

## NICHOLAS DAMES

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### Austen's Nostalgics

*This morning we have been to see Miss Chamberlayne look hot on horseback. —Seven years & four months ago we went to the same Ridinghouse to see Miss Lefroy's performance!—What a different set are we now moving in! But seven years I suppose are enough to change every pore of one's skin, & every feeling of one's mind.*

—Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 8 April 1805

*Mémoire.—Se plaindre de la sienne, et même se vanter de n'en pas avoir. Mais rugir si on vous dit que vous n'avez pas de jugement.*

—Gustave Flaubert, *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*<sup>1</sup>

**A**HISTORY OF NOSTALGIA: what could this history be but a chimerical one, given that *nostalgia* seems to denote an inauthentic longing and vague remembrance that would be hostile to the specificities of historical recollection? To reclaim *nostalgia* as not only a mode of memory but also a mode of history would mean considering it as a strategy—as a response to social conditions and, in fact, as a form of therapy: a winnowing of the specificity, emotional disturbance, and unpredictability of reminiscence into a diluted, comfortable, and serviceable retrospect.<sup>2</sup> By understanding nostalgia strategically, or procedurally—what it does, and how it does it—history and nostalgia might again merge; where they meet is in a series of crucial shifts in the psychosocial effects of mobility in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They meet at a moment when a pathological relation to physical and psychic dislocation becomes depathologized, when, in other words, a specific form of traumatic memory is erased in favor of a curative memory that will curiously bear the identical name. The traces of this transformation can be read, and the procedure studied, not only in a set of historical instances but also in narratives that bear its imprint: Jane Austen's fiction.

“The last few hours were certainly very painful,” *Persuasion's* Anne Elliot tells her future spouse, Captain Wentworth, “but when pain is over, the remembrance of it often becomes a pleasure.”<sup>3</sup> This particular *ars memorativa*, which has analogues in every one of Austen's novels, instructs both Anne's lover, as well as Austen's readers, in the very possibilities of nostalgic remembrance that by the early nineteenth century are coming to supersede an older definition of nostalgia. The moves and tactics that combine to make Anne's proclamation possible might together be

termed a *nostalgics*: a strategic logic of nostalgia that Austen's fiction works out with care. This logic, however, is far from a disembodied one. It has links to a history of displacements and disease that it carefully shrouds or forgets, making our own efforts to recover this history more difficult and conjectural. The task of my inquiry, then, is twofold—to analyze a nostalgic strategy integral to the fiction of Jane Austen that becomes increasingly possible, and visible, in the early nineteenth century, and to trace this strategy back to the historical pathology that it so effectively cancels.

### Pathologizing, Depathologizing

In September of 1770, Lieutenant (later Captain) James Cook's vessel the HMS *Endeavour* left the coast of New Guinea in haste, its crew having enjoyed a landing reception of fire darts. On board the *Endeavour* was Sir Joseph Banks, a former pupil of Linnaeus and the ship's resident botanist, who recorded the leavetaking in his journal:

As soon as ever the boat was hoisted in we made sail, and steered away from this land, to the no small satisfaction of, I believe, three-fourths of our company. The sick became well and the melancholy looked gay. The greater part of them were now pretty far gone with the longing for home, which the physicians have gone so far as to esteem a disease under the name of nostalgia. Indeed I can hardly find anybody in the ship clear of its effects but the captain, Dr. Solander, and myself, and we three have ample constant employment for our minds, which I believe to be the best, if not the only remedy for it.<sup>4</sup>

Here *nostalgia* enters the English language—carefully distanced as a medical neologism, one that the physicians have gone “so far as to esteem a disease” in a conceptual leap as large as the geographical journey Cook's crew has traveled to contract it. The most immediately curious thing about this taxonomical debut is that, as far as a history of nostalgia might go, it seems to represent a dead end. Rather than a comfortable sentimentality, the nostalgia of the eighteenth century—elaborately studied in nosologies, tracts, and case studies, particularly in the century's concluding decades—was a danger, a potentially fatal affliction. Banks's journal provides us with a glimpse of nostalgia in extremis: a homesickness that was powerful and real, situated first among travelers, among the exotic, far from “home.” Indeed, the eighteenth-century study of nostalgia centered on its prevalence in armies and on board ships, in precisely those places where travel, particularly enforced travel, was likely to occur.

This is not quite Jane Austen's nostalgia, nor is the semantic field it encapsulates very similar to contemporary usage. Something has intervened between Banks's illness and the generalized comfort and disembodied quality of current definitions of the word to alter *nostalgia* beyond any real recognition, something more complex

and obscure than the fact of European medicine's gradual relinquishment of it as a clinical entity. If during the first few decades of the nineteenth century this medicalized nostalgia begins to disappear from scientific study, and homesickness ceases to be a pathologized concept, something has operated to reclaim nostalgia as a social process and a desirable bit of mental furniture—to depathologize and then propagate a new nostalgia. If nostalgia is transformed from a wasting illness, one with its own etiology, symptoms, and set of cures, to a regular fact of human memory, the open question is: where might we locate the pivot of this transformation in time and in cultural space?

The search for this answer takes me away from medicine and overseas travel and toward Austen's novels, a corpus of work that initiates the revision of a pathologized memory linked to the perils of dislocation. In attempting to locate the moment and the site where Banks's nostalgia becomes a contemporary, depathologized nostalgia—where, that is, the idea of a nostalgia that might be *shared* is born—I turn to a set of social novels from the early nineteenth century, at the very moment when the peak of an older nostalgia has passed. In this passage from a pathology to a general cultural category, medicine itself is only part of the story; what it is necessary to chart is the passage of nostalgia through literary representation, through the novel, on its path to becoming innocuous, inescapable, and normative.

Telling the story of nostalgia's transformation is remarkably similar to telling the story of remembrance in the succession of Austen's narratives. I begin with *Sense and Sensibility*'s Marianne Dashwood, who courts memory, and who suffers from a wasting disease brought on by an excess of regret and reminiscence. The keynote of her character is rung at the novel's outset precisely through her eighteenth-century version of nostalgia: she is the most reluctant of the Dashwood family to leave their former home, Norland Park, and the most consistent in her desire to remain nostalgic; "Elinor," she says to her mother, "in quitting Norland and Edward, cried not as I did" (SS, 39). This nostalgia is very real—its referent is a real place, not an inaccessible time—and, of course, highly dangerous, as dramatic in its eventual effects upon Marianne's body as any of the case studies discussed by eighteenth-century physicians. The nostalgia of *Sense and Sensibility* is still very much a disease; it is perhaps more a social disease than the traditional medical understanding of nostalgia, insofar as it occurs in a restricted compass of space somewhat unlike the vaster, isolated locales mentioned in eighteenth-century medical texts, but it is a disease nonetheless, a disorder with potentially drastic consequences, and a disease (although undeniably somatic) of excessive remembrance.

Next to this early example of Austenian nostalgia, consider one of the final scenes of *Pride and Prejudice*, in which a newer and more recognizable nostalgia begins to supplant any sense of a mnemonic disease; this nostalgia is explicitly curative. Elizabeth and Darcy have begun a survey of their fraught, almost accidental courtship, a review potentially laden with unhappy memories and burdensome

emotions. In reaction to this possibly dangerous strain of conversation, Elizabeth begins, “Oh! do not repeat what I then said. These recollections will not do at all” (*PP*, 368). When Darcy persists in remembering his earlier, explanatory, often bitter letter to Elizabeth, she responds with customary spirit:

The letter, perhaps, began in bitterness, but it did not end so. The adieu is charity itself. But think no more of the letter. The feelings of the person who wrote, and the person who received it, are now so widely different from what they were then, that every unpleasant circumstance attending it, ought to be forgotten. You must learn some of my philosophy. Think only of the past as its remembrance gives you pleasure. (*PP*, 368–69)

What was a troubled memory—and one with a potential to resurrect resentment and ripple the surface of this new pairing—is transformed by Elizabeth’s “philosophy” into a nostalgic pleasure. Unlike Marianne’s backward-turned pathology, Elizabeth’s therapeutic advice asserts the crucial principle of *disconnection*: the past, once gone, is of no further consequence, and because it is of no consequence, it can be forgotten. Of course there is an element of sophistry to this logic, one that Elizabeth’s own irony lightly registers—if the past were truly of no consequence, it would hardly be necessary to attempt to forget it; if Darcy’s current feelings are indeed “so widely different from what they were,” then why is there a lingering unpleasantness that must be forgotten? But however much Elizabeth’s claim begs the question of how disconnected their present “really” is from their past, the assertion of discontinuity remains, and it does not depend upon any tight logic. Indeed, the nostalgic principle of “pleasure” neatly brushes aside any impertinent queries or lingering doubts, and it is well to remember that fantasy occupies a preeminent place in any theory of nostalgia. Elizabeth’s nostalgic fantasy—that all is different in the present, and that the past can be safely, even pleasurably recalled once that disconnection is asserted—is nothing if not pragmatic. Barring any yearning for the past, or any continued cathexis to memory, her new nostalgia has cured what the older, medicalized nostalgia puts into peril. Darcy will insist upon returning to his past, a moment to which I too will return, but Elizabeth’s proclamation signals the end of an older style of nostalgia. Her “philosophy” is entirely in the service of the present, and so it is appropriate that this conversation should end by their finding, “on examining their watches, that it was time to be at home” (*PP*, 370), for unlike Marianne’s affliction, the new nostalgia increasingly employed in Austen’s fiction is turned resolutely forward.

