## *‘A first return to the sea’ in Jane Austen’s* Persuasion

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Accepted version of essay that appeared in *Essays in Criticism* 64 (2014).

At the end of the first of the two books of *Persuasion* (1817), Anne Elliot, her sister Mary, and her brother-in-law Charles Musgrove, together with Charles’s conspicuously eligible sisters Louisa and Henrietta, visit Lyme Regis on an impulse after hearing that Captain Wentworth’s friend Captain Harville has made a home there for the winter. In *Persuasion*, by far the largest part of the action takes place at Kellynch Hall (Anne’s father’s estate) and Uppercross, or at Bath. Lyme is, in this regard, a diversion, but it is a central one, since the events of the visit reverberate throughout the remainder of the novel. Lyme is the scene of Louisa Musgrove’s famous headstrong ‘jump’ from the Cobb, the medieval jetty that forms the harbour at Lyme. Louisa’s accident initiates not only a drastic change in her temperament, but also provides an opportunity for Anne to impress Wentworth with her ‘strength and zeal, and thought’.[[1]](#endnote-1)

It is here, then, that both Anne and the reader are made to begin to look forward to the reunion between Anne and Wentworth with which the novel concludes. This very structure of reunion is of course what makes *Persuasion* unusual among Jane Austen’s novels: whereas, say, the preceding titles *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815) depict the process by which two people gradually come to realise their mutual affection, *Persuasion* begins belatedly, years after the more familiar procedure has been tried unsuccessfully. From the outset, Austen’s lead characters are alienated not just from each other, but from the forms of development traditionally offered by the romantic plot of a novel. Anne Elliot’s estrangement from Frederick Wentworth is especially painful because, having once rejected him, it is impossible to return to a time prior to this calamity. *Persuasion*, that is, is a novel concerned with the way in which a new beginning might take the form of a recurrence, which is why Gillian Beer describes itas ‘a book about a longed-for and impossible return’ in her recent introduction for Penguin Classics.[[2]](#endnote-2)

This paper argues that it is not incidental that key episodes in this ‘longed-for and impossible return’ occur by the sea: the sea offers Austen the means to test ways in which an apparently static relationship, like the one between Anne and Captain Wentworth, can in fact become a launching point for renewal or reacquaintance. The seaside at Lyme marks the point in *Persuasion* when repetition and variability begin to be thought of as possible complements. Therefore, the sea functions not only to supply crucial elements of plot and context, but also to suggest a way of thinking through the novel’s central problem: how a return can be more than simply a reiteration, the ‘revival of a former pain’ (p. 30). To explore this thought, I concentrate on three instances in which apparently settled views (which often take distinctly un-metaphorical form) become instead opportunities for narrative development, and argue that this process occurs with particular frequency when Austen or her characters think of the sea. Anne’s first look at the sea is the precursor to a series of ‘looks’ that emphasise her changing appearance and hint at the development of the novel’s plot; Anne and Benwick’s conversation about poetry, brought on by ocean views, turns into a prescription for narrative prose; and finally Admiral Croft’s odd reaction to a printed seascape establishes a pattern of interpretation the enables Anne to imagine an alternative future. Emma has never seen the sea, but in *Persuasion* all eyes are fixed upon it.

I am not unique in my focus on the sea in Austen; a number of critics have traced the sea’s appearance through her novels. In *Maritime Fiction: Sailors and the Sea in British and American Novels, 1719–1917*, for example, John Peck devotes a chapter to ‘Jane Austen’s Sailors’. Tim Fulford sets Austen in the surprising company of Captain Marryat and Lord Nelson’s most famous biographer, Southey; these three are all thought of together as romancers of empire.[[3]](#endnote-3) *Mansfield Park* has formed the centre of an expanding discussion of ‘Jane Austen and Empire’, in Edward Said’s phrase. Alternatively, it has been read as a story of ‘naval ambition’, as in *Jane Austen and the Navy*, where Brian Southam shows that Austen possessed a fine and accurate knowledge of the Georgian Navy in which her brothers served, and, like Fulford, repositions her books as the counterparts to the novels of naval heroism written early in the nineteenth century. Approaching the subject from a different angle, Monica F. Cohen draws attention to the navy as a promoter of, as Austen puts it in the last words of *Persuasion*, ‘domestic virtues’.[[4]](#endnote-4) John Mullan highlights an erotic licence of seaside holiday-making that we see in, say, Emma and Mr. Knightley’s seaside honeymoon, or Lydia’s less salubrious escape to Brighton with Mr. Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), while Gillian Mary Hanson goes so far as to find such seaside carnivalesque in Louisa’s leap from the Cobb in *Persuasion*.[[5]](#endnote-5)

I have no quarrel with critics who have suggested that Austen writes about the sea in *Persuasion* with clear knowledge of British Navy, or with a witty eye to the habits of early nineteenth century holidaymakers. The approach taken by Fulford or Southam both crucially releases Austen from the drawing room, and detects a welcome precision of historical reference in her work. Mullan and Hanson, in drawing attention to the seaside as a legible nineteenth century locale, remind the reader of the tendency marginal counter-narratives have of being shuffled off to a conspicuously marginal landscape in Austen’s novels. However, I would suggest that, in *Persuasion*, Austen did not intend only to point out the problems with medical bathing any more than she meant exclusively ‘to write a determinedly moral-boosting novel, a story designed (with an eye on the sailor brothers) to show the Navy in its best light’.[[6]](#endnote-6) On the contrary, this essay takes stock of the fact that Austen bears topicalities like these in mind in *Persuasion* without necessarily settling on one ‘of which the sea is the chief emblem’, to use Nina Auerbach’s phrase.[[7]](#endnote-7) By comparing the way Austen treats such topics in her novel, it is possible to trace patterns in the way they are deployed. *Persuasion* is a novel that lingers about the seaside, and its business with the sea is expressed, not only by the meticulous deployment of historical fact and allusion, but also by a sort of structural fascination. Austen finds in the sea examples of the way in which what seems at first to be an unchanging vista or a prospect can occasion narrative prospects.

