

“Jane Austen as Editor: Letters on Fiction and the Canceled Chapters of *Persuasion*”

[As she was writing *Persuasion*, Austen made unusually extensive changes to the novel’s final chapters, eliminating large portions of text and heavily revising others. In this article, Katie Gemmill examines the manuscript evidence of this revision process to better understand Austen’s writing practice and theories of fiction.]

Jane Austen wrote *Persuasion* over the course of a year, from 8 August 1815 to 6 August 1816. The manuscript of the canceled chapters indicates that she began the first draft of chapter 10¹ of the second volume on 8 July, and that she finished chapter 11—originally the concluding chapter—on “July 16. 1816,” which she inscribed after the final paragraph, along with “Finis.”² Two days later, she appended an additional paragraph and similarly wrote “Finis. July 18, 1816” (xl). Austen evidently thought, however, that this ending was problematic, as she deleted a considerable portion of chapter 10, and carefully revised the remainder of it to reuse in two new chapters: X and XI in the final version. The original chapter 11 remained *Persuasion*’s conclusion, becoming the twelfth and final chapter.

Although critics often allude to the feelings of dissatisfaction that prompted Austen to make this drastic alteration, few provide a thorough justification for the changes.³ Her nephew, James Edward

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- 1 It is probable that in preparing *Persuasion* for posthumous publication, either Henry Austen or the copyeditor at John Murray converted the novel’s chapter numbers from Arabic to Roman numerals. For ease of reference, I shall denote the canceled manuscript chapters with Arabic numerals, 10 and 11, and the published chapters with Roman numerals, X, XI, and XII, a reference system that Jocelyn Harris also adopts.
 - 2 Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. Janet Todd and Antje Blank (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xl. References are to this edition, including references to the canceled chapters, which appear in an appendix (278–325).
 - 3 One exception is Jocelyn Harris, who, to account for Austen’s revisions to *Persuasion*, juxtaposes the canceled chapters with Frances Burney’s *The Wanderer*. Harris argues that Austen changed the conclusion of her own novel upon realizing that it had been distorted by some of the ideas she had absorbed from Burney’s book. Harris, “Frances Burney’s *The Wanderer*, Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*, and the Canceled Chapters,” *Persuasions* 31 (2009): 130–44.

Austen-Leigh, made the earliest—and certainly the most speculative—attempt in his *Memoir of Jane Austen*:

her performance did not satisfy her. She thought it tame and flat, and was desirous of producing something better. This weighed upon her mind, the more so probably on account of the weak state of her health; so that one night she retired to rest in very low spirits. But such depression was little in accordance with her nature, and was soon shaken off. The next morning she awoke to more cheerful views and brighter inspirations; the sense of power revived and imagination resumed its course.¹

Austen-Leigh's explanation is presumptive, claiming an implausibly thorough knowledge of his aunt's personal experience. Janet Todd and Antje Blank point out the unreliability of his account in their introduction to the Cambridge edition of *Persuasion*. He misrepresents Austen's revision process, "impl[ying] a single original followed by revision, where the manuscript shows that Jane Austen tinkered with her first draft more than once."² In contrast to Austen-Leigh, Todd and Blank avoid outright assumption in their discussion of the subject, and in their hesitancy to make any kind of inference, they do little to further our understanding of what motivated Austen to revise. They simply state that the first ending "failed to provide something she wished her book to deliver and she was pleased with the second version."³ Even Jocelyn Harris's monograph *A Revolution Almost Beyond Expression: Jane Austen's "Persuasion,"* which devotes two chapters to Austen's revision of the canceled chapters, circumvents the issue by simply quoting Austen-Leigh's justification.⁴ Kathryn Sutherland, rather than focusing on Austen's reasons for revising, aims instead to use the manuscript and the published material to paint a picture of the stages of literary creation that Austen followed with *Persuasion*, a picture that is unavailable for her other published novels.⁵

1 James Edward Austen-Leigh, *Memoir of Jane Austen*, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 157.

2 Janet Todd and Antje Blank, introduction to *Persuasion* by Jane Austen, lxxviii–lxxix.

3 Todd and Blank, introduction to *Persuasion*, lxxviii.

4 Harris, *A Revolution Almost Beyond Expression: Jane Austen's Persuasion* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 37.

5 Kathryn Sutherland, "Persuasion: From Manuscript to Print," in her *Jane Austen's Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 148–68.

