for these newly formed pasts, Wordsworth and Byron find meaning in nostalgic self-projections caused by war. When looking comparatively upon novels of female authors Austen and Smith, past realities are depicted in order to criticize the simulacrum and suggest a different future, as the novelists' protagonists work through realities reformed by war and Revolution. Austen and Smith, however, are noticeably less personal within their narratives than the male poets; their nostalgia and the meaning made from it is more indirect. Neither Austen nor Smith blur the line between author/narrator/character as does Byron, nor do they use the personal pronoun or directly indicate their personal politics within their writing, although it has been noted that Smith incorporates in *The Old Manor House* "her liberal politics without being overtly political" (Labbe 13). Rather, these women present "domestic tales...yet these novels deliberately engaged with the languages and ideologies of the revolution" (Cousins, Napton & Russo 2). The third person presentation of these domestic tales allows Smith and Austen to react to male nostalgia by mirroring the male preoccupation with the past through invented characters, while displaying the faults in such preoccupation. The nostalgia of these novels appears on the surface to be like that of the male authors because it recreates the past before the war, but the novels are more accurately re-creating representations of the past, adding another layer to nostalgia. Such recreation allows the authors, through their narrative protagonists, to critique the past as it remains in the present.

This present for Smith is the French Revolution, but her narrative concerns the past American War of Independence, which inevitably links Smith's *The Old Manor House* to war. The presence and history of the manor house are connected to its matron's displayed nostalgia for chivalry and prewar conventions. Smith displays the former social order, however, breaking down, so that only nostalgia remains. It is a nostalgia which idealizes a pre-war patriarchy largely governed by wealth and one which romanticizes war. Smith, a precursor to Wordsworth's "Romantic feeling for landscape and Nature" (Labbe 9), writes *The Old Manor House* from the perspective of Orlando, whose dependence on the Rayland estate and Mrs. Rayland's will reflects Smith's own struggle with her father-in-law's will. Orlando holds onto this nostalgia for past hierarchal structures, as it provides hope of wealth passing to him from the Raylands. Yet the ruination of Monimia and Orlando's family complicates such nostalgia, so that its full meaning is no longer in the past but rather a suggestion or warning for the future. The novel indirectly suggests a change in social order that aligns with Smith's faith in Revolutionary idealisms.

Such idealisms oppose conventional ones, such as male primogeniture and chivalry, which define past nostalgia. Former conventions manifest in more traditional and dichotomous gender roles, such as the pure angelic female and the chivalric male savior. Such roles are emphasized by the nostalgia-driven world Mrs. Rayland creates around herself in the old manor house through her treatment and separation, of the lovers Monimia and Orlando, the former being locked away and the latter encouraged to become a soldier. Their separation as well as the nostalgic past, appears to be under critique as Mrs. Rayland's nostalgia only causes problems for the lovers, even as Mrs.

Rayland's world, and subsequently the world of her dependents, begins to break down. As the characters cling to lost reality, nostalgia creates a world counter to the Revolution, but the difficulties faced by Monomia, Orlando, and other lower class characters agree with the initial idealism behind the French Revolution, the same initial ideals with which Wordsworth and Smith agreed prior to the violence of the Terror. Such agreement appears to stand against Mrs. Rayland's past nostalgia and show support of the Revolution. The French Revolution, then, causes awareness in Smith of the lack of or resistance to change following Revolution and, therefore, recalls former ideals established during the American War of Independence, which the author hopes for, but despairs of ever seeing realized.

Hope in a renewed reality, on the other hand, is precisely the result of Anne Eliot's experience during the Napoleonic Wars in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. Nostalgic for a past disrupted by the war, the characters' combined nostalgia creates, or finds, meaning in what can be viewed as a simulacrum, which is created by the remaining representations of the past which the characters of the novel have maintained since the start of the Napoleonic Wars. Fredrick Wentworth's departure from Anne marks the beginning of the created simulacrum as his entrance into naval service also indicates the narrative's placement in a wartime period. Wentworth returns during the false peace of the Napoleonic Wars, which brings the characters of Austen's novel face to face with the past they had begun to idealize and long for, thus shattering the simulacrum and presenting a hopeful new reality for the characters. A simulacrum-free reality readies the characters, perceivably readies the country, for renewed war. Recognition of the full meaning of nostalgia, of the stagnation of the past defined simulacrum, is necessary for

such renewal. Austen's *Persuasion*, the only work of this thesis composed during post-war peace, critiques nostalgia and not only accepts post-war change, but does so with confidence in the future. War then becomes a means for desired change for this female novelist in the early nineteenth century.

Turning specifically to the reactionary writings following the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, this thesis means to explore the manifestations of nostalgia, largely of a personal nature, in works of Wordsworth, Byron, Smith and Austen as they are used to critique the past, in the novels, and project preferred realities in the poems.

Additionally, I seek to draw a comparison between not only gender and wartime reaction, but between the works written during the French Revolution and at the close of the Napoleonic Wars. The earlier writers, Wordsworth and Smith, have been disappointed in their Revolutionary ideals and so are looking back in order to reaffirm the source of their idealisms, nature and The American War of Independence, respectively. In contrast the later writers, Byron and Austen, use the past in order to reflect upon future reality. War forces change, forces the past to become past, and these works display a progression from past nostalgia to considerations of future hopes postwar.

Chapter 1: Past and Present Selves in *The Prelude*

Memory has been extensively studied by psychologists, ranging from memory reliability, specifically in eyewitness testimony, to nostalgia. In “The Power of the Past: Nostalgia as a Meaning-Making Resource,” for example, the findings of Routledge et al reveal that Nostalgic memory increases “the perceived presence of meaning” (452). Nostalgia is additionally linked to meaning making by Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) as the theorist discusses the meaning assumed by the nostalgia resulting from war and history (6). Using Baudrillard’s work as a theoretical lens, I posit that *The Prelude*’s subjective display of nostalgic memory, as it is used to make meaning from the violence and abrupt changes of present reality brought by war and revolution, constitutes the first order of simulacrum. Having experienced wartime, Wordsworth’s nostalgia presents itself through an uninterrupted yearning for the pre-war past and lamentation of its loss in the present. Essentially, in Baudrillard’s terms, *The Prelude* reflects, idealistically, “a profound reality” (6). Nostalgia allows both Wordsworth, as well as Byron, whom I will discuss further in the second chapter, an escape from war-distraught reality into past selves, allowing them to project both past and future reality as they wish it to be. Each poet presents an undisguised projection of self which is formed by their nostalgia. Wordsworth’s personal reflections on nature and childhood idealize the past. Nostalgic reflections also aid Wordsworth’s creation of a continuum for the future, which collapses the idealizations of past and present. Wordsworth, and later Byron, can, thus, be seen to react against the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars during the Romantic era, and through these reactions create nostalgic idealizations for the future and the past, respectively.

Wordsworth's display of humility in poetry, specifically *The Prelude*, marks a turn from Revolutionary politics towards nature and greater conservatism, as he examines his past self. Byron's consideration of past wars in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* demonstrates an attempt to establish control over his current surrounding environment and make meaning from his past as the poet projects himself in the form of Childe Harold. The works of the authors then create a continuum between their nostalgic memories and projected past selves, since memory helps to form the images of self the authors present. Memory and self together allow the poets to escape from wartime changes and project their nostalgia onto a possible future reality. Both poets struggle with the wars of their time through nostalgic considerations. Finding hope in such considerations, Wordsworth continues to dwell in pre-war idealizations which he uses as a continuum for future idealisms, while Byron seeks to reimagine his past through postwar nostalgia. Such differences reveal nostalgic considerations of "what can be" versus "what might have been" suggesting that, for Wordsworth and Byron, the purpose of nostalgia in the aftermath of war and Revolution is to attempt to understand the self and discover possibilities for the future.

The Prelude explores Wordsworth's nostalgia for his past youth by not merely reflecting on what was, but idealizing it. I will, in this first chapter, explore the relationship between the poet's nostalgic idealizations, self, and war. Wordsworth makes reference in *The Prelude* to having "Two consciousnesses...of myself / And of some other being" (*Two-Book Prelude* II. 30-31) and Richard Onorato describes in *The Character of the Poet* a separation of selves in *The Prelude* as a result of the trauma of Revolution. I further define these divided selves as past and present, which Wordsworth

attempts to collapse and project into the future. This division constitutes Wordsworth's personal reaction to war as he uses nostalgic remembrances to re-envision both his past and future. The presence of authorial nostalgia and overlapping selves is examined in *The Two-Book Prelude* since it was composed during the final years of the French Revolution and thus remains as Wordsworth's most immediate response to the Revolution which critics have indicated as an altering event for the poet's subsequent work and ideals. The autobiographic personalization of *The Prelude*, however, as well its reactionary relationship to war appear to be recognized by the author in later revisions and publications of the more extensive *Fourteen-Book Prelude*, from which the author attempted to remove much of the personal pronoun and included two books relating, if vaguely and perhaps hesitantly, his experiences in France during the early months of the Revolution (de Selincourt xxix). I use, here, the 1805 publication, as it was composed and published during the Napoleonic Wars, to demonstrate the author's eventual and direct consideration of the Revolution in his memory.

Additionally I incorporate the examination of the relationship between past memory and war in *Simulacra and Simulations*. Jean Baudrillard characterizes nostalgia as reaction to war and the recreated images of past reality. Wordsworth's use of nostalgia in *The Prelude* then parallels Baudrillard's discussion of nostalgia as something interconnected to history and incited by war and which serves to create, as does *The Prelude*, a representation of the real through memory. Wordsworth presents his past self through the voice of his present self. This overlap of selves allows the past to be reimagined and projected into future reality as the poet escapes the distresses of the

present world through the hope and contentment that memory offers, suggesting that nostalgia even as it is a representation, acts as a resolution to postwar trauma.

This chapter, therefore, focuses on Wordsworth's nostalgic concerns in *The Prelude*. In the 1798 publication of *The Two-Book Prelude*, Wordsworth asks,

...But who shall parcel out
His intellect by geometric rules,
Spilt like a province into round and square;
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were sown, even as a seed;
Who that shall point as with a wand and say,
This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain?... (II. 243-50)

Wordsworth's concern is not uncommon. In times of uncertainty people tend to look back, to look through photo albums or reminisce with siblings, as they examine their pasts and memories in an attempt to answer that one question which has long formed the basis for the studies of social sciences and genealogy: why are we the way that we are. Wordsworth asks "Who knows the individual hour in which / His habits were sown..." (II. 246-47); who can look back and truly define the moments which shape him or her? This question, one with really no definite answer, is what Wordsworth explores throughout *The Prelude*. The author had been orphaned early in life, separated from his sister, witnessed war and death, and during his time in France fathered a child, from whom he was also separate. In just the early decades of his life, Wordsworth has much to look back upon, to make him question himself.

In a mode of such questioning near the end of the French Revolution, 1798, Wordsworth began *The Prelude* and later revised the work in 1805, during the Napoleonic wars, as part of *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*. Having visited France shortly before the Terror of the Revolution, the author experienced the stirrings of violence, as

the initially patriotic and idealistic rebellion intensified, and Wordsworth then began to doubt the personal idealisms that first aligned him with the French patriots. In reaction to Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic wars, then, Wordsworth turns back to memories before war, before separation, before loss. He looks to his childhood, and in examining specific memories, he finds an idyllic nostalgia for that distant past. More importantly, in looking back, Wordsworth finds what I believe many people discover through memory, a self which he has ceased to be. There exists in *The Prelude* a division of selves, because the past can never truly be seen for what it was, for it is always subject to the present, and even to an imagined future. The poem thus presents the past self, the boy Wordsworth, as seen and made nostalgic in the memory of the author, Wordsworth, as his present self. The past self, imbued with the experience and ideals of the present self, is then designed also to project a future self, a future ideal consisting of all that is best of past and present. More than asking, then, how did I come to be as I am, the author asks, how might I be in the future? Wordsworth was not unused to crisis due to the losses faced early in life, yet in his adulthood, early trauma is renewed by the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars. Reacting to war, the author returns nostalgically to early childhood and a solace found in nature. In an interaction of divided selves, *The Prelude* presents both a moment of crisis and renewal. Wordsworth's resulting autobiographical work is a personal exploration of self that provides the possibility of a future formed by nostalgic past memory.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Britain was in a continuous state of war, stretching from the American Revolution to the French Revolution to the Napoleonic Wars. Wordsworth was born 19 years prior to the

beginning of the French Revolution, and when experiencing Revolution during his young adulthood, he began to reflect upon his childhood. Such nostalgic contemplation is seen in autobiographical works, such as *The Prelude* and “Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” (1798), which recall the nature that became the poet’s solace, especially as he links his sister, childhood and nature through nostalgia. Nostalgia follows an autobiographical format in these works as the speaker considers childhood and how he has changed over time, while looking upon nature. Wordsworth attempts to turn attentions away from himself and towards nature, in order to reflect, and maintains his gaze directly on the past, on the landscape and the “unremembered pleasure” which kept him company in the cities and lonely rooms away from nature (“Tintern Abbey” 32). In viewing his sister, Dorothy, Wordsworth is better able to look back as he hopes that “yet a little while / May I behold in thee what I was once, / My dear, dear Sister!” (120-22). It is not then merely in nature that Wordsworth retreats to the tranquil reflections of nostalgic remembrances, but in the untainted way one of youth and innocence is able to view nature, much as he once did.

Wordsworth’s personalized nostalgia is prevalent through self-projection in his extensive, arguably epic work, *The Prelude*. Paul A. Cantor’s “The Politics of the Epic: Wordsworth, Byron, and the Romantic Redefinition of Heroism” asserts that *The Prelude* and *Childe Harold* consist of a new Romantic type of epic concerning the inner quest of self rather than an external quest concerning a specific, often war-related event (379). Heroism, in the sense that the subject of an epic length poem is heroic, has been attributed to Wordsworth in *The Prelude*, since the author makes himself the subject of the poem and a “favored being” possessing a special knowledge of nature (l. 70 & 14).

While the inner, autobiographical focus of both poems is evident, Wordsworth makes an attempt to separate his personal self from his writer self. Onorato discusses in the images of self presented in *The Prelude* and asserts that “the self is not merely a transplanted thing, but one unconsciously aware of a lost home...” (165), which suggests that loss, or trauma, which Onorato later mentions, is at the root of Wordsworth’s self-reflections. Onorato also separates Wordsworth’s selves in different ways: “the contented spirit and...the Poet’s spirit” (165), Wordsworth and “the *poetic* self” (167), as well as the present self and the past self, which is remembered in order to understand the present (170). The overlap of these variations of divided selves is an attempt by Wordsworth to connect the past and the present, childhood and adulthood.

In his attempt to establish a continuum between idealized past and nostalgic present, Wordsworth superimposes his present self, further divided into the authorial and personal selves, onto his past, or remembered self. In Book II, for example, the author describes the beauty and joyous presence of the sun even though as “a Boy I loved the sun / Not, as since I have loved him, as a pledge / And surety of my earthly life, a light / Which while I view I feel I am alive” (II. 219-222). The past and the present conflict as love for the sun is something he gained and came to feel throughout life. ‘I feel’ is noticeably written in present tense as a present rather than past emotion. There is a switch to past tense, however, in the following lines: “when from excess / Of happiness my blood appeared to flow / With its own pleasure and I breathed with joy” (II. 226-228). Past tense suggests a continuation of boyhood stories, but the author has already stated not to have loved, not to have been able to feel the ‘excess of happiness’ as a boy. It then seems that either the author is applying feelings of his present self to memories of his

past, or the past being related is not always the same; the past could be boyhood at one point and young adulthood at another. In either case, the past is being collapsed and idealized as it is brought into the present through nostalgic remembrance.

Wordsworth does not appear to intend to portray his present self as heroic or even as the main subject of his “epic.” Instead nature, rather than the author’s personal or even authorial self, appears to be the focus of nostalgia for Wordsworth. His nostalgic retreat to nature, in fact, constitutes the whole of his reaction to the French Revolution, because Wordsworth does not respond directly to the Revolution, does not significantly criticize or support the event, as the author “was unsure of what to say his actions in that period meant” (Onorato 180). Rather, *The Prelude* serves as a description of Wordsworth’s experiences in France and subsequent personal, emotional reaction to the event. Such pairing of description and humble reaction in the poem might be viewed in sociological terms as the exhibition of the “two sides to a cultural trauma, an emotional experience and an interpretative reaction” (Eyerman 43). In fact, traumatic core of Wordsworth’s mental life and of English Romanticism generally” to the extent that it is “almost completely assimilated into a series of personal responses which frequently obscure what is being responded to” (Eyerman 60). In other words, *The Prelude*, without ever directly indicating as much, acts as a response to the French Revolution; the trauma of war results in personal nostalgia in writing.

In the 1805 revision of *The Prelude*, appearing six years after the publication of the *Two-Part Prelude* and only two years after Napoleon Bonaparte’s rise to power, Wordsworth, according to Mary E. Burton in *The One Wordsworth*, removes the personal pronoun from the poem “nearly a hundred and fifty times” even at the expense of “the

beauty of his line in order to effect the change” (Burton 119). In making these revisions, Wordsworth demonstrates a determined modesty as well as an attempt to broaden the poem beyond his own personal experience (122). The revisions also suggest more than a removal of the personal, but more specifically a removal of the personal present self which intertwines with memory throughout his early publications. Such an extensive removal of the personal, as Burton suggests, places more emphasis on the effects of nature on the mind being described, making that mind more submissive to nature’s power, and acts to deemphasize the personalization of Wordsworth’s nostalgia without removing it entirely. Placing his past self, specifically through pre-war memories, into his work, even with less of the personal pronoun, allows the epic to embody nostalgia. Burton views Wordsworth’s later revisions as an attempt to erase evidence and “avoid the accusation of being an egoist” (130) following the poet’s change of political ideologies resulting from the French Revolution.