If Austen uses the sea to suggest flux and permanence in imaginative contact, she resembles many other nineteenth century writers both Romantic and Victorian. Jules Michelet’s typically poetic work of natural history, *La Mer* (1861), voices the belief that ‘the element which we describe as fluid, mobile, and capricious, does not really change; it is regularity itself’.[[8]](#endnote-8) This pattern can be turned several ways. When the Ancient Mariner goes to sea, it is not long before he meets the ‘Night-mare Life-in-Death’, and is forced to go on living, though bound to past mistakes, much like Anne, who ‘wished the past undone’ as if it were a stubborn knot (*Persuasion*,p. 28). Tennyson’s Princess Ida thinks in a characteristically exacting vein of ‘No rock so hard but that a little wave / May beat admission in a thousand years’, where the relentlessness of the line’s metre is made to beat out a vindicating admission from all hearers.[[9]](#endnote-9) Darwin’s thoughts take on a comparable pattern, though a different tone, when he writes to his sister to say that his feelings about the voyage aboard the *Beagle* are as unrelenting as ‘little waves’ beating out ‘all the doubts & hopes that are continually changing in my mind’.[[10]](#endnote-10) In a treatise on ‘The Representation of Water’ in 1863, Professor Ansted writes that ‘the phenomena of waves’ are marked by ‘variety without end’.[[11]](#endnote-11) This is perhaps why Byron found himself able to think of the sea as ‘endless, and sublime – / The image of Eternity’ in spite of its changeability: ‘Calm, or convulsed – in breeze, or gale, or storm’.[[12]](#endnote-12)

While these examples dramatise a tension between permanence and flux, in others repetition and recurrence are *structuring* principles that attend the sea. Repetition with difference colours much of Byron’s most famous writing about the sea. He returns over and over again to variations on the ‘dark-blue sea’ in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, for example. In the first canto, we have not only ‘Fair Cadiz, rising o’er the dark blue sea!’, but also ‘ye dark-blue waves!’; while in the second, Byron opines, ‘He that has sail’d upon the dark blue sea, / Has view’d at times, I ween, a fair full sight’.[[13]](#endnote-13) In 1814, the year in which *Persuasion* is set, Byron touched this theme again, beginning *The Corsair* by casting his mind

O’er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,

Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,

Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,

Survey our empire, and behold our home![[14]](#endnote-14)

Stuttering inexpressibility often characterises the sublime, of which the sea is a familiar Romantic exemplum. And yet, the distinction between awed stillness and mental brittleness can at times seem rather fine: Byron’s rhyming of ‘sea’ and ‘free’, which returns in both *The Corsair* and *Childe Harold*, forces itself on the poet with a kind of inevitability that works against the sense of the lines, and seems to bespeak something other than a mind at liberty. The sea seems at once to hinder Byron’s capacity for poetic invention, as he loops back to earlier formulations, and to be imaginatively inexhaustible: it is an image that loses none of its power however often Byron recurs to it.[[15]](#endnote-15)

In his late autobiography *Præterita* Ruskin declared that he had had ‘no “first sight” of the sea’.[[16]](#endnote-16) (His phrase recalls the moment in *Persuasion* from which I take my title, and which I discuss at length below.) In a passage that combines absolutely new and comfortably worn-in forms of experience, Ruskin describes a trip he took at the age of three aboard a small boat: ‘I might as well have been ashore; but I grew into a sense of ocean, as the Earth shaker, by the rattling beach, and lisping sand’. Cultural memory influences a private one, since growing into a ‘sense of the ocean’ is for him a process whereby classical allusion takes on personal significance: ‘the Earth shaker’ is Poseidon’s epithet in *The Iliad*. Ruskin goes on to say that, until he reached the age of forty, he has been in the habit of spending ‘four or five hours every day in simply staring and wondering at the sea’, an occupation that joins stillness and the investigative energy of curiosity, just as wonder itself both whets the appetite for mystery and marks the place where one must simply stop and marvel. Even with the advantage of hindsight he writes of the practice as being at once happily concluded and strangely inconclusive: he regrets ‘wasting all that priceless youth in mere dream and trance of admiration’, while at the same time admitting that ‘it had a certain strain of Byronesque passion in it, which meant something’ – what that ‘something’ might be is, of course, only ‘certain’ insofar as that word too, as Ruskin uses it, licenses a degree of uncertainty.[[17]](#endnote-17)

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A good example of how Austen accomplishes a comparable balancing of the static and the dynamic can be found in a letter she wrote describing her own visit to Lyme in 1804. I will discuss this letter in detail as a test-case of Austen’s structural as well as thematic interest in the sea, before moving on to examples from *Persuasion*. In her letter, Austen passes over the topics favoured by the critics I have mentioned above – the navy and seaside recreation – without pausing. Instead, she constructs a small narrative that carefully measures restraint and repetition against the possibility of release. On the morning of 14 September 1804, Austen bathed in the sea. She wrote about her swim to her sister Cassandra, who had gone East down the coast with her brother Henry and Eliza, his wife, to the more fashionable resort at Weymouth in hopes of seeing the Royal Family. Towns like Weymouth and Ramsgate, where her brother Frank Austen was stationed in 1803, did not meet her approval.[[18]](#endnote-18) Charles Sprawson has written brilliantly of the development of seaside swimming resorts in England which, ‘ever since George III had set the mood by swimming off Weymouth to the accompaniment of a chamber orchestra’, were a characteristic feature of the English coastline.[[19]](#endnote-19) However, Austen declared Weymouth to be ‘without recommendation of any kind, & worthy only of being frequented by the inhabitants of Gloucester’, and wrote definitively of an acquaintance who had considered settling at Ramsgate: ‘Bad taste!’.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Austen did, however, enjoy Lyme; 1804 was probably her second visit. Her letter to Cassandra includes gossip about a ball (‘had I chosen to stay longer [I] might have danced with Mr Granville, Mrs Granville’s son – whom my dear friend Miss Armstrong offered to introduce to me – or with a new, odd looking Man who had been eyeing me for some time, & at last without any introduction asked me if I meant to dance again’), and wryly disparages her own skills as a housekeeper in Cassandra’s absence.[[21]](#endnote-21) She comments on a new appointment for one of her sailor brothers, Charles, aboard a sloop, and is annoyed at her Aunt’s habit of referring to it as a frigate. She tells how she walked ‘for an hour on the Cobb’, with Miss Armstrong, a new acquaintance, whose ‘Sense’ she praises (though she fails to find ‘Wit or Genius’ much in evidence). Showing the seaside holiday as a meeting-place for a wide range of experiences, Austen happily moves from one subject to another; she assigns roughly the same weight to the glances of her ‘odd looking Man’ as she does to an (unsuccessful) attempt to have some furniture repaired.