It is possible to take Elizabeth’s request, to think only of the past as its remembrance gives us pleasure, as the foundation of Austen’s new nostalgia—and as the foundation of the semantic range of nostalgia that dates from the early nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, Austen’s critics have registered the importance of nostalgia to her work, but the critical tradition surrounding Austen has understood its importance only obliquely.<sup>5</sup> It is as if nostalgia is an affliction to which Austen’s readers are particularly susceptible, for which only the inoculations of a radically denostalgizing criticism are a cure. As early as 1905, in Henry James, who saw in

Austen what he saw with the Brontë sisters—a “case of popularity” that displays “a beguiled infatuation, a sentimentalized vision”—one feels the urge to remove the nostalgic encrustations upon Austen’s image, the urge to read nostalgia as an unfortunate fact of reception-history, or of popular consumption, that is finally detachable from the fiction itself.<sup>6</sup>

Yet what if the nostalgia so often associated with Austen—and so productively identified and castigated by recent critics—is part of the effect Austen creates? What if readers learn their nostalgia from her texts? What has gone unnoticed in all the recent discussions and corrections of the nostalgic Austen reader is the nostalgia that inhabits Austen’s own narratives, the nostalgia that she inherits from eighteenth-century medical diagnoses and begins to transmute into a modern sentimentality and poignant yearning. Forgetfulness of former traumas and contestations, closings of former fissures, a sense of disconnection from the past: these are not usually considered the best analytic equipment with which to explore older texts, but they are conceptual tools that are provided by Austen herself. The very process of becoming a nostalgic reader, as well as the resultant blind spots and errors such a process implies, is dramatized in her novels, and there is no better place to locate the semantic and conceptual transformation of Banks’s pathology into a contemporary register that tends more to pleasure, or harmless regret, than bodily dissolution. Nostalgic remembrance begins in Austen, with *Sense and Sensibility*, as the object of representation; by the time of *Persuasion* it has become a principle of representation, so thoroughly embedded into her narrative practice that readers learn, perhaps, their nostalgia from these later texts—the very nostalgia that serves to mobilize the modern Austen critic. In attempting to understand the nostalgia that remains linked to Austen, however, we must return to the earlier nostalgia with which Austen begins.

### **The Unassimilable Self**

The fact that the medical origins of nostalgia have been largely forgotten is itself a tribute to the success of the condition. Hiding or diluting a traumatic past into one safe for contemplation is the basic work of nostalgizing, which has extended to the very concept itself—insofar as current usage forgets nostalgia’s original ties to the body and to death, it remains nostalgic, one might say, about nostalgia. Only recently has the denostalgizing work of studying, and recovering, the origins of *nostalgia* been carried on.<sup>7</sup> The word itself was still in a comparative infancy in Austen’s time; it is not listed in Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary*, and is never used by Austen herself. As an explanation for this fact—the word’s presence in Banks’s travel journals, and its absence from most literary lexicons—one might offer the comparatively exotic quality of *nostalgia*: a term coined by a foreign physician, and still, by the late eighteenth century, very much a medical diagnosis, foreign to other discourses.

Indeed, *nostalgia* begins as an explanation for the often malignant effects of foreignness and distance. Its history begins in Basel in 1688, when the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer published his “Dissertatio medica de nostalgia.”<sup>8</sup> Hofer’s coinage—combining the Greek *nostos*, or homecoming, and *algos*, or pain—is essentially a translation of preexisting terms, such as the German *Heimweh* and the French *maladie du pays*. But Hofer’s uniqueness consisted in providing the first extended treatment of the perils of what might be more simply called homesickness. Building around homesickness a set of both psychological and physiological symptoms, a specific etiology, and a series of suggested ameliorations and cures, as well as a taxonomic term from the Greek, Hofer gave the malady a new importance and thus prepared the way for its entrance into serious medical research. Indeed, in the scientific literature devoted to nostalgia throughout the eighteenth century, there is very little deviation from the outlines provided by Hofer’s thesis. Hofer’s malady was canonized by its inclusion in the great nosologies of the mid-eighteenth century: Francisco Boissier de Sauvages de la Croix’s *Nosologia Methodica* (1760), Linnaeus’s *Genera Morborum* (1763), Rudolf Vogel’s *Definitiones generum morborum* (1764), and—most influential of all for British physicians—William Cullen’s 1769 *Synopsis nosologiae*. In the taxonomies of the 1760s, nostalgia was placed alongside melancholia, nymphomania, hypochondria, and bulimia. From here nostalgia entered European history at large.<sup>9</sup> The dislocations of the last two decades of the eighteenth century—preeminently the French Revolution, the mass emigrations that it spawned, and the distant movements of armies increasingly based on conscription—led to a rise in diagnoses of homesickness. Two separate “epidemics” of nostalgia swept French armies, the first occurring among the Army of the Rhine from 1793 to 1794, the second afflicting the Army of the Alps starting in 1799; indeed, Didier Jourdeuil, the French deputy minister of war in 1793, issued a command intended to reduce desertion by suspending all convalescent leaves *except* those necessitated by a diagnosis of nostalgia.<sup>10</sup> Even American soldiers fighting for independence in the early 1780s were found to be suffering from the disease.<sup>11</sup>

What was this disease like? One of the best British accounts is from William Falconer’s 1788 tract *A Dissertation on the Influence of the Passions upon Disorders of the Body*. Falconer, educated at Edinburgh and Leyden, was a physician at Bath General Hospital from 1784 to 1819—during which time, of course, Austen lived in Bath, enduring an enforced separation from her Hampshire home. Borrowing from Hofer and succeeding writers, Falconer drew a standard picture of nostalgia’s origin and progress:

This disorder is said to begin with melancholy, sadness, love of solitude, silence, loss of appetite for both solid and liquid food, prostration of strength, and a hectic fever in the evening; which is frequently accompanied with livid or purple spots upon the body. Sometimes a regular intermittent, and sometimes a continued fever attends this disorder; in the management of which, the greatest care is requisite not to exhaust the strength and spirits by evacuations of any kind. Nausea and vomiting are frequent symptoms, but emetics are of no ser-

vice. . . . when the disorder is violent, nothing avails but returning to their own country, which is so powerful an agent in the cure, that the very preparations for the return prove more effectual than anything else, though the patient be debilitated and unable to bear any other motion than that of a litter.<sup>12</sup>

It was, in essence, a disease of yearning—a yearning for home so intense that the most severe pathological effects ensued. Falconer’s general description is echoed throughout the medical literature: general listlessness and melancholy—the dangerous first signs—followed by fever and occasionally hallucinatory visions of home; then gastric distress caused by the body’s torpor, issuing in severe gastroenteritis; finally, the body succumbs to its weakness, a more severe fever killing the patient.

This was, evidently, not merely a psychological disorder. Hofer’s thesis received further theoretical ballast from associationist theories of the mind, which claimed that the brain can be physically altered by the overuse of certain mental pathways. This sort of associationist thinking, with its physiological implications, provided nostalgia’s eighteenth-century cartographers with a key methodological tool. In 1821 the First Surgeon of Napoleon’s Grande Armée, Baron D. J. Larrey, published his extensive research on nostalgia garnered from his experience during the French westward retreat. Larrey performed a series of autopsies on patients found to have died of nostalgia, and discovered that the sutures and ridges of the brain were often obliterated, and that brain tissue tended to be inflamed. Using an associationist physiology, Larrey claimed that the increased activity of a mind turned obsessively toward home would cause “a sort of expansion in the substance of the brain, engorgement and torpor of the vessels of this organ, and successively, of the membranes which envelope it, and line its cavities.”<sup>13</sup> Although Larrey’s interest in brain structure is unusual among most writers on nostalgia, his insistence upon the physicality of the disorder is not; nostalgia was a somatic fact, a remembrance that threatened to break apart the normal pathways of the brain.