In this article, I will suggest precise reasons for Austen's overhauling the end of *Persuasion* by turning to her letters on fiction to Anna Lefroy. Austen never wrote an essay on fiction to delineate her literary principles; scholars have therefore had to glean these principles from her novels and from comments in letters about her reading and writing practices. The letters that she wrote to her niece in the summer and autumn of 1814 are perhaps the most revelatory; as Richard Cronin and Dorothy McMillan note in their introduction to the Cambridge edition of *Emma*, they "represent her most sustained exercise in literary criticism."¹ At about the age of twenty, Anna started writing a novel of her own, first tentatively titled *Enthusiasm* and then *Which is the Heroine?*², which she sent in instalments for her aunt's perusal. Neither Anna's letters nor her unfinished novel are extant; as her daughter Fanny-Caroline reports, Anna burned the manuscript of her unfinished novel in 1825, and with it the possibility of comparing Austen's criticisms to their source.² The five letters that record these criticisms, however, survive. In these letters, Austen tells Anna where she has done well and where she has fallen short, and in the process, states many of her own literary standards with striking precision and definiteness. On one hand, inferring Austen's theory of novel-writing from her comments on Anna's work is problematic, as she does not explicitly articulate this theory in full. On the other hand, Austen comes closer to delineating her own literary principles in these five letters than anywhere else in her oeuvre and her manuscripts. In the absence of an unequivocal statement on fiction from Austen, a close reading of her letters to Anna is certainly a worthwhile exercise to enhance our understanding of her ideas about novelistic form.

Nearly all of Austen's advice about literary technique is based on two general principles, to which she alludes in the letter to Anna of Wednesday 10–Thursday 18 August:

Your Aunt C. does not like desultory novels, & is rather fearful yours will be too much so, that there will be too frequent a change from one set of people to another, & that circumstances will be sometimes introduced of apparent consequence, which will lead to nothing.—It will not be so great an objection to *me*, if it does. I allow much more Latitude than she does—& think

1 Richard Cronin and Dorothy McMillan, introduction to *Emma* by Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), xxiv.

2 William Austen-Leigh and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, *Jane Austen: A Family Record*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1989), 193.

Nature & Spirit cover many sins of a wandering story—and People in general do not care so much about it—for your comfort.¹

Austen sees plot as secondary to the qualities of nature and spirit in a novel. The first principle, nature, as “contrasted with art,” denotes “fidelity or close adherence to nature or naturalness”:² in other words, realism of representation in fiction. Austen’s letters contain exacting instructions to this effect. She insists that characters adhere to social customs; she also tells her niece to respect geographic and topographical verisimilitude in her descriptions, and to exercise moderation and consistency in characterization. She objects to unrealistic extremes in Anna’s characters, doubting “whether Ly Helena is not almost *too* foolish” (222) and whether “Cecilia is perhaps a little too solemn & good” (221). She admits that “Cecilia continues to be interesting in spite of being so amiable” (214), indicating her belief that extreme traits jeopardize characters’ ability to engage readers. Instead, she prefers more realistic characters with a mixture of traits, such as D. Forester, whom she likes “a great deal better than if he had been very Good or very Bad” (214). In short, Austen decrees that realism must inform everything in Anna’s novel.

Austen similarly objects to characters whose actions are erratic or unnatural in the broader context of their development. She presses Anna to maintain consistency in her characters over the course of the novel, taking issue with a marked and inexplicable shift in Susan’s treatment of a suitor: “I like her as she is *now* exceedingly, but I am not so well satisfied with her behaviour to George R. At first she seemed all over attachment & feeling, & afterwards to have none at all; she is so extremely composed at the Ball, & so well satisfied with Mr. Morgan. She seems to have changed her Character” (220). For Austen, upholding the principle of nature ensures that characters’ actions follow logically from what has come before, consistent with their previous actions and peculiar character traits.

1 Jane Austen, “Letters on Fiction,” in *Later Manuscripts*, ed. Janet Todd and Linda Bree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 218 (emphasis added). References are to this edition.

2 *Oxford English Dictionary* online (*OED*), s.v. “nature, n.,” section IV “Senses relating to the material world,” entry 13 “Contrasted with art,” accessed 13 June 2011, <http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/125353>. “In a person’s speech, writing, drawing, etc.: fidelity or close adherence to nature; naturalness; (apparent) lack of artifice. *Obs*” (usage examples for this specific definition are drawn from the eighteenth century, with one from the early nineteenth century).

