Georgette Heyer: what Austen left out

HOPKINS, Lisa <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9512-0926>

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Lisa Hopkins

Sheffield Hallam University

Georgette Heyer's debt to Austen is obvious. In *An Infamous Army*, the heroine Barbara Childe has been involved with someone called Ralph Dashwood and the Duchess of Avon tells her not to cry because it will ruin her face, both recalling *Sense and Sensibility*; Miss Devenish and Lord George being secretly married recalls the story of Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill, and *Emma* is remembered again when at the Duchess of Richmond's ball 'It was a very hot night, and the young people, overcoming the prudence of their elders, had had the windows opened in the ballroom'.[1] There is a suggestive contrast here with *Childe Harold*, which Heyer certainly knew and which might indeed have suggested Barbara's surname, where the atmosphere of the ball is presented as febrile in the extreme, with passions roused by music, lamplight and danger and the Duke of Brunswick assailed by a premonition of his imminent death at Quatre Bras. For Byron, the ball is a brief poignant moment of love and joy already marred by the approaching sounds of war; Heyer, though, homes in on something far more prosaic, and in so doing stitches Waterloo into the fabric of English society by aligning it with the stories of two or three country families in which Austen famously declared herself to specialise. In particular, *Regency Buck*, the first of Heyer's regency novels and in many ways a template and a manifesto for those which followed, repeatedly evokes Austen. Judith recalls Fanny Price, when she says to Perry 'you would not care to travel on Sunday', and both Lizzy Bennet and Austen herself when she is very taken with Worth's house, which is in Austen's own county of Hampshire.[2] *Pride and Prejudice* is recalled again when Worth says 'Do not be striding about the room any longer, Miss

Taverner. You look magnificent, but it is a waste of energy' (205), when Peregrine tells Worth that 'she had not been disliking you for a long time them, you know … In fact, quite the reverse' (288), and when Judith and Worth speculate about whose family will like their marriage least (356). *Emma* is echoed when Judith sheds tears in a coach after being reproached by Worth (248), , and also in a teasing reference to out-of-season fruit, a famous error in *Emma*: '"My dear ma'am, where will you find strawberries at this season!" said Miss Taverner, amused' (62). *Regency Buck* also shares territory with *Northanger Abbey* when Judith tells Perry she suspects he is being poisoned and he says 'This is what comes of reading Mrs Radclyffe's novels!' (201). In *The Unknown Ajax* Anthea muses 'I could, I think, have developed a *tendre* for Jack Froyle' (25); Froyle is an anagram for Lefroy, and Tom Lefroy is often identified as Jane Austen's lost love.

There is however also a strong contrast between the two authors. It has often been observed that there are certain things Jane Austen excludes from her books. *Regency Buck* systematically includes everything that Austen keeps silent on: Prinny and the Pavilion; duels; snuff; men's clothes and pastimes; men's conversation; Beau Brummell; curricle racing; cockfighting; boxing; and the manners of men to women whom they do not consider ladies. In particular, the heroine's brother Peregrine 'took sparring lessons at Jackson's Saloon; shot at Manton's Galleries; fenced at Angelo's; drank Blue Ruin in Cribb's Parlour; drove to races in his own tilbury, and generally behaved very much as any other young gentleman of fortune did who fancied himself as a fashionable buck' (78). We even overhear an all-male conversation, when Judith goes out of the library and we stay with Worth and Charles (208), and indeed Heyer's book, as suggested by the title, is almost as interested in men as in women: when Judith faints in the Pavilion just after Perry is drugged by Worth it is clear that the stories of the siblings comment on each other in a way that never obtains for an

Austen heroine. In this essay I suggest that the combination of Heyer's close relationship to Austen and her equally strong investment in other topics and tropes provides a formula which helps to explain why Austen herself has come to be so often understood as aligned to the romance genre.[3] Seeing Austen through and with Heyer, and using Heyer to supply the precise details of coaches, fashions, and domestic furnishings which Austen herself does not give us (Marghanita Laski notes that 'any of her characters may talk more "Regency English" in a paragraph than is spoken in Jane Austen's entire corpus'),[4] we have come to understand Austen as a writer like Heyer, and perhaps even to feel disappointed when she withholds what Heyer gives so freely.