Who was prone to this disease? Its usual haunt was the military; the “ecological niche,” to use Ian Hacking’s precise term, for the disease seems to have been army camps and naval vessels, where mobility of an enforced and newly vast sort was common.<sup>14</sup> But throughout eighteenth-century writing on nostalgia a more general clinical profile appears. The nostalgic patient is likely to have an aversion to social intercourse and a preference for solitary meditation, as well as a vivid imagination; that the usual nostalgic sufferer has an excess of “sensibility” is a theme to which most medical writers recur.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the personal characteristics mapped by physicians, there was a more vivid, and more highly contested, range of national characteristics shared by nostalgics. A fascinating linkage is made, starting with Hofer, between liberty and homesickness: the freer the nation, so the reasoning runs, the greater the danger that its citizens will miss their homes and fall into nostalgia. Hofer drew for his evidence upon Swiss nationals living in France, and thereafter Switzerland was taken as the preeminent site of nostalgia.<sup>16</sup> The

Helvetian origins of nostalgia could be explained as an instance of climatic factors—Larrey, for instance, claims that cold regions inspire nostalgia, and adds that French troops in Egypt were remarkably free of it—but were more usually adduced as a critique of illiberal governments. Falconer states that nostalgia “is particularly prevalent among the Swiss, and to a certain degree among all nations, those especially where the government is moderate, free, and happy.” With a dramatic flourish, Falconer adds that “this is the only endemic disorder, of which we have any knowledge, that can scarcely be called with justice a national misfortune.”<sup>17</sup> For George Seymour, an early-nineteenth-century physician and writer on nostalgia, homesickness was virtually identical to a liberal nationalism: in his *Dissertatio medica inauguralis de nostalgia* Seymour cited William Wallace, John Hampden, and Admiral Horatio Nelson as early “nostalgics.”<sup>18</sup> There are implications here for a consideration of what might be called colonial consciousness, particularly given the fact that by the time nineteenth-century imperial projects reach fruition this disease, with its liberal and *centered* form (a disease that somatically registered distances from national capitals), has disappeared.

Political reflections on nostalgia are given an unexpected inflection in the work of Thomas Arnold, the foremost British expert on insanity at the end of the eighteenth century. Arnold’s compendium of mental disorders, the 1782 *Observations on the Nature, Kinds, Causes, and Prevention of Insanity, Lunacy, or Madness*, contained these reflections on the *habitus* of nostalgia: “This unreasonable fondness for the place of our birth, and for whatever is connected with our native soil, is the offspring of an unpolished state of society, and not uncommonly the inhabitant of dreary and inhospitable climates, where the chief, and almost only blessings, are ignorance and liberty.”<sup>19</sup> Nostalgia, Arnold claims, is a rural phenomenon only, insofar as the cosmopolitan mixtures of the city break down former partialities and soften obdurate memories. It is also, and for similar reasons, a disease found among the lower orders, thus leading to the following general clinical profile: nostalgia flourishes where social discourse is limited, whether limited by geographical factors (the mountains of Switzerland, England’s water barriers), regional characteristics (the comparative isolation of rural areas), social class (the restricted opportunities for travel among lower orders), or psychological traits (the overimaginative, the solitary, the melancholic personality). Homesickness is a disease, therefore, of *failed assimilation*—of psyches whose natural, political, social, or constitutional barriers to frequent encounters with new stimuli create an inability to adapt to change.

It was, in short, a disease of transplantation, and it is worthwhile to consider how many of Austen’s characters fit the profile, how many are forced to leave their home behind, how many of her heroines endure indefinite or permanent removals from home.<sup>20</sup> The Dashwood family in *Sense and Sensibility* must leave Norland Park, the Dashwood seat for several generations, permanently; Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* leaves Portsmouth, and her family, for her uncle’s distant estate, and when the novel’s main action begins she has been gone for nine years; and the Elliot family



in *Persuasion* is forced by debt to rent their estate with a seven-year lease and move to Bath. With the notable exception of *Emma*, the decisive actions of Austen's plots occur away from home, on prolonged visits, on travels, or during enforced segregations from what constitutes, at the novel's outset, "home." As we have seen from the eighteenth-century creation of the category of the "nostalgic," in situations of transplantation memory becomes a potential danger. How, these medical texts implicitly ask, is memory to be managed in a situation of vastly increased mobility? How does memory function, or malfunction, when those who have never known foreignness suddenly find themselves sundered from the familiar? The clinical profile established in medical writing defines nostalgia as the mind's resistance to adaptation, its refusal to feel at home in a larger world; at the time of Austen's writing, therefore, sending a person from home was a test of mnemonic control, a psychic gamble. The eighteenth-century nostalgic self is unassimilable; confronted with altered circumstances, it begins to malfunction.

It is not surprising, therefore, that with this combination of medical interest and mass diagnoses, homesickness increasingly inflects the literary representation of personality. One might adduce the 1774 appearance of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Das Leiden des jungen Werthers* and its lavishly nostalgic account of Werther's return to his boyhood home, including the retracing of old walks and a glimpse of Werther's old school.<sup>21</sup> A relevant British example is Samuel Rogers's *The Pleasure of Memory*, a virtual anthology of nostalgic attitudes that is first published in 1792 but reprinted throughout the next two decades; shortly thereafter, the word "homesickness" makes its first appearance in English, in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "Home-sick," published in 1800:

Home-sickness is a wasting pang  
 This I feel hourly more and more:  
 There's healing only in thy wings,  
 Thou breeze that play'st on Albion's shore!<sup>22</sup>

The emphasis here is predictably on the virtue of *return*—on the moral and physical benefits of avoiding nostalgia's grip; concomitantly, of course, there is a dramatization of the obstacles to returning home and the "healing" it might provide.

Certainly by Austen's time, literary culture was well aware of medicalized nostalgia, and prepared to incorporate the various strands of that disease—its nationalistic and liberalizing slant, its elucidation of a backward-turned personality, its interest in the psychic conditions of transplantation—in its own projects. Nostalgia, that is, provided writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with a common narrative—the increasing fact of mobility, the necessity of returns—with which to work; but by the second decade of the nineteenth century this narrative would no longer have any cultural authority, and the word *nostalgia* itself began its long, slow shift toward its current semantic range.<sup>23</sup> With the strangeness of overlapping facts that is so common in cultural history, Austen's novels stand out among

the early-nineteenth-century welter of homesick representations and present a new possibility: the cancellation of a pathology, and the reconfiguration of the unassimilable self, through a set of what might be understood as modern “nostalgic” practices, a more contemporary “nostalgics.”

### **Plots of Nostalgia: Opened Possibilities**

In 1781 an army physician, Dr. Robert Hamilton, was stationed with his regiment at Tinmouth, in the north of England, when a recent recruit began to suffer from a mysterious ailment. The young soldier, named Edwards, seemed fit enough, but as Hamilton later recorded, “a melancholy hung over his countenance, and wanness preyed on his cheeks.”<sup>24</sup> Frequently dizzy, complaining of a noise in his ears and a general weakness, the soldier was taken into the regimental hospital. Hamilton at first suspected typhus and set about the usual methods to alleviate it, but to no avail—the recruit’s appetite had disappeared, and he slept little, spoke less, and sighed frequently. Eventually Edwards’s pulse weakened considerably, and a hectic fever set in. After three months in the hospital Edwards seemed to Hamilton to resemble a patient in the final stages of consumption, with hollow eyes and sunken cheeks. “In short,” Hamilton relates, “I looked on him as lost” (216).

But at this point Hamilton received some new information:

On making my morning visit, and inquiring, as usual, of his rest at the nurse, she happened to mention the strong notions he had got in his head, she said, of home, and of his friends. What he was able to speak was constantly on this topic. This I had never heard of before. The reason she gave for not mentioning it, was, that it appeared to her to be the common ravings of sickness and delirium. He had talked in the same style, less or more, ever since he came into the hospital. (216–17)

Aware of nostalgia and its place in the current nosologies, Hamilton responded immediately to the nurse’s story. Upon being asked about his home, the young recruit suddenly begged to be returned there, and confided in Hamilton that he was Welsh. Hamilton promised—tactfully neglecting to mention that it was not in his power—that once he regained some strength, he would be granted six weeks convalescent leave in which to return to Wales. Soon after this offer was made, Edwards’s illness began to disappear—an appetite returned, along with some strength, although disturbingly enough for Hamilton, he continued to refer to the promise of a furlough. With some trepidation, Hamilton mentioned the offer to his commanding officers, noting that it had gone some way to curing the patient’s nostalgia, and the furlough was granted. Edwards, so it seems, was allowed to return to Wales for a time, and the attack of nostalgia was averted.

It is an isolated instance from the medical journals of the time, but it is an ample portrayal of what might be termed the “older” plot of nostalgia. This cultural

narrative ran as follows: an initial displacement from home, whether that home be defined nationally, regionally, or even more locally; a sudden appearance of morbid signs of melancholy, indeed a feminization of the patient through the familiar markers of “sensibility” (sighing, weakness, longing); and then a rapid physical decline, beginning with the onset of fever. From here the nostalgic plot could only envision two possible outcomes: the restoration of home, or death. It is notable that this restoration must be an actual one—although Edwards improves upon having his fantasies of a return home authorized with an official promise, Hamilton does not consider the cure final until the furlough has been granted and the trip made. Either an earlier state of being must be returned to—it cannot be merely imagined—or the patient must be consigned to the fatal effects of nostalgia. It is an axiom of eighteenth-century nostalgia that one *can* go home again, and in fact *must* go home again.<sup>25</sup>

Here it is necessary to introduce a set of buried technical choices concerning memory and narrative form that few readers of Austen have acknowledged, a set that revises the exigency of the nostalgic plotting of Hamilton and replaces it with a series of psychic movements that permit the formation of a depathologized, in fact *curative*, nostalgia. I would list them schematically as follows: 1) pleasure; 2) temporal rather than spatial orientation; 3) disconnection; 4) naming or categorizing; 5) communal dissemination. What this schema does not quite represent, and what a further investigation will have to illustrate, is the interdependency of these five strategies, which—as we will see—almost never exist in isolation in any given moment from Austen’s narratives. The simple binary of eighteenth-century nostalgia, repatriation or death, is increasingly dispersed and opened up by Austen’s novels through this newer nostalgic system, in which each of the five elements exists both as cause and effect of the other four.<sup>26</sup> It is imperative to claim this at the start: that the goal of these five processes is as much a readerly memory as the related memories of characters; what they begin to create, I would suggest, is a nostalgic reader far from the nostalgic patients of the eighteenth century.