The sea itself proves to be the only thing capable of arresting the momentum of Austen’s prose. She returns twice to the fact that she had swum in the sea, the second time in a postscript where she remarks that she had enjoyed the sensation so much that she fears she may have ‘staid in rather too long’.[[22]](#endnote-22) In light of this verbal return, her qualm about staying too long might be a response to her inability to stop herself dwelling too long on the sea in writing, just as she found herself unable to resist staying too long physically immersed in it. The postscript as a form often plays a double role of this kind, artificially and superfluously extending a letter past its putative close, representing the absolute urgency of saying one thing more. Yet it is essential to note that Austen’s postscript is worked more intricately than most, because she finds a way of saying something new by repeating what she has already said. The erotic energy stored up and put aside earlier in the letter when she remarks that, ‘had [she] chosen to stay longer’ she might have danced with Mr. Granville, is symbolically released by her extended stay in the water. ‘Stay’ returns in a new form as ‘staid’, both a considered judgement of her earlier reserve, and a representation of the way in which, at least in writing, a new meaning might be drawn from the same kind of thought or expression upon its recurrence. If Austen thinks half-regretfully that had been overly ‘staid’ at the ball, she breaks that habit of restraint when she allows herself to linger on another occasion. The sea offers Austen more than an excuse to speak about frigates and the pleasures of the Cobb; it provides a way of indicating to Cassandra that the looks and understandings of the ball have stayed in her mind, just as they persist in the inflection of her voice, even beyond the time when she has ceased speaking about them explicitly.

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As I have said, Lyme and the Cobb return in *Persuasion*, and the first glimpse the party from Uppercross has of the seashore, as well as the scenes surrounding this moment, are my first set of examples from the novel. The sea allows Austen to expose difference in what seems at first familiarly predictable. While Austen goes on to draw attention to the ways in which views may shift and change, she begins the seaside passages at Lyme by emphasizing the reliable sameness of seaside vistas. Glancing at the ‘romantic’ sea cliffs, the narrator of *Persuasion* considers that ‘many a generation must have passed away since the first partial falling of the cliff prepared the ground for such a state, where a scene so wonderful and so lovely is exhibited, as may more than equal any of the resembling scenes of the far-famed Isle of Wight’ (p. 89).

The narrator’s diction, leading up to the party’s visit to the shore, modulates between a well-worn Romanticism and the stock enthusiasm of a guide to British seaside resorts. Austen shows ‘the happiest spot for watching the flow of the tide’ and assures us that ‘a very strange stranger it must be, who does not see charms in the immediate environs of Lyme’ (p. 89). A work of popular nonfiction like John Feltham’s *A Guide to all the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places* (1815) might proceed in much the same vein: Feltham explains that ‘Lyme, upon the whole, may perhaps be regarded, when compared with the other sea-bathing places, as one of the most eligible, and best adapted, for answering the various purposes for which it has, for some time past, been the rage to make annual excursions to the coast’, and recommends visiting the Cobb, where ‘the violence of the tide’ can be observed in safety, and one can meditate on the ‘*levelling* principles of waves’.[[23]](#endnote-23) Feltham’s pun, which turns roguishly upon widespread concerns about political ‘levelling’, encodes a prevalent worry about the way in which the unvaried motion of waves might produce equally predictable responses in visitors to the shore.

Like Ruskin, Austen is interested in the way in which the sea encourages us to see. When she describes the party from Uppercross’s first glimpse of the seashore, as in the letter describing her swim, she is intent on showing the ways in which the sea provokes those who visit it to ‘linger’. In *Persuasion*, it is the ‘gaze’ in particular that is captured and held. If Austen’s novels are in general conspicuously verbal, the sea provides a context in which the other senses, and sight in particular, can be given emphasis:

The party from Uppercross passing on by the now deserted and melancholy looking rooms, and still descending, soon found themselves on the sea shore, and lingering only, as all must linger and gaze on a first return to the sea, who ever deserve to look on it at all, proceeded towards the Cobb […]. (p. 90)

The tone of the passage is ambiguous; the extent to which Austen approves of such a response to the sea is unclear. They may ‘linger and gaze’ perfunctorily,‘as all must linger and gaze’, but equally they could be thought to be duly enthralled to the sublimity of the view. It turns out, however, that the particular emphasis Austen places upon the ‘gaze’ here is preparatory to a more closely structured scene of observation, an intricate series of looks, which themselves prefigure key contours in the novel’s unfolding plot. If Austen begins by drawing the reader’s attention to the perceptions of an impersonal eye, she goes on to call its preeminence into question by shifting emphasis to the ‘looks’ of individual characters. A claim about the unchanging demands of the seaside upon the percipient changes, through a variation in stress, into a claim about the mobility and subjectivity of appearances. Austen’s emphasis falls on the join between what appears to be a permanent aesthetic truth and the shifting way such apparent certainties operate on the individual eye or mind.

Anne and Henrietta begin their second day in Lyme, by walking down to the seashore where they are soon joined by Louisa and Wentworth. Ascending the steps from the beach, the as yet unknown Mr. Elliot’s eye is ‘caught’ by Anne’s face (p. 97). She feels that she has discerned a certain amount about him in this single glance: he is, she considers, a ‘gentleman, (completely a gentleman in manner)’ – an important prevarication given that Mr. Elliot turns out to be a gentleman in little more than manner. Regardless, it is instantly obvious that he ‘admired her exceedingly’. Indeed, the narrator concurs that Anne ‘was looking remarkably well’, though it is partly the looks of others that account for the change: ‘her very regular, very pretty features, having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion, and by the animation of eye which it had also produced’ (p. 97). Austen is, in this instance, delicately ambiguous about whether ‘it’ refers to the wind, Anne’s beauty, or to the eye’s animation, which makes it impossible to be confident about whose eye is animated in the previous sentence, Anne’s or Mr. Elliot’s.