To make characters' behavior consistent, Austen advises Anna to use the plot of her story as a tool. Identifying a discrepancy between Mrs. F.'s character in theory and in practice, she writes to Anna:

We are not satisfied with Mrs. F.'s settling herself as Tenant & near Neighbour to such a Man as Sir T.H. without having some other inducement to go there; she ought to have some friend living thereabouts to tempt her. A woman, going with two girls just growing up, into a Neighbourhood where she knows nobody but one Man, of not very good character, is an awkwardness which so prudent a woman as Mrs. F. would not be likely to fall into. Remember, she is very prudent;—you must not let her act inconsistently.—Give her a friend, & let that friend be invited to meet her at the Priory, & we shall have no objection to her dining there as she does; but otherwise, a woman in her situation would hardly go there, before she had been visited by other Families.
(219)

Austen wants this fictional episode to unfold in the same way that a similar situation would unfold in life, and she suggests that Anna use the plot to help her. By devising a new character (a friend) and a new event (an invitation to this friend to meet Mrs. F. at the Priory), Anna can easily eliminate the incongruity between Mrs. F.'s established traits and her behavior.

Spirit is the other quality in a novel that Austen believes can “cover many sins of a wandering story” (218) in order to maintain its high caliber. One of the ways in which she compliments Anna's novel is by telling her that “the Spirit does not droop at all” (214). The term “spirit” here denotes a quality of “liveliness, vivacity, or animation in persons, their actions, discourse, etc.”¹ Spirit is inextricably linked to a novel's entertainment value, and it underlies Austen's various comments about plot and characterization in Anna's story. Characters that are bland or flat are targets for suggested alterations; Austen mildly complains, for example, that “there is nothing to *enchant* one certainly in Mr. L.L.—but we make no objection to him, & his inclination to like Susan is pleasing” (220). Although she does not explicitly condemn him, she stresses that he is lackluster and does nothing to contribute to the story's interest. She urges Anna to shape the plot to showcase characters in a way that engages readers: “What can you do with Egerton to increase the interest for him?—I wish you cd. contrive something, some family occurrence to

1 OED, s.v. “spirit, n.,” 14b, accessed 19 July 2011, <http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/186867>.

draw out his good qualities more—some distress among Brothers or Sisters to relieve by the sale of his Curacy—something to [take] him mysteriously away, & then heard of at York or Edinburgh—in an old great Coat.—I would not seriously recommend anything Improbable, but if you cd. invent something spirited for him, it wd. have a good effect” (223–24). Playful suggestions aside, Austen talks about plot as an indirect rather than a direct source of amusement, insofar as it provides opportunities for characters to display different traits. Austen wants Anna to devise a challenge for Egerton to which he will respond in a way that shows his good qualities, engaging readers and augmenting their investment in him. Events in the plot are not always amusing in isolation; rather, they often function in relation to characters to increase the spirited tone of the novel.

Aside from nature and spirit, Austen values innovation in novel-writing. She encourages her niece to do the same, advising her not to stray into the realm of cliché when drawing characters and selecting diction. One example of this advice comes at the expense of the character Henry Mellish, whom Austen is “afraid will be too much in the common Novel style—a handsome, amiable, unexceptionable Young Man (such as do not much abound in real Life) desperately in Love, & all in vain” (222). Frustrated with tired novelistic conventions, she encourages her niece to depart from them. She cares more about seeing this break with convention occur in form than in content, making this distinction in a comment about Devereux Forester: “Devereux Forester’s being ruined by his Vanity is extremely good; but I wish you would not let him plunge into a ‘vortex of Dissipation.’ I do not object to the Thing, but I cannot bear the expression;— it is such thorough novel slang—and so old, that I dare say Adam met with it in the first novel he opened” (223). She does not object to the stock event in Anna’s plot—Devereux’s supposed descent into depravity—as much as she disapproves of the clichéd language in which it is represented.¹ Novel slang, as Austen dubs it, should be avoided.

From this short survey of Austen’s letters on fiction, some of her salient principles of novel-writing emerge. An author must draw natural characters that do not exhibit traits in their extreme forms and that behave in a manner consistent with their social standing and prior actions. She must situate these characters within a set of circumstances that are equally plausible, respecting verisimilitude in every detail from social mores to the topography of the setting.

1 The phrase “vortex of dissipation,” as Todd and Bree note, “became popular around 1770 and was indeed very widely used by novelists in the final decades of the eighteenth century” (686n36).

Only after this prerequisite of realism is satisfied can the author work within this framework to generate readerly amusement, devising spirited plot lines that may help to showcase characters' appealing qualities. All the while, concision and innovation help to sustain readers' interest and engagement.