However, despite Wordsworth’s laborious attempts to center nature through the removal of the personal pronoun, the 1799 publication of the *Two-Part Prelude* still displays the strength of Wordsworth’s personal experiences, at least as he nostalgically recalls them, through meditations upon nature. The personal is then, in a sense, inseparable from nostalgia and vice versa. This inseparability, this interconnectedness between nostalgia and experience is something Baudrillard detects in asserting that history takes the form of a referential, or “the last great myth” (47). As history is remembered, or rather idealized, through nostalgia, it cannot remain as knowledge derived from an objective perspective, but is always subject to personal experiences driving the idealizations. Such an example of nostalgic remembrance and personal

experience coexisting in nature is seen during the well-known cliff scene of *The Prelude*. The speaker is given no specified age during the cliff scene in *The Two-Book Prelude*, but according to the 1970 Oxford University Press edition of the 1805 *Prelude*, he is nine years old (l. 310-311). The speaker is also doubling as Wordsworth at present and Wordsworth's nostalgic, past self-projection, allowing both voices to coexist as he rows a skiff onto a lake watching a "craggy ridge" (l.100) nearby slowly grow in size. Nostalgia is present by way of the remaining personal pronoun, I, and the sublime form of the memory as a greater unknown is invoked by nature's presence. Nature is presented in these lines by way of the cliff as it gradually acquires greater power for the reader. The memory of this experience gains power for the past self, as days later this vision of nature's power still haunts his dreams, resulting in the reiteration of the memory as seen in *The Prelude*:

a huge Cliff,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head: I struck, and struck again
And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff
Rose up between me and the stars, and still
With measured motion, like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling hands I turned,
...
And through the meadows homeward went with grave
And serious thought; and after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days my brain
Worked with unknown modes of being: in my thoughts
There was darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion; no familiar objects
...
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were the trouble of my dreams. (*Two-Part Prelude* l.108-129)

Where once it was merely a "craggy ridge," it becomes a capital-c-Cliff as the speaker gains distance from it and recalls it, allowing the rock form to grow and rise like a living,

breathing example of nature's power. Yet the language used to describe the experience, such as "there was darkness, call it solitude" and "went with grave and serious thoughts," is not that of a nine year-old boy, but rather of an adult in reflection. This is not to suggest that the emotions being described are not those of Wordsworth's past self, but rather that his present self is required to recognize the emotions and the importance of the moment as could not be put into such words by his childhood self. These solemn, nostalgic reflections of the experience are then happening on two levels: the boy who remembers dark and imposing forms days later and the adult who remembers the cliff scene years later. Such a distant remembrance must alter the scene nostalgically as Wordsworth of present views the moment in his past as a distinct "spot of time" (l. 290) in which he is able to recognize the eternal power of nature and his own passion felt in its wake.

Wordsworth's nature in this passage is powerful and terrifying and takes precedence over the rest of the scene. *The Prelude* takes the nostalgic image further than merely implied distance by displaying implications of the nostalgic remembrance through the speaker's terror, as his hands tremble, and his resulting awe as he grapples with the unknown darkness and mystery of thought, which this observation of nature's power incites within. The speaker, here, saw a cliff in childhood, but in memory it is much more. It is mystery and the unknown; it is a higher power of nature looming over man. Wordsworth does not presume to understand the power he remembers and admits his own uncertainties in the face of it—in the face of death perceptually. The darkness which clouds Wordsworth's thoughts after the cliff scene seem to be impressions of death, since they are bereft of "hourly objects" and the vivid images of "life and nature...sanctifying

by such discipline / Both pain and fear, until we recognize / A grandeur in the beatings of the heart" (l.125 and 137-141), or rather, a grandeur in life. The solemn thoughts which result from Wordsworth's memory of the cliff cause him to think upon the importance and wonder of life. Death seems the appropriate contrast to life and therefore the darkness which troubles the speaker's dreams. The speaker is thus able to face the idea of death, here, by creating through nostalgia something greater, more transcendently powerful, than himself. Furthermore, the speaker confronts the dark solitude and obscure forms that the image of the rising cliff incites, not with pride or attempts to control it, but with a virtuous wisdom of his present self that allows him to ponder the thoughts and understand his submissive position to the power he has witnessed. Wordsworth displays a reverence inspired by the connection between man and the higher power of nature which he remembers from a present standpoint in adulthood. Through the instability of human memory and experience, nostalgia assumes a meaning other than truth, or rather one of self-projected truth, as it is idealized in memory. Nostalgia becomes the ideal. Personal truths revealed through nostalgia in a post-war context, especially when a higher power is invoked, seek to subvert the violence and fallen idealism present in war. Nostalgia, in this way, provides a mode for understanding the present through past, specifically pre-war past, ideals.

Beyond a single memory of the past, finding terror in the face of great powers is relevant historically to the author's lifetime through the occurrence of revolution. Both the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars signal violence and resistance within eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe as the power of the masses and then of a single dictator revolt against existing social and political structures. Even though Wordsworth

resided in France in 1791 during the early years of the French Revolution, he does not include an account of this experience in the *Two-Book Prelude*. Wordsworth's time in Revolutionary France is instead included in *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, and in an introduction to the 1805 text, published in 1970, editor de Selincourt comments on the poet's hesitancy to include these reflections at all; Wordsworth's "references to it in later years were often vague and misleading; but even when he wrote *The Prelude* he felt no inclination to say more of it than was barely necessary to explain his recovery and release from it" (de Selincourt xxix), so it is clear even to Wordsworth that the Revolution impacted him. It makes sense, though, that the author would return to his Revolutionary experience while composing *The Prelude* in 1805, since "in year 1804 he was already heart and soul with his own country in her struggle with Napoleon" (de Selincourt xxix); he was occupied with another war. The present Napoleonic Wars cause the author to reflect upon past Revolution and reaffirm the nostalgic reaction to war present in *The Two-Book Prelude*. Books IX and X of *The Fourteen-Book Prelude* directly address the French Revolution as they move beyond a retreat to nature as a reaction to war. In these books the Revolution is not viewed through the lens of history or even the retrospective knowledge that Wordsworth as he published *The Fourteen-Book Prelude* six years following the Revolution and two years after the start of the Napoleonic Wars. Rather, by detailing Wordsworth's own time in France during the early stages of the Revolution, these books provide an intensely personal view of an historic event and elucidate the reactionary nature of the surrounding books.

Wordsworth's belief in reason made him immediately sympathetic to the patriots. He found in France "what my soul / Mourn'd for, / or loath'd, beholding that the best /

Rul'd not, and feeling that they ought to rule" (IX. 215-217). Logic deemed, for Wordsworth, that the best should rule, aligning him with the patriots. In coming to France, Wordsworth is an idealist seeing only what should be and the potential for violence living under the surface during these early days of the Revolution. Yet as the violence of the patriots' cause intensified, Wordsworth describes himself as conflicted by the disparagement to his reason; he describes his unquiet sleep and the "ghastly visions had I of despair / And tyranny, and the implement of death...and a sense, / Of treachery and desertions in the place / The holiest that I knew of, my soul" (X. 374-380). The violence of war and Revolution affects Wordsworth to his soul and triggers nostalgia as his image of the present is destroyed. The Revolution begins to mark an end to Wordsworth's characterization of that present and give way to the past. The author's present self looks back and sees that "insensible / False preconceptions were corrected thus / And errors of the fancy rectified" (IX. 25-27). Wordsworth's present self recalls in his past the loss of ideals, of fancy, during the Revolution, even as he experiences the Napoleonic wars in his present.

As the French Revolution and later the Napoleonic wars then progress, they begin to take "place at the intersection of a maximum historical and 'revolutionary' stake, and of the installation of [...] deterrent authority" (Baudrillard 24). In examining war in the twentieth century, Baudrillard goes on to question, "What meaning did this war have, and wasn't its unfolding a means of sealing the end of history in the decisive and culminating historic event of our era?" (24). Revolution, thus, acts to seal history, or rather to make present past, and subject to nostalgia. As soon as Wordsworth discovers an end to the optimistic hopes he and the patriots held for the Revolution, he begins to lament the loss.

France, the city he loves becomes merely “an image in my mind / To mock me under such a strange reserve” (X. 464-465). The poet’s image of the city here acts as a lost referential to the past he idealizes. It is, however, a past he realizes to be gone in the subsequent history of war and Revolution. He must thus retreat further into his past, into nature, to find an image which can be recreated in his future. Onorato describes Wordsworth’s feelings during his time in France: the poet was “idealizing the principles of the Revolution” and, more significantly, “were he to see that his natural sympathies with the Revolution were Nature’s way of ‘betraying’ him to the experience of what men in History are ‘really’ like, he might bring upon himself the repressed traumatic feelings of the past. He would have to make himself understand why Nature had seemed to set him apart from men so early in life” (181), something Wordsworth explores in *The Prelude*.

Onorato seems to suggest that if Wordsworth’s experiences with nature in youth influenced his early idealisms, then the failure of his ideals during the Revolution acts as a betrayal by nature. It is then through *The Prelude* that the author’s present personal self can be seen to revisit the past and find once more the early knowledge and passions given to him by nature. Onorato continues in this vein of lost idealisms in asserting that “...were [Wordsworth] subsequently to see himself in this way in his poetry, he would see the young Poet standing alone in the middle of his ordeal, as in fact he did stand alone, though he did not see it clearly” (181). Wordsworth may in fact stand alone in his poetic search for self through nostalgic memory at the Revolution’s end, but the author surrounds himself with nature, and past memories, and the idea of a projected future-self found in both his past and present. Wordsworth thus loses an idealized image of France

and his own politics, and is left with divided selves and nature, which served to grant him the vision of idealism early in life. It is then no surprise that following direct discussion of the French Revolution, and the author's feelings of "treachery and desertion" (X. 379), Book XI of *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, significantly titled "Imagination, how Impaired and Restored," returns to nature, to spring, in the wake of the "utter loss of hope" (XI.6) which the Revolution signifies.

In the face of lost hope often brought by war, Wordsworth reacts personally by retreating to nature as a resolution to his struggles with the French Revolution. The poet treats nature as a higher power. Such a reactionary creation, or rather recreation of a higher power discovered in childhood, coincides with Baudrillard's views of power. Like the real, power, according to Baudrillard, is continually being produced and reproduced through signs and representations. Baudrillard indicates that higher power is put to death by its representations (14). Although Baudrillard is referring to God as a higher power, the same idea is at play when Wordsworth represents nature as a higher power. As the real slowly becomes depleted, and "it is now impossible to isolate the process of the real, or to prove the real" (15). Power, rather, "plays at the real, plays at crisis, plays at remanufacturing artificial, social, economic, and political stakes. For power it is a question of life and death" (16). During the French Revolution, the revolutionary power which slowly takes hold of France initially intends to change the social and economic systems of the country, change which Wordsworth agrees with early on. However, in the violence of Revolutionary power the poet glimpses the truth which Baudrillard notes, that power is essentially a question of life and death, and the poet is left with "the haunting memory that is already in evidence everywhere, expressing at once the compulsion to get

rid of [power...] and the panicked nostalgia over its loss" (16). Wordsworth is then caught between the desire for a higher power, for the ability to retain his idealisms, and the resistance to the "power," as false representation of his idealisms, which exists in France during the Revolution. Wordsworth's reaction to the Revolution in *The Prelude* "enacts an intellectual and spiritual journey in terms of the poet's own experience, [and] is also a national epic, since it explicitly weighs the social, secular ideology sustaining the Revolution against ideology of the conservative powers" (Butler 67). *The Prelude* concerns, as Butler notes, Wordsworth's changed attitude towards conservatism.

Wordsworth also gives in to the human demand for signs of power (Baudrillard 7) in turning to conservatism. He takes childhood memories of higher power, such as displayed in *The Prelude*'s description of the cliff, and nostalgically begins to project upon his present and future reality a past-based representation of higher power found in nature. *The Prelude* refers to such a power in multiple ways; it is "A tranquilizing spirit [that] presses now / On my corporeal frame" (II.25-26), and "When I am in the woods, unknown to me / The workings of my spirit thence are brought" (II.376-377). Each of these lines represents submission to nature and the resulting ethereal sensations of a released poetic spirit. As a return to nature and a childhood spent in nature is considered in *The Prelude* and is considered in a transcendent light, power becomes nostalgically associated with childhood, as Wordsworth emphasizes in *Intimations Ode*.¹

Wordsworth's nostalgia then, while offering a hopeful continuum from past to war to future, also becomes increasingly circular as it idealizes past childhood from the vantage point of current natural observations.

¹ Wordsworth's *Intimations Ode* notes the transcendence of children prior to growing up, as he says "Heaven lies about us in our infancy" (l. 67).

Wordsworth's nostalgic struggles with wartime change become more apparent as, following the initial publication of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's subsequent revisions enter into the early years of the Napoleonic Wars. An example of the poet's struggle and the revolution's presence in *The Prelude* occurs near the closing of *The Two-Book Prelude*:

if in these times of fear,
 This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,
 If, 'mid indifference and apathy
 And wicked exultation, when good men
 On every side fall off we know not how
 To selfishness disguised in gentle names
 Of peace, and quiet, and domestic love,
 Yet mingled, not unwillingly, with sneers
 On visionary minds; if in this time
 Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
 Despair not of our nature; but retain
 A more than Roman confidence, a faith
 That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
 The blessing of my life, the gift is yours,
 Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! (II.483-97).

As *The Prelude* was first published during the French Revolution, lines such as “times of fear” and “time of dereliction and dismay” cannot help but bring that revolution to mind. In speaking of the disguises of peace and love, it is also possible that Wordsworth is referring to his former view of the revolution, also indicated in the book's beginning when the speaker refers to the “Two consciousnesses” of his present and past selves (II. 30). Finally, the above passage indicates Wordsworth's initial reaction to the dismay of the Revolution, which was to turn toward nature and offer the blessing of his life, for in nature he can find passion which he could not find in his Revolutionary politics.

The visionary mind the narrator views to be behind revolutionary politics, at least behind their initial idealism, is one in which Wordsworth still wishes to believe, as the poem notes that its speaker does not despair of “our nature.” Whether “our nature” refers

precisely to the nature of men, poets, or visionary minds is uncertain; yet each possibility suggests faith in an ideal existing prior to the Revolution that Wordsworth's nostalgic memories attempt to recreate post- Revolution. Nostalgia thus becomes an answer for Wordsworth's inner struggle with revolutionary violence and his younger self's ideals. Through the competing sensibilities of *The Prelude*, however, Wordsworth is only able to find reconciliation between the double consciousnesses, as well as between the world he has come to experience and the one he once idealized. Wordsworth turns to nature in order to explore his inner self, which coincides with the notion that the "Romantic turn to nature is a turning away from politics; their enchantment with nature follows from disenchantment with politics (especially their disappointment with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic despotism that resulted from it)" (Cantor 376). Cantor's use of the word 'enchantment,' in fact, indicates that the Romantics' view of nature, in opposition to politics of war, is less than realistic. The enchantment with nature during the late Romantic period rather idealizes nature by viewing it largely through the nostalgic memory of a seemingly simpler or better time prior to war. In submitting to nature's power, Wordsworth personalizes revolution and separates nature from politics, which suggests a nostalgic desire for a power or ideal that will not disappoint its believers.

Wordsworth's desire for an ideal manifests in *The Prelude*'s nostalgic merging of past and present selves as he reacted to the Revolution. Burton discusses Wordsworth's reaction in noting a youthful "enthusiasm for the French Revolution" which is lost "in later orthodoxy, and thus [had] sacrificed to conservatism all that made him interesting to the public" (24). As his revisions remove the personal, they also, according to Burton, further emphasize human frailty (31). More than demonstrating personalization through

revision, however, *The Prelude* displays nostalgia and inner moral struggle fostered postwar. The speaker of *The Prelude* uses both nature and the past as a lens through which to personalize his experiences and examine his present self, as shown in the beginning of the second part of the 1799 publication when the speaker talks of his double consciousness—of himself and another being—, laments past prides and asks if any of mankind have not wished “For things which cannot be, who would not give / If he so might, to duty and to truth / The eagerness of infantine desire?” (II.22-24). Such nostalgia for the past creates what Wordsworth terms a double consciousness representative of both his personal memories and “some other being” (II. 33), the greater idealized power of nature he projects upon the present. Nostalgia is thus doubled. Baudrillard terms nostalgia such as Wordsworth’s a simulation, a mere representation of lost or disappearing reality (Baudrillard 2). A simulation of reality and thought is created in *The Prelude*, and is broken by distance and tranquility. Wordsworth describes

A tranquilizing spirit presses now
On my corporeal frame, so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days,
Which yet have such self-presence in my heart
That sometimes when I think of them I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other being...(II.25-31).

The above passage could be interpreted as Wordsworth’s reflections upon his once revolutionary minded politics, after he experiences the violence of revolution, and his preceding childhood as he begins to move toward a greater conservatism in the present. The ideological change the Revolution sparked in Wordsworth resulted in both nostalgia and struggles with the two parts of himself—his two consciousnesses. The passage appears in the present tense, since the “tranquilizing spirit presses *now*” upon the

speaker. Looking back from the present, Wordsworth views a large “vacancy between me and those days.” Those days refer to the author’s idealized childhood or his time in France when he sympathized with the Patriots, for both instances seem present in *The Prelude* and manifest themselves in nostalgic remembrance. Considering the lack of Revolutionary experience detailed in *The Two-Book Prelude*, it is more likely that Wordsworth means to refer to childhood memories, yet in either case, the author is reflecting upon a distantly remembered self who was able to believe in the ideals presented by revolutionaries. It is this part of himself, this former idealistic and even slightly rebellious past self, that Wordsworth can no longer fully relate to and so sees as “some other being.”

Essentially, Wordsworth is an adult asking himself “was I ever that young?” Maturation or change causes us to look back and to reconsider. Revolution changed Wordsworth; it changed his ideals, his politics, and his perceptions of past, present and future realities. The removal of so much of the personal pronoun from *The Prelude*, as well as the reverent view of nature’s power in the poem, reveal nostalgic reaction to war—reveal change. More significantly, however, the author’s attention to, which is nearly a rejection of, the personal in revisions of *The Prelude* suggests Wordsworth’s awareness of the personalized reaction the work encompasses; war in this sense veers the poet away from his revolutionary sensibilities toward greater humility. De Selincourt notes this change in the author, because “When his poetry was commended for the purity of its morals [Wordsworth] insisted that he, on the other hand, valued it according to the power of the mind which it presupposed in the writer and excited in the hearer”(xxxviii). The author turns attention from himself which becomes increasingly ironic when

considering that “of the vital source and hiding-places of its power the original *Prelude* is the frankest and most direct confession” (de Selincourt xxxviii).

No matter how much Wordsworth attempted to reject the personal nature of the work, it remains a confession. The author describes his memories from boyhood and weaves together significant ‘spots of time’ from his life. However, *The Prelude* as a whole, both the two and fourteen book publications, is a “spot of time” (*Two-Book Prelude* I. 290). Wordsworth’s epic work preserves a moment of self-crisis and nostalgia that was his reaction to the French Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic Wars. What then is the meaning created from nostalgia? Wordsworth’s continuum, his connection of past and present, as it extends into the future, displays meaning for the human construction of time and history. Wordsworth wrote interchangeably between past and present tense, because even as he turned to his past to understand his present, he was changing the past through nostalgic memory. Therefore, time, especially in relation to the human memory, cannot be linear. The past and present continually interact with one another as they constantly give way to a projected future. *The Prelude* is then a microcosm of collapsed time, memory, and the author’s attempt to re-identify himself in light of postwar change.