The first two processes are visible in one of the more obviously “nostalgic” moments of *Mansfield Park*. William Price, Fanny’s naval brother, has returned to England with his ship, and has obtained leave to visit Fanny at Mansfield; with their conversation during the first few days of his arrival Fanny is entirely pleased. They discuss everything without reserve—William’s plans for promotion, Fanny’s adjustment to the ways of the Bertrams, the perfidy of Aunt Norris—and it is William “with whom (perhaps the dearest indulgence of the whole) all the evil and good of their earliest years could be gone over again, and every former united pain and pleasure retraced with the fondest recollection” (*MP*, 234). We catch the authentic accents of modern nostalgia in the phrase “fondest recollection,” which might bring to mind Elizabeth Bennet’s “philosophy” of remembrance—and which constitutes the first, and perhaps the initial, alteration to the older plot of nostalgia. An evident switch has taken place from memory as productive of trauma or sickness

to memory as a source of *pleasure*, as a poignant but harmless dip into reminiscence. Fanny and William are both as sundered from their home, Portsmouth, as any of the recruits or travelers mentioned in Hofer or Larrey's medical texts, but their memory of this inaccessible home does not become malignant. It does not express itself as a yearning for a return or restoration, but instead as a desire for continued occasions merely to recall their childhood home, as if the iteration of memory (we did this, we saw that) was itself enough to supplant any more dangerous desires. Unlike Hamilton's patient, Fanny and William find that talking is enough.

The shared recollections of Fanny and William are pleasurable despite the deprivations of the past; we hear of "evil" and "pain," but that is all we hear of potential trauma; the lesson of Austen's new nostalgia is that very little psychic material is unavailable to the brighter tints of retrospective "fondness." The key to this alchemy of trauma into nostalgia is, perhaps, the fact that for Austen's readers these Price childhood memories are really not memories at all: they refer to nothing we have seen or heard in the text previously, and they do not attain enough of a level of specificity to disturb the sentence's happy conclusion. What "pain" or "evil" the Prices previously suffered remains persistently—one might say *tactically*—enigmatic. Were any of these memories of pain to burst into explicitness (and it is difficult enough to imagine what they might be, so heavy is the curtain hung over childhood in Austen), the sentence's resolution might seem like bad faith or, at best, irony, but insofar as William and Fanny's memories are so persistently vague, the pleasure they yield does not open itself up to suspicion. What we have is the following alignment: particularity of mnemonic detail equates to pain, whereas pleasure follows from a determined inexplicitness.

If uncomfortable memories are deflected for the reader through a strategy of vagueness, they are further deflected for Fanny and William through the second pivotal alteration to the older plot of nostalgia: the substitution of an inaccessible *time* for a still-real place.<sup>27</sup> Return is an issue for eighteenth-century nostalgics precisely because it is at every moment conceptually possible, if not physically possible: Hamilton's patient can see Wales again with the help of some official wrangling; Coleridge's "healing" is only as far away as the next ship leaving from Antwerp or Calais. The nostalgia of medicine is fixated on a place that does not lose but instead gains power when distant; the nostalgia of Austen, like our nostalgia, desires a time that has already disappeared—and insofar as this nostalgia knows that it desires what cannot be regained, its desire does not harden into mental disturbance, and it cannot therefore be captured in the return-or-die conflict. When the first part of the older closural system—restoration—is forbidden, the second—fatal sickness—is similarly disabled. Whatever evil or pain the Prices endured cannot be restored, for it is tied to a completed childhood rather than Portsmouth itself—a fact that Fanny's eventual return to Portsmouth, which is an inversion of the older nostalgic "return," demonstrates.

A tour of the newer nostalgic plot's collision with its predecessor might continue

with a return to *Pride and Prejudice* and Elizabeth and Darcy, and with the review of the past in which they were engaged. Darcy answers Elizabeth's "think only of the past as its remembrance gives you pleasure" with a renewed allegiance to a putatively painful form of memory:

Painful recollections will intrude, which cannot, which ought not to be repelled. I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child I was taught what was *right*, but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit. Unfortunately an only son, (for many years an only *child*) I was spoilt by my parents, who though good themselves, (my father particularly, all that was benevolent and amiable,) allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to *wish* at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own. Such I was, from eight to eight and twenty; and such I might still have been but for you, dearest, loveliest Elizabeth! (*PP*, 369)

Darcy's penitential return to the past constitutes not a refutation of Elizabeth's "philosophy" of remembrance, however, nor even a correction of it, but its fulfillment and amplification. For if, as we have seen, pleasurable retrospect is tied to the inexplicit, Darcy's avoidance here of particular memories—at the very moment when his remorse might be expected to issue in an apology for a specific action or turn of phrase—is a triumphant act of nostalgic remembrance. It is a modern nostalgia in spite of its manifestly regretful tone, for it is not only vague but also crucially *disconnected* from the past it relates—much like Fanny and William's musings on their childhood, but in a different emotional key, what we might call Darcy's "life-review" considers his past as passed.

The third alteration of the old nostalgic narrative, then, is the switch from a memory that is still very much constitutive of a patient's identity to one that is crucially obsolete, disconnected, and distant for a no longer pathologized subjectivity. Clearly part of the difference consists in the absence, in Austen, of any explicitly *national* dimension to this subjectivity. Hamilton's patient is still, and continually, a Welshman; Coleridge is still and forever English, however immersed in German culture and acquaintances he may become. Medical nostalgia assumed a psyche that was not capable of periodizing life narratives, of treating development as discontinuous, and yet was highly amenable to the more static identities of nationality. Darcy is here clearly marking a discontinuity in his own sense of himself, a discontinuity that is produced by the delineation of periods, eras, or epochs. What Darcy was from eight to eight and twenty is an identity unto itself, not causally related to what follows, for the very definition of what follows—what might be called the Era of Elizabeth—is a rejection of what had constituted, in Darcy's mind, the previous period: pride, conceit, selfishness, solitude. A modern nostalgic consciousness is made up of such revolutions of mind, in which the old is overthrown, barred from further import, and thereby made safe for remembrance; it should be noted that Darcy is in a position to recall his previous life only when he can consider it over,

only when a conceptual line can be drawn between it and the present. The newer nostalgia, that is, idealizes not only what cannot be returned to but also what is not of any more consequence—not only a *lost* time (as opposed to a still-real place) but also a time that is felt to be causally *unrelated* to the present. However phantasmatic such a belief of Darcy's may seem—that pride and conceit will not continue to deflect his behavior—the belief is implicit in Austen's own closural processes, which invite us to imagine a contented marriage founded on a revolution of principle. To refuse such a belief, to doubt that an epoch has been made in Darcy's life, is also to refuse the proffered satisfactions of the novel, so that complicity in Austen's narrative logic involves a complicity in the logic of nostalgia as well. We are asked, that is, to see the past as ended: periodized, disconnected, memorable only in the nostalgic registers of Fanny and William's fond recollections or Darcy's relieved regret.<sup>28</sup>

Darcy's remorse, therefore, is not the contrary of Elizabeth's asserted pleasure in remembrance but its corollary, since the pleasure he takes from remembrance consists in finding his memories, in themselves unpleasant, obsolete. Elizabeth's dictum had claimed that the unpleasant should be forgotten, but Darcy's life-review enables us to see that under the conditions of nostalgia the unpleasant can be remembered pleasurable through the lens of disconnection. Darcy's reappraisal, although newly aware of parental failings, is not, as we might expect, incompatible with nostalgia; the suddenly formed consciousness of his flawed past yields more pleasurable relief than discomfort, insofar as his description of that past is felt to put an end to its lingering effects. It ends not in a murmur of regret but a welcome exclamation of release: "such I might still have been but for you, dearest, loveliest Elizabeth!"

What licenses this pleasure of release is not merely the grammar of self-exculpation—the replacement of active constructions ("I have been") with passive ("I was taught. . . . I was given. . . . I was spoiled")—but a particular closural device frequent in Austen, in which the particularized memories of the novel's own past, of therefore our past of reading, yield to a more general and nostalgic reappraisal of a past that *we have not seen*. A general and unassailable past: protected from our own memories of Darcy's within the text, of which we have perhaps formed judgments, we instead listen to vague ruminations upon a past that we will never know any better. It is the beginning of a nostalgic readerliness, a method in which our textual recollections in all their specificity (and potential for reawakening, given our ability literally to "turn back the pages of the past") are supplanted at the text's end by a new, rather more mystified past.