I propose that these novelistic principles were the underlying force shaping Austen's revision of the final chapters of *Persuasion*. Having recognized that she committed many of the same errors in her own draft chapters that she criticizes in her niece's novel, she performed masterly editorial work to correct them. Her revisions can be observed on both micro and macro levels. Her editorial style is recorded, for example, in all of the minute deletions and insertions that are visible on the manuscript of the canceled chapters. By comparing deleted words with the ones that she inserted instead, one gains a picture—available elsewhere only in the manuscripts of “The Watsons” and “Sanditon”—of her writing process and an appreciation of the meticulous care that went into her linguistic craftsmanship. On a larger scale, Austen reworked entire episodes from the canceled chapters, making changes in diction and narrative form to improve them for the published version. At times, she omitted episodes from the draft and replaced them with new ones, significantly changing the plot at the end of the novel. Considering the revisions of *Persuasion* on small and large scales offers two different perspectives on Austen's editorial practices. The former approach paints a picture of the author engaged in the minutiae of writing. Both Arthur Axelrad and Harris have done extensive and careful work with this approach, often painstakingly reproducing the manuscript's deletions and insertions typographically.¹ The latter approach, which forms the methodology of my study, is a larger-scale, primarily formalist, comparison of the two versions; it provides insight into the kinds of broad changes that ultimately satisfied Austen's standards for quality in a piece of published fiction.

Although Austen deletes a considerable portion of chapter 10 of *Persuasion*, she revises its opening for chapter X. She retains the general scenario from the original—Anne's reaction following her discovery of Mr. Elliot's true character—but rewrites it in entirely new language. Chapter 10 opens with a frenzied tone: Anne's mind was “deeply busy in revolving what she had heard, feeling, thinking, recalling & foreseeing everything”—and she questions, “How to behave to him?—how to get rid of him?—what to do by any of the

1 Arthur Axelrad, *Jane Austen, Caught in the Act of Greatness: A Diplomatic Transcription and Analysis of the Two Manuscript Chapters of Persuasion and the Manuscript of Sanditon* (n.p.: 1st Books, 2003); Harris, *A Revolution*.

Party at home?—where to be blind? where to be active?—” (314). The rapid enumeration of verbs enacts Anne’s revolving mind, while the proliferation of questions shows her at a loss about how to proceed, placing her, to quote Harris, “disastrously within the convention of not just the silenced but the hysterical woman, distraught to the point of paralysis.”¹ Moreover, the repetition of dashes situates this passage within the clichéd language of sensibility fiction. Throughout the opening of 10, Austen relies on strings of descriptors, effectively diluting Anne’s experience through linguistic deferral, rather than opening it up for the reader. As the narrator states, “it was altogether a confusion of Images & Doubts—a perplexity, an agitation which she could not see the end of” (314). Anne is paralyzed and unable to interpret the situation, let alone diffuse it.

In contrast, chapter X opens with a more measured mixture of Anne’s distress at discovering Mr. Elliot’s villainy and her quiet confidence about how to proceed. She is certainly distressed, feeling “concerned for the disappointment and pain Lady Russell would be feeling, for the mortifications which must be hanging over her father and sister”; she “had all the distress of foreseeing many evils, without knowing how to avert any one of them” (230). Her inability to avert future evils, however, does not preclude her perceiving the situation calmly and clearly. Rather than witnessing Anne’s agitated thoughts, the reader instead perceives her relief at knowing the truth and her “sensations unqualified, unperplexed” with regard to Mr. Elliot’s “unwelcome obtrusiveness” and his “evil attentions” (230). The language is extreme in its own way—“There was *no longer any thing* of tenderness due to him” and “Pity for him was *all over*” (230, emphasis added)—but it is not the clichéd and dramatic sort that makes Anne appear almost hysterical in the counterpart opening of chapter 10. In X, Anne has her wits about her, devising a plan of action: “She must talk to Lady Russell, tell her, consult with her, and having done her best, wait the event with as much composure as possible” (230). From 10 to X, Anne moves from experiencing an unproductive sort of distress to a more controlled, thoughtful sort of distress, much better befitting the Anne Elliot to which the reader has grown accustomed through the novel.

These amendments reflect Austen’s novelistic principles of consistency in characterization and innovation in language. Just as she warns Anna not to let characters behave erratically and offers ways to help her to avoid doing so, she provides such solutions for herself in revising the opening of chapter 10. She converts Anne’s helplessness to controlled distress that does not preclude agency, thus

1 Harris, *A Revolution*, 48.

maintaining the outward composure and rationality that has been typical of her heroine throughout the book. Similarly, Austen rescues Anne from the cliché of the helpless heroine that she very nearly embodied in 10, adhering to her ban on all that is “too much in the common Novel style” (222).