Chapter 2: Projected Past in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

Born in 1788, just before the French Revolution, war is a consistent background to Byron's early life. Byron finally leaves England in self-imposed exile shortly following the failure of his marriage to Annabella Milbanke in 1816 and one year after Napoleon's defeat and forced exile. The effect of Napoleon's defeat on Byron is noted by Biographer Benita Eisler: "No other world event could have aroused Byron to such to such a pitch of feeling: 'I mark this day,' he wrote momentarily in his journal" (422). Eisler further writes "disillusionment was further fueled by the downfall of his onetime idol Napoleon" (405). It seems significant that Eisler says "onetime idol." In this post-war state of exile and alienation, Byron also loses his image of the hero and begins to view Napoleon as an anti-hero. Byron then tries to regain this image as he writes the nostalgic Canto III of his well-known epic poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. In viewing the past, Canto III refers not only to the general idea of war, but to the war of Byron's time by referring directly to Waterloo.

War and Byron's exile both trigger reactionary nostalgic considerations, which are displayed in Byron's work. This second chapter will confine itself to such considerations in the third canto of Byron's *Pilgrimage*. Byron's nostalgia at this time creates the title character Childe Harold, an alternate self in the form of a soldier. He is a solid representative of Byron's former "idealized image of Napoleon as the personification of heroic conquest" (Eisler 5), before his defeat and Byron's disillusionment of the monarch (Eisler 405). I will further refer to Childe Harold as a projected self or heroic self, as Byron's own history often overlaps with that of his heroic character. This self allows Byron to re-create his past in a heroic framework and opposes the ruling or anti-heroic self he identifies in Napoleon by contrast. Recognizing Byron's

incorporation of the past in his examination nostalgia in the writings of Byron and Robert Burns, Drummond Bone indicates a literary element, “which is often present in their more interesting passages of nostalgia is a literary root, an inter-textual presence, a shadow from the past” (99). Bone further notes that Byron “enact[s] the artistic past in presenting the loss of the past at large” (99). More than presenting an ‘artistic past,’ Byron’s work creates an ‘artistic’ self in reacting to the loss of a larger past during wartime. Through Childe Harold, Byron is examining both who he has become and who he might have been.

By projecting another self, Byron is forming a simulation of a preferred nostalgic past in lieu of his real past that resulted in exile. Such a rejection of the real resembles the later post-modern theory of Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). In experiencing both an end to wartime, which signified the defeat of his identified ruling Napoleon-like self, and an exile prompted by social criticisms, Byron turns from reality and to the past as he chooses to represent it. The poet’s created past “masks and denatures a profound reality” (6) signifying a second order simulacrum. The poem allows the author to mask reality, to recast it in Byron’s own ideals, but the addition of the alternate Childe Harold self then goes one step further. In creating another self, Byron complicates reality and fragments his perceived self. The poet can thus assert some level of control over reality by way of the simulacrum in his poetry.

Byron’s attempts to control reality may be partly attributed to his personal circumstances. As Longford writes of Byron, he was attracted to the “Romantics’ typical brooding over real or imagined persecution” and exiled himself from his country (102). Persecution, whether real or imagined, is perhaps not the exact reason for Byron’s

departure from England. Yet the public view had become negative following Byron's separation from wife Annabella and speculations of the separation's "'specific' cause," which range, even amongst current biographers, from incest to "Byron's ambivalence about women," to Annabella's own religious principles (Longford 93-95). As such speculations arise, Byron chooses to leave England and embarks upon his own pilgrimage through Europe, thus asserting the only control he can over perceived scandal and his separation. It is following his exile from England and his struggles with the social standards which caused it that Byron writes his four canto epic, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which Jerome McGann asserts "refused the distinction between his life and his art, and the result has been, as G. Wilson Knight has always said, that he became a work of art" (*Fiery Dust* 28). The intermingling of narrative and authorial voice, which McGann notes here, has created a topic of study among Romantic scholars as they seek to separate Byron from Childe Harold. The distinction between poet and character is one which Byron makes little effort to make clear, especially in the beginning of Canto III.

The description of Childe Harold's past shows a marked similarity to the poet's past as "both are subject to the same melancholy dissatisfaction, and restiveness in the society of England's soulless 'crowd' ... There is nothing in this portrait to distinguish Harold from his creator" (*Fiery Dust* 82). Byron thus aligns himself, his past, his travels and his emotions with those of his dark epic hero, discovering that he can be his own best hero (Cantor 377). Such an extensive nostalgic dwelling upon past experiences through a re-creation of self that places Byron in the role of hero suggests a certain arrogance of authorship through a presumption of superiority. Nostalgia in the form of a fictional character, however autobiographical, subverts the control Byron attempts to project.

Childe Harold may give the author control over an entire world and character that are his creations, but such creation simultaneously allows Byron to ignore reality, in its existing un-idealized form. Byron then is not controlling reality, but inventing a reality he can control; he escapes reality by replacing it with a simulated version. An idealized image of the past and the poet's reaction to the new reality taking present form can then be seen in the vast landscapes and deep reflections upon the terrors in war, death and destruction portrayed in *Childe Harold*. Byron in the form of his title character seeks to understand Revolution as it affects him.

Besides violence, the Revolution also offered idealisms for society. While Wordsworth sympathized with these idealisms, they oppose the ruling Napoleonic self, a self which is further opposed by way of the Napoleonic Wars. In contrast, Byron's heroic autobiographical self subverts the real by replacing it with a simulated representation or ideal. As the real of Byron's life ceases to be what it 'was' in the poem, nostalgia takes form; the work is nostalgia itself. This pilgrimage through vast landscapes and deep reflections upon the terrors in war, death and destruction represent Byron's nostalgic thoughts within a poem of nostalgia, thereby doubling the nostalgia and allowing it to represent itself, or, in Baudrillard's words, "Thus everywhere the hyperrealism of simulation is translated by the hallucinatory resemblance of the real to itself" (15). Essentially, the effect of nostalgia within nostalgia is to further highlight the imitation of the real, or the hyperreal. Through the representations of the real, which take the form of an idealized past that Byron is projecting with Childe Harold, Byron seeks to understand revolution as it affects him. Like Wordsworth, Byron is attempting to recreate himself through the past. However, Wordsworth's collapse of past and present selves is

projected into the future while Byron attempts to replace his self, past and present, for a nostalgically preferred creation. Instead of a hedonistic noble who fled his failed marriage and immoral image in England, Byron is able to form himself into the sympathetic and heroic brooding soldier. In 1823, years after writing *Childe Harold*, and upon aligning himself with the War of Independence in Greece, Byron appears to truly adopt the image of Childe Harold; as he says, “He who is only a poet has done little for mankind”; he would therefore “endeavor to prove in his person that a poet may be a soldier” (Longford 174). Years before he becomes a soldier, however, Byron re-created himself autobiographically in the past through poetry.

The war-affected present appears in stanzas V and VI of canto III as the speaker alludes to suffering and the inevitability of time proceeding, of the past becoming. In a personal view of time, the speaker refers to age: “He, who has grown aged in this world of woe,/ In deeds, not years, piercing the depths of life” (37-38). Yet, as McGann and Cantor have indicated, Byron has grown nearly synonymous with the “He” he writes of, Childe Harold, and so cannot relinquish the superiority of authorial voice by confronting the difference between Childe Harold’s nostalgically-inflected idealizations and the reality of Byron’s past. The poet ends the stanza with the impression that thoughts remain “Still unimpaired, though old, in the soul’s haunted cell” (V 45) and continues in stanza VI:

...in creating live
A being more intense that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we imagine, even as I do now.
What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,
Soul of my thought!... (46-51).

This stanza suggests an infinite longevity through both soul and poetry. Stanza V not only admits the nostalgic purpose of Child Harold's character to act out an imagined self, but also displays the author's conscious awareness of nostalgia for "the life we imagine" in saying "even as I do now" (VI 49). Childe Harold then serves as an embodiment of the life, or rather a past, that the poet envisions for himself, more hopeful in his childhood past and suffering heroically in the recent present. Therefore, the poem dwells on a once joy-filled youth and the cruel fate which poisoned Childe Harold's springs of life (VII 60). The author then sees his present self, not as something to combine with and enrich the memories of a past self, as Wordsworth sometimes does, but as "Nothing" (VI 50). Byron is divided between authentic selves (both past and present) and imagined self, Childe Harold. The created character is what most matters, because, where Byron is nothing, Child Harold is so much more; he is the soul of thought, of hope, and of what might have been (VI 51). Therefore, Byron does not create for himself a nostalgic world in which to find a continued future, lived postwar, as Wordsworth does in *The Prelude*. Wordsworth needed to revive his past in idealization, but Byron needed to reshape his. Byron's nostalgia, instead, finds meaning in Childe Harold, a character formed by a melancholy version of the past so that it might both bear examination and acquire longevity. *Childe Harold* displays Byron's attempted control over the processes of time and change through assertions of past self and immortality. The poet's desire for control is his reaction to what the Revolutions and Napoleonic Wars reveal about himself. In reaction to these wars, both Byron and Wordsworth turn their gazes inward and discover an internal character flaw. Wordsworth painfully realized the violent outcome of idealisms when the Revolution became the Terror, and began to examine his own

idealisms. Byron, on the other hand, recognized his ruling, or perceived, self and the fallouts of ambition as armies fought against Napoleon. The earlier author attempted to erase his socially idealistic flaw by reasserting his past in the present, but Byron seeks control over his perceived self in creating an alternate heroic self to oppose this internal flaw.

The poet's desire for control is further shown, if more subtly, in Byron's nostalgic observations of Harold's surroundings. Nature is revealed less as awe-inspired and more subject to the vision of humanity. However, Byron is still considered a "green" writer (Hubbell 14) by some critics. J. Andrew Hubbell, for example, in "A Question of Nature: Byron and Wordsworth," refers to Byron's approach to nature as "wandering, the 'touristic' mentality that is aloof to the environment and its inhabitants," by which Byron interconnects human culture and the environment (14). While this aloofness separates Byron's poetry from the eco-writers, such as Wordsworth, whose passion for nature resembles a religious mentality, Hubbell maintains Byron's standing as an eco-writer, as the act of wandering fosters for Byron an "ecological awareness" (17) of both nature and culture, as evidenced in stanza XIII of canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*:

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;
Where rolled the ocean, thereon was his home;
Where a blue sky, and glowing clime, extends,
He had the passion and the power to roam;
The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,
Were unto him companionship; they spake
A mutual language, clearer than the tome
Of his land's tongue, which he would oft forsake
For nature's pages glassed by sunbeams on the lake. (109-117)

These lines display a definite notice of nature, particularly its interaction with the narrator. Each piece of nature described, the ocean, sky, forest, and so on, is not beautiful,

wondrous, or even terrifying unto itself, but is immediately contextualized in relation to Childe Harold. The ocean, for example, marks his home while the desert and cavern are his friends. Nature is then placed within or defined by an already existing human experience. The poem's speaker is, therefore, able to maintain a self-focus rather than a focus on nature even as he chooses nature's "tongue" over the writing of man. Nature is momentarily elevated in this passage as the speaker claims to forsake "the tome / Of his land's tongue," most simply a book, for "nature's pages glassed by sunbeams on the lake" (116-117). While this choice elevates nature above humanity, it does so through a comparison of nature to a book, something man-made, thus linking nature with the very humanity the speaker means to escape. Nature is made into something elemental and sensory instead of otherworldly or divine. As a wanderer, the speaker must turn his gaze to the surrounding landscape and recognize nature, but it is only temporary during the time nature is within the speaker's direct perception (Hill 223). The landscape disappears and the speaker turns away from it and turns to considerations of himself or war. The image of a sunny lake presented above is a reflective surface. 'Nature's pages' would ultimately reflect the speaker's own image, further making the natural secondary to the human. Byron, therefore, focuses upon human experience even when considering nature, and nature is the background to Byron's nostalgia which focuses upon himself and his past. Using nature as a background contrasts with Wordsworth's nature, which is consistently present through *The Prelude's* remembrances and idealizations. Nature thereby represents an immediately visible difference in the nostalgic writing of the two poets. In reacting to war, Wordsworth's writing attempts to internalize his idealized past self, largely characterized by nature. He attempts to look beyond himself to nature, even

as his self is always being reflected. No such attempt at external consideration is made by Byron as nature becomes mere background to the heroic self he projects onto reality.

Byron's reaction to war manifests in an entirely imagined poetic self, the Byronic hero Childe Harold. The very literary archetype which Childe Harold originated describes the character's significance for the poet. The character is not Byron, merely like Byron, or Byronic, and further embodies what Byron would want to be as a stereotypical hero, which, by the very virtue of being like Byron, is something altogether different from heroic. The formation of a character who is representative of Byron, but not Byron, who is rather the poet's imagined self-projection, is central to the poet's nostalgia and to the poem, because, in McGann's words, "an important aspect of the poem depends upon our ability to see both the similarities and differences between narrator and Harold, and especially, what happens to each of them during the course of the pilgrimage" (*Fieri Dust* 69). This differentiation between poet and character then allows nostalgia's idealization to be recognizable. The very image of the wandering pilgrim, however idealized, also suggests a deeply personalized experience or contemplation of experience, since a pilgrim is generally a searching traveler. Byron's pilgrimage, as represented by the poem rather than his actual travels through Europe, searches, via the metaphoric journey of creating Harold, for self and for a past which he desires to envision post-war. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* displays an escape into nostalgia, yet it is being used to contemplate humanity, as Byron's memory constructs it, to understand and to separate from present reality.

In further attempting to control and understand his past, Byron turns in Canto III to the mythological image of Prometheus in examining humanity's tortured state. In fact

“all of the poetry he wrote in July of 1816 had Promethean touches” (105), which Longford describes as “the triumph of the spirit over torture” (105). When writing during his self-imposed exile and the year after Waterloo had marked the defeat of Napoleon’s armies, Byron focuses upon the images of sufferers, of lone and wandering beings, such as the punished Titan and the unrecognized soldier. In speaking of war, he writes, “The day drags through though storms keep out the sun;/ And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on / .../ There is a very life in our despair, / Vitality of poison” (XXXII. 287-288 and XXXIV. 289-299). These lines embody the “Promethean touches” Longford refers to, because they vividly suggest endurance and continuation despite pain and darkness, much like Prometheus lives on despite his eternal torture. Soldiers, such as Childe Harold, similarly, trade death for triumph and live on through fame. Theirs is a noble death and Prometheus’s crime a noble act.

Byron’s nostalgia searches for such Promethean nobility and reacts to both the recent war and his own recent separation and exile. Through Childe Harold’s soldier role, specifically, Byron incorporates heroic suffering and the immortal fame such suffering can bring. Indications of the Prometheus figure, however, appear even before the Titan is introduced by name or related suffering, as the poem’s speaker refers repeatedly to fire: “there is a fire / And motion of the soul, / which will not dwell/ In its own narrow being, but aspire / Beyond the fitting medium of desire; / And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore, / Preys upon high adventure.../ Fatal to he who bears, to all who bore” (III. XLII. 371-78). The speaker is describing a “fire” within man “to lust, to shine, to rule” (III. XLIII. 388) as he continues to consider the battles of men. The image of fire here is not representative neither of a spirit, a hope, or light within humanity, but rather of a

negative and destructive force. Such negativity is significant to both the work's later vision of Prometheus and the indication of Byron's struggle with the wars of his time. Man's fire is 'fatal' as it is a lusting for power and for war. When Prometheus is named in the next canto, the titian of myth is equated with man, as other authors of the period have done, but this is no "Prometheus,"² for the Titan is not considered in terms of sympathy or gratitude because his "Godlike crime was to be kind" ("Prometheus" 35). Rather, Prometheus' fire in *Childe Harold* is something which man must "endure" and was "repaid / By him to whom the energy was given" (IV. CLXIII. 1460-1461). The poem acts to detail this recompense as the wars of man are fought for the pride and desires provided by the fire. Men are thus tortured, much as Prometheus, and there is little difference between the fate of god and man.

A comparison of god and man looks to past legend, to a myth of a savior of humanity, and finds war to be born within man, directly linked to the god's fire. The poem is nostalgic as it looks to the mythic past in order to rationalize the disruption of Byron's idealized reality in the recent past. Using the past as rationalization dually uses nostalgia as a reactionary sentiment and as a suggestion that the past was not always ideal. A reactionary view that draws from the past for understanding displays the past's effect upon the present. The work simultaneously criticizes and sympathizes with man's desire to rule, which can be seen when the poem portrays "He who surpasses or subdues mankind, / Must look down on the hate of those below" (III. XLV. 399-400). From this

² Byron's poem was published in 1816, around the same time as *Child Harold's Pilgrimage*, which sympathies with Prometheus' eternal torment and equates his suffering with that of man. Also Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), a play depicting the release of Prometheus. According to myth, in punishment for giving men fire, Prometheus was chained to a rock and his liver was eaten by an Eagle every day and regenerated every night for eternity.

ruling height “loudly blow / Contending tempests on his naked head, / And thus reward the toils which to those summits led” (III. XLV. 403-405). The man who rises above mankind, through whatever hardships or ‘toils,’ gains only hatred and loneliness. Meanwhile, the young, noble, gallant soldier is praised, a sentiment which reflects directly upon the recent French Revolution and Napoleonic wars (III. XXIX. 261). Byron romanticizes the soldier even as he laments men’s self-destructive nature and the vain effort of man’s ambition, which he has noted in himself,³ as well as the loss of his own former joy in youth.

Byron creates, therefore, what John W. Ehrstine refers to in *The Gothic Imagination* as a metaphysical pattern, in which “his attempt to reestablish unity collapses, enchaining him, and adding a burden to man’s existence” (101). In other words, the speaker of Byron’s poem considers the history of man throughout his pilgrimage and feels a sense of hopelessness. He reacts to war by creating a personal journey of discovery for himself and the state of humanity. Promethean allusions display man’s ‘burden,’ since the given fire within man causes war. Byron also romanticizes the soldier and projects himself as the heroic Childe Harold in an attempt to unify his present self with this created self and reform his past. However, Byron cannot remove his identification with the notorious ruling men *Childe Harold* criticizes. Aligned with such men through his current fame and disreputable past, Byron remains ‘enchained’ to that past and can only seek to escape it through nostalgic projection.