It is a mystification all the more nebulous for the self-advertising clarity of the terms under which it is brought forth: "I have been a selfish being all my life," "I was spoiled by my parents." What we have here is the fourth alteration to eighteenth-century nostalgia: a replacement of the ineffable particularity of "home" with a process of *naming, categorizing, or judgment* that binds memory into familiar narrative patterns. The past is contained in Darcy's phrases; it does not burst into any particu-

larity of detail. What Darcy does, in essence, is to provide himself with a series of explanatory terms (“selfish being,” “an only son”) that situate his past in an understandable narrative pattern: the spoiled but nonetheless principled child brought into contact with, and humbled by, a wider world. Affixing the proper terms provides the proper narrative context for the past and helps deflect any specificities that might open up the past to readings other than those provided by the nostalgic narrator. In a fashion similar to the text’s tactical silence regarding Fanny and William’s childhood pains, the terms provided by Darcy are far more authoritative than a series of examples; were we to know any instances of Darcy’s selfish upbringing, we might be inclined to quarrel with his description of his “benevolent” and “amiable” father, but lacking those instances Darcy’s own adjectives cannot be supplanted or revised. By shaping the past through a series of stereotypical terms, Darcy can arrive at the sort of judgment—“We were happier then,” “I was a badly taught child”—that the newer nostalgia always produces, a sort of insight that is denied to the eighteenth-century nostalgic patient, who cannot judge the past but can only long for its return. So many of Austen’s characters are prone to this sort of nostalgic self-review, one that is implicitly pedagogical: an expropriation of an exemplary pattern from the past, a pattern that is at once *disconnected* from the present (insofar as the current moment of retrospect is its culmination, the sign of the past’s irrelevance) and *named* (in order to achieve the proper judgment, in order to prevent excessive specificity).<sup>29</sup> If we take trauma, in Cathy Caruth’s description, as not simply the reality of past violence but “the reality of the way that its violence has not been fully known,” then the function of general, categorical terms in Austen’s “life-reviews” seems to be trauma’s opposite: a knowing of the past that would make particularized remembrance obsolete.<sup>30</sup>

And yet to what purpose is all the wrenching of an older notion of homesickness—the replacements of traumas with pleasures, places with times, constitutive pasts with disconnected pasts, instances with names—tending or leading? I suggest that the key lies in the vagueness of nostalgia that seems to be apparent in the workings of the four processes listed earlier—in that vagueness, and in the very social nature of nostalgic remembrance. Susan Stewart has written of the “social disease of nostalgia,” and, however interesting the curious persistence of “disease” is in reflections on the subject, what is equally important in Stewart’s phrase, and perhaps more perspicuous, is her insistence that nostalgia is *social*.<sup>31</sup> In Austen’s texts it is inescapably so, and a tentative explanation of the purpose of the four earlier alterations to eighteenth-century nostalgia might be the following: the dilution of the past in the service of making it available to social groups. The fifth and final aspect of modern nostalgia, then, is perhaps the summation of all nostalgic processes: a replacement of stubbornly individual pasts with *communal* pasts.

Eighteenth-century homesickness is, as we have seen, a glitch in the act of assimilation. Grouped into armies, on explorers’ vessels, or in urban centers, the homesick individual fails to merge his or her own identity into a new, larger group

identity, because personal memory remains too clear and too pressing: Hamilton's patient is removed into the hospital where he can only speak of former friends and locales; sequestered and ill, he is no longer a functioning part of his new identity, the army, because a preexisting identity (as a "Welshman") maintains its priority. Thomas Arnold understood nostalgia as a failure specifically in urban assimilation, asserting that homesickness "shuns the populous, wealthy, commercial city, where a free intercourse with the rest of mankind, and especially the daily resort and frequent society of foreigners, render the views and connections more extensive, familiarize distant notions with each other, rub off the partiality of private and confined attachments, and while they diminish the warmth, vastly increase the extent of affection."<sup>32</sup> In Austen the emphasis is much the same—the older homesickness is allied with "private and confined attachments," attachments that the newer nostalgia specifically dissolves; with Arnold in mind, we might even see Austen's plots tending toward the creation of more *cosmopolitan* psyches. Claiming a disconnection from the past, naming and judging it, taking a fond pleasure in it rather than taking it as a fount of distress, the Austenian nostalgic makes the individual past available to others.

It is a process most visibly enacted in *Emma*, where the memory of one private and confined attachment—Harriet's former attraction to Mr. Elton—is transmuted, through a literal act of dispensing with the past, into a diluted memory that can be shared. Rather than permitting the memory of Emma's promotion of the affair to harden into a settled resentment or a remembrance that, by virtue of its being unmentionable, would become all the more present to them, Harriet carries to Hartfield a box of souvenirs. The parcel, labeled "Most precious treasures," contains a piece of court-plaster and a fragment of a pencil, both once discarded by Elton—highly effective metonymies of the days of Harriet's interest. Harriet begins by asserting a disconnection from this past: "It seems like madness! I can see nothing at all extraordinary in him now" (*E*, 337). Then she proceeds, while wishing the Eltons well, to state her purpose in visiting Emma: "No, let them be ever so happy together, it will not give me another moment's pang: and to convince you that I have been speaking truth, I am now going to destroy—what I ought to have destroyed long ago—what I ought never to have kept—I know that very well (blushing as she spoke).—However, now I will destroy it all—and it is my particular wish to do it in your presence, that you may see how rational I am grown" (*E*, 337–38). The mere destruction of the souvenirs—called later "relics" and "remembrances"—is not sufficient, for forgetting is not so much the point as is forgetting in the service of a shareable past. Harriet's emphasis is upon the burning of the "relics" taking place before Emma: "I have nothing more to show you, or to say—except that I am now going to throw them both behind the fire, and I wish you to see me do it" (*E*, 340). Of course, before the souvenirs are destroyed and the memory consigned to the fire, Harriet narrates the ambient incidents surrounding the objects, small moments of furtive, imagined intimacy between her and Elton, to



Emma, and Emma is therefore able to revise her own memories of those incidents, so that Harriet's "private and confined attachment" is confined to her no longer. By sharing her previously ineffable and appropriately boxed memories with Emma, Harriet enables their forgetting: the destruction of the souvenirs and the sharing of the memories with Emma is a single act, one that in releasing the remembered material from its individual grip annihilates it. Should there be any skepticism regarding Harriet's combined act of forgetting, penance, and sharing, the text does not support it—the novel proceeds to its conclusion without any further resurrection of Harriet's memories of Elton. They are common property between Harriet and Emma, and therefore forgotten, nostalgized now: "There it goes," Harriet says, "and there is an end, thank Heaven! of Mr. Elton" (*E*, 340).

In sharing the past, Harriet's narration becomes simply interesting, ironic, piquant; it is neither traumatic nor consequential. The nostalgic processes of disconnection, communality, and naming or judgment—Harriet calls her former infatuation "madness" and "nonsense"—lead to a form of memory capable of making former pain, as Elizabeth Bennet had suggested, pleasurable for a social grouping, even those memories that once threatened those social groupings. Of course what Harriet tells us, just as what Darcy tells of his childhood, we have not seen; what is Austen to do with difficulty that we have seen, that must in some sense be resolved and then nostalgized? Here *Emma* is again instructive. Frank Churchill lets slip, during a walk to Hartfield, that he has news of the doctor Mr. Perry's impending use of a carriage, forgetting for the time that the means through which he has acquired this bit of neighborhood gossip is his secret correspondence with Jane Fairfax. The innocuous slip causes Jane some anxious moments, and the others some seconds of suspicion, which are allayed by Frank's claim to have dreamed the information. A series of worried glances pass between Frank and Jane, are registered by the ever-observant Mr. Knightley, and a small crisis seems to have just passed. With an economy of detail that presages the modern detective novel, Austen does not let this incident pass away; it becomes instead the object of the novel's nostalgic close, a microcosmic example of how we are to regard all of the text's earlier crises. Much later, the liaison between Frank and Jane having been brought to light and fully sanctioned, the chance mention of Mr. Perry's name sparks a communalized memory:

Frank Churchill caught the name.

"Perry!" said he to Emma, and trying, as he spoke, to catch Miss Fairfax's eye. "My friend Mr. Perry! What are they saying about Mr. Perry?—Has he been here this morning?—And how does he travel now?—Has he set up his carriage?"

Emma soon recollected, and understood him; and while she joined in the laugh, it was evident from Jane's countenance that she too was really hearing him, though trying to seem deaf.