Austen entirely expunges the middle section of chapter 10 from the new ending of *Persuasion*. As this material did not merit revision, it provides its own peculiar insight into her literary standards. This section depicts an elaborate series of events leading up to the pivotal *éclaircissement* between Anne and Wentworth, in which they finally disclose their feelings for one another. As seen in her letters on fiction, Austen condones using the novel’s plot as a catalyst to draw out specific behavior from characters. She seems to have gone wrong, however, in implementing this method in 10, as it is painfully apparent that the unfolding events’ sole purpose is to establish circumstances in which Wentworth can ask Anne about her rumored engagement to Mr. Elliot, and they can finally profess their mutual love. In a scene reminiscent of theatrical farce, Admiral Croft meets Anne in the street and immediately assumes that she is on her way to call on his wife. Despite Anne’s denials, the Admiral obtusely has already “stepped back & knocked at the door, calling out, ‘Yes, yes, do go in; she is all alone’” (314), apparently leaving Anne no choice but to comply. The scene proceeds in much the same awkward manner; the Admiral seems “crass, loud, and unobservant,” to quote Harris’s assessment,¹ and Anne repeats her feeble objections to his heedless ears. Responding to Anne’s inquiry whether Mrs. Croft is “quite alone,” the Admiral overcompensates in his replies: “Oh! yes, *quite alone*—*Nobody* but her Mantuamaker with her,” “you will find *nobody* to disturb you,” and finally the anticipated contradictory statement of “there is *nobody* but Frederick here” (314, 315, emphasis added). To clinch the necessary tête-à-tête scenario, the Admiral declares, “I cannot stay, because I must go to the P. Office” (315). The Bath post office has never been mentioned before, so his reference to it at this point in the novel seems clearly to be, as Harris puts it, “an authorial stratagem transparently designed to remove him from the scene.”² Austen’s sudden introduction of a new venue at this stage in her story is jarring, making for an uncharacteristically choppy reading experience.

Forced into these extraordinary circumstances, Anne is unable to remain calm. The Admiral smilingly alludes to having heard “strange things” of her (314)—presumably of a romantic nature—to

1 Harris, *A Revolution*, 58.

2 Harris, *A Revolution*, 44.

which she responds only by blushing. Privately, she is “left to guess at the direction of his Suspicions;—the first wild idea had been of some disclosure from his Br in law—but she was ashamed the next moment—& felt how far more probable that he should be meaning Mr. E.” (315). Harris remarks that Anne’s thought process is “alarmingly chaotic” here, picking up on the rupture in Anne’s typical composed behavior.¹ Anne’s panic also manifests itself in her erratic physical comportment, as she “*was* sitting down, but now she arose again—to entreat him not to interrupt Mrs. C.—& re-urge the wish of going away & calling another time” (315). The far-fetched chain of events that have unfolded in a short time are both forced and unnatural, and thus it is understandable that they should elicit unusual behavior from Anne. The domino effect spreads from Austen’s plot into her characterization, generating negative effects along the way.

The self-conscious quality of Austen’s writing in this section of chapter 10 betrays her awareness that events and characters’ behavior are unnatural. I am thinking in particular of her use of free indirect discourse. Elsewhere in Austen’s oeuvre, this technique produces spectacular narrative effects, allowing her to nuance her story in creative ways. Here, however, it is not so elegantly deployed. Take, for example, the passage describing how the Admiral secures the necessary circumstances for Anne and Wentworth’s climactic conversation: “the Admiral was too much on the alert, to leave any troublesome pause.—He repeated again what he had said before about his wife & everybody—insisted on Anne’s sitting down & being perfectly comfortable, was sorry he must leave her himself, but was sure Mrs. Croft wd. be down very soon, & wd. go upstairs & give her notice directly” (315). Free indirect discourse in this passage is merely an expedient, facilitating the rapid unfolding of trivial events in order to set the scene. In effect, the Admiral’s words and actions are all plot bolsters; it makes sense, then, that Austen would choose a narrative technique that allows her to relate them in quick succession, without dwelling on them. When used in this way, free indirect discourse causes a damaging side effect: it reveals to the reader that Austen is conscious of the comparative insignificance of these events in the novel—that they are only a means to an end—and as such, it amplifies the forced quality that pervades this section of 10.