In nostalgia Byron turns toward Napoleon Bonaparte, an obvious reflection upon recent war and, as McGann asserts, “the first of Byron’s historical self-projections”

³ Stanza XIX of Byron’s *Epistle to Augusta* laments Byron’s desires for ambition and fame, while hoping he once had a “nobler aim.”

(*Byron and Romanticism* 142). Longford writes that in January of 1816, having recently exiled himself from England, Lord Byron “described himself as ‘the greatest man living’ not excepting Napoleon” (86). The association Byron made between himself and the Emperor has been similarly made by critics who notice that Napoleon, having died “in exile when Byron was himself in exile...had been at times a macrocosm of the young rake” (Longford 5). For example, “Napoleon loved his sister, as did Byron. Napoleon was a superstitious skeptic, as was Byron. They were vanquished within a year of one another, Napoleon by the military establishment, Byron by the social establishment.” (5). Longford further notes their similarities, “At each stage of his pilgrimage Byron could measure his ideals against Napoleon’s career” (Longford 5). In Napoleon, Byron saw an infamous greatness, which he alternately praises and condemns in his work. The parallels between the two men become increasingly significant to the poet as he examines, even reforms, the past in his *Pilgrimage*, and begins to look at his life melancholically as one who has risen above and apart from the rest of humanity.

Despite having experienced the Napoleonic wars, Byron appears to admire, or least identify, with Napoleon. By identifying with Napoleon, Byron creates a famed, a ruling self which, like Napoleon, knows the Promethean fire. The self created with Childe Harold, as a heroic pilgrim, directly opposes this ruling self, suggesting Byron’s inner derision of it. Napoleon is who Byron believes himself to be and Childe Harold whom the poet wishes to be, hence the poetic creation of the hero and pity for a higher being such as Prometheus.

In examining Byron’s admiring yet sympathetic view of Napoleon, Michael V. DePorte notes that Byron is “trying to have things both ways. He has given us Napoleon

the demigod; now, to temper awe with pity, he gives us Napoleon the victim...He could not even relish power because he kept hungering for more" (406). In speaking of Waterloo, Byron turns to leaders who rise and fall and who

are themselves the fools to those they fool;
 Envied, yet how unenviable! what stings
 Are theirs! One breast laid open were a school
 Which would unteach mankind the lust to shine or rule
 ...and their life
 A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last. (III.XLIII –XLIV. 384-389)

An emperor, a general, such a Napoleon is then both "envied" and "unenviable." He has both the godly fire of ambition that causes him to rise and the poison of such ambition which leaves him alone, eventually to fall, and leaves him pitiable. Byron's dualistic depiction of the infamous nineteenth century warmonger reflects his image of Prometheus, and of himself, as someone to be equally heroic, destructive, and worthy of pity. Viewing Napoleon as such suggests that the war and human suffering viewed in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is not the fault of one man or circumstance, but rather a greater fault of humanity and the cursed fire of Prometheus. Napoleon exemplifies this fault as he is a victim of the Titan's fire; he rises to infamy through a desire to rule. Negating the blame for Napoleon's despised rule from the man to an inherited human curse relieves Byron of any guilt for the past actions which caused him to leave England. In viewing the past, Byron has "...proceeded in a theme /Renew'd with no kind auspices: -- to feel / We are not what we have been, and to deem/We are not what we should be" (III. CXI. 1031-1034). The speaker/poet has previously criticized the prideful fire within man, even as he displays it within the poem, and here he says that "we are not what we should be." Such a line suggests a great hopelessness for humanity and for the author, as

the plural pronoun suggests, as well as a need for something different, something that opposes the prideful fire of man, and that Byron searches for in the past. It is in his daughter, Ianthe, that Byron seems to find hope for such a difference in humanity. As the third canto ends, he collapses his past with his daughter's and considers,

The child of love, -- though born in bitterness
And nurtured in convulsion. Of thy sire
These were the elements, -- and thine no less
As yet such are around thee, -- but thy fire
Shall be more temper'd and thy hope far higher.
Sweet be thy cradled slumbers...(CXVIII. 1094-1099)

Even though Ianthe's circumstances of birth, "born in bitterness and nurtured in convulsion," are not ideal and similar circumstances contributed to Byron's own upbringing, he contends that Ianthe will be different. She will not endure the same fire which he has observed, through Childe Harold, to lead to the warring devastation of man; rather her fire "shall be more tempered," in part due to her stereotypically gentler gender. 'Tempered,' here, is not specifically defined; the reader can only be sure that Ianthe's past, and subsequent future, will be somehow different, better, than Byron's own. In addition, Ianthe's future, while indicated as better than Byron's present, is not elaborated upon or imagined at length. Thus, a focus upon the past is maintained. A turn toward Byron's daughter suggests that the pilgrimage of Childe Harold is one in search of a redemptive quality for humanity, which can be found in the past.

Attempting to redeem himself as much as, or even more than, humanity, Byron uses nostalgia to cast himself in the heroic role of Childe Harold and reimagine past reality the end of the Napoleonic Wars nears. In doing so, Byron also seeks understanding and control his past and to make meaning from the nostalgia for an unrealized self shown in the creation of Childe Harold. In creating a fictional image of his

past self, the poet is indulging fully in nostalgic reflection. However, Byron's autobiographical character also allows for an escape into and examination of the past, as the poet attempts to understand and control the fall of his past reality into past existence. Such control is something which Byron never fully achieves as he dwells so extensively on the fire of men, their propensity for war, and cruelty of fate following his more idealized childhood, rather than forming any hope for future reality. Byron's postwar reflections are at once heroic and tragic, much like Byron's hero. In reforming his past, the poet creates a Romantic, Byronic hero his work popularized. The making of such a hero in wartime allows war, from a postwar perspective, to be equally heroic.

Byron, then, does not create, like Wordsworth, a continuum for idealized future reality, nor is he reconciling disrupted idealisms. After separation, exile, and the defeat of his imagined ruling self, Byron looks internally at himself, his fame, and his regrets. The poet recasts the past in a nostalgically preferred image and projects a heroic self onto that past in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Nature becomes secondary, a mere backdrop to humanity in the poem. Nostalgia assumes meaning in *Childe Harold* and the poet's subsequent reinvention of past self, which is nostalgically preferred, even as the presence of a heroic self opposes the present ruling self and the inclusion of Promethean fire pities it. that aligns with Byron in the present. The interplay of past and present and real and created selves represents Baudrillard's metaphor for reality as a Mobius strip whereby "[a]ll the referentials combine their discourses in a circular, Möbian compulsion" (Baudrillard 12). While the author dwells in the past and wishes to escape reality, there exists a continual discourse between the past that was and that yields to present reality, and the past that might have been and is nostalgically created by a reactionary present.

Byron envisions a heroic version of himself, which opposes the self his abandoned home country sees, and through *Child Harold's Pilgrimage* he is able to project this preferred past into poetic reality. Within his poetic reality, Byron can reconcile his present to his past in order to one day embody his heroic self in the future, during the Greek War of Independence.

Chapter 3: Breaking from the Past in *Persuasion*

The reaction of male Romantic poets to the French Revolution has long been of interest to critics, as A.D. Cousins, Dani Napton and Stephanie Russo note in *The French Revolution and the British Novel in the Romantic Period*; as they proceed to trace and add to the attention given, during the latter part of the twentieth-century, to novelists' reactions to the Revolution (1). The reaction of female novelists, in particular, has been discussed in relation to the frequent depiction of domestic scenes and the relationship to the authors' own lives. Claudia L. Johnson, in "The Novel of Crisis," describes this domesticity as a result of the "reactionary ideology" which "required women to be amicably weak, retiring, and docile so to assure the authority, the chivalry, and even the identity of men" (2). Reacting to revolution, these resulting ideologies "were brought to the forefront of the national life and were infused with dignity as well as urgency" (Johnson 2) by female novelists who experienced war.

Jane Austen, for example, experienced wartime throughout her life. She was born in the winter of 1775, during the American War of Independence, or American Revolution (1775-1783), grew into adulthood and began her writing career during the French Revolution (1789-1799), and died in 1817, two years following the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815). In light of the author's biographical relationship with war, critics have examined Austen's work in conjunction with war, especially with the Revolution. Writers have maintained critical focus largely upon female novelists' relationship with and reaction to the French Revolution in the late Romantic period. Yet, as critic Jocelyn Harris notices, "Jane Austen's adult writing career was essentially synchronous with Napoleon's military one (1793-1815)" ("The History of Bonaparte" 73). The Napoleonic wars, then, would have just as much, if not more, influence upon

Austen's texts than the French Revolution, and are directly indicated by the 1814 setting of her last published novel, *Persuasion*. Biographer David Nokes, taking a different approach to war, notes the lack of it in Austen's work:

For most of Jane Austen's life, England was a country at war. Yet famously, her novels rarely hint at this fact. [...] Absence of war is a condition of Jane Austen's fiction much prized by modern readers [...] The temptation to view Jane Austen's chosen fictional milieu (3 or 4 families in a country village) as an accurate social microcosm of Regency England has proved irresistibly beguiling to readers willing to discover, in the pages of her novels, a lost England of innocent pride and faintly comic prejudices. (56)

What Nokes reveals here is more than just the attraction of Austen's fiction for readers, but also the conventional surface world of her novels that cloaks the author's indirect personalizations and reactions to war. War then may be outside of occasional mentions of the regiment troops or the Navy, rarely seen in Austen's novels, but the domestic world being presented is one created by the "reactionary ideology" (Johnson 2) of the Revolution. Beneath the surface of the conventionalized female image created by reactionary ideology, Austen is able to present revolutionary reaction through images of postwar nostalgia for domesticity.

This domesticity, Austen's "fictional milieu" of the everyday, does not directly display war. While her earlier novels, such as *Pride and Prejudice*, allude to war through depictions of the militia or references to the Navy, *Persuasion*, through its precise setting, appears as the most direct allusion to wartime among Austen's novels. However, even this novel is principally focused upon social themes and a love story evolving between characters during peacetime. Rather than excluding war from the narrative, peacetime

allows for a more poignant reaction to war. After living a life in which war is constant, is the norm, a year of peace provides space for reacting to and experiencing the effects of prolonged wartime. The novel's love story parallels the transition from the immobility of domestic wartime to acceptance of change, of a renewed reality, as soldiers return. It is the domestic story, then, that reveals the effects of wartime from a domestic, specifically female perspective, as peacetime forces a shift out of a reality defined by nostalgic past to reality of the present. The idealization of nostalgia, which Nokes detects even among readers of Austen, defines domestic reality of wartime. Domestically centered idealization is placed by the narrative at the novel's forefront for examination, in order to suggest the possibility of a postwar world beyond nostalgia. When referring to wartime eras, nostalgia is common, since war by nature disrupts the present world and almost invariably causes change. War in a sense causes reality, at least the reality of present, to no longer exist and recede into the past. In an attempt to maintain the past, during wartime nostalgia can create a state of stagnation and simulacra. It is then in an instance of disrupted and shifting postwar reality that nostalgia may assume meaning. The implication war has on the novel becomes more significant when considering the novel is written post-Waterloo.

Austen is not unique in her attention to the past. Humans have always been preoccupied with the past, particularly with idealizing it, as Baudrillard notes in the social turn to cinematic representations of traumatic past events, thereby celebrating the past's resurrection (43). Such media representations can create a simulacrum, a "reality" in which there is no reality, but rather a hypereality based upon signs and simulations (Baudrillard 6-7). The past, like media, can create such awareness separate from reality.

Often simply having lived or being aware of the past is not enough; one must confront it in order to truly live in reality. Austen's *Persuasion* considers the human preoccupation with the past from the first page, which describes Sir Walter Elliot's continual perusal of the Baronetage and the history of the Elliot family, until the characters' ultimate confrontation of the past, a third order simulacrum, which "masks the absence of a profound reality" (Baudrillard 6) through adherence to a past reality that only exists in memory, is recognized and broken.

Viewing *Persuasion* through Baudrillard's postmodern theory allows for a modern conceptualization of the nineteenth century novel. It also allows for a focus on interpretations of reality in the novel, which without Baudrillard might be overlooked, while still maintaining focus on the historic period of the setting. Combining the nineteenth-century novel with the twentieth century theory then ultimately allows for an emphasized realization of withstanding concerns and trials of humanity which make Austen transcendent of history and changing social norms. The characters of *Persuasion* face the trial of past rejection in order to disrupt the false reality of a second order simulacrum, defined by the past, thus allowing them to gain a second chance in the renewed present just in time for Britain to return to war.

Postwar possibilities in Austen's novel are not as centered on the self, however. In contrast to the highly personalized reaction of male poets to war and Revolution, Austen does not use first-person or confuse author with the main character, allowing for a more subtle and objective reaction. Yet the reaction of the female novelist still relies upon nostalgia and can be seen through Baudrillard's theory to create, through those idealized memories, past-formed simulacrums. In *Persuasion*, rather than using nostalgia to

project an idealized past or future, nostalgia creates a simulacrum of idealized past during wartime. It is this simulacrum, this use of nostalgia, which Austen's narrative rejects and disrupts through peacetime change. The author is using nostalgic ideals to examine the faults of the past and form a future reality separate from past idealization. Beyond the narrative, such a reaction might suggest possibilities for postwar change and renewal.

Austen began to write *Persuasion*, her final work, around the summer of 1815, which is shortly after Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, and continued to revise the work during the 'true' peacetime which follows. Austen, however, does not set the novel following Napoleon's fall, but rather within the false peace of the previous year.

Persuasion is then a novel written immediately after and in reaction to the first peacetime Austen had known since the brief period during her childhood between the American War of Independence and French Revolution. After experiencing a year of peacetime in adulthood, however, Austen creates *Persuasion's* heroine, the author's final heroine, Anne Elliot, who is able to break from simulacrum and the conventionality of revolutionary ideologies, instead of adopting them. It seems that in peacetime, near the end of her life, Austen begins to do more than highlight the conventionalities for women created by post-revolutionary nostalgia and finds hope in the possibilities of postwar change beyond the ideals presented by nostalgic remembrance.

Considering *Persuasion's* direct recognition of recent war, the novel presents itself as having wartime significance and as a contrast to the personalizations of the male Romantic poets. In viewing *Persuasion*, the precise setting separates the work from other Austen novels as being unique in its attention to time. Time, in fact, pervades much of the novel. In writing the plot strictly within the time frame of the false peace, Austen is

evoking circumstances of her recent past in order to make connections to her recent present, specifically, the victory at Waterloo, which is seen as characters Anne and Wentworth confront their pasts and become renewed in the present as the false peace comes to an end.

The novel is set during the “false peace” of the Napoleonic wars (Favret 619), but, as this historic false peace begins, the domestic peace of the novel’s characters comes to an end. The characters have long been living stagnant lives unconsciously defined by their past rejections and losses. This brief respite between wars is comparable to the invasion of history and the resurrection of “myth, chased from the real by the violence of history” during the period between the world wars and the cold war, as referenced by Baudrillard. He asserts that the violence of war “chased” myth, in the form of history, out of the reality of the war period and into peacetime, where it became nostalgically represented in cinema (43). Obviously, the early nineteenth century lacked cinematic representations; however, this attempt to retreat within historic “myth” following a time of trauma or violence is seen in the domestic level as the Navy returns from war in *Persuasion*. The novel begins in the summer of 1814, the beginning of the false peace. Concurrent with the inactive lethargy often associated with the summer season, the beginning displays the characters in retreat as they go about their lives in the stagnation created by losses and rejections during wartime. The false peace of the novel is unconsciously defined and invaded by the traumatic rejections and losses of the characters’ pasts, paralleling the worry which would prevail in a time of war. The characters’ rejections fall into two categories: deaths and refusals.

The pain of past death appears repeatedly throughout the novel. What is unique about death in *Persuasion* is that it is never observed during the action of the novel, but related by the characters or the narrator as a prominent event of the past, just as deaths, or even fears of death, occurring in war would have occurred prior to the false peace of the novel's setting. In addition, these deaths result in the loss of spouses, a commonality in wartime, from Sir Walter Elliot to Mrs. Smith, thus defining the present in a direct, as well as unconscious, way. During the early summer of the novel, all of the deaths and rejections associated with the Elliot family and their stagnant states are related. However, the most notable of such past deaths, that of Fanny Harville, is not discovered until the winter of the novel. Her death is notable, not because the reader witnesses it, but because of the deep affliction felt by her fiancé, Captain Benwick, whose grief helps Anne move out her simulacrum, and whose role is equivalent to that of a widower as he becomes melancholy and lost in the gloom of Romantic poetry. While Fanny Harville's death appears prominent due to Benwick's effusions of grief, the death of Mrs. Elliot in Anne's youth, mentioned early in the novel, is the one which most affects the main character. The loss of Mrs. Elliot weighs upon Anne's mind as she recalls that she has "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" (Austen 83). The moment Anne lost her mother is, thus, the moment she became a rejected member of her family.

Anne's memories of the past are constant reminders of her rejected status, to both herself and the reader. Her memories of Captain Wentworth are viewed by Laura Fairchild Brodie, in an analysis of widowhood in Jane Austen, as the equivalence of widowhood as

“Anne finds consolation in a widowed devotion to the past” (699). The rejection of refusal, rather than of death, may have deprived Anne of the man she loves, but she suffers from memory just as the other widows/widowers in the novel. Her widowed-like state, due to a sailor she loves being gone in the war, emphasizes the extreme effect that memories of the past have on Anne as the false peace begins.

Memories of multiple rejections are what define the period of false peace as the characters’ past remembrances construct a layer of false representation which “masks and perverts a basic reality” (Baudrillard 5), thus constituting a second-order simulacrum, which goes beyond equivalent representations, but is not yet a hyperreality. The Elliot family, specifically Elizabeth and Sir Walter, are a prime example of a perverted reality. The novel begins by detailing Sir Walter’s nostalgia over the Baronetage; “he could read his own history with an interest which never failed” (Austen 45). His preoccupation with the Elliot family’s history of wealth and position creates a reality which serves to blind him to the problems of the present. For example, it is probable that Sir Walter turned to the Baronetage as an escape from his money troubles. Distressed for money, Sir Walter looks to the more successful history of his family line and “their two confidential friends, Mr. Shepard... and Lady Russell, we called on to advise them; and both father and daughter seemed to expect that something should be struck out by one or the other to remove their embarrassments and reduce their expenditure” (52). These confidants must make the difficult decision to quit Kellynch Hall because Sir Walter looks in his mirrors (151) and through the Baronetage and cannot make the decision himself.