All this causes Wentworth to ‘[look] round at [Anne] instantly’, with a ‘glance of brightness, which seemed to say, “That man is struck with you, – and even I, at this moment, see something like Anne Elliot again”’ (p. 97). From here on, much of Anne and Wentworth’s renewed flirtation is carried on in this way. Take this later scene, at a concert later in Bath, when Anne, fluttered by ‘thoughts, with their attendant visions, which occupied and flurried her too much to leave her any power of observation’, is nonetheless observed in conversation with Mr. Elliot by a jealous Wentworth (p. 175). She looks for Wentworth, who has been pointed out by her father:

Anne’s eyes had caught the right direction, and distinguished Captain Wentworth standing among a cluster of men at a little distance. As her eyes fell on him, his seemed to be withdrawn from her. It had that appearance. It seemed as if she had been one moment too late; and as long as she dared observe, he did not look again: but the performance was recommencing, and she was forced to seem to restore her attention to the orchestra and look straight forward. (pp. 177–78)

The choreography of the gaze that Austen gives us here is prefigured by the series of exchanged looks at the seaside in Lyme. These looks capture in miniature the love triangle that drives the remainder of the novel’s plot, both identifying its main actors, and hinting at the tangle of silent misapprehension that must be unpicked before the novel can happily conclude. That Wentworth should turn to ‘look round at her’ at Lyme, in the context of Anne’s return to ‘something like’ herself (a judgement that the narrator leaves hovering between Anne and Wentworth, assigned conclusively to neither), prefigures the more decisive return to affection and full understanding with which the novel concludes.

The drama of looks that Austen gives us depends upon a conspicuous ambiguity: as I have said, it is left unclear whether Anne’s ‘looks’ are improved by the sea breezes or by the combined ‘looks’ of her admirers. It is an ambiguity aided by context. *OED* usage suggests that the seaside first came to be seen as a place ‘resorted to for health or pleasure’ in the late eighteenth century.[[24]](#endnote-24) However, as early as 1782, the mindlessness of holidaymakers who ‘agree, / With one consent, to rush into the sea’ proved laughable to William Cowper, one of Austen’s favourite poets, whose inexorable rhyming of ‘agree’ and ‘sea’ is itself a parody of social agreement.[[25]](#endnote-25) Indeed, the habits of the holidaymaker became the object of easy satire in Austen’s fragment, *Sanditon* (1817), begun only five months after *Persuasion* was completed. In *Sanditon*, Austen always links her characters to the sea with a mocking tone. Mr. Parker, for instance, is a mirror image of *Emma*’s Mr. Woodhouse. While the latter opines that ‘“the sea is very rarely of use to any body. I am sure it almost killed me once”’, Parker is convinced that sea air might be a positive help to anything, even his sprained ankle: ‘A little of our own bracing sea air will soon set me on my feet again. Depend upon it, my dear, it is exactly a case for the sea. Saline air and immersion will be the very thing. My sensations tell me so already.’[[26]](#endnote-26) Mr. Parker, however, resembles Woodhouse insofar as he is cartoonish, unalterable. Like a figure in a pantomime or a Punch and Judy Show, Mr. Parker can be knocked down as often as one likes, and simply set on his feet again.[[27]](#endnote-27) Austen’s joke about his ‘sensations’ is funny precisely because, unlike Anne Elliot, for example, he seems to have none.

The ways in which *Sanditon* would have developed can, of course, only be speculated upon, but its treatment of the sea in the early chapters is in marked contrast to *Persuasion*. Early in the latter novel, Anne hopes to develop ‘a cheerful confidence in futurity’, a change that will require reversal of the usual order of things: ‘She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older: the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning’ (p. 29). At Lyme, however, for the first time, such a sequence begins to seem like a possibility. The novel signals this in part, as I have shown, by its willingness to embellish a pictorial ‘look’, a picturesque seaside tableau, into a series of looks that intricately replicate the dynamics of attraction and misconception that comprise the novel’s main theme and plot. But it also signifies this shift by making Anne herself seem less resolutely static.

We are told from the very beginning of *Persuasion* that ‘an early loss of bloom’ has been, not only the ‘lasting effect’ of Anne’s persuadability, but a permanent consequence. Anne herself feels that she is ‘blighted for ever’ (p. 91). As Mr. Parker would attest, sea air and seaside holidays are one nineteenth-century cure-all, and the representative of such a viewpoint in *Persuasion* is Henrietta, who is particularly taken with the notion of the sea’s beneficial effects on the body: ‘Oh! yes, – I am quite convinced that, with very few exceptions, the sea-air always does good (p. 95). The sea air, she continues, had ‘been of the greatest service to Dr. Shirley, after his illness, last spring twelvemonth. He declares that […] being by the sea, always makes him feel young again’ (p. 95). By contrast, Sir Walter and Mrs. Clay object to the Navy on the grounds of its unwholesome effects on the body and on one’s looks: ‘The sea’, in Mrs. Clay’s opinion, ‘is no beautifier, certainly; sailors do grow old betimes; I have often observed it; they soon lose the look of youth’ (p. 21). However, perhaps surprisingly, such claims are precisely what the rest of the novel will set about disproving – not only because the sea restores Anne’s youthful look, but also because Wentworth is brought to look at her as he did when they both were younger.