Austen’s concern is even more apparent in her lapses into self-reflexive language. Anticipating readerly skepticism about Anne’s failure to extricate herself from this distressing situation, the authorial voice chimes in with a rationalization: “if she did not return to the charge with unconquerable Perseverance, or did not with a

1 Harris, *A Revolution*, 44.

more passive Determination walk quietly out of the room—(as certainly she might have done) may she not be pardoned?—If she *had* no horror of a few minutes Tête a Tête with Capt. W——, may she not be pardoned for not wishing to give him the idea that she *had*?” (315–16). Trying to convince readers of the justness of the scene by addressing them with direct rhetorical questions, Austen not only punctures her sphere of fictional realism, but also virtually admits that she is struggling to justify Anne’s actions and the scene as a whole. Austen’s control over the scene weakens as the narrator reports Anne’s anxiety about the imminent meeting with Wentworth: “among other agonies [she] felt the possibility of Capt. W——’s not returning into the room at all, which after *her* consenting to stay would have been—too bad for Language” (316). This final hyperbole is particularly surprising in a text by Austen, proponent and mistress of “the best-chosen language.”¹ Elsewhere in her works she is never wont to evade articulating complex thoughts and emotions; here, however, her struggle to do so is clear.

Like Austen’s revisions of the opening of chapter 10, her mass excision of its middle section can be traced to her desire to maintain nature—or realism—in her plot. In a letter of 1807 to her sister Cassandra, Austen dismisses Sarah Harriet Burney’s novel *Clarentine* as a work that is “full of unnatural conduct & forced difficulties, without striking merit of any kind.”² It is not surprising, then, that Austen expunges the middle section of 10, rife with events that are simply too coincidental to be plausible; she is attempting to avoid “unnatural conduct” and “forced difficulties” in her own novel. This large-scale deletion eliminates Anne’s uncharacteristically erratic behavior, and the extraordinary circumstances that drew it out of her, preserving the even representation that Austen has achieved thus far in *Persuasion*.

Having deleted this considerable portion of chapter 10, Austen devotes the body of chapter X to setting up entirely new circumstances to bring about the novel’s climax. In doing so, she takes care to round out her story in ways that she failed to do in 10. Anne and Mr. Elliot are allowed one final conversation following her discovery of his disingenuousness, in which Anne shows herself to be mistress of her own good conduct: she tries “to be as decidedly cool to him as might be compatible with their relationship, and to retrace, as quietly

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- 1 Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Barbara M. Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 31. References are to this edition.
 - 2 Jane Austen, *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 120.

as she could, the few steps of unnecessary intimacy she had been gradually led along" (232). With this added scene, Austen showcases Anne's good sense and propriety, thereby upholding readers' expectations of the heroine. Austen then reintroduces the Musgrove party, including Mrs. Musgrove, Mary and Charles, Henrietta, and Captain Harville. This added plot element effectively sets the stage for Austen's stunning scene at the White Hart; it also provides readers with final access to these secondary characters, all of whom would otherwise have fallen by the wayside in the second half of the novel. It creates continuity between the two volumes, helping to satisfy Austen's own decree to avoid circumstances in novels that are "nothing to the purpose" or "which will lead to nothing" (221, 218).

The respective endings of chapters 10 and XI mark the long-awaited *éclaircissement* between Anne and Wentworth. Understandably, the moment of revelation between the two lovers is considerably different in the two versions, as each stems from a vastly different set of events. The initial scenes of each version share the same premise—reconciliation—but none of the same words or phrases. The version in 10 fits clearly within the tradition of eighteenth-century sensibility fiction, teeming with feeling that eludes the characters' powers of speech. While at first Anne's words are "un-intelligible" (317), at last she somewhat stammeringly denies the Admiral's report that she is engaged to Mr. Elliot. Wentworth then gives her a look with "something more than penetration in it, something softer," which "her Countenance did not discourage" (318). Despite having depicted the scene effectively as an intense moment in which Anne and Wentworth communicate without saying a word, Austen's self-consciousness seeps through the narrative as she explicitly states it to be so—"a silent, but a very powerful Dialogue" (318)—betraying her anxiety about its effectiveness. A rapturous reunion ensues with "a hand taken and pressed," followed by Wentworth's cry, "Anne, my own dear Anne!—bursting forth in the fullness of exquisite feeling" (318). As Todd and Blank note, "Austen may ... have thought that, in her reliance on nonverbal exchanges in such an emotional work, she was too close to the sentimental novel she had burlesqued in her youth and to Burney's *The Wanderer*, ridiculed in her 'Plan of a Novel.'"¹ Moreover, she may have recognized that the few words she does deploy—especially Wentworth's rather hollow-sounding exclamation—smack of the clichéd lexicon of sensibility, qualifying as "such thorough novel slang" as she objects to in Anna's work (223).