Using nostalgia to escape from, or even to attempt to understand, present events and losses somewhat aligns Sir Walter with male Romantic writers. Sir Walter sees only

the image of himself and his family that his nostalgic ideals form; like Wordsworth and Byron, he superimposes nostalgia upon the present. The novel's narrator, however, makes clear that Sir Walter's occupation with his own history arises from vanity, as it is "the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character; vanity of person and of situation" (47). Vanity is perhaps something prevalent in *Child Harold*, as Byron creates a self projected image, but Wordsworth attempts to avoid such obvious vanity by removing the personal pronoun from *The Prelude* even as he asks "Was it for this?" and declares himself given "A knowledge, a dim earnest of the calm / Which Nature breathes among the fields and groves" (*Two Part Prelude* I. 1 and 14-15). *Persuasion*, however, lacks authorial vanity though it links history to vanity, through the Baronetage, while making such vanity ridiculous by calling Sir Walter "a conceited, silly father" (Austen 47) and presenting the image of him gazing into mirrors placed throughout his home (151). The incorporation of comical vanity in the male character could be interpreted as an indirect criticism of the nostalgia found in popular male Romantic writers preceding Austen.

Not only male vanity is criticized, however. Elizabeth Elliot's character presents female vanity at its worst. She ignores the Baronetage book as it recalls to her the truth of the present: her age and her continued unmarried state. She is nostalgic for her fading beauty and for the idea of 'what might have been' through her former acquaintance with Mr. Elliot. Not only does vanity cause memories of former beauty to be forcibly applied to present selves, but, following Mr. Elliot's rejection of Elizabeth, by marriage to a woman of lesser class, Elizabeth Elliot becomes characterized by "the sameness and the elegance, the prosperity and the nothingness of her scene of life" (Austen 51). In juxtaposing

Elizabeth's stagnant state of life with the history of her most upsetting rejection, that rejection, and the nostalgia for the possibility of the past, becomes a definition of Elizabeth's character and situation.

As summer turns to autumn, Elizabeth Elliot comes face-to-face with her past rejection in meeting Mr. Elliot again, but she repeats the past instead of moving from it. She and Sir Walter, then, both remain in stagnation through adherence to the past as they pursue wealthy family connections in Bath. Sir Elliot maintains his book chronicling the Elliot family tree and vainly recalls his youth, while Elizabeth continues to hope for a man who rejected her. In light of their refusal to progress into a renewed present, they retreat from their economic troubles to Bath while Anne goes to Uppercross, where she encounters Wentworth after eight years apart. The past occupies all of the characters in Austen's novel, yet the narrative proceeds to separate Anne and Wentworth from such preoccupations, allowing Anne to become more aware of existing nostalgia and become renewed.

The present realities of Anne and Wentworth are initially subjected to images of their pasts. Anne once refused Wentworth's proposal, which sent him away from her and into the navy, and Wentworth, in turn, rejects Anne because "had he wished ever to see her again, he need not have waited till this time; he would have done what she could not but believe that in his place she should have done long ago, when events had been early giving him independence which alone had been wanting" (Austen 93). In other words, if Anne refused Wentworth merely on the pretext that he lacked independence, then his maintained distance from her after receiving this financial independence can only be interpreted as a denial that any attachment existed, or as a rejection of Anne. Anne

handles this rejection, as she does most things, in silence. She never mentions his name around her family, not for eight years, until his own relations enter her acquaintance, but, even so, her memories of the past are clear in her rejection of Charles Musgrove's more acceptable proposal. In the wake of Wentworth's distant rejection, "her attachments and regrets had, for a long time, clouded every enjoyment of youth; and an early loss of bloom and spirits had been their lasting effect" (67). Without Wentworth, Anne is left with only memories of the past which shadow her reality.

As is common in memory, Anne's past takes on an idyllic persona, as "no one had ever come within the Kellynch circle, who could bear a comparison with Frederick Wentworth, as he stood in her memory" (Austen 67). Her memory had created a false representation of perfection from the past, and when "the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning" (Baudrillard 6). Anne's nostalgia assumes a re-creation of a reflected, yet lost reality, one in which Wentworth is idealized. Such nostalgia created by a memory-altered reality, when the 'real' existed pre-wartime, is a result of the "retrenching" of Anne's consciousness (Young 83), or the reorganization and reduction of her reality as confined by her past pains. The character's nostalgia for the past prior to rejection and loss is not only comparable to the people of this period longing for the peace they once knew, but also to Austen's of remembrances of the false peace. All of the characters' past rejections, which create the simulacrum present at the beginning of the false peace, occur prior to the novel's start. The novel's action, then, serves to force characters to face these past rejections and disrupt the simulacrum.

The characters must move from stagnation in order to face their pasts. When Anne meets Wentworth again, the truth of the present collides with Anne's

representations, causing “the repeated bouts of vertigo and dislocation Anne suffers in Wentworth’s presence” (Favret 620). The meeting of Anne and Wentworth displaces the past, which defines the initial reality of the novel, thus causing the perverted reality, the simulacrum, to begin breaking apart. This breaking of false reality applies to Wentworth as well as Anne. His simulation allows him to appear to forget the past surrounding her rejection of him. There is no pretending in Wentworth’s actions or emotions as he shows no remaining love for Anne, for he does not merely try to make others believe in his indifference, but he believes it himself. Upon reflection at the novel’s end, he is “obliged to acknowledge –that he had been constant [to Ann] unconsciously, nay unintentionally; that he had meant to forget her, and believed it to be done. He had imagined himself indifferent when he had only been angry” (Austen 249). Wentworth’s conscious reality is a simulation of what he imagines to be true of the present. His reality is not “simply masked” (Baudrillard 3) but creates a simulation. Wentworth’s simulation additionally constitutes a simulacrum, for it acts to “threaten the difference between the ‘true’ and the ‘false,’ the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary” (Baudrillard 3) as the reader attempts to negotiate the truth and the simulations of the characters’ realities.

Then as the reality of the simulacrum that constitutes the first half of the novel begins to crack, it is clear that much of Wentworth’s reality/simulations, or rather, his thoughts, perceptions and actions, are a reaction to rejection. For example, when Wentworth describes his ideal wife, “Anne Elliot was not out of his thoughts... ‘A strong mind, with sweetness of manner,’ made the first and the last of the description” (Austen 96). He even denounces the idea of having women on ships, despite his sister’s example, because Anne’s rejection of him causes him to rationalize that women are unsuited for

naval travel. It is also possible, here, that he cannot tolerate the thought of merging his past reality, in which he was almost married, with his refuge from the pain of that past, the navy. Such a merging, even in the hypothetical, represents a break from Wentworth's simulated reality, which he cannot yet endure. Wentworth's intolerance for the meeting of past and present may also be interpreted as a representation of one returning from war, as he attempts to reconcile the present domestic world of the false peace with wartime and the past he knew before the war. Wentworth is thus trying to reconcile his memories of triumph and rejection in the present. Such a reconciliation of realities, a dissolution of a war-created simulacrum, does not come simply, and is only attained by Wentworth because the break of the simulacrum occurs gradually as characters become confused within their past-based representations of reality and the differing interpretations of that past.

Wentworth displays the fallacy of his simulated indifference when he comments upon Anne's altered appearance, causing Anne to realize that he has not forgiven her for her rejection of his proposal (Austen 95). As they were both in some way rejected, they both must face the events of the past before change can occur. Adding to the confusion of Wentworth's feelings, Anne perceives that he "could not see her suffer" (120). The contradiction created between his believed indifference and the occasional display of thoughtfulness Anne perceives merely begins his separation from the past that confines and perverts his present reality.

One way in which Wentworth continues to cling to his simulation, however, is seen in his failure to recognize Louisa Musgrove as a "false heroine" (Richardson 145). Louisa serves to delay the marriage of the main characters, and for a brief period, her

engagement to Wentworth seems almost certain, but he loves her only for her forceful nature. Such a nature is significantly in direct opposition to Anne's. However, following her accident in Lyme, Wentworth realizes his mistake in choosing a wife in reaction to his past. Anne points out his reaction when she wonders, "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;...a persuadable temper might sometimes be as much in favor of happiness, as a very resolute character" (Austen 143-144). Anne, here, pointedly compares her own character to Louisa's, setting herself up for the first time as a possible rival for Wentworth's affections. Significantly, Wentworth's reaction following Louisa's accident, of which Anne takes such thoughtful note, is, unbeknownst to her, the moment when the simulations forming Wentworth's reality finally break against the present tragedy of Louisa's fall.

Nostalgia has thus prevailed at Kellynch and Uppercross, but begins to weaken in Lyme. Nostalgia has a strong presence in Austen's novel but is ultimately presented negatively. Nostalgia is not something through which the present can successfully be escaped or the past can be altered or reasserted in the present as it was for Wordsworth and Byron. Nostalgia rather acts to replace or mask the present. The past is fully recalled and idealized to a point where the truth of the present, and future possibilities, are ignored. In *Persuasion*, nostalgia creates the stagnation which locks characters in a simulacrum. When Sir Walter looks through his family history, when Anne is living at Kellynch with the one happy memory of a man she loves and when Wentworth rejects Anne in the present, they are each consumed by nostalgia either dwelling in past memories or reacting against them. Their lack of recognition of the present world and the

resulting inability to change is presented negatively, because it keeps the novels' main protagonists from being together. Even Sir Walter and Lady Russell's nostalgia prevents the couple from marrying as their nostalgic idea of a wealthy highly-positioned Elliot family causes them to reject Wentworth for his low social standing. Until Anne can learn to separate from her family, love Wentworth for his present, imperfect self and let go of her past nostalgic image of him, she cannot break her simulacrum and move forward in the present. Wentworth similarly cannot love Anne nor finally be happy in marriage until he is able to see her as she is and not be blinded by his past rejection, which he has reshaped in memory in order to turn himself into a victim of the Elliot family. Nostalgia then acts contrary to happiness in the novel. While nostalgia still exists for the characters, it must be recognized by the characters before any resolution can be reached. Much of such recognition occurs while the characters are in Lyme.

In many ways, Lyme constitutes a turning point, from historically defined stagnation to realizations of a fully present reality. For instance, as the natural world is shifting into the winter season, the novel enters its lowest point, emotionally, when Louisa falls and the characters' internal worlds shift out of the simulacrum of the past. The most obvious way in which Lyme acts as a departure from the past is through its general novelty for the characters of *Persuasion*; there is little here to incite nostalgia. Anne and the Musgroves had never before been to Lyme, so there were no past experiences to intrude upon or form their present experience. The resulting ability to 'live in the moment' for the first time in years is seen in Anne, as she is able simply to enjoy the scenes around her, by "glor[y]ing in the sea; sympathiz[ing] in the delight of the fresh-feeling breeze" (Austen 131). Anne's countenance at Lyme, thus, shows a marked

difference from her engagement, or lack thereof, with the autumnal scenery at Uppercross, where she had to recite lines of seasonal poetry in order to gain any pleasure from the scenery. At Uppercross, Anne was still living within a created, rather than genuine, reality.

The alteration of experience affects Anne physically as well, for “the bloom and freshness of youth [are] restored to the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion” (Austen 133) while at Lyme. It is as if not only her mind, but her entire self, is beginning to emerge from the simulacrum of a past defined reality. She, ahead of the others in her progress toward present reality, represents the renewal of the coming spring and, ultimately, of the false peace. The positive change in Anne produces admiration from a passing gentleman, Mr. Elliot, which draws the notice of Wentworth; Anne’s brilliant return to present reality makes her noticeable. Kay Young describes this moment as a return to consciousness for both Anne and Wentworth:

She becomes in this momentary glance of brightness the object toward which Wentworth’s consciousness (re)turns. If the first half of the novel—“half agony”—has been about the return of Anne’s being as fully conscious... and Wentworth as the relational object that enables that representation, the second half—“half hope”—is its mirrored reflection. With Anne now present as “here,” in bloom, Wentworth surrenders to an uncontrolled shift in consciousness toward her as the chief object of his representation of longing. The surrender is assisted by the glance of the gentleman’s eye. (87)

Anne's renewed presently-conscious self draws admiration not only from Mr. Elliot and Wentworth, but from Captain Benwick, whom Charles Musgrove later swears to be besotted with Anne. However, Elliot and Benwick merely serve as a "hint of a red herring across the reader's path in the form of this alternative...with whom Anne might overcome her loss of the straying, though soon to be chastened Captain Wentworth" (Robinson 165). These red herrings serve to awaken Anne from her sufferings over the past, just as the red herring that is the false peace serves to awaken the combatants and families of war from their enduring worries and fears, renewing them for future war. The red herring characters, in terms of the novel, also show Wentworth that Anne is still worthy of attraction. She is no longer the hated being his memories had manipulated her into. These characters ultimately provide both reader and the other characters with possibilities of the future rather than the simulations of the past.

Another aspect of Lyme with no connection to the past is the Harville household. This is the only time during the novel in which Anne is introduced to new acquaintances without the influence of her father, older sister, or Lady Russell. Anne is left free to view the naval couple through her own eyes and without the colored lens of her family's perceptions, and the result is that she finds the couple to be kind and accommodating (Austen 127). The Harvilles, just as the Crofts, with whom Anne becomes better acquainted in the second half of the novel, symbolize the kind of marriage of equality that Anne will one day have with Wentworth (Lenta 170), allowing the naval couple to display a simulated future. In addition to the Harvilles, Anne's new acquaintance with Captain Benwick is vital to her recognition of the present while in Lyme. Benwick's grief reflects Anne's own sufferings of the past eight years, and, as she helps to console him,

she inadvertently consoles herself in reflecting that “she had been eloquent on a point in which her own conduct would ill bear examination” (Austen 130). Here, in speaking with a man whose grief over the past and preoccupation with the poetry of the present age place him in between the realities with which Anne is struggling, Anne begins to recognize her own fallacies in handling the past.

Crucial to awakening characters from the past and breaking the simulacrum is Louisa’s fall. In this single traumatic moment, the present jarringly transplants any remainders of the past, causing the characters to become situated in present reality. When Louisa falls from the Cobb, it is as if she falls through the last thin layer of simulation maintaining the characters’ simulacrum of the past. The distinctness of this moment is clearly displayed, for, when Louisa falls, it is “the only scene in which the narration of events take much longer to read than the events themselves would take to happen, as if the present has expanded in the rare urgency of these few pages” (Rohrbach 747). The expansion of the present allows the shift in reality to be emphasized and Anne’s strength to be seen by the other characters. Louisa’s fall triggers Anne’s rise in the eyes of Wentworth, or rather it “entails a shift in the usual relationships—between characters as well as between the position of the reader and the heroine” (Rohrbach 747), because Anne is the one person who takes charge of the situation. Anne suddenly speaks out.

Lyme marks the end of Anne’s silent passivity. During the following scenes in Bath, Anne speaks to Wentworth despite her family’s presence, when once she could not even speak his name before them. When Louisa becomes silent, Anne begins to speak. Young, additionally, interprets this scene as Louisa literally falling away from Wentworth, thus leaving “Frederick vulnerable, Frederick needing, Frederick open. Anne

fills in the open space” (87) with her commanding presence. As Wentworth’s simulacrum finally breaks, leaving him lost in the face of the tragedy which causes the break, Anne is there to offer aid, to offer a chance to pick up the pieces of his broken reality. Wentworth thus refers to Anne as the most capable among the group at Lyme (141), having seemingly forgotten his earlier criticisms of her weakness of character.

While all these changes of reality are occurring around the injured Louisa, little is known about her condition. It is later discovered that she, in her unconscious state, changed as much as the rest. The instant she fell from the Cobb and Henrietta screamed, “She is dead, she is dead!” (138), Louisa transformed. The narration of this scene considers the horror of Louisa’s brother, sister, supposed fiancé, and even her sister in law, but it gives little attention to Benwick’s reaction. Benwick is, at this point, witnessing a young woman in a death-like state shortly after the death of his own fiancée, Fanny Harville. Her accident cannot but act as a jarring collision of the grievous past he never directly experienced, with the present in which he cannot forget Fanny. This collision of incidents is both too similar and too traumatic for Benwick’s anguished mind, and so the identities of Louisa and Fanny merge in that abrupt moment of shifting consciousnesses on the Cobb. Benwick collapses the reality of past and present, much like Wordsworth, and is able to project a future reality for him and the changed Louisa. As a result of this merging of personas, Benwick helps transform Louisa during her recovery. He forms her mind into what can only be assumed to resemble the character of Fanny. The transformation of Louisa is not seen within the action of the novel, but the effects of her accident are seen on the other characters. The plot enters its lowest point, emotionally, as the now separated group agonizes over Louisa’s fate while in a state of a broken simulacrum. In

this “new” present, characters, namely Wentworth, do not yet know how to manage their present reality. Anne, however, most adept in the new reality, soon moves on to Bath, a place of renewal in the novel. With Anne and Wentworth changed, but separated, and the fate of Louisa uncertain, the novel shifts into the second volume as the characters are left to pick up the pieces of their renewed reality.

It is in Bath that winter shifts to spring, but not until Wentworth arrives and begins renewal. Young refers to this post-simulacrum period as the manifestation of the “half hope” (87) of soul that Wentworth describes in his confessional letter to Anne at the novel’s end. Picking up the pieces, hope, and a reality bereft of past-based simulations all amount to the renewed possibility for second chances. After years of stagnation and trying to ignore a past that formed their reality, characters of *Persuasion* have confronted the past in order to inhabit the present and make another attempt at the happiness they were once denied. The characters, just as others who experience the false peace, are able to break from the stagnant domestic state created by war and thus become readied for renewed battle.