"Such an extraordinary dream of mine!" he cried. "I can never think of it without laughing.—She hears us, she hears us, Miss Woodhouse. I see it in her cheek, her smile, her vain attempt to frown. Look at her. Do not you see that, at this instant, the very passage of

her own letter, which sent me the report, is passing under her eye—that the whole blunder is spread before her—that she can attend to nothing else, though pretending to listen to the others?” (*E*, 479–80)

What was anxiety is here comedy, safely transformed into a humorous anecdote that Jane and Emma can both understand—a communality that nicely effaces the original confinement of Frank and Jane’s mutual secrecy by, in essence, letting Emma in on the joke. The tone is firmly nostalgic: taking pleasure in the recollection of pain when the pain ceases to tell. What had been the transgression of Frank and Jane, their asocial secrecy and longing, is metamorphosed into *the very binding force* of the novel’s completed community. The capacity of this community to remember past secrets as amusing bumps on the road to full revelation is *Emma*’s justification for the alchemies of nostalgia. That is, the text demonstrates the necessity of nostalgia to the formation of new identities, for nostalgia acts as the force whereby previous confinements are pried apart. Remembrance in Austen, particularly in her closural scenes, is a communal phenomenon, carried out between couples and groups; Elizabeth Bennet’s or Anne Elliot’s soliloquizing is replaced by a court of mnemonic appeal. The vague, sometimes poignant, often humorous, occasionally earnest retrospects of Austen’s texts are social phenomena, enacted in order to cement new alliances and to erase old contentions. Like Thomas Arnold’s cities, Austen’s closural retrospects prefer a wide-ranging, forgiving nostalgia to any sickness for home.

The five qualities of modern nostalgia—pleasure, temporal rather than spatial orientation, disconnection, a naming or patterning in the interests of judgment, and communality—intertwine and interact, working upon each other to insure that the physical potency and danger of eighteenth-century homesickness ceases to afflict the more mobile modern individual. That is, we might say, the purpose of the revision to nostalgic plots: to create possibilities for mobility, and to make psychic formation and physical mobility no longer an oppositional pair. Cures of return will no longer function. “Mansfield shall cure you both,” Mrs. Grant tells Mary Crawford; “London would soon bring its cure,” Fanny Price thinks of Henry Crawford’s sudden affection for her (*MP*, 47, 324). What are these offered cures but the cure of *being somewhere else*?

### **The Harmonies of Distance: Mobile Subjects**

“The family of Dashwood had been long settled in Sussex” (*SS*, 3). From this opening statement of a rooted existence, *Sense and Sensibility*, and Austen’s work as a whole, plots a rapid decline. “Settlements” are disrupted, and the equipoise of this summarizing sentence will yield to a particularity—of dislocation, transplantation, and movement—that is only later brought back to the summaries of nostalgic

retrospect. The work of Austen's plots is to convert a psychosocial resistance to mobility, as expressed in eighteenth-century nostalgia, to an embrace of it, by appropriating the language of "settlement" for personal memory. Distance is the key: the vague distance of nostalgic memories, and the very real distances traveled by individuals seeking to escape, rather than return to, their past. The figures of Austen's later career—Fanny Price, Anne Elliot—are mobile ones. In the nineteenth century, Richard Terdiman has claimed, "the inadequacy of available memory mechanisms to the needs of a transformed society had become critical."<sup>33</sup> Here, in a history of nostalgia, we see an older "memory mechanism" beginning to yield to the social realities that have made it dangerously obsolete.

Even moments of stasis in Austen (sitting still, soliloquizing) can register mobility; it saturates the paraphernalia of her settings, notably in the form of the souvenir.<sup>34</sup> One might turn to Fanny Price's retreat, in *Mansfield Park*, to the East room, which is full of her collections and mementos. Here are kept old drawings of Maria and Julia Bertram's, a sketch of William Price made in the Mediterranean, work-boxes given her by family members: a short lifetime's worth of "memorials," all stored with assiduous care. The history encoded by these souvenirs is not one of loss, it is one of loss ameliorated and overcome:

Every thing was a friend, or bore her thoughts to a friend; and though there had been sometimes much of suffering to her—though her motives had been often misunderstood, her feelings disregarded, and her comprehension under-valued; though she had known the pains of tyranny, of ridicule, and neglect, yet almost every recurrence of either had led to something consolatory; her aunt Bertram had spoken for her, or Miss Lee had been encouraging, or what was yet more frequent or more dear—Edmund had been her champion and her friend—he had supported her cause, or explained her meaning, he had told her not to cry, or had given her some proof of affection which made her tears delightful—and the whole was now so blended together, so harmonized by distance, that every former affliction had its charm. (*MP*, 152)

The East room objects do not tell a detailed narrative. Like any nostalgic retrospect, the past is "blended" and "harmonized by distance" into a sealed "whole," a completed period whose particular pains and disappointments are united into something more pleasant than distressing. We are offered a catalog of what Fanny might choose to remember—from "tyranny" to "neglect"—so that the cancellations performed by the East room souvenirs might seem more striking by contrast. The specifically nostalgic function of disconnection carried out by the room's objects is mirrored by their context-free juxtapositions: three souvenir transparencies fill the lower panes of one window, "where Tintern Abbey held its station between a cave in Italy, and a moonlight lake in Cumberland" (*MP*, 152). Furthermore, these souvenirs are literally contained, held in one room, not permitted to spill over into the house at large—like souvenirs in a drawer, they exist to be consulted occasionally, but not to interfere with work or plans made elsewhere, not to become, that is, living objects again. What Fanny celebrates here, what these souvenirs provide her with,

is not past events but the conclusion of those events, the spectacle of the past's condensation and conclusion. Threatened with a resurrection of old tyrannies, specifically Aunt Norris's reminder that Fanny is not in a social position to refuse to act in the theatricals, Fanny has at least the East room and its souvenirs, where all the old tyrannies are over. These souvenirs also represent physical, spatial "distance"; for Fanny, the reader of Lord Macartney's Chinese travel journals, movement is a curative reality, and distance from the past, from its traumas as well as from its physical places, is to be prized.

The consequence of this kind of nostalgia is a plot propelled by departures, of which *Persuasion* stands as the preeminent example.<sup>35</sup> Although *Persuasion*'s largest possible motion is a return—Anne and Wentworth's return to each other—the return is achieved through a series of leavetakings and exits. Even that largest return is figured as the most dramatic departure possible, the departures implied in the "tax of quick alarm" (*P*, 252) Anne must pay for being a sailor's wife. Real restorations are not possible, in the fullest nostalgic sense. Anne is offered the possibility of a "restoration" in the person of her cousin Mr. Elliot and is not at first entirely disinclined: "The idea of becoming what her mother had been; of having the precious name of 'Lady Elliot' first revived in herself; of being restored to Kellynch, calling it her home again, her home for ever, was a charm which she could not immediately resist" (*P*, 160). But resist it she does, of course; the return home flashed before her consciousness is rejected fairly quickly, far sooner than in *Mansfield Park*, where Fanny Price's return home to Portsmouth has to transpire before its importance can be negated. *Persuasion* instead leaves the Hamilton-and-Edwards plot of restoration behind, departs from its consequences before they can become dangerous, and chooses instead a constant mobility that leaves its traces on the memories of its characters. Anne's modern nostalgia is most evident upon leaving a place or scene, upon considering a period of time to have concluded; thus her second departure, from Uppercross to Bath, is far less difficult than her departure from Kellynch, for this time she feels the departure to coincide with the closing of an era, with a nostalgic disconnection:

Scenes had passed in Uppercross, which made it precious. It stood the record of many sensations of pain, once severe, but now softened; and of some instances of relenting feeling, some breathings of friendship and reconciliation, which could never be looked for again, and which could never cease to be dear. She left it all behind her; all but the recollection that such things had been. (*P*, 123)

What we have here is the perfect coalescence of spatial and mnemonic distances, a physical mobility that licenses nostalgic elisions, and a nostalgic memory that makes possible a continual mobility.

It should be no surprise, then, that discussions of memory in *Persuasion* occur in the context of discussions of travel. Arguing with Captain Harville about gendered memory during the novel's climactic scene, Anne insists that the mobility of men enables their forgetfulness—women "live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings

prey upon us,” while men “have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort or other, to take you back into the world immediately, and continual occupation and change soon weaken impressions” (*P*, 232). When Harville replies by depicting the homesickness of departed sailors, Anne counters by claiming for the immobile woman the power “of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone” (*P*, 235). What is at stake in this pivotal argument is the shift from one form of selfhood—the naval memory of Banks’s homesick sailors, the unassimilable self—to another form, which finds in mobility a rescue from the confinements of remembrance. The terms of the argument are significantly naval, and the theme of the argument is the shift, the initial phases of which are visible in Austen’s fiction, from an older medical nostalgia to the newer nostalgia that will be its cure. The lesson is voiced early in the novel: leaving Kellynch for Uppercross, we learn that “a removal from one set of people to another, though at a distance of only three miles, will often include a total change of conversation, opinion, and idea” (*P*, 42). It is only later in the novel that the lesson is implemented. Concluding her narrative as a wife prepared for sudden alarms and movements, as a wife unmoored from family locales and family examples, Anne has, one assumes, undergone a “total change”—a sea change, perhaps—and has left behind the yearnings with which she began.