For the *éclaircissement* in chapter XI, Austen cuts these clichéd elements and reinstates her almost unfailingly rational and composed

1 Todd and Blank, introduction to *Persuasion*, lxxxii.

heroine. To facilitate this change, she locates the scene in the public sphere with all its inherent social constraints, in contrast to chapter 10, set in the Crofts' sitting room. In full view not only of Charles Musgrove but also of Bath's Union Street and all of its amblers, Wentworth does not address Anne, but "only looked," while she "could command herself enough to receive that look, and not repulsively" (261). Far differently from Anne's struggle to command herself in 10, followed by her shared looks with Wentworth—"on his side, Supplication, on her's acceptance"—and culminating in his trite burst of "exquisite feeling" (318), their reunion in XI occurs seamlessly, barely causing a ripple in the narrative. The focus of the scene shifts from displaying raw feelings in 10, to keeping this private emotional experience safely concealed from public view in XI. Austen achieves this shift partly through diction, choosing words that emphasize propriety: Anne and Wentworth walk silently, with "a most proper alacrity, a most obliging compliance for public view; and smiles reined in and spirits dancing in private rapture" (261). The moment of *éclaircissement* at the end of XI represents more of a denouement than a climax for Anne; all uncertainty evaporates, and instead of being overcome with feeling, she adheres to her usual mode of conduct, basking in the joy of her reunion in an appropriately controlled, measured manner.

The remainder of chapter XI—in which Anne and Wentworth re-examine together the circumstances leading up to their reunion—is based on original material from the ending of chapter 10 that Austen revised and expanded. It provides one of the only opportunities in the author's oeuvre to witness her process of transforming a skeletal draft into stylistically realized prose. Evidently, there were times when Austen got it right on the first try: a handful of passages in XI match their counterparts in 10 word for word, such as the passage reporting the evolution of Wentworth's thoughts about Louisa Musgrove, and the passage in which Anne gently remonstrates with Wentworth for failing to realize that she would be less susceptible to persuasion now than she was eight years ago. Notwithstanding these unaltered passages, the majority of the material in the end of XI is expanded considerably from 10, with additional details contributing in various ways to the new version's realism. In 10, the narrator's description of Anne and Wentworth's reunion is terse: "They were re-united. They were restored to all that had been lost. They were carried back to the past, with only an increase of attachment & confidence" (318). Pithy yet hyperbolic, the version in 10 depicts Anne and Wentworth as secure in the idealized realm of their renewed love. In contrast, Austen tempers her representation of the reunion in XI

with subtle reminders of life's inevitable uncertainty: "There they exchanged again those feelings and those promises which had once before seemed to secure every thing, but which had been followed by so many, many years of division and estrangement" (261). Austen acknowledges the problematic fact that the lovers have already exchanged all of these promises before; Anne and Wentworth, though happy, are still in the realm of real life, in which a promise is no guarantee. Austen then qualifies this statement with a healthy dose of optimism: "they returned again into the past, more exquisitely happy, perhaps, in their re-union, than when it had been first projected; more tender, more tried, more fixed in a knowledge of each other's character, truth and attachment; more equal to act, more justified in acting" (261). Though life is neither perfect nor predictable, Austen situates her heroine and hero firmly enough in their mutual respect and understanding to have a strong chance for happiness. In doing so, she heeds her own advice and proves herself to be a proponent of moderation rather than extremes in novel-writing.

Austen similarly adds nuance and realistic detail to Wentworth's character at the end of chapter XI. In chapter 10, the narrator provides a short account of Wentworth's feelings for Anne: "[her character] was now fixed on his Mind as Perfection itself—maintaining the just Medium of Fortitude & Gentleness; ... he had never ceased to love & prefer her, though it had been only at Uppercross that he had learn't to do her Justice—& only at Lyme that he had begun to understand his own sensations;—" (319). Austen returns to this foundation in XI, polishing it to produce more elegant, fluid prose, and expanding it to humanize Wentworth:

He persisted in having loved none but her. She had never been supplanted. He never even believed himself to see her equal. Thus much indeed he was obliged to acknowledge—that he had been constant 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; and he had been unjust to her merits, because he had been a sufferer from them. Her character was now fixed on his mind as perfection itself, maintaining the loveliest medium of fortitude and gentleness; but he was obliged to acknowledge that only at Uppercross had he learnt to do her justice, and only at Lyme had he begun to understand himself. (262)

In 10, the narrator reports terse, hollow statements of constancy on Wentworth's behalf, while in XI, the same statements are fleshed out

to show his understanding of his own folly. The fact that pride and anger prevented him from admitting his fidelity is characteristic of human nature; that he can acknowledge it is less common, demonstrating an admirable degree of humility and self-knowledge on his part. The effect of this revision is twofold: first, it makes Wentworth more appealing for his ability to be accountable for his faults, contributing to readers' enjoyment; second, it justifies his behavior earlier in the novel, helping to maintain continuity throughout the work.