Since Anne has already broken from her simulations of the past and become renewed, while living once more in the Elliot household, she grows “wearied of such a state of stagnation, sick of knowing nothing, and fancying herself stronger” (Austen 197); she moves away from the simulacrum maintained by her family. Anne spends time in Bath with the Crofts, Musgroves, and Harvilles, rather than her father and older sister. She even sees less of Lady Russell in favor of the others. At one point, she allows her plans of sitting with Lady Russell to “give way” in order to visit with Henrietta and Mrs. Musgrove (231). Separating from her family indicates that Anne’s awakening at Lyme

was no mere temporary change impeded by a return to reminders of the past, but a permanent renewal. Anne's new full consciousness to present reality strengthens in the second half of the novel. One example of Anne's continued renewal, as noted by Harris in "*Persuasion*," is the regenerative symbolism of rain, which seems to constitute Anne's meetings with Wentworth during the time of renewal in Bath. Each meeting constituted by rain, in fact, is a moment of renewed present for one of the lovers. For Anne this moment occurs the first time the two encounter one another in Bath. Here, Anne realizes her remaining love for Wentworth while the "Rain[,] at first the correlative to melancholic in *Persuasion*, becomes the agent for spring, and a mirror to Anne Elliot's renewal" ("*Persuasion*" 194). The rain, as an "agent for spring," indicates a figurative cleansing of the simulated past. The characters can then transition out of the dormant, winter-like simulacrum, kept insulated during wartime by memories of rejection, into the bright hope of a realized future, as seen when Anne first meets Wentworth in Bath and when the two finally confess to love one another. These two meetings with Wentworth are unique in that they display an openness, from both parties, to their present attachment and the hope of a future together. Ann recognizes this change in their relationship as she feels that for the first time, since their renewed acquaintance, she felt that she was betraying the least sensibility of the two...All the overpowering, blinding, bewildering, first effects of strong surprise were over with her. Still, however, she had enough to feel! It was agitation, pain, pleasure, a something between delight and misery. (Austen 294)

The description of Anne's emotions, "agitation, pain, pleasure, a something between delight and misery," symbolizes the transition from prolonged stagnation to the possibility of a second chance, from past pain to future pleasure, and thus causes

contradictory emotions within Anne. Also notable is the similarity between the description of Anne's emotion here and the way Wentworth describes his own emotions in his confessional letter. This is Wentworth's moment of renewal, also constituted by rain. After overhearing Anne speak of constancy in love, Wentworth finally gives into the love he still feels for her; the love his simulacrum of existence has caused him to forget. Of his emotions at the time of his renewed recognition he writes, "You pierce my soul, I am half agony, half hope" (245). Each lover experiences contradicting emotions simultaneously as they finally break from simulacrum and recognize renewal. For Anne this occurs when meeting Wentworth unexpectedly on a rainy day. For Wentworth it happens when hearing Anne speak of constancy. The emotions themselves symbolize their transition to renewed selves as they each stand before the object of second chance.

Before Anne even realizes the possibility of a second chance, however, Captain Benwick had already taken full advantage of his own. Anne finds out in Bath, the place of second chances, that Benwick is engaged to Louisa. Benwick's sudden engagement serves the purpose of identifying second chances in the novel on varying levels. First, Benwick receives another chance not only to marry, but, in the sense that Louisa has been transformed "into a person of literary taste," presumably to marry someone formed in accordance with his own tastes (Austen 186). Secondly, Benwick helps Louisa's transformation by reading to her recovering consciousness until it is reformed, thus giving her a second chance in life. Ironically, these levels of renewal, while still allowing Benwick to break from his past grief, also give him a new form of his previous fiancée. Benwick is renewed in the present, is consoled by the "tolerably pleasing young woman who had listened and seemed to feel for him" (186), but through coming to love Louisa in

Fanny's home and giving her the picture of him made for Fanny, Benwick still somewhat remains in the simulacrum of the past. He has neither overcome nor recognized the past, but rather supplanted his memory of one woman with the presence of another. He is unable to separate fully from nostalgia. Benwick is, though, able to end his bereavement and considerations of the past as he plans to marry Fanny. He thus symbolizes the grief rooted in wartime which is alleviated in peacetime.

Benwick's experience of a love lost in wartime and regained during the false peace displays how the losses and experiences of wartime bleed into postwar present, causing a reality shaped by war and the past. War, like the past, creates an enduring reality. Such a continuation of the past, seen specifically through Benwick, parallels the Anne and Wentworth's focal love story. Long ago in love, Anne and Wentworth, while not separated because of war, still remained separate by war, and mirror the loss and distance of a wartime couple. Caught up in his past and his love prior to war, Benwick cannot move beyond these memories, and "he must love somebody" in order to retain some semblance of the lost past (186). Similarly Wentworth is unable to live outside of the past; he cannot see any change in Anne, in reality. In reaction to this, he, like Benwick, searches for new love in Louisa. However, Wentworth is able to break from his past and his nostalgic memory of new, young love in order to view the truth of his actions. Wentworth loves Anne still, but more significantly, he loves the renewed Anne. Captain Wentworth is finally "unshackled and free" to recognize his simulacrum because Benwick's engagement frees Wentworth from attachment to Louisa (Austen 186). The moment Anne discovers Wentworth's marital freedom, she is also able to acknowledge the existence of more than just a past-free present, but a second chance for the future,

thus paralleling the second chance at victory which false peace renewal allowed. Finally, the news of Benwick's engagement indicates Louisa's second chance. It is Louisa's forceful character which causes her accident, and her post-recovery engagement to Benwick marks her extreme alteration in character as a second chance at attaining the proper "proportions and limits" of temper to be most "in favour of happiness" (143-44).

While Benwick's engagement to Louisa may serve as a second chance in multiple forms, it is often criticized for its implications upon constancy, which is an important theme in *Persuasion*, as well as a common concern in wartime as couples are separated for long periods of time. Benwick's fault is more precisely viewed as having "haste in ending his period of bereavement" (Robinson 158). Even Captain Harville, who argues on the side of men's stronger constancy, concedes, "when I think of Benwick, my tongue is tied" (Austen 244). However, the view of Louisa as a transformed Fanny Harville, at least in Benwick's eyes, counters these criticisms, for Benwick is, in his own way, remaining constant to his first engagement. The debate of constancy is thus renewed, allowing for men and women the equal ability to be constant, and lending, for the reader, more credence to Wentworth's own claim of constancy: "Unjust I have been, weak and resentful I have been, but never inconstant" (245). With these words, with the anguished letter in which they appear, Wentworth removes any final doubt of his broken simulation of indifference. At Lyme he learned the drawbacks of self will and retreated from company to consider his renewed consciousness. Then in Bath, lacking Anne's joyous recognition of present possibilities, he maneuvers, hesitantly, in the renewed present. Thus "Frederick comes to consciousness of his feelings from the outside in" (*Persuasion* 209), and, upon hearing Anne's declaration of constancy, he drops any

shred of simulated indifference which may still exist for himself, Anne, or the reader, and steps fully into the possibility of a future with Anne, of a second chance.

Wentworth's recognition of his renewal and remaining love for Anne is triggered by Anne and Harville's constancy debate, which has become a focus for many critics of *Persuasion*. In insisting that their own sex is the most constant, Anne and Harville's debate directly addresses natural differences existing between men and women. It also complicates a view of the novel's progress from stagnation to change or renewal because the characters must let go of nostalgia to attain resolution, but it is Anne and Wentworth's confessions of constancy which finally bring them together. However, in relation to nostalgia, constancy might be considered a parallel sensation, as both include strong adherence to an emotion, idea or person over time. Anne, at one point, relents that instead of one sex being more constant, perhaps they experience constancy differently, with men's being stronger and women's tenderer. Men, she says, can remain constant "so long as you have an object...while the woman you love lives, and lives for you," and women love "longest, when existence or when hope is gone" (244). Women thus are able to love without hope, and, as the events of the novel suggest, such love goes beyond nostalgia for past love, but includes a recognition of change and the present. Anne is able to remain constant to Wentworth even as he rejects her and considers engagement to Louisa. Breaking from the simulacrum and becoming renewed before the other characters, Anne maintains constancy in the present even as she recognizes a changing world. Wentworth claims to have remained constant, but it is only as he becomes renewed in Bath that he can display his continued love for Anne.

Austen appears to be displaying a constancy of women which counters the men's histories of woman's inconstancy. "Songs and proverbs, all talk of woman's fickleness" but, as Anne notes, "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" (243). It is difficult to ignore the irony in this last statement of men's literary dominance as it is penned by a renowned female author. Austen, here, seems to momentarily speak outside of the narrative, directly to address an issue of her time, rather than making indirect references through domestic narratives. Austen's indirectness, particularly in avoiding direct discussion of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, has been criticized as a conscious choice to ignore her historical present (Danta 137). However, as critic Chris Danta posits in "Revolution at a Distance: Jane Austen and Personalised History," Austen's perceived avoidance suggests "not the incapability of [the] author to engage with the world-historical events of her time, but rather her aesthetic decision to forge her own sense of history—and her own sense of historical subjectivity—out of the empirical materials of her everyday life" (140). The everyday is Austen's subject matter, and it allows her to project her own version of history, a female centered history.

Persuasion's peacetime setting then makes more sense as a reflection upon nostalgia and war than a wartime setting. War for women in England at this time was experienced domestically; the everyday still existed but in a state of stagnation as those at home were tasked with continuing or remaining constant to prewar reality. Constancy is essential in the wartime home front, as women remain constant to prewar memories of soldiers and sailors who are gone, to nostalgic memories of what was and what perhaps will be again. Constancy is dependent upon memory, upon nostalgia in this way. Peacetime is then

more domestically traumatic as the changes brought by war must finally be confronted. Constancy in wartime triumphs over lack of hope, and is eventually able to face change and the time beyond the nostalgic past. The truth beyond stagnant simulacrum must be faced, and the constancy Anne ascribes to women, which can endure without hope in wartime, can similarly continue without the simulacra. It is only the two constant lovers, then (for in the end Wentworth does proclaim constancy) who are best able to confront the truths of their pasts and change in order to gain their second chances. This time around, Anne will not be so persuaded as to refuse him, and Wentworth will not ignore her out of a sense of “angry pride” (Austen 249). This time, after eight years of living within a simulacrum defined by the past, they will take full advantage of the potential for happiness set before them, and even look confidently on toward the next battle to come.

Anne and Wentworth’s elated marriage, which ends Austen’s *Persuasion*, is referred to by Harris as “a soaring cadenza” to “the contest of constancy” (“*Persuasion*” 208) that defines the novel. While the importance of the constancy discussion to both Anne’s happy ending and gender differences of the period cannot be argued, the novel’s constancy also relates to women’s wartime role and the second chances which constancy allows in peacetime. Simply being constant is not enough to produce the novel’s end, however. The characters must face one another and the pasts which have long defined their existence. It is only by facing the past that their self-made simulacrums can be broken and their own false peace can end. Stepping into renewal and the reality of a broken simulacrum may be indicative of reentering the uncertainty of the war which parallels the period, but it is also the only manner in which change can be a possibility. The characters, in ending stagnation, necessarily must change, must be renewed. Such

renewal and rejection of simulacra, however initially painful, is the only way that characters can attain hope or happiness, the only way Anne and Wentworth can end the story they began so many years before. Nostalgia, then, is not the hope of Wordsworth and Byron, but of most prewar memories and the misery of stagnation. Hope is found in facing nostalgia in order to view the problems of the past and move forward, as Anne and Wentworth are able to do.

Persuasion is not merely the story of Anne and Wentworth, however. After years of war—the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic wars—Austen visits the time of her country’s brief respite in *Persuasion*. Looking back on this momentary peace, a collapse of past and present becomes visible, and, by way of Anne and Wentworth’s rejections, readers are able to see not only the constraining effects of rejections but of war. Harris writes, “the novel’s theme of loss and restoration reflects, I believe, Britain’s mixed feelings of desolation and relief after Waterloo” (“The History of Bonaparte” 73). While this is logical coming from Austen’s position writing the novel in 1815, why bother to set the novel in 1814 instead of directly after Waterloo? It seems more probable that the novel is reflecting exactly what it appears to: 1814. The people of this period in time, as the Navy returned and the war appeared at an end, were similar to the characters of *Persuasion*, able to face the fears and worries of the past war which had so long defined their existence. They were then able to move forward, to break the simulacrum of fear. The false peace provided a brief increase for soldier morale and readied Britain for the final battle to come; hence the final lines of *Persuasion*, “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 its

national importance” (Austen 258). Nostalgia and constancy then assume meaning in a domestic and largely female sense. Anne, in her renewed state and “mental alacrity” (258), seems to foresee the war to come, but this short domestic period in 1814 has renewed Anne, Wentworth and the defending Navy. Austen’s writing of the past depicts, rather than the results of victory, the period which made victory, and a second chance at it, possible.

The second chance, for both victory and love portrayed in *Persuasion* separates Austen’s postwar reaction from male poets Wordsworth and Byron. The poets project and recreate the past in an attempt to impose preferred images of self and of reality onto a postwar world. War caused in these male writers a deeply personal and internalized reaction, as they each examined themselves in order to make sense of, or rather reshape, a present war-altered reality. While Austen’s narrative also employs a need to assert a version of present reality, it is not a reality formed in the image of postwar past or a preferred self. *Persuasion*, rather, faces the truths of the past, as they remain in a simulated present, in order remove that simulation. Nostalgia is then used by Austen not to create but as device to demonstrate idealizations of the past serving to prevent characters from moving forward. The male poets’ reaction to war is to reassert former hopes and desires, while Austen’s is to break from these and view the postwar world as a second chance for what was once lost in the past.

Chapter 4: Rejecting Nostalgia in *The Old Manor House*

Born in 1749, Charlotte Smith began publishing her own work in 1784 with the *Elegiac Sonnets* and began publishing novels in 1788 incorporating themes ranging from sentimentality, the Gothic, and the ideals of the French Revolution. Writer James R. Foster vehemently criticizes critics' past dismissal of Smith's work in saying that they "have dealt but scurvily with Charlotte Smith, since she has been completely forgotten" and further describes the sentimental novel as it existed pre-Romantic era: it "provided the atmosphere for the Gothic, turned the attention to landscape, and was a political and ethical doctrine. Because of it, all of the women novelists at the turn of the century, save Hannah More and Clara Reeve, were in sympathy with the Revolution" (463-464). Smith's own sympathies have not gone entirely unnoticed, however. In "'A People Driven by Terror': Charlotte Smith, *The Banished Man*, and the Politics of Counter-Revolution" Stephanie Russo discusses Smith's novel *The Banished Man* (1793) as an exploration of French Revolutionary ideals "in an attempt to reconcile the optimism of the early days of the Revolution with the mayhem of the Terror" in contrast to the "unlimited support" for the French Revolution shown in her earlier novels, *Celestina* (1791) and *Desmond* (1792), which were published during the early years of the Revolution (37). Russo further argues that Smith's novels and poetry "reveal a growing and profound personal disappointment with the realities, as opposed to the ideologies, of the French revolution" (37).

Russo's insight suggests that Smith's novels, viewed together, are a progressive representation of the author's reaction to the Revolution from idealism to disillusionment. In this progression, Russo fails to mention Smith's novel *The Old Manor House* (1794), which falls somewhere in between support and disillusionment. Composed throughout

1792, both the writing and publication of *The Old Manor House* occurs during the Terror of the French Revolution, and, much like Wordsworth, Smith's ideals for the Revolution are in opposition to the Terror's violence, which results in nostalgia for former idealisms; yet Smith's novel dramatizes nostalgia for prewar reality that exists within the Rayland and Somerive families. The reality created by pre-war nostalgia constitutes Baudrillard's which only "plays at being appearance, is only a distorted pretense of reality (6). The dramatization of nostalgia in Smith's novel acts in opposition to and as a critique of nostalgic sensibilities, since it displays the degeneration of prewar conventions, essentially a loss of prewar reality. Showing such loss, however, does not break nostalgic representations as does Austen's *Persuasion*. *The Old Manor House* does not share the sense of hopeful renewal for victory found in Austen's novel at the end of reoccurring war over two decades later. Smith's novel, written around the lowest, most violent point of the French Revolution, is a reaction of uncertainty in the face of past-based conventionalities, which are maintained despite the presence of Revolution, suggesting a detrimental domestic continuation of prewar reality in Britain during wartime that Smith criticizes.

The setting of *The Old Manor House* is, for the most part, domestic. It centers on the Somerive family and a manor house in England belonging to their wealthy cousin, Mrs. Rayland. The youngest Somerive son, Orlando, is favored by Mrs. Rayland and so is often at the old manor house, where he falls in love with the orphan Monimia. Orlando secretly meets with her until Mrs. Rayland sends him into the militia at which point he enters into the American War of Independence. The narrative turns only briefly to a depiction of Orlando in war. Returning from the war, he finds Mrs. Rayland deceased,

her fortune in the hands of dishonest servants, Monimia missing, and his older brother, Philip, sick and dying after a duration in debtor's prison and a failed suit to claim the Rayland inheritance. Following Philip's death, Orlando finds Monimia, marries her, and also gains a confession from Mrs. Rayland's former servant Mrs. Lennard that serves to return the Rayland estate and fortune to the Somerive family.

Despite the present troubles of the family presented in the narrative, *The Old Manor House* begins by situating the reader in the past. The narrative provides an overview of the Rayland family history extending from a Baronet title granted by James the First (37) to the last remaining direct descendant, Mrs. Rayland, and the Somerive family, cousins barely recognized as relations. Jacqueline M. Labbe refers to this beginning in "Metaphoricity and the Romance of Property in *The Old Manor House*" as a "side-stepping [of] legal proprieties" (220), because even as Mrs. Rayland is the authoritative matriarch of the family in this microcosm of domestic inheritance, her position as such defies legal conventions of property. In short, it was an oddity in the eighteenth century for a woman to be heir and property owner. The connection between Smith's personal life and the creation of such a character has been widely noted by critics as well as Smith's contemporaries.⁴ Labbe describes in both her article on property romance and her introduction to *The Old Manor House* (2002) Smith's influential experience with the process of legal inheritance. Her father-in-law Robert Smith willed his fortune to his grandchildren and left Smith as the executor, but the inheritance remained out of Smith's reach, despite any attempts to legally obtain her children's legacy. This circumstance, as Labbe additionally notes, "informs *The Old Manor*

⁴ As Labbe notes in her 2002 introduction to *The Old Manor House*, Mary Hayes and Anna Letitia Barbauld specifically took note of the tone of Smith's persona life in her writing (17).

House...[and] could be read as validating the need for a strict male primogeniture, but that more logically, given Smith's own situation, works instead to expose the law's inability to cope with the notion of a Mrs. Rayland" ("Introduction" 18). Representing both an impossibility of female inheritance in Smith's life and the conventions which create such impossibility, Mrs. Rayland stands in a contradictory position. Her existence defies past reality even as she covets it.