The sea’s effect, I should like to suggest in conclusion to this section, is deliberately difficult to determine. Henrietta’s scene-setting medical prattle, the sense that the sea air may undo the effect of years, establishes an atmosphere wherein the changes occurring primarily *within* Anne and Wentworth, the subtle motions of jealousy and affection in each of them, can be connected to external factors like effects of saline air on the body. The connection between the way Anne’s looks change at the seaside, and the way Anne appears to Wentworth as he begins to recognise that he still loves her, is subtle and ambiguous. Aspects of seaside visiting that, in *Emma* and *Sanditon*, generate satire and static characterization, in *Persuasion* offer Austen the means to make fine discriminations. Toward the end of the novel, Anne inwardly affirms ‘the absolute necessity of seeming like herself’ (p. 223), a wish for personal soundness that simultaneously acknowledges a growing awareness that the self may be less determinate than one might think (at the outset of the novel, say). Though she is repeatedly referred to as ‘only Anne’, the reader is made aware that this need not imply that her feelings or her appearance are static (p. 7). Thus, when Wentworth’s seaside looks are made to suggest that he sees ‘something like Anne Elliot again’, the reader understands that, by visually joining sameness and difference, Wentworth sees Anne precisely as she would hope to be seen.

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The unanimous sensibility that has the party from Uppercross lingering and gazing at Lyme ‘as all must linger and gaze on a first return to the sea’ finds narrative purchase in another thread of the Lyme plot in *Persuasion*. Wentworth’s friend, Captain Benwick, who goes on to become Louisa’s husband, is at first drawn to Anne. When they go walking along the shore and on the Cobb, after their initial meeting at Harville’s, he repeatedly returns to Anne’s side. He is quiet and morose, ‘rather too piano’ as Admiral Croft says, still recovering from the death of his fiancée, Fanny Harville, the previous year while he was at sea (p. 161). The seaside in winter seems ‘exactly adapted to Captain Benwick’s state of mind’ (p. 91) – an arrangement that Anne finds easy to understand. Anne, who feels her life to have been indelibly coloured by loss, sympathises with Benwick, though she tells herself that ‘he has not, perhaps, a more sorrowing heart than I have’ (p. 91). Benwick is an avid reader (one of Harville’s ‘ingenious [domestic] contrivances’ has been to build Benwick a shelf for his books), and his bond with Anne is strengthened by a shared love of literature: another site at which repetitions and rehearsals might yield something fresh.

Anne’s own family exhibit a philistine indifference to literature. The only book Sir Walter ever reads is the Baronetage, which he regards as ‘his own history’ (p. 5). When Charles Hayter is found by the Musgroves with ‘some large books before him’, they are ‘sure all could not be right, and talked, with grave faces, of his studying himself to death’ (p. 76). Prior to the Lyme episode, when Anne and the Musgroves had gone walking, poetry serves to mark her loneliness: ‘Her *pleasure* in the walk must arise from the exercise and the day, from the view of the last smiles of the year upon the tawny leaves and withered hedges, and from repeating to herself some few of the thousand poetical descriptions extant of autumn’ (p. 78). In Benwick, however, Anne finds someone whose feelings are equally ‘glad to burst their usual restraints’ (pp. 93–94). They enjoy speaking together, in particular, of Walter Scott and Byron, and arguing over the respective merits of *Marmion*, the *Giaour*, and others.[[28]](#endnote-28)

In *Sanditon*, Austen converts conversations like Anne and Benwick’s into comedy. ‘Do you remember’, murmurs Sir Edward to Charlotte, ‘Scott’s beautiful lines on the sea? – Oh! what a description they convey!’. Though Charlotte cannot remember any, Sir Edward persists:

He began, in a tone of great taste and feeling, to talk of the sea and the sea shore – and ran with energy through all the usual phrases employed in praise of their sublimity, and descriptive of the *undescribable* emotions they excite in the mind of sensibility. – The terrific grandeur of the ocean in a storm, its glassy surface in a calm, its gulls and its samphire, and the deep fathoms of its abysses, its quick vicissitudes, its direful deceptions, its mariners tempting it in sunshine and overwhelmed by the sudden tempest, all were eagerly and fluently touched; – rather commonplace perhaps – but doing very well from the lips of a handsome Sir Edward, – and she could not but think him a man of feeling – till he began to stagger her with the number of his quotations, and the bewilderment of some of his sentences.[[29]](#endnote-29)

The bewilderment of Sir Edward’s sentences is matched by Austen’s own. The piled punctuation, the abundant dashes, produce a self-extending syntax in which one idea flows from and modifies retrospectively those that precede it. His thoughts may be traced to the busiest shelves of the Sanditon Circulating Library: ‘the truth was that Sir Edward whom circumstances had confined very much to one spot had read more sentimental novels than agreed with him’. His talk is a disordered accumulation of clichés that parodies the aesthetics of the sublime, while matching the limitlessness of the sea. The broader contours of *Sanditon* suggest that,for Austen, there may be a worrying slippage between such ‘commonplaces’ of expression, and the degradation the seaside itself has undergone since becoming a ‘public place’.[[30]](#endnote-30)

In *Persuasion*, however, literary allusion is for Anne a matter of slight incredulity mixed with welcome release. As Anne and Benwick walk along the shore, the reader is told that ‘Lord Byron’s “dark blue seas” could not fail of being brought forward by the present view’ (p. 101). The reference to Byron is made to appear independent of either Anne or Benwick; neither character, but instead ‘the present view’, calls it up. (We might consider it peculiarly apt, given the inexorability with which Byron himself returned to the phrase.) This unfailing allusion is the closest Austen comes to describing what she means when she says that the party from Uppercross linger ‘as all must linger and gaze on a first return to the sea’. However, what for Byron is a deeply inhuman space, tolerating no ‘shadow of man’s ravage’, returns in Austen as both as commonplace and a matter of common understanding.[[31]](#endnote-31)

Here too, however, Austen is determined to oppose a view that tends toward inertia to alternative models that privilege development. Indeed, Anne connects poetry with a kind of emotional stagnancy she deems unhealthy. She records that Benwick

shewed himself […] intimately acquainted with all the tenderest songs of the one poet, and all the impassioned descriptions of hopeless agony of the other; he repeated, with such tremulous feeling, the various lines which imaged a broken heart, or a mind destroyed by wretchedness, and looked so entirely as if he meant to be understood, that she ventured to hope he did not always read only poetry. (p. 94)

Novels, she thinks, might be more to the purpose, and ‘she ventured to recommend a larger allowance of prose’ (p. 94). In particular, she suggests works by ‘moralists’, and ‘memoirs of characters of worth and suffering […] calculated to rouse and fortify the mind by the highest precepts, and the strongest examples of moral and religious endurances’ (p. 94). Unlike in *Sanditon*, where Austen scorns sentimental novels and Romantic poetry equally, in *Persuasion* she suggests the remedial influence of prose narrative upon minds morbidly locked into the same patterns of regret. Against Benwick’s tendency to ‘repeat’, Anne opposes a model of endurance, calculated to ‘rouse’ the somnolent mind, feeling herself ‘emboldened to go on’ (p. 94). Such an undertaking – ‘to go on’ – combines a quality of endurance with a capacity to change, a double meaning which, I suggest,preoccupies *Persuasion*.