Above all Heyer differs from Austen in focusing on the Napoleonic Wars. Austen herself is famously reticent on this topic: the nearest we come to the end of the Peninsula campaign is the moment in *Persuasion*, set in 1814, when Mr Shepherd says 'This peace will be turning all our rich Navy Officers ashore',[5] and none of the various army officers in the novels ever seems in danger of being called into action. In Heyer, though, references to the wars abound. Almeria, a town in Spain, appears in several books as a Christian name for a female, evoking the Peninsula. In *Charity Girl*, the hero's middle brother Horace, who never appears because he is serving in France in the Army of Occupation, seems to have been introduced solely in order to connect the story to the war; similarly in *The Reluctant Widow* Harry, the one Carlyon brother whom we never meet because he is on the staff of Sir Rowland Hill, seems to exist expressly to introduce the idea of the Peninsula and to connect the espionage motif to the day-to-day lives of the characters,[6] and the surname of Eustacie de Vauban in *The Talisman Ring* recalls a legendary military architect who worked (amongst other place) on the Franco-Spanish border. In *Regency Buck*, Charles Audley has just been wounded in the Peninsula; Judith 'wanted to be hearing of Lord Nelson, who had naturally been the hero of

her school-days' (58), and eventually induces the Duke of Clarence to talk about him (88); and when Bernard Taverner meets Charles Audley 'The news of the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo had not long been made known; there was plenty to say; and half an hour passed apparently to both men's satisfaction' (219). In *Sylvester* Sir Nugent hilariously asks Ianthe, who is nervous about crossing the Channel, 'What would have happened if Nelson had been scared to go on a ship?'.[7]

Judith and Sir Nugent may both have made a hero of Nelson, but if there is one figure in whom Heyer herself is interested, it is Wellington. Brian Cathcart says of the duke that 'for well over a century his conduct and manner defined the English gentleman for the rest of the world - courteous, elegant, unflappable, terse and detached almost to a fault'.[8] Apart from 'courteous' this also defines the Heyer hero, and in fact Wellington was not consistently courteous:

> A guards chaplain reported that 'General officers, even those commanding divisions are kept in ignorance by the great Duke … I am astonished to find the *fear* which exists, of *at all offending* the Duke; and the implicit submission and humility with which Men of talent courage and character shrink before his abrupt, hurried and testy manner'.[9]

This is in fact the most strongly developed feature of Heyer's two portraits of the duke, in *The Spanish Bride* and *An Infamous Army*: he is almost always irritable. Nevertheless for Heyer's men service in Wellinton's army is an infallible preservative from foppishness and folly; essentially, they have a choice between fighting for Wellington or growing to be like Prinny or Byron. The events of *The Corinthian,* in which Pen's aunt is named Almeria, are bookended by Sir Richard Wyndham's promise to purchase a pair of colours for Cedric Brandon, who otherwise has nothing to do but '[Back] a goose to win a hundred-yard race

against a turkey-cock'; a commission will save him from such frivolity, let alone to the robbery to which his brother has already stooped.[10] In *April Lady* the heroine Nell's brother, Viscount Dysart, will find a vocation in Wellington's army which will save both his sister's marriage and his own self-respect. There is no sign that Dysart could ever be good for anything until a chance-met acquaintance is unwise enough to spout the standard Whig view 'that Wellington's victories had been exaggerated, and within a very few minutes was not only being dragged relentlessly through the previous year's campaigns, but was being given a lesson in strategy into the bargain' (107). It is also notable that in many of Heyer's regency novels the language, experience and attitudes of the Peninsular War do not simply stay in Spain but permeate the fabric of English society, particularly in battles of the sexes. In *April Lady*, military imagery begins to seep into the language of the novel after this initial reference to the Peninsular Wars. Dysart has a disagreement with Letty, the heroine's sister-in-law: 'The Viscount emerged victorious from the engagement' (115), and when Letty next encounters him 'Nell intervened hastily, before she could again cross swords with her incorrigible tormentor' (119). Soon afterwards, Nell's husband the Earl of Cardross, discovering that a promise to his mother has prevented Dysart from joining up, declares that 'I am persuaded that if she was aware of the truth she would think the hazards of war less perilous than those of the metropolis' (142). Letty too continues to think and act in a military way, telling Nell with 'a martial light in her eye' that 'my affairs have now reached a Crisis!' (148); she soon launches 'her preliminary skirmish' (153) with her brother, which 'had developed rapidly into a full-scale attack' (154) before she goes out riding 'with the light of battle in her eyes' (176), while elsewhere in the household, the steward 'maintained a guerrilla warfare with the Gallic ruler of the kitchens' (151). Not until Cardross resolves to purchase Dysart a commission in a Hussar regiment does peace break out, with Nell and Cardross reconciled and Letty finally allowed to marry Mr Allandale.