Aside from adding detail to sharpen the novel's realism, the change that Austen makes most frequently in this section is transposing passages of free indirect discourse into direct speech.¹ Although this particular kind of revision requires few changes in wording and phrasing, the scope of its effect on the prose is remarkable. Note, for instance, the simplicity of the following alteration:

He found that he was considered by his friend Harville, as an engaged Man. The Harvilles entertained not a doubt of a mutual attachment between him & Louisa—. (319)

becomes

"I found," said he, "that I was considered by Harville an engaged man! That neither Harville nor his wife entertained a doubt of our mutual attachment. I was startled and shocked." (263)

Here and elsewhere, a small change in narrative mode makes an extraordinary difference in the prose's potential to generate amusement for readers. Not only does the added direct speech create a change of pace, increasing the momentum of the prose, but it also amplifies the scene's immediacy by removing a layer of mediation. The spoken words put the reader in seemingly more direct contact with the characters and their newly formed intimacy; the impression of Anne's interacting with Wentworth is strong, generating satisfaction and enjoyment after the long period of anticipation leading up to their reunion. Moreover, by using direct speech Austen gives Wentworth the opportunity to state, from his own perspective, that he felt both "startled and shocked" that Harville considered him to be an engaged man. Austen performs similar conversions of indirect to direct speech throughout this passage, contributing considerably to the liveliness and energy—in short, the spirit, to use Austen's own term—of this section of *Persuasion*.

1 My thinking in this section is indebted to the fine discussion of Austen's narrative conversions in Harris, *A Revolution*, 52–53.

In revisiting the foundation that she laid for this scene in chapter 10, Austen takes care to complete in chapter XI various narrative arcs introduced early in the novel. In 10, the narrator reports that “before they parted at night, Anne had the felicity of being assured in the first place that—(so far from being altered for the worse!)—she had *gained* inexpressibly in personal Loveliness” (318–19). This statement has a hollow ring in light of the devastating comment that Wentworth made in volume 1, subsequently reported to Anne by Mary: “he said, ‘You were so altered he should not have known you again’” (65). Not only does Wentworth’s profession of constancy in the finale of 10 detract from his genuineness, but it also unsatisfactorily bypasses Anne’s feelings on hearing it, given that she had formerly endured “silent, deep mortification” to learn that he thought her so drastically changed. In XI, by contrast, Austen qualifies Wentworth’s profession in the context of his earlier comment. Wentworth’s statement—“to my eye you could never alter” (264)—gives Anne pause for reflection: “Anne smiled, and let it pass. It was too pleasing a blunder for reproach. It is something for a woman to be assured, in her eight-and-twentieth year, that she has not lost one charm of earlier youth: but the value of such homage was inexpressibly increased to Anne, by comparing it with former words, and feeling it to be the result, not the cause of a revival of his warm attachment” (264). Allowing Anne this moment of reflection that is absent in 10, Austen effectively forgives Wentworth his “blunder” and reinforces some of Anne’s best qualities: her understanding and her generosity of spirit. Austen simultaneously guards against having circumstances of seeming consequence in her novel that ultimately lead to nothing.

Collectively, the manuscript and published chapters of *Persuasion* provide a number of avenues by which to gain insight on Austen’s novelistic technique. Certain parts of the manuscript that she eliminates entirely from the final version represent the kind of writing that she felt she could not transform to satisfy her standards. The body of chapter 10 fits under this category: it departs from realism in its reliance on clichéd language and plot paradigms, and it is full of implausible events that elicit not only inconsistent behavior from characters, but also self-conscious writing from Austen. Her palpable effort to justify characters’ actions is an indication that this section of 10 simply fails to satisfy her professed priority of nature in novel-writing. Her purgation of various elements in this section is, in itself, a critique of tired novelistic tropes. The new set of plot events that she devises in chapters X and XI helps her to increase depth and consistency in characterization, to build continuity between volumes, and plausibly to establish the necessary circumstances for Anne and

Wentworth's reunion. In contrast, the parts of the manuscript that Austen expands and polishes for the final version represent the various ways in which her genius operates when she goes back to flesh out the foundation that she has laid in her draft. The ending of XI belongs to this category: its polished language and increased volume of direct speech add to the prose's liveliness, and its supplementary material thoughtfully wraps up storylines and character arcs. In her letters on fiction, Austen articulates her stringent novelistic standards in theory, to assist Anna in a mass-revision of her novel-in-progress. The canceled chapters prove that Austen applies the very same rigorous standards to her own rewriting practice.

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