Devoted to the past, "Mrs. Rayland had a peculiar satisfaction in relating the history of the heroes and dames of her family" (Smith 49), and the novel's narrator criticizes the aging woman's nostalgia as "a ridiculous instance of human folly and human vanity" (49). The novel's speaker openly recognizes the folly of living, like Austen's Sir Walter, in a representation of a preferred past. Such an adherence to nostalgic remembrance, to a point that any person living outside this remembrance is ostracized from the Rayland home, can be attributed to, as Baudrillard describes, an inability to mourn the real (18), even as society seeks to restore the real that escapes it (16). Mrs. Rayland demonstrates Baudrillard's assertion concerning nostalgia because she most wishes to restore the reality of the past as present reality changes around her, and she uses her social position to maintain a grip on the past. The post-modern presence in Smith's novel is recognized, if hesitantly, by Labbe as she argues that *The Old Manor House* is not only a cultural critique, but that Smith "uses the intangibility, the ephemerality of the literary to undermine the apparent substantiality of the culture of property" ("Metaphoricity..." 218). Viewed in accordance to Baudrillard, Mrs. Rayland's past-defined world offers is used to simultaneously present and challenge the false reality of an environment nostalgically formed amidst wartime.

Mrs. Rayland strictly maintains her representation of the past, confined to the Rayland Estate, and forces out the present world, yet present reality remains constantly at the edges of Mrs. Rayland's nostalgic world. For example, various references are made to the nouveau rich of the period, that is to say wealthy men divorced from Mrs. Rayland's antiquated conventions. Mr. Stockton fulfills such a role as he moves into a neighboring estate once occupied by Lord Carloraine. Sharing Mrs. Rayland's disdain for the modern world, Carloraine, before his death, met with Mrs. Rayland regularly, and "their whole conversation consisted of eulogiums on the days that were passed, in expressing their dislike of all that was now acting in a degenerate world, and their contempt of the actors" (68). Frequently seen leading a boisterous hunting party over the properties of the neighboring estates, Mr. Stockton is an embodiment of this 'degenerate world,' and unsurprisingly disliked by his neighbor. Roaming the edges of her estate, Mrs. Rayland stubbornly ignores his existence, even forbidding Orlando from becoming acquainted with him, but Stockton remains as a constant reminder to the reader of the division between Rayland Hall and the rest of the world, as well as the gradual antiquation of the Hall. Other references to the modern world are made through characters such as the smuggler Jonas Wilkins and Captain Warwick. The occupation of the former and the elopement of the latter stand contrary to the upstanding chivalric preferences of Mrs. Rayland. Warwick, however, straddles the present and past world divide. A part of the modern world, he is widely liked and is familiar enough with taverns and gambling houses when searching for Philip Somerive, yet Warwick also appears "like a young hero just returned unhurt from the field to recount its triumphs" (328) and depends on the inherited fortune of his uncle—a fortune which is withheld from him.

A mingling of past and present conventions suggests impracticality in Mrs. Rayland's formation of reality, and subsequently, in Orlando's view of the world, which follows Mrs. Rayland's example. Orlando shares in her representations of convention rather than the modern world known by Philip and Warwick. Bartolomeo notes Orlando's foils in the novel, saying "both Philip and Warwick function as doubles against whose character and conduct we judge Orlando's" (648). More specifically, Philip and Warwick's more lively personalities, whether they are being malicious or energetic, cause Orlando's to appear 'wooden' and flat (649). Despite their opposing personalities, Philip and Orlando are connected to the Rayland Estate. Philip depends upon its inheritance and Orlando spends most of his time on the property as Mrs. Rayland's favored relative. However, the brothers move gradually away from the Rayland Estate, throughout the narrative, and portray opposing nostalgias for that property. Philip selfishly values his imagined inheritance and lives in a simulation that the Rayland property will one day be his, and possibly that he will then become the heroic savior of the family, instead of Orlando. This simulated reality is only encouraged by spending his time with other wealthy, or soon to be wealthy, heirs such as Stockton and Wickham. However, Philip's situation in the novel is dominantly one of disappearance or estrangement. He remains in the novel's background explained by similar reoccurring phrases: "Philip was gone" (239), "he had for some time disappeared, and no one knew what was become of him" (435) or he "had again disappeared" (484). Much of this time was spent in gambling houses, imprisonment, or illness, but little of it is accounted for in detail. The only time he appeared to take action is generating a law suit contesting Mrs.

Rayland's will, but even this tapered off into nothing and is only known through a brief recount of events from Selina.

Despite Philip's more spirited personality, his lack of presence makes him inactive and often moves him from the reader's perspective while Orlando stands in the forefront. Having been fully immersed in the environment of the Rayland Estate, in Mrs. Rayland's reality, Orlando's position as the main character is a constant reminder of the pre-war conventions upheld by Mrs. Rayland. Since the brothers' realities are each formed around eventual ownership of the Rayland Estate, their realities cannot co-exist. The past, specifically the version of the past which Orlando and Mrs. Rayland value, is thus placed at the novel's forefront, and Orlando only briefly questions his pre-war values, really questions anything, when he is a soldier in America. As a soldier and as a ruined man stripped of any hope of inheritance, Orlando and Philip, respectively, are forced from the simulated reality formed by the Rayland Estate. Austen's *Persuasion* will later display breaks from simulated reality, but caused by choice. The events of Smith's novel leave the Rayland Estate, and nostalgic reality, as an impossibility for the Somerive family, so that Orlando and Philip never grow from or choose to leave their simulations. The simulation, while still desired, becomes temporarily unattainable following Mrs. Rayland's death. War, in the case of the narrative, the American War of Independence specifically, can be similarly characterized as an event which rips away past reality, leaving people of the past to yearn for it, rather than move forward. The novel then acts not merely to criticize nostalgia for the past, but to explain it, and perhaps even to suggest a necessity to consent to Revolution and accept change before Revolution can be truly successful.

The Revolution the novel endorses, here, is twofold because while the characters of the novel are affected by the American War of Independence, this past Revolution is being used by Smith as a representation of the French Revolution, which is present to her writing of the novel. The wars depicted and being commented upon are layered representations. First the American War of Independence appears dually in the heroic sentimentalities of Mrs. Rayland and Orlando and Orlando's less than heroic, almost disillusioning experience of war, yet this war is, at the same time, A representation of Smith's nostalgic memory of a Revolution that was successful and first showed her the possibilities of evolutionary idealisms. Secondly, the American War of Independence is being used to represent the French Revolution, allowing Smith to comment upon the domestic realities, specifically Mrs. Rayland's, which the French Revolution originally meant to change. Finally, the novel as whole is a representation of Revolution generally. Collapsing the past and present Revolutions which Smith has experienced, it provides a larger criticism of ruling powers and the lack of idealisms in the support of war, rejecting pre-war conventions existing prior to both wars.

Smith rejects restoration of former, essentially pre-war, reality by presenting characters who irrationally seek the past, to which the Somerive family is subject. Despite the Somerive's former rejection of conventions, occurring when Mr. Somerive married a woman below his station instead of one his Rayland cousins, the family lives in the hope that past conventions will save them. Namely, they hope that primogeniture will dictate that the Hilderbrand Rayland fortune pass to the eldest Somerive son, Phillip, or even to the youngest son, Orlando, favored by Mrs. Rayland. Smith's own battle with inheritance law is ironically mirrored here as it becomes a means of salvation, rather than

ruin, for the impoverished family. Philip is the character who holds most closely to this hope, even commenting that “the old has been, thanks to my fortunate stars, brought up in good old-fashioned notions, and knows that the first-born son is in all Christian countries the head of the house, and the rest must scramble through the world as well as they can” (Smith 58). Philip’s boasting faith in Mrs. Rayland’s ideals is taken beyond mere nostalgia for a past convention.

He creates around himself a simulated world in which his eventual fortune is assured. Befriending the wealthy Stockton, whom Mrs. Rayland dislikes, aids Philip in supporting his idea of being an heir, even as this acquaintance lowers him in Mrs. Rayland’s opinion. Then in regards to his family, his actions bring worry to his parents and after taking up the habit of gambling and soon falling into debt, Philip “had too plainly evinced, that to his own selfish gratifications he would always sacrifice the welfare, and even the subsistence of his family” (506). Even though Phillip rarely has dialogue in the narrative, the reader is given a selfish image of him by other characters’ descriptions. Even Orlando detects resentment in his brother as Orlando comments, I “am only sorry that he thinks he has cause to do me every disservice in his power” (128). Philip is thereby generally distrusted, but it is living life in the belief of a fortune owed to him, but never received, turns Philip to selfish “debauchery and excess” and ultimately “plung[es] the family into poverty and himself into debtors’ prison and a miserable death” (Bartolomeo 648-649). Adherence to past reality, and the subsequent loss of it, destroys Philip and nearly destroys his family, but Philip’s death also, ironically, allows Orlando to become the rightful inheritor of the Rayland fortune in the novel’s *deus ex machina* characterized conclusion.

The switch of fates between the brothers illustrates their contrasting characterizations. Orlando is also pulled away from the Rayland Estate when he becomes a soldier. Mrs. Rayland imagined Orland in the heroic image of a soldier and so encouraged going to war, making it less a choice for Orlando than it is part of Mrs. Rayland's simulated reality. Orlando then becomes characterized by a distorted version of the romantic hero, a role he is cast in by Monimia as well as Mrs. Rayland. For Monimia, Orlando is the first person to seek out the lonely orphan, to teach her and to profess to love her, so she views him as her savior, even though Orlando's intentions to remove Monimia from her Aunt's care never go beyond promises and possibilities. Orlando goes so far, however, as to sneak into Monimia's tower bedroom and thus occupies the role of the hero of fairy-tale ("Metaphoricity..." 222). Yet he only plays the part.

Internalizing Mrs. Rayland's projected image of him, Orlando reforms it so that he is not Mrs. Rayland's heroic knight, but Monimia's. However, he never fully embodies a hero as he deserts Monimia in going to war and becoming captive. Orlando rather distorts the heroic construction through his inaction and his stereotypically feminine characterizations. For example, he is passive by nature, never questioning his father or Mrs. Rayland, and shares with most heroines the virtues of gentleness, consideration, loyalty, and self-sacrifice (Bartolomeo 347). Orlando's failure to embody this role, as past conventions define it, reveals a critique of past nostalgia. Even when reality is shaped to resemble the past, it cannot always be the same; the past cannot be exactly replicated, especially when the past is known through the imprecise nostalgic memory of Mrs. Rayland. Her vision of reality is already distorted into an idealized past,

making true knowledge or replication of that past impossible. The matriarch is not, however, derailed from her obsessions with a chivalric past and loathing of the current world and continues to impress her reality upon her favored cousin. In one instance, while looking once more over the portraits of her ancestors, much as I will later demonstrate Austen's Sir Walter looks his volume of family history,

Mrs. Rayland had soon totally forgotten the young hero who was before her, while she ran over the names and exploits of heroes past; and, lost in their loyalty and their prowess, she forgot that hardly any other record of them remained upon earth than what her memory and their pictures in the gallery above afforded. Orlando, however, heard her not only with patience but with pleasure. In recurring thus to them when the question of his professional choice was before her, it appeared that she had somehow associated the idea of his future welfare with that of their past consequence. (238)

The novel's narrator acknowledges the dominance of Mrs. Rayland's memory in the present, as she nostalgically reforms it. Passive and obedient, Orlando is the empty vessel into which Mrs. Rayland can place all of her memories and representations and form him into her vision of the past. He becomes her hero, and he finds no problem in this, rather finding pleasure in her vision of him and in the future inheritance to which it might speak. Orlando may project his own reality, as when he casts himself in the role of Monimia's protector, but it remains a reality based upon Mrs. Rayland's own. He is unable to escape her projects because they have become his own. In consequence, Mrs. Rayland encourages Orlando to become a soldier, and, left without other means to

support himself or his family, Orlando joins Captain Warwick's regiment and leaves for America.

As a soldier, life is unchanged in the sense that Orlando merely has to follow orders; he does not even have to muster the creativity to meet Monimia and evade Mrs. Rayland. War then takes on an a systematic pattern, in comparison to the rest of the narrative, as Orlando falls into despondency (358) and thinks only of home. Labbe interprets Orlando's commitment to memory as a portrayal of volume II's epigraph concerning "heroes with baby minds" ("Metaphoricity..." 224). Labbe argues that the epigraph "could just as easily refer to Orlando's increasing frenzy over Monimia and desperate servility to Mrs. Rayland, that is, his adventures in England, as to his war-time adventures in America" ("Metaphoricity..." 224). Orlando once more distorts any romantic image of hero as war is made secondary in his fears and considerations. Only for one brief moment, perhaps a few pages in length, does Orlando consider the reason for war and ask "What all this was for? (350). The majority of his soldier life is spent thinking of home; of his past: "Orlando, during the perusal of his letter, was so entirely occupied by it, that he forgot where he was. The Hall and its inhabitants were present to him" (378). The past is always more real for Orlando than the present. He experiences his journey home as more of a war than the American War of Independence. For example, during his capture he reconciles himself to death. Afraid of torture, he says that "death appeared most desirable to him; and his great hope was that he should by death escape them" (380). Death is reconcilable here, because he will escape pain and can still die with his belief in the nostalgic reality of his home. War has not broken or taken any representations from him; his truth is perfection, and, having known this created reality,

death is acceptable to Orlando. Yet when he arrives in France and begins to near Rayland Hall, even as cold, hungry, wet and miserable as he is (396), he keeps going. He must reach the safety and comfort he remembers, but he finds his memories to be nothing more than that. The past he lived in is finally gone, taken from him. It is in the vague beginning of this realization, described above, that Orlando feels fear, not when he is captive to Native Americans, not when he believes he will be tortured or killed, but at the loss of his reality. Smith dramatizes the supplantation of present reality and war for a desired past reality, often romantic in nature. The importance these simulacric representations assume is criticized and even feared by the novel's narrator since these representations reject change and present progression, whether that change be at the hands of an American War of Independence or of the Terror of the French Revolution.

Orlando actively rejects change and recognition of the past during the war when he begins to question the reason behind war, but then almost immediately returns to worries of his family and home life. This moment of reflection is not only unique for the character, but critically noteworthy for its presence in the novel. As Orlando's thoughts drift to the disease-ridden ship and the men around him dying not as much from sickness as by the sword (354), the voice changes from Orlando's to that of the narrator, possibly reflecting the attitudes of the author. For example, in considering the dying men on the ship to America, it is mentioned "that the ministry should, in thus purchasing glory, put a little more than was requisite into the pockets of contractors, and destroy as many men by illness as by combat, made but little difference in an object so infinitely important; especially when it was known (which, however, Orlando did not know) that messieurs the contractors were for the most part members of parliament" (354). This passage not

only looks at glory ironically in comparing it to the preventable death of many soldiers, but also makes it clear, through the parenthetical notation, that the narration has moved beyond the scope of Orlando's knowledge and understanding. The speaker has moved temporarily from behind the narrative curtain, which allows for an indirect display of morals and opinions, which comment on war, using Orlando's situation as merely a jumping-off point rather than a focus. The narrator's use of the French phrase 'messieur' indicates a switch to present considerations of the French Revolution, during which the ill treatment of the people by the ruling classes being noted in the above passage is a central issue.

Following the move away from Orlando, during this brief tangent, the narrator continues in a despairing tone to pose unanswerable questions: "Merciful God! can it be thy will that mankind should thus tear each other to pieces with more ferocity than the beasts of the wilderness? Can it be thy dispensation that kings are entrusted with power only to deform thy works – and in learning politics to forget humanity?" (354). These questions, while on the surface despairing to God over the state of war, are not necessarily denouncing Revolution. The narrative, at this point, has yet to reach America and the Revolution being fought there. What is being criticized here is the violence within mankind—much like Byron's 'fire to rule'⁵—and the misused power of kings and monarchs alike. These critical questions are those at the core of Revolution (French or American). Through Orlando's experience of war, Smith is displaying the fault of the ruling state which sparked Revolution and continues to harm the everyday soldier, or citizen, to use a term of the French Revolution, with whom Smith most sympathizes,

⁵ Chapter 2 discusses the implication of these words, found in the third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, upon man's propensity for war as well as, indirectly, Byron's own desire for fame.

rather than condemning Revolution for its own sake. Smith essentially noting that those who seek betterment through Revolutionary idealisms are often those who fight and endure the costs of Revolution. This perspective can be seen indirectly to situate the fault of the Terror not upon the Revolution but upon the very same ruling class that is being revolted against, thus reaffirming the early ideals of Revolution through the novel's glance back at the American War of Independence in which these ideals were founded.

Just as suddenly as the novel stepped away from its main character into wartime discussion, it remembers Orlando and resituates the reader with his present circumstances: "Orlando, embarked in a cause of which he had hardly ever thought till he was called upon to maintain it, was insensibly visited by reflections like these; but whenever they recurred he drove them from him as much as he could, and endeavored to cherish the fond hope that all might yet be well; that Isabella, about whom he was haunted with a thousand fears, was in some of the vessels which were now all assembled in one fleet..." (354). The reader is subtly reminded of Orlando's current role as a soldier in war, and he is then almost hastily attributed with the narrator's preceding reflections and back to his heroic fairy tale role. Yet, in staying true to the character, once these reflections become Orlando's, they cannot be further contemplated, and the narration abruptly jumps back to the character's true concerns: his home, his family, the past, and 'the fond hope that all might yet be well.' Orlando remains passive even in war and is only resistant, as in this passage, to the contemplation and possibility of change, of a present ideal which he does not recognize and which contains the ability to break him from his safe past-formed reality.

The past is doubled by the novel as it is set during the American Revolution but composed during, and subsequently comments upon, the French revolution. The appearance of the American War of Independence in British literature of this period was common, certainly for Smith, and so accounts for much of the critical attention placed on Smith (the remainder characterized by Smith's use of the romance structure). Barbara Tarling, for example, in "The slight Skirmishing of a Novel writer: Charlotte Smith and the American War of Independence" discusses the role of war in Smith's novel, specifically asserting that Smith

promoted and defended her reformist agenda in response to changing events in France and increasing repression in Britain, [and] we can trace a progression from the confident optimism of *Desmond* through the anxieties of *The Old Manor House* towards the disillusion of *The Young Philosopher*. We can also see how her skirmishes against the forces of prejudice and interest are focused through an extended dialogue with one work, Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. (72)

It is then no secret that Smith supported revolutionary ideals in her writing. The 'events in France' Tarling refers to can only be the Terror, at least as far as *The Old Manor House* is concerned. Tarling equates The Terror with Britain's repressive fear of further Revolution following both America and France, suggesting that, at least in Smith's perspective, doing nothing and adhering to the past is no better than too extreme a revolution. Such dichotomies are repeatedly represented in *The Old Manor House* by Orlando's passiveness versus Philip's recklessness, Monimia's obedience versus Isabella's defiance, and war in America versus domesticity in Britain. Labbe briefly notes

the “tidy dichotomies” (72) in Smith’s work in “Narrating Seduction: Charlotte Smith and Jane Austen,” but their very tidiness appears purposeful in the reiteration of these ineffectual wartime circumstances that Tarling indicates (72). Dichotomies, as well as the dramatization of romantic and fairy tale tropes which expose them, act as the manifestation of Smith’s reactionary anxieties.