In other novels, too, the effects of the Napoleonic Wars are felt in England. In *The Nonesuch*, the father of Ancilla, the heroine, was killed at Ciudad Rodrigo (84) and Tiffany wears a Waterloo hat (269). So too does the eponymous heroine of *Arabella* (28), who when she first meets Mr Beaumaris 'did not hesitate to cross swords with this expert fencer' (63), and later to 'look at him with a distinct challenge in her eyes' (95). *Frederica*, set in 1818, is too late for any of the characters to have been recently engaged in active campaigning, but the hero, the Marquis of Alverstoke, still has a 'victorious engagement' with his sister (66), while his secretary Charles Trevor thinks of himself as an aide-de-camp (128) at the ball. In *Venetia*, the heroine's brother Conway is in France with the Army of Occupation, but the real battles are fought at home in Yorkshire. First Lord Damerel overcomes Venetia's nurse: 'Having created a breach in her defences by showing solicitude for Aubrey and a proper respect for her judgment in all matters concerning him, I got within her outer walls at least by the exercise of devilish strategy. In fact, I sacrificed your worthy suitor, and stormed the fortifications over his fallen carcase' (84); then after the arrival of Mrs Scorrier 'the dining-room rapidly became a battlefield on which … line inevitably demonstrated its superiority to column' (169), while the library is Aubrey's 'stronghold' (194). In *The Toll-Gate*, set in 1817, Captain Jack Staple is bored now the war is over, and is only too glad to find himself caught up in the aftermath of a robbery in which he and his horse Beau (named after the Duke of Wellington) can at least pretend that there are ambushes (136, 143), regiments (146), sentry-duty (170), reconnoitring (192) and reserves (266). In *Cousin Kate*, the heroine has grown up in the Peninsula following the drum. Left in poverty after the death of her father, she is invited to stay in the country with her aunt, and concludes cheerfully that on her journey to Staplewood 'I'm not at all likely to be snatched up by a party of guerrilleros, am I?' (36). In fact she finds she needs to treat her disturbed cousin Torquil as she did 'my

father's subalterns' (43), is offered the chance to act as 'aide-de-camp' to her aunt (64), and is provoked by Philip Broome into using soldiers' Spanish (89). Torquil, who believes he is surrounded by enemies (106), even threatens her with a gun (150), though her background enables her to realise that it is not loaded and to take it away from him. Adopting a time-honoured tactic, her aunt attempts to ensure that 'communication' with her old nurse is 'severed' (158), and 'constant warfare' (190) is waged between the servants of the aunt and those of the uncle, while the aunt regards Philip Broome as the enemy (319). In *False Colours*, where Kit has been a diplomat in Vienna and attached to Lord Cathcart's Staff in Russia during the campaign of 1814, 'a state of guerrilla warfare' exists between two sets of servants (108) and Kit going to see Mrs Alperton realises that 'when he entered the Blue saloon he would be facing guns of unknown but almost certainly heavy calibre' (160), at least until they are 'spiked' (168) by Cressy.

In particular, for Heyer an engagement in the marital sense is always also an engagement in the military sense. In *The Corinthian* Sir Richard's engagement facilitates his marriage to someone quite different, as does Serena's to Hector and Rotherham's to Emily in *Bath Tangle*. It is an engagement that drives Gilly to throw over the traces in *The Foundling* and that makes Barbara Childe torment Charles Audley in *An Infamous Army*. There is also, of course, the hilarious wrangling of Charles Rivenhall and his deplorable fiancée Eugenia Wraxton in *The Grand Sophy*, where the heroine Sophy, who has much in common with Emma, has been effectively shadowing Wellington by living first in the Peninsula and then in Vienna and Brussels with her diplomat father, the mother of Augustus Fawnhope, the unsuitable suitor of Sophy's cousin Cecilia, is called Almeria (13) and Sophy's horse is called Salamanca, and a touch of Spain is brought into the heart of London by Sancia, the fiancée of Sophy's father, whom nothing can persuade that 'English roads are not infested