Anne and Benwick have a vocabulary in common, but Anne and Wentworth have plotted their lives according to a common landscape. The ready recollection of verses describing the sea reflects not just the popularity of Byron’s poetry, but also Anne’s private history, which has caused her to focus on certain lines in particular. Having given her advice, Anne admits that she has not followed the recommendations she has made to Benwick, and has ‘been eloquent on a point in which her own conduct would ill bear examination’ (p. 94). She has dwelt on the sea for years as an armchair traveller and habitual reader of ‘navy lists and newspapers’ before she sees it for the first time (p. 29). While Anne ruminates on the ill advice and ill judgement that led to her estrangement from Wentworth, his own conversation returns to the substance of their separation when he talks to the Musgroves. The significance that Anne draws from Wentworth’s words has little to do with the specifics of his stories. Instead, she focuses on the way in which he organises his recollections around the break between ‘before’ and ‘after’ that the sea marks: ‘“*That* was in the year six;” “*That* happened before I went to sea in the year six”’ (p. 59). To ‘go on’ is advice Anne is finally able to take, but this is brought about according to certain patterns of recurrence. In their first conversation since leaving Lyme, Anne immediately assures Wentworth that she ‘should very much like to see Lyme again’ (p. 173). He cannot believe that she should wish to return to such a scene of ‘horror and distress’, but she assures him that ‘when pain is over, the remembrance of it often becomes a pleasure’ (p. 173). When she and Wentworth arrive at the seashore together, then, they linger not only ‘as all must linger’, but also in a way peculiar to their recollections.

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The process of substituting narrative possibility for established views is undertaken at other points in the novel, as my final example demonstrates. Admiral Croft, chuckling and shaking his head, protests to Anne about the picture he sees in a print-shop window in Bath. In a scene that does not take place by the sea, Austen replicates parameters for thinking about the look of the sea that she has deployed earlier. The pattern of interwoven change and constancy I have discussed has the potential to come ashore:

Did you ever see the like? What queer fellows your fine painters must be, to think that anybody would venture their lives in such a shapeless old cockleshell as that? And yet here are two gentlemen stuck up in it mightily at their ease, and looking about them at the rocks and mountains, as if they were not to be upset the next moment, which they certainly must be. I wonder where that boat was built! (p. 159)

It has been suggested that Austen had in mind as the original of this picture Turner’s painting *Lyme Regis, Dorsetshire: A Squall* (*c*. 1812); her publisher John Murray produced a print of it in 1814.[[32]](#endnote-32) Turner’s picture shows the bay at Lyme in muted hues, the beach dotted with a few bathers and a man fishing, a sublime head of cloud blowing in while a boat heels crazily over, heading toward the surf and the viewer. Part of Croft’s difficulty with the print involves what he sees as its lubberly disregard on the part of the artist for the fine points of shipbuilding. This sort of finicky passion for accuracy in naval matters is of a piece with the fastidiousness Austen shows in her letter to Cassandra, where she insists on differentiating between a frigate and a sloop. And, in fact, Croft’s fussiness is fairly typical of nineteenth century attitudes to the depiction of ships in visual art. Ruskin, for instance, thought he ‘never saw the ship drawn yet which give[s] me the slightest idea of the entanglement of real rigging’. He dares his reader to ‘take what scale you choose, of Stanfield’s or any other marine painter’s most elaborate painting, and let me magnify the study of the real top on proportion, and the deficiency of detail will always be found equally great’.[[33]](#endnote-33)

More striking than Croft’s criticism of the little boat’s construction is his inclination to appreciate the picture in narrative terms. Just as the scene of seaside looks I described above is developed along narrative lines, Croft perceives the print, not as a representative scene, but as a complex and unfolding event. From the picture, Croft attempts to draw conclusions about prior occurrences (‘to think that anybody would venture their lives’), and is motivated to look ahead to a probable future (‘upset […], which they surely must be’). Kate Flint has discussed the Victorian partiality for narrative painting, a taste that can be traced back to eighteenth-century illustrators like Hogarth, and that gave relish and legibility to moral works like Holman Hunt’s *Awakening Conscience* (1853) or Augustus Egg’s *Past and Present* (1858).[[34]](#endnote-34) Paintings like these were designed to be decoded in terms of their careful arrangement of symbolic objects. For example, Egg’s painting, the first part of a triptych depicting the decline of a fallen woman, includes in the background a reproduction of Clarkson Stanfield’s *The Abandoned* (1856), a painting of a partially overturned shipwreck adrift in stormy seas. The relationship of the inset painting to the work as a whole is that of metaphor (a shipwreck stands for the wreckage of a Victorian home), calculated to reinforce by analogy the painter’s message. Austen deploys her own inset marine picture; it is not, however, designed to be interpreted in the same way as Egg’s. Any sense that Anne’s life might have taken a course similar to that of the little craft shown in the print (Croft asks where Anne is ‘bound’ [159]) is offset by the Admiral’s pragmatic inclination is to treat the picture as if it were continuous with the world he inhabits. Just as Anne is said to have lost her ‘bloom’ and ‘changed’ irreversibly in the twelve years since Wentworth last saw her (p. 144), but is then shown ‘having the bloom and freshness of youth restored’ (p. 97), a picture that might lend itself to static misreading is approached in such a way as to emphasise versatility of interpretation. Croft’s style of reading permits him to regard the image as if it were in the process of unfolding, as a site of imaginative possibility rather than settled significance.