The answer to these anxieties is meant to be found in the American War of Independence, which “[Smith] considers a ‘successful’ Revolution has played itself out” (Russo 50). The recognized initiator of Revolutions during the late eighteenth century, these Revolutionists achieved their aims and thus act as a hopeful model of liberation for Smith, who has faced the legal repression of woman in British society. Tarling notes that Smith’s revulsion does not decrease her ideals (76), but at the same time recognizes a progression towards disillusionment of Revolutionary ideals in her novels. Therefore, it seems more precise to say that Smith’s belief in Revolution is harmed by the violence of the Terror, but *The Old Manor House* is her attempt to reconnect with those ideals before they were tainted by the French Revolution. The novel essential acts as a search for a ‘lost referential’ (Baudrillard 29), even as it mocks Britain’s inability to mourn lost reality which is instead represented in the present. The present becomes a conglomeration of domesticity, war, repression, idealisms, and conventionality. Smith examines these competing states of eighteenth-century Britain in order to reveal to readers the existence of past simulacrum, evidence a “need for change” (Tarling 86) and deconstruct the romantic chivalric past championed by Edmund Burke in *Reflection on a Revolution in France* (81).

Tarling notes Smith's direct response to Burke, whose 1790 essay contains a nearly Mrs. Rayland-esque sentiment which nostalgically remembers the past and criticizes the present changing world. In the context of Smith's 'skirmishes' with Burke, Mrs. Rayland, and the simulated reality she fosters domestically, adopts a larger relevance to the conventional world mourned by Burke. Through Mrs. Rayland, Smith is able to mock Burke's nostalgia and display its detrimental possibilities for domestic life in Britain. These possibilities are fully played out in the suffering of the Somerive family. Returning from war, Orlando is not honored for his position as a soldier. He does not return to the welcoming family and the home of which he dreamed—the home he nostalgically remembers as a place of salvation and safety. Orlando's need to return to this remembered home is relentless: "His impatience, however, to get to Rayland Hall, conquered every idea of present danger—and he went on, contending against the united opposition of darkness and storm" (396). Finally reaching the Hall, Orlando is met with a desolate building bereft of his love, his family, and its aged matriarch, and he feels that "an apprehension of the truth, vague as it was, was infinitely more terrible than any certainty" (400). Facing the loss of his past is more poignant and more terrifying a moment than his captivity in America, which displays the extent of Orlando's internalization of Mrs. Rayland's reality. The reality projected upon him is stronger than present experiences.

Orlando's attachment to the past and to the Hall is further noted by Labbe's discussion of Mrs. Rayland's nostalgic re-creation of a feudal system within her estate. Viewing Orlando as the vassal/knight to Mrs. Rayland's Lady, his entrance into the war emphasizes the perspective of soldiers dying for someone else's, specifically a ruling

power's, cause. Mrs. Rayland's feudal colors are even "figuratively carrie[d] into battle when she pays for [Orlando's] soldier's uniform" ("Metaphoricity 222). Even in another country, during war, surrounded by unfamiliarity, Orlando maintains his feudal role, and carries a reminder of the simulated reality he cannot fully leave behind. It for this reason that war seems to have little effect on Orlando; much like in a fairy tale construction, violence is quickly skimmed over in order to reach the happy ending. Once home again, his time as a soldier is rarely referred to or reflected upon; it seems to never have happened. For Orlando war was an extension of his feudal role in the reality of the Rayland Estate. While in America, this reality remained in his mind, so returning to the loss of this reality is what truly effects Orlando. This "loss of property" and essentially of all of the nostalgic reality which characterized the property, "results in a complete loss of identity for Orlando" ("Metaporicity..." 225). He is ripped from his simulacric reality and loses all sense of self. He is then only able to find purpose in attempting to reform this reality, to find his family and Monimia and recover Mrs. Rayland's will. Philip made similar attempts following Mrs. Rayland's death as he attempted to take legal action, but is unable to follow through, especially after Orlando's return once more usurps Philip's place as the eldest son. Philip dies when finally faced with his failure to gain the reality he once imagined for himself and redemption through the occupation of his expected role as wealthy heir.

More fortunate in his search for lost reality, Orlando uncovers, through a series of fortunate circumstances, Mrs. Rayland's true will before it was altered by Mr. Roker. Ultimately, then, Orlando is able to resurrect the Rayland Estate with himself at its head, instead of Mrs. Rayland. The main characters achieve their happy ending, but the

circumstances of attaining this end are characterized, as I have previously mentioned, by an element of *deus machina* as Orlando miraculously receives a confession from Ms. Lennard who just happened to have hidden a copy of Mrs. Rayland's original will, which the late woman just happened to write, and just happened to want revenge for her husband's rejection. This series of unlikely events does not weaken the narrative, but rather further dramatizes it and denotes the fact that Orlando is returning to a representation of past reality, essentially to a 'story' of reality told to him by Mrs. Rayland in which he persists believing.

In reforming Mrs. Rayland's created reality, Orlando even begins his own feudal-like system when he makes "the useful old military mendicant...the tenant for life of a neat and comfortable lodge in his park" as a reward for the man's services during the war (523). It is "an arrangement that gratified both the dependent and his protector" (523). The inclusion of a new dependent in the Rayland Estate brings the novel full circle, as it began with the Somerive family as dependents. Little has changed then, despite Orlando's rise to inheritor of the property and Monimia's to lady of the Hall. Mrs. Rayland's past representations still govern both the estate and its inhabitants, and the ruler/subject dynamic criticized during Orlando's passage to America still remains. The ending leaves no room for hope of any change or movement forward; there is only uncertainty of what will be the result of the current Revolution. This hopelessness in the novel perhaps reflects Smith's own uncertainty that the revolutionary ideals she believes in will ever be realized in her home country. What then is the purpose of presenting hopelessness and of reflecting on the principles and environment of the American Revolution, during the time of the Terror, and forcing characters from past characterized

conventionalities only to forget the war and return to these conventionalities in the end? Smith was unknowingly predicting France's eventual return to a monarchical rule with the narrative's ending, but this circular narrative structure also represents England's reaction to the American Revolution, or at the least the reaction Smith finds most problematic. It is, ironically, representation of representation. By showing a fearful retreat from the defeat of a ruling power and possibility of further revolution into conventions existing before the American War of Independence, Smith "expose[s] the autocratic nature of the British polity in the 1770s" and supports the ideals which initially prompted the French Revolution. Smith creates a third order simulacra and is calling for Revolutionary ideals by showing the negative outcome of living in the past, through the suffering of the characters, and the potential continuation of these ideals if no action is taken to prevent the conventional power wielded by the ruling or dominant class.

During the Revolution's Terror, Smith writes a novel which exposes a problem in her present and wonders if change through war is possible. Over two decades later, Britain has not only entered into war with French monarch Napoleon Bonaparte, but achieved victory. Writing from this time of long awaited peace, Austen portrays what Smith could not, a break from past formed reality and renewal in the present. Often compared to Smith's *The Old Manor House* by way of *Mansfield Park*,⁶ Austen's final novel, on which I will elaborate in the following chapter, is a rarely considered point of comparison; however, it provides a perspective of

⁶ Citing W.H. Magee's "The Happy Marriage: The Influence of Charlotte Smith on Jane Austen" and B. Hammond's "The Political Unconscious in *Mansfield Park*," Labbe discusses the plot and character similarities between *Mansfield Park* and the *Old Manor House*, asserting that "Smith's novel is the blueprint for Austen's" ("Narrating Seduction..." 117).

war which both counters and continues Smith's exploration of Revolution in *The Old Manor House*.

By commenting on war through a fictional narrative, "Smith transforms plot into metaphor, into representation" ("Metaphoricity..." 229). This description of *The Old Manor House* is an apt one, because representation is at the core of the novel. Mrs. Rayland is representing her nostalgic past, which in turn is represented by Orlando, all of which Smith represents for the reader. This three-fold order of representation causes the world of the novel to move through Baudrillard's first three phases of the simulacrum, from a "reflection of a profound [prewar] reality" which "masks and denatures a profound reality," through nostalgia, and finally "masks the absence of a profound reality" (5), causing the novel to constitute a third-order simulacrum. Smith presents the maintained memory of a reality which has faded, the reality surrounding the American War of Independence. Through this presentation of past, Smith seeks the ability to move forward and attain the idealisms she views as possible through Revolution. Tarling, however, asserts that "the significance of the War of Independence, Smith implies, for the American nation as well as for Orlando Somerive, resides in a transitional and unrepresentative nature that achieves a break with the past but preserves the possibility of establishing a future built on its foundations" (84). Agreeably, the War of Independence is used by Smith because it is transitional; it forces change for both America and England, but many in England rejected this change. Therefore, the transitional nature of the War of Independence is not being used in *The Old Manor House* to display domestic transition in its England, but to contrast a great lack of transition and acceptance of changed reality. I am arguing then that the characters do not ultimately break from the

past. Such a consequence of Revolution is perhaps what Smith hopes for, but it not realized, as Austen portrays, until Napoleon's defeat. The characters of Smith's novel are rather forced from their nostalgic and representative past and prove unable or unwilling to function in a new reality. The past is sought out once more. No break occurs. Writing during wartime, Smith, much like Wordsworth, is occupied by the loss of Revolutionary idealisms, which can only be recaptured by looking back. In doing so, however, Smith does not, despite her personal relationship with the theme of inheritance, make the narrative an exploration of self, but rather of war's domestic implications and its inability to compel change. Unable to find hope in the nostalgic representations of prewar England, which exist during the French Revolution, Smith's novel criticizes such adherence to past reality, therein reestablishing the reason for Revolution.

Smith's personal sympathies with the French Revolution and struggles with inheritance law have resulted in a more personalized perception of *The Old Manor House*, to a point in which the separation between the novel's author and narrator becomes blurred. In considering such interchangeability, as well as Smith's layered representation of war and reality in the novel, Smith's writing appears as almost post-modern, which Labbe notes in saying that Smith's

characters and plots are not solely representative of a moral, but rather, in their mixture, in their *metaphoricity*, to coin a term, they enact their own dependence on, and departures from, cultural mores and norms. *The Old Manor House* and Smith's other writings, anticipate the 'meta,' the style of writing aware of its own status as text, as genre. Her fictionalized self

and the fictionalization of culture create a thematics of artifice that work to underscore the constructedness of human experience. ("Introduction" 28)

Smith, in this way, presupposes the layered view of realities appearing in the work of theorists such as Baudrillard just under three centuries later. The 'constructedness of human experience' then becomes a matter of perceptions of reality and the interconnectedness of nostalgia, the past, and reoccurring war. War in this text causes a nostalgic reaction as people resist change brought by war. Nostalgic adherence to the past is then, ironically, solidified by war, even as Revolution attempts to effect change in present reality. War or rather the fears arising during war, strengthens simulacrum. This nostalgic solidity to the past is displayed by Smith's layering of war. Mrs. Rayland holds on the past before the American War of Independence, and so, in spite of war, does Orlando even after fighting in this Revolution. Orlando's reaction then reflects the nostalgic environment of the French Revolution as wartime change is resisted. Such continued nostalgia suggests a continuation of nostalgia simulacrum which is nearly impossible to break. The human creation of reality is more resilient than Revolution and its idealisms.

Conclusion: Finding the Future in Romanticism

Each day we tell stories. Relating incidents to friends and co-workers, meeting someone for the first time, and reconstructing events in memory for our own considerations are all stories which shape perceived reality. The great question of ‘who we are’ is essentially a story altered and refined over time. Concluding her discussion of the construction of the narrative self, Vice writes, “We are trying to tell things as they were, not as a good story would have them. Self-knowledge involves precisely seeing that we are not characters in stories. Our lives are messier and greater than stories and great stories transcend themselves. In order to achieve self-knowledge, we need to think of ourselves and our lives as they really are...” (108). Reaction to war, specifically to the fears inherent in wartime, occasions narrative representations of reality and a search for self-knowledge. Life, as Vice asserts, can quite often be more complicated, more nuanced and subtly more remarkable than stories; yet without stories, people would be unable to define or understand life and the realities in which they live. Wordsworth, Byron, Smith and Austen created narratives in order to discover knowledge of self and of the world as it concerns each of them postwar. Their narratives, however, did not separate themselves from their stories, as Vice advises, nor did they fully immerse themselves in story and reach pure simulacrum of postwar nostalgia, as Baudrillard’s theory predicts. Rather, the works of these authors allowed them to explore fear of a lost past, as well the possibilities of change forced by war, and ultimately to discover acceptance of post-war reality.

While stepping away from the story and viewing ‘ourselves and our lives as they really are,’ as they are in reality, as Vice advises, appears a simple concept, the problem becomes how to separate the reality from the story. At what point do the stories we tell

become reality? This question is at the base of Baudrillard's simulacrum. The pure, fourth-order simulacrum is where story and reality become indistinguishable. I think it then significant to note that of the four works previously discussed, no one reaches a pure simulacrum. They consistently remain just beyond a full and unseen replacement of reality; however, the works, when viewed chronologically with gender as a consideration, represent a progression towards 'self-knowledge' (Vice 108), or an acceptance of present reality, which mirrors Baudrillard's progression toward the simulacrum.

At the beginning of this progression, *The Prelude* reflects Wordsworth's "profound" reality, his childhood, in order to redefine that reality in an uncertain war-changed present (Baudrillard 6). The purpose of this reflection is to reconnect with former, perceivably purer, ideals through memory, rather than distort to reality. In other words, Wordsworth, instead of replacing the present with the past, connects past and present in his assertion of a continuum. *The Prelude* thus remains a reflection and a simulacrum of the first order. The second phase moves slightly further from profound reality as its reflection becomes altered. Byron's reflection of the past takes on a heroic form through Childe Harold, thus distorting past reality. Through reflection and distortion, prewar reality begins to disappear, represented instead by nostalgic memory, which serves to mask disappearance. In a wartime context, nostalgia disguises the changed present and the awareness that the past has become past. Smith and Austen recognize such masked reality in their narratives, which characterize a third-order simulacrum. The characters from both novels have been living in a stagnant past-based reality during wartime, although different wartimes, and ignore their present. In *The Old Manor House*, the narrator's criticism of the nostalgic world, as well the world's

recognized relationship to the past and to Mrs. Rayland, prevent the novel from displaying a pure simulacrum. The characters remain, however, in a simulated reality; they actively choose this reality. Austen's novel, while beginning with the same stagnation and fear of a changed present seen in *The Old Manor House*, progresses in a way that Baudrillard did not theorize. Instead of remaining in simulated reality or progressing to full simulation, *Persuasion*'s protagonists break from the simulacrum in order to accept a renewed present.

Renewal, then, is the culmination of this post-Revolution literary progression at the turn of the nineteenth century. After wartime idealisms were complicated for Wordsworth and Smith, found through a heroic image by Byron, and transformed into hope for Austen, it is only the woman writing from the perspective of peacetime who can present an image of hopeful future existing outside of remembered or recreated reality. Smith suggests that Revolution can result in an improved present through her known Revolutionary sympathies and the criticisms of domestic stagnation in *The Old Manor House*, but, perhaps due to the novel's composition during the Terror, it is more difficult for Smith to imagine a peace as does Austen.

It is still, however, significant to note that both women novelists portray an ability to step away from the past and view it more objectively than the male poets, who can only separate from the past by creating divided selves. This gender difference appears additionally noteworthy when considering that Smith and Austen are writing over two decades apart with the male poets writing in the interim. A greater yearning for future and escape of the past for women shown across time, as suggested in these works, indicates something in the past which is undesirable and worth escaping. *The Old Manor House*

and *Persuasion* both present the third-order simulacrum in a domestic setting, giving that setting a confined and inescapable atmosphere. Therefore, as the simulacrums are criticized, so are these domestic spheres often attributed to women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. War for women, then, results less in a search for the past and for self and more in discovered criticisms for past reality and hope for the future, while, for men, war causes a reassertion of the past and division of self in order to internally bridge the gaps between, perceivably, ‘what was,’ ‘what is,’ and ‘what might be.’ Ultimately, then, the ‘what ifs’ of reality encompass reaction to Revolution.

Among both male and female writers, however, reaction to war manifests as a reconsideration and obfuscation of past memory and present reality. Such a reaction to war is commonly associated with postmodernity of the twentieth-century. In relation to such postwar literature, Labbe, in discussing *The Old Manor House*, notes Smith’s writing to be somewhat ahead of its time, since “Smith translated her experience and her frustrations into art, some two hundred years before the term ‘cultural studies’ was invented” and, in addition, “*The Old Manor House*, and Smith’s other writings, anticipate the ‘meta’ more commonly associated with 20th century postmodernity (“Introduction” 29 and 28). Smith’s work, therefore, as well as *The Prelude*, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, and *Persuasion*, through their differing considerations of post-war nostalgia and reality, find a place in post-modern concerns—in literary questioning post-war—just as Baudrillard’s theory finds a place in Romanticism.

This thesis not only situates Romanticism in post-modern concerns, but also within a wartime perspective. Works across this literary movement can be viewed as reactionary, to wartime, thus adding to the varying definitions of a Romantic work. Such

a connection pivots upon war, or rather postwar reaction, thus displaying an enduring human reaction to war, to change, which has both affected and interested writers overtime. Women writers considered also demonstrate a surprising irony that manifests during war. Specifically, a socially more restricted group possesses greater foresight of future reality and signifies, despite a similar concern, a significantly different perspective of the world between genders. Considering this irony, the personal biographical details of Romantic writers affect the impact of their works. I, therefore, intend this thesis to further position Romantic works in biography and wartime as reflections of personal realities through portraying a dual perspective of past and present as well as uncertainties about the way the world is and expectations for what it could be. These Romantic writers are essentially taking up a fundamental human concern of finding personal meaning in life. War is forcing them to look back at their selves and their world in the past and present and to question the meaning and progression of their lives parallel to that of war. To question the meaning of life, while an enormous, and at times cliqued, issue, remains at the center of human contemplations, so as these writers collapse, reform, criticize, and hope, they also position their works perpetually within the scope of human understanding. The works, then, in reflecting the war-affected self, allow Romantic writers to display the inner human dichotomy of existing, to quote Austen's Captain Wentworth, in "half agony, half hope" (245).

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