This, then, is the new horizon of “nostalgia,” more thoroughly delineated by Austen’s last fiction than any of her previous narratives of dislocation. A leavetaking of home spurs a series of further leavetakings; a trauma rooted in the memory is ameliorated, judged, and left behind; former mistakes are canceled, former times periodized and then ended, stopped with a mental period; and what is left is a capacity for communalized retrospect, for what, during a conversation between Anne and Mrs. Smith, is called “the interesting charm of remembering former partialities and talking over old times” (*P*, 153). Matched to this new nostalgia, in fact its necessary condition, is movement—new scenes, new faces—a condition reflected in Anne’s previously cited *ars memorativa*. Asked by Wentworth if “disgust” permeates her remembrance of Lyme, if memories of Louisa Musgrove’s injury efface all else, Anne responds with a formula for a new nostalgia:

“The last few hours were certainly very painful,” replied Anne: “but when pain is over, the remembrance of it often becomes a pleasure. One does not love a place the less for having suffered in it, unless it has been all suffering, nothing but suffering—which was by no means the case at Lyme. We were only in anxiety and distress during the last two hours; and, previously, there had been a great deal of enjoyment. So much novelty and beauty! I have travelled so little, that every fresh place would be interesting to me—but there is real beauty at Lyme: and in short” (with a faint blush at some recollections) “altogether my impressions of the place are very agreeable.” (*P*, 183–184)

“Novelty” over trauma, “every fresh place” over regret: a vision of a mobile consciousness fulfills the preference for pleasure over pain that Elizabeth Bennet had previously advised. Furthermore, what is a “philosophy” in *Pride and Prejudice*—a piece of advice, an effort that must be undertaken—becomes a natural process in

*Persuasion*, a usual occurrence, a psychological metamorphosis that occurs in spite of the most vivid traumas. Pain is foreshortened into a “few hours,” and pleasure is widened to fill the vacuum, all with an effortlessness, an ease, that was missing from the wrenching transmutations of *Sense and Sensibility*. It is the new semantic range of “nostalgia” that Anne outlines here, and she does so by naturalizing it and by invoking a renewable mobility alongside it.

There is, famously, no settlement awaiting Anne at the novel’s conclusion, “no Uppercross-hall before her, no landed estate, no headship of a family” (*P*, 250)—what has been accomplished instead is the judgment, dilution, and cancellation of a difficult past, nowhere better exemplified than in the small-scale cancellation of Louisa Musgrove’s crisis at Lyme. Nostalgia is a closural process in Austen, a way of halting the reverberations of narrative—for how can a narrative end unless a finality of consequence is asserted? It is a method whereby the traumatic dislocations and injuries of Austen’s openings do not obscure the happier dispositions of her plots, and whereby the reformations and assimilations that complete her narratives are not shadowed by earlier fractures and fissures. Yet nostalgia is more than a narratological principle; in Austen’s final novel, it is a narratological principle naturalized as a psychological process, since the principle exhibited by the texts—the elision of Fanny Price’s Portsmouth upbringing, of Anne and Wentworth’s eight missed years, of Elizabeth and Darcy’s mutual woundings—must be learned by Austen’s characters themselves as a *mnemonic habit*. Austen’s novels, that is, instruct her characters in the form of memory that will help close her fictions. Uncovering the “nostalgics” of these texts—their nostalgic logic—is not simply elucidating a technical choice, then, but is also arriving at a sense of where a more contemporary *nostalgia*, to use the word so often employed by Austen’s later critics, begins: where it is first taught, out of what situations it arises, against what it first reacted. In *Persuasion*, nostalgia is taught as a reaction to the naval homesickness of Banks’s sailors; we are taken from “home” to “every fresh place,” to a naval memory that celebrates departures and not returns.

## Notes

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1. Deirdre Le Faye, ed., *Jane Austen's Letters*, 3d ed. (Oxford, 1995), 99; Gustave Flaubert, *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, vol. 17 of *Les oeuvres de Gustave Flaubert* (Lausanne, 1965), 430. Flaubert's aphorism can be rendered as "Memory. Complain about your own, and even boast of not having any. But howl if anyone says you lack judgment." Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
2. Frederic Jameson's analysis of the failure of contemporary nostalgia to provide a genuine historical sense—as an "elaborated symptom of the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way"—is perhaps our pre-eminent example of the severance of "nostalgia" from a memory that might represent a full historical consciousness. But Jameson himself is aware of the history of dehistoricizing, warning his readers that the current nostalgia he indicts is "in no way to be grasped as passionate expressions of that older longing once called nostalgia but rather quite the opposite," thus hinting at the history of the supercession of trauma (or passion, or longing) that contemporary nostalgia conceals. What Jameson exhibits here is a sense of the slight catechresis in terming a contemporary forgetfulness of history *nostalgia*—a catechresis that is nonetheless tellingly ironic, given the fact that what contemporary nostalgia most thoroughly forgets is *its own* history; Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C., 1991), 21, xvii.
3. Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1982), 183. Hereafter, citations from Austen's novels are given parenthetically with the following abbreviations:

*E*: *Emma*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1982)  
*MP*: *Mansfield Park*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1980)  
*P*: *Persuasion*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1982)  
*PP*: *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1982)  
*SS*: *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford, 1982)

4. Sir Joseph Banks, *Journal of the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Banks*, ed. Joseph Hooker (London, 1896), 329.
5. Obliquely, but nonetheless insistently. Most of the finest recent work on Austen is based on the impulse to refute, refine, and unsettle various explicitly "nostalgic" readings. "It is no accident, of course," Claudia Johnson writes, "that as modern readers find themselves more nostalgic for the stateliness and stability Austen's world is said to apotheosize, Austen's class gets higher and higher, and she herself is claimed to be more conservative"; Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago, 1988), xviii. The critic with whom Johnson argues most consistently, Marilyn Butler, makes a similar move, criticizing the politically neutral tenor of earlier Austen criticism as examples of anything from "simple nostalgia to a more complex and subtle justification for inactivity"; Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford, 1987), xiv. Johnson has more recently reflected upon the various difficulties professional readers of Austen have in relation to a dehistoricizing nostalgia in Claudia Johnson, "Austen Cults and Cultures," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster (Cambridge, 1997), 211–26; while Roger Sales has written pertinently on some aspects of the Austen nostalgia industry, including the celebration of the 1975 bicentennial of her birth, in Roger Sales, *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England* (New York, 1994). What has been consistently opposed to Austenian nostalgia is what might be called a *dramatic historicism*, an attempt to restore to cultural memory what nostalgia has elided or diluted—the most well-known example of which might be Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991): 818–37.

6. Henry James, "The Lesson of Balzac," In *Henry James: Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, Prefaces to the New York Edition* (New York, 1984), 118.
7. This denostalgizing has most notably been initiated by Michael Roth, in his work on French case histories of nostalgic sufferers, and David Lowenthal. See Michael Roth, "Dying of the Past: Medical Studies of Nostalgia in Nineteenth-Century France," *History and Memory* 3, no. 1 (1991): 5–29; David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985), 10–13. See also G. S. Rousseau, "War and Peace: Some Representations of Nostalgia and Adventure in the Eighteenth Century," in *Guerres et paix: La Grande-Bretagne au XVIIIe siècle I–II*, ed. Paul-Gabriel Bouce (Paris, 1998), 121–40; George Rosen, "Nostalgia: A 'Forgotten' Psychological Disorder," *Clio Medica* 10, no. 1 (1975): 29–52; and Jean Starobinski, "The Idea of Nostalgia," *Diogenes* 54, no. 3 (1966): 81–103.
8. Johannes Hofer's little-known work is picked up by two thorough German histories of nostalgia: Fritz Ernst, *Vom Heimweh* (Zurich, 1949); Klaus Brunnert, "Nostalgie in der Geschichte der Medizin," *Düsseldorfer Arbeiten zur Geschichte der Medizin* 58 (1984): 1–339.
9. It has yet to depart European history: the most telling recent revision of Hofer's coinage is *Ostalgie*, a persistent, regretful memory of the vanished German Democratic Republic by former East Germans. In contemporary analyses of and apologies for *Ostalgie*, a part of the eighteenth-century structure of nostalgia—the inability or refusal to form new, assimilated social wholes—makes a ghostly reappearance.
10. Rosen, "Nostalgia," 40–41.
11. James Thatcher, a physician for the colonials, made this entry in his journal during the summer of 1780, while encamped in New Jersey: "Our troops in camp are in general healthy, but we are troubled with many perplexing instances of indisposition, occasioned by absence from home, called by Dr. Cullen *nostalgia*, or home sickness. This complaint is frequent among the militia, and recruits from New England. They become dull and melancholy, with loss of appetite, restless nights, and great weakness. In some instances they become so hypochondriacal as to be proper subjects for the hospital"; James Thatcher, *A Military Journal During the American Revolutionary War* (Boston, 1823), 242.
12. William Falconer, *A Dissertation on the Influence of the Passions upon Disorders of the Body* (London, 1788), 90–91.
13. D. J. Larrey, *Surgical Essays*, trans. John Revere (Baltimore, 1823), 155.
14. For Ian Hacking the "ecological niche" is "not just social, not just medical, not just coming from the patient, not just from the doctors, but from the concatenation of an extraordinarily large number of diverse types of elements which for a moment provide a stable home for certain types of manifestation of illness"; See Ian Hacking, *Mad Travelers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illnesses* (Charlottesville, Va., 1998), 13. The concept is a highly useful one, insofar as it allows us a way out of the methodological bind of reading "nostalgia" as either a comically faulty diagnosis or a mask for a deeper pathology, such as clinical depression. Hacking's study—centering on the late-nineteenth-century malady known as "fugue," or the compulsion to travel—has interesting implications for a history of its earlier opposite, homesickness.
15. Although the bulk of clinical instances, given the usual military "niche" of the disease, were male, female sufferers of the malady were known. Emily Brontë seems to have been understood as one; Elizabeth Gaskell writes that her suffering when forced to leave Haworth "became at length so much an acknowledged fact, that whichever was obliged