Austen treats Croft with friendly irony, and the inclination may be to take his pronouncements about the print with a grain of salt. However, in the pages that follow, the narrative finds that perception, inclined toward narrative inventiveness, even when grounded in a misprision like Admiral Croft’s, can be as telling as fact. Walking down the street away from the shop with the Admiral, Croft takes Anne by the arm. An acquaintance, Sir Archibald Drew, passes and mistakes Anne for Mrs. Croft: ‘look he sees us; he kisses his hand to you; he takes you for my wife’ (p. 160). In an earlier scene, Anne has felt herself conspicuously excluded from the little community of sailors: ‘“These would have been all my friends” had she married Wentworth, was her thought; and she had to struggle against a great tendency to lowness’ (p. 92). Wentworth’s sister, the Admiral’s wife Mrs. Croft, provides a foil, highlighting the tragic nature of Anne’s position with her jokes about being one of those ‘poor sailors’ wives’, and having ‘crossed the Atlantic four times, […] been once to the East Indies, and back again’, while affirming that ‘the happiest part of my life has been spent on board ship’ (pp. 65–66).[[35]](#endnote-35) Harville later explains the feeling of leaving loved ones behind in terms Anne both readily understands and feels herself painfully excluded from: ‘“Ah!” cried Captain Harville, in a tone of strong feeling, “if I could but make you comprehend what a man suffers when he takes a last look at his wife and children, and watches the boat that he has sent them off in, as long as it is in sight, and then turns away and says, ‘God knows whether we ever meet again!’”’ (p. 220). Indeed, it has been little noted that Anne assumes, in many respects, a role that would have been familiar to Austen’s first readers from countless broadside ballads: that of the wife left ashore.

As Southam says, ‘that “last look”, of sad parting and fond farewell, is a recurrent theme in the poetry of the sea and it made its way onto the poetry and prose of the period and was the subject of many prints’.[[36]](#endnote-36) However, after having taken a ‘last look’ (the phrase appears only twice in the novel) at the print-shop window, Anne finds herself on the Admiral’s arm. Evidently, Anne makes a good likeness of a sailor’s wife, and her looks (both her appearance and the way she perceives things) encode this possibility. Thus, in the context of this novel, a ‘last look’ proves to be an opportunity to look again, a twice-repeated phrase that hints at the way in which Anne feels her identity to be split. Her sense of how to respond to the Admiral’s lark encodes this division: ‘as she was not really Mrs. Croft’, she concludes, ‘she must let [Admiral Croft] have his own way’ (p. 160). Because Anne cannot match Mrs. Croft’s bold decisiveness, she allows the Admiral to go on pretending that she is his wife, a compromise that sounds distinctly like having one’s cake and eating it. It is, as we have seen, Anne’s repressed wish that her ‘way’ might be something like Mrs. Croft’s way, and this episode helps both Anne and the reader to entertain this idea as a real possibility. Indeed, in the conversation that follows, Croft reveals to Anne that Louisa is to marry Benwick, not Wentworth as Anne had feared. Hence Austen is careful to match the renewed hope that Anne may herself become a sailor’s wife like Mrs. Croft with the practical affirmation she has just been given, in the form of Sir Archibald’s misapprehension, that she might suit the role after all.

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*Persuasion* is a novel that typically reveals its characters and tensions by the use of carefully constructed tableaux and telling detail; what Austen refers to as ‘thoughts, with their attendant visions’ (p. 175). I have suggested that the seaside at Lyme is crucial to Austen’s novel because it enables her in various ways to model change through constancy. At the seaside in Lyme, an intricate economy of looks and understandings both drive and prefigure developments in the novel’s plot. *Persuasion* had, until this point, explored the painful consequences of past mistakes, and brooded over the notion that they might be irreversible. In the context of the seaside, however, a landscape imaginatively inhabited by a counterfactual narrative in which Anne had not been persuaded to refuse Wentworth, a second youth and a second chance begin to seem like real possibilities. It is a strength of Austen’s novel to attribute this development ambiguously both to the curative properties of the sea and to the changing perceptions of the characters she sends there.

Austen models interpretive strategies that draw narrative from views that, in other novels, generate only the static recitation of Romantic cliché. Anne and Benwick’s conversations about the sea’s representation in literature do not replicate ocean views, but instead suggest tactics of response. That the narrative force of prose should be given priority at Lyme over the more fixed rhythms of poetry suggests the way in which Austen’s novel goes about ‘restoring the past’ in spite of initial fears that this will prove impossible.

And, finally, vision is given a narrative twist in the scenes at the print shop in Bath. Admiral Croft’s odd habits of interpretation, which privilege a picture’s capacity to be read in terms of narrative over whatever meaning it may generate by metaphor, are duplicated in the scene that follows, which centres on a misreading of a second nautical scene. In the latter case, Austen insists that a tableau like the one she makes by arranging Anne and the Admiral together with linked arms can in fact be the seed of narrative development; a version of the future which the scene helps both Anne and the reader to imagine finally does happen. These scenes are significant because the problem Anne faces is in part a problem of narration. Anne wishes for the chance to repeat an earlier part of her life, and struggles to imagine a developing narrative that will permit her to do so. And, of course, Austen must accomplish something similar.

Throughout *Persuasion*, the fixity of past errors, ‘the indelible, immovable impression of what persuasion had once done’, is set against the necessity for constancy of other kinds: ‘steadiness’, and ‘self-will’ must be measured against the ‘retarding weight’ of doubts and ‘retrospections (p. 229, p. 227, p. 226). In the end, Wentworth acknowledges that Anne’s ‘character was now fixed on his mind as perfection’ (p. 226). ‘To my eye, you could never alter’, he tells Anne, who lets it pass as a ‘pleasing blunder’ (p. 228). It is, however, the kind of judgement Anne is constantly tempted to make, as when she detects in Wentworth’s responses to her conversation about Lyme, ‘his half averted eyes, and more than half expressive glance’, that ‘he had a heart returning to her’ that still possessed some of ‘the tenderness of the past’ (p. 175). The novel teases out the complexities of the question of whether ‘it was possible that [Anne] might retain the feelings of the past’, beginning by emphasizing that it is at once inevitable and intolerably painful that she should, and finally suggesting that the best way to move on is for Anne and Wentworth to return to a prior point (p. 228); this sort of movement both forward and backward is what Wentworth suggests when he refers to his ‘returning hopes’ (p. 228).