to leave home, the sisters decided that Emily must remain there, where alone she could enjoy anything like good health"; see Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. Alan Shelston (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1975), 158–59. Austen's biographers have similarly attempted to read their subject as an eighteenth-century nostalgic, retailing an apocryphal tale of her fainting upon learning of the family's relocation from Steventon to Bath. David Nokes in his recent biography casts needed doubt on this story, reminding us that Austen's attitude toward the move may have been closer to that of the modern nostalgic: wistfully regretful, but by no means unwilling to move to a new locale; see David Nokes, *Jane Austen: A Life* (London, 1997), 220–23.

16. See, for instance, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which as late as 1818 offers us Victor Frankenstein's nostalgia—poised neatly between a medical condition and a sentimentality—for his native Geneva: "Sometimes, indeed, I felt a wish for happiness; and thought, with melancholy delight, of my beloved cousin; or longed, with a devouring *maladie du pays*, to see once more the blue lake and rapid Rhone, that had been so dear to me in early childhood"; Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* (London, 1969), 182. A persistent, if persistently debunked, anecdote of the late eighteenth century described Swiss mercenaries in France as perpetually in danger of contracting nostalgia en masse were they to hear the native anthem "Ranz des vaches"; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his 1768 *Dictionnaire de musique*, relates that French army musicians were forbidden "*sous peine de mort*" to play the tune; J.-J. Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique*, vol. 14 of *Oeuvres complètes de J.-J. Rousseau* (Paris, 1831), 79. Sauvages de la Croix's 1760 *Nosologia Methodica* seems to have been the origin of the story, but it appears in virtually every published description of nostalgia, including Falconer's *Dissertation*. Samuel Rogers's *The Pleasures of Memory* (1792) made the anecdote a parable for any nationalist homesickness:

The intrepid Swiss, that guards a foreign shore,  
 Condemn'd to climb his mountain-cliffs no more,  
 If chance he hear that song so sweetly wild,  
 His heart would spring to hear it, when a child;  
 That song, as simple as the joys he knew,  
 When in the shepherd-dance he blithely flew;  
 Melts at the long-lost scenes that round him rife,  
 And sinks a martyr to repentant sighs.

See Samuel Rogers, *The Pleasures of Memory* (Oxford, 1989), 20–21.

17. Falconer, *Dissertation*, 90, 92.
18. George Seymour, *Dissertatio medica inauguralis de nostalgia* (Edinburgh, 1818), 6.
19. Thomas Arnold, *Observations on the Nature, Kinds, Causes, and Prevention of Insanity, Lunacy, or Madness* (Leicester, Eng., 1782), 1:266.
20. Dislocation, travel, relocation: categories of *place* that until recently have been ignored in studies of Austen; one exception, to which I owe a debt, is Edward Said's argument, apropos of *Mansfield Park*, that "we have become so accustomed to thinking of the novel's plot and structure as constituted mainly by temporality that we have overlooked the function of space, geography, and location"; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), 84. Of particular value is Franco Moretti's recent study of Austen's cultural geography in his *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900* (London, 1998). Historians, meanwhile, have not been reluctant to use Austen's work as evidence of the grow-

- ing importance of mobility to Regency culture; Linda Colley cites *Northanger Abbey* as an instance of the nascent trend of “internal tourism,” while Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, when discussing the early-nineteenth-century intersection of mobility and gender, turn to the walks of *Pride and Prejudice*. See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, 1992), 172–74; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago, 1987), 404, 531.
21. One might also adduce the increasing dignity of “homesickness” in philosophical and literary registers, such as Novalis’s well-known proclamation: “Die Philosophie ist eigentlich Heimweh—Trieb überall zu Hause zu seyn” [Philosophy is essentially homesickness—the impulse to be at home everywhere]; Novalis, *Schriften*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel (Stuttgart, 1960), 3:434.
  22. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Home-sick,” in *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Oxford, 1912), 1:314.
  23. In fact what one might call a “terminological nap” occurs, in which *nostalgia* disappears from active use until its reappearance, much later in the century, in its contemporary guise. Needless to say, my dating of this semantic shift is meant to account only for Britain; as Michael Roth has shown, the vibrancy of the pathological version of *nostalgia* persisted much longer in France, where it was not until the 1870s—when Jean-Martin Charcot’s *hysteria* took precedence—that the depathologization of nostalgia began in earnest; see Roth, “Dying of the Past,” 21–24. The term was still in clinical use in the United States as late as the Civil War, when casualties from nostalgia (572 cases with one death in 1862; 2,016 cases with 12 deaths in 1863) were noted by Union doctors; see Rosen, “Nostalgia,” 46–47.
  24. Robert Hamilton, “History of a remarkable Case of Nostalgia affecting a native of Wales, and occurring in Britain,” in *Medical Commentaries for the Years 1786, 1787* (Philadelphia, 1795), 216–17. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses.
  25. Insofar as it was often difficult to repatriate patients afflicted with nostalgia in distant lands, examples of the fatal option of the nostalgic plot—death from homesickness—are present in the medical literature. Larrey describes the case of a soldier in the Royal Guard, a native of the north of France, who enters a wounded ward complaining of some numbness, but who dies after a month of futile treatment; “He exhibited unequivocal signs of nostalgia,” Larrey writes, “for during the delirium with which he was attacked, he spoke incessantly of his country”; Larrey, *Surgical Essays*, 171–72. Honoré de Balzac’s 1840 story “Pierrette” offers a fictional instance of such a resolution; his central character dies from, among other ailments, “la nostalgie bretonne, maladie morale si connue que les colonels y ont égard pour les Bretons qui se trouvent dans leurs régiments” [the Breton homesickness, a moral illness so well-known that colonels allow for it in the Bretons who serve in their regiments]; Honoré de Balzac, “Pierrette,” in *La comédie humaine* (Paris, 1976), 4:107.
  26. Michael Schudson has provided a set of terms for understanding how collective remembrance distorts the past that dovetail interestingly with those I have supplied to explain the workings of nostalgia; his first process, “distanciation,” mirrors what I have called *disconnection*, while his remaining processes (“instrumentalization,” “narrativization,” “conventionalization”) offer alternate versions of what I term *naming*. With this taxonomic similarity in mind, it is possible to wonder if nostalgia is the central form of modern collective remembrance; see Michael Schudson, “Dynamics of Distortion in

- Collective Memory,” in *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past*, ed. Daniel Schacter (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 346–64.
27. What this particular alteration undoes is the ancient linkage of memory to space—architectural space, imagined interior space—that Frances Yates, in her seminal *The Art of Memory* (Chicago, 1966), traces back to the mnemonic loci of classical orators and rhetoricians. Perhaps part of the effect of this undoing might be described as a shift from the arts of memory described by Yates to what might be called a nostalgic art of forgetting.
  28. My description of “disconnection” here owes a debt to Reinhart Koselleck’s analysis of the term *Neuzeit*, which—in its early-nineteenth-century formation—encapsulates a world where “the difference between past and present increased, so that lived time was experienced as a rupture, as a period of transition in which the new and the unexpected continually happened”; Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 257.
  29. The nostalgic process of naming or judging the past—a sort of mnemonic taxonomization—bears a strong relation to D. A. Miller’s account of naming in Austen as a “clausal imposition” that is essentially a dilution or condensation of available fact and circumstance into a precise term; see D. A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel* (Princeton, 1981), 45. My analysis here is particularly indebted to Miller’s example.
  30. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, 1996), 6.
  31. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, N.C., 1993), ix.
  32. Arnold, *Observations*, 266.
  33. Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1993), 20.
  34. In its purest form, the souvenir produces distance; it is the dead end of the past. “We do not need or desire souvenirs of events that are repeatable,” Susan Stewart has written. “Rather we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable, events whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative”; Stewart, *On Longing*, 135. To carry Stewart’s logic one step further, it might be said that we need and desire souvenirs *in order to* place the past beyond us, *in order to* make the past not repeatable. Such, at least, is the logic of *Mansfield Park*’s objects.
  35. See also Monica Cohen, *Professional Domesticity in the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge, 1998), for an alternate account of one form of departure, the naval, as a form of domesticity—a version of “home” as continual travel.