The sea offers Austen a landscape in which her characters can plausibly look forward to recurrence: Wentworth says ‘the scenes on the Cobb, and at Captain Harville’s, had fixed [Anne’s] superiority’, meaning that her merits had become both settled and mended in his mind at Lyme (p. 226). It is, Austen tells us, not just the party’s first visit to the seaside, but their ‘first return to the sea’, an odd and telling phrase, especially in a novel so preternaturally attentive to the dynamics of return and renewal. The phrase paradoxically yokes novelty and recurrence; the impracticability of a first return, that is, expresses the obstacle that Anne perceives to her union with Wentworth – that past mistakes are irrevocable precisely because they are past – while at the same time, supplying a consolatory formula by which any return might be seen as a fresh experience. This is not just a first return to the sea, but a first inkling of the novel’s most significant return, in which Anne and Wentworth are described as having ‘returned again into the past, more exquisitely happy, perhaps, in their re-union, than when it had been first projected’ (p. 225). Although the couple will finish the novel having ‘returned again’ in Bath, they should be thought of as having returned first in Lyme (p. 225, p. 117).

1. Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. Gillian Beer (2003), 103. Further references are to this edition, and will appear parenthetically in the text. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Gillian Beer, introduction to ibid., xxix. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. John Peck, *Maritime Fiction: Sailors and the Sea in British and American Novels, 1719–1917* (2001), 30–49; Tim Fulford, ‘Romanticizing the Empire: The Naval Heroes of Southey, Coleridge, Austen, and Marryat’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 60 (1999), 171. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), 95–116; Brian Southam, *Jane Austen and the Navy* (2000), 182; Monica F. Cohen, ‘Persuading the Navy Home: Austen and Married Women’s Professional Property, *NOVEL*, 29 (1996), 346–66. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. John Mullan, *What Matters in Jane Austen? Twenty Crucial Puzzles Solved* (2012), 86–101; Gillian Mary Hanson, *Riverbank and Seashore in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Literature* (Jefferson, NC, 2005), 105–7. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Southam, *Austen and the Navy*, 264–65. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Nina Auerbach, ‘O Brave New World: Evolution and Revolution in *Persuasion*’, *English Literary History*, 39 (1972), 122. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Jules Michelet, *The Sea*, [trans. W. H. D. Adams] (1875), 24. For the characterisation of Michelet’s writing as poetic, see Lionel Gossman, ‘Michelet and Natural History: The Alibi of Nature’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 145 (2001): 332. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 15, bk 1, *Poems (Reading Text)*, ed. J. C. C. Mays (2001), p. 387, line 193; *The Princess*, in *The Poems of Tennyson: In Three Volumes*, ed. Christopher Ricks, 2nd edn. (Harlow, 1987), vol. 2, p. 224, lines 138–39. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, ed. Frederick Burkhardt and Sydney Smith, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1985), 562. Southam discusses this letter in a different context; see *Austen and the Navy*, 302. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Professor Ansted, ‘The Representation of Water’, *The Art-Journal*, 2 (1863), 13–15 (13). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Lord Byron, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, in *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1980), p. 185, canto 4, lines 1643–44, 1641. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Byron, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, p. 35, canto 1, line 711; p. 13, canto 1, line 194; p. 49, canto 2, lines 145–46. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Byron, *The Corsair*, in *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1981), p. 150, canto 1, line 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Byron’s most famous iteration of the formula is of course, ‘Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean – roll!’**.** This fourth canto appeared in 1818, two years after *Persuasion* was published. *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, p. 184, canto 4, line 179. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. *The Works of Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, vol. 35, *Præterita* (1908), 106. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid., 78. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. See David Nokes, *Jane Austen: A Life* (1997), 261–4. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Charles Sprawson, *Haunts of the Black Masseur: The Swimmer as Hero* (New York, 1992), 26. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye, 4th edn (Oxford, 2011), 96; Austen quoted in Nokes, *Jane Austen*, 262. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 96–9. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid., 99. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. [John Feltham], *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places….*, rev. edn(1815), 356. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. *OED*, 2nd ed., 1989, s.v. ‘sea-side | seaside, n.’, sense 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. ‘Retirement’ (‘Hackney’d in business’), in *The Poems of William Cowper*, ed. John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp, vol. 1, *1748–1782* (Oxford, 1980), p. 391, lines 523–24. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Jane Austen, *Emma*, ed. Fiona Stafford (2003), 97; Jane Austen, *Sanditon*, in *Lady Susan*, *The Watsons* and *Sanditon*, ed. Margaret Drabble (2003), 158. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Compare Henri Bergson’s description of a Punch and Judy show in ‘Laughter’: ‘No sooner does the policeman put in an appearance on the stage than, naturally enough, he receives a blow which fells him. He springs to his feet, a second blow lays him flat.’, in Wylie Sypher, *Comedy* (1980), 106. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Southam teases out some naval implications of the poems mentioned, *Marmion* in particular. *Austen and the Navy*, 288–90. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Austen, *Sanditon*, 184. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid., 191, 188. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Byron, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, p. 184, canto 4, line 179. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Jocelyn Harris, *A Revolution almost beyond Expression: Jane Austen’s* Persuasion (Newark, 2007), 158. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Ruskin, *The Harbours of England*, in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, vol. 13, *Turner: Harbours of England, Catalogues, and Notes* (1904), 33, 32. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge, 2000), 197–235. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. On her first visit to Lyme in 1801, Austen declares that, stationed beside the sea, her family will now ‘possess many of the advantages which I have often thought of with Envy in the wives of Sailors’. *Jane Austen’s Letters*, 68. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Southam, *Austen and the Navy*, 296. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)