with bandits and guerrilleros' (38). Though Sophy's cousin Charles warns her not to 'cross swords' (63) with him, that is of course what she does do, and also with his deplorable fiancée Eugenia. Their first skirmish comes when Sophy is dressed for riding 'with epaulettes and frogs, à la Hussar' and 'a tall-crowned hat, like a shako' (74), after which her friend Sir Vincent Talgarth tells her 'You are like poor Whinyates's rockets: no one know what you will do next!' (84); as described in *An Infamous Army*, Whinyates's rockets were used at Waterloo. Resolving that 'I am going to spike Charles's guns!' (97), Sophy drives the furious Eugenia out of Hyde Park through 'the gate by Apsley House' (113), Wellington's London residence, and later takes the party to Merton, where, as Augustus Fawnhope observes, Nelson lived with Emma Hamilton (125), where she tells Charles that he has been 'rolled … up … horse, foot, and guns!' (126). Eventually she infuriates him so much that he fires a gun in the house (195), before she finally routs Eugenia and conquers Charles when she recalls a phrase, 'Surprise is the essence of attack', which was 'once uttered by a General in her presence' (254).

The influence of the Napoleonic Wars is particularly apparent in *The Quiet Gentleman*. Although its apparent villain, Martin Frant, is more of a Brontë character than an Austen one, *The Quiet Gentleman* is Austenian in two respects: its heroine, the self-effacing Miss Morville, is a direct descendant of Fanny Price, and it repeats *Mansfield Park*'s risqué pun on rears and vices (93). Its hero Gervase Frant, earl of St Erth, and late of the 7th Hussars, is a doubly isolated figure: firstly his beautiful mother ran away from the marital home when he was a small child, eloping with her lover only to die in poverty three years later, so that Stanyon Castle is now occupied by Gervase's widowed stepmother and her son, Martin, to whom the child of that long-ago marriage is a standing offence; secondly his home has until recently been in the army, which played its part so effectively at Waterloo that it has largely

done itself out of a job, with promotion no longer likely now that there are no more wars to fight. Gervase has clung on as long as possible: when his father dies, 'Captain Viscount Desborough, as he then was styled, was at Mons, with his regiment, and it was conceivable that a high sense of his military duties had prevented him from applying for furlough at a moment when Napoleon was almost hourly expected to cross the frontier. But the seventh Earl, surviving a minor, but rather bloody, engagement at the village of Genappe, and a major engagement at Waterloo, still showed no disposition to return to the home of his ancestors'.[11] When he does return, his stepmother is not overjoyed to see him:

> 'Providence has decreed that he should succeed to his dear father's honours,' pronounced the Dowager, thinking poorly of Providence. 'One might have supposed that military service in the Peninsula - a very unhealthy locality, I understand, setting aside the chances of Violent Death in an engagement, which cannot be altogether precluded - might have rendered the present occasion unnecessary. But it was not to be!'
>
> (4)

His half-sister is even more forthright:

> 'I was never more grieved than when I heard that Gervase had come through the engagement at Genappe without a scratch, for, you know, the Seventh were heavily engaged there, and one might have supposed - But it was not to be.'
>
> (119)

Nobody even wants to know about his war; when the chaplain suggests 'How much he will have to tell us of his experiences', the Dowager is quick with an answer:

> 'Military anecdotes are never acceptable to me … I have no intention of encouraging Desborough to enlarge upon his experiences in Spain. The reflections of a General

must always be of value - though I fancy we have heard enough of the late war: those of a junior officer can only weary his auditors.'

(9)

However, though his family may have heard enough of the late war, they are in effect about to re-enact it, for when the earl finally does arrive, he brings his experience of battle to the home. The first 'skirmish' (18) is over the placement of an epergne which obscures the view across the dining table; the second, over what time he is to go to bed. He wins both, to the amazement of the household, which when he first suggests removing the epergne 'waited with suspended breath for the climax to this engagement' (19).

After the Battle of the Epergne, the imagery and language of warfare colour every aspect of this ostensibly domestic story. Day-to-day doings continue to be troped in military terms. When Theo says 'My bedchamber is above the muniment room', Gervase replies 'A day's march to reach you!' (25), and in similar vein tells his valet Turvey 'It would certainly be better that you should be quartered rather nearer to me' (26). Gervase's groom, who was with him in Spain, is constantly deploying the vocabulary he picked up there: he has had 'a bit of an *escaramuza* with the Honourable Martin's man', but now everything is 'very nice and *abrigado*' and 'the natives are *bien dispuesto*' (31). Hearing of this, Gervase says sternly 'Chard, I will have no fighting here!': '*Fighting*, me lord?' said his henchman, shocked. 'Lor', no. Nothing but a bit of cross-and-jostle work, with a muzzler to finish it! ' (31). When Gervase enquires much later how things now stand with Martin's groom, Hickling, Chard replies, 'Well, me lord, bearing in mind what you said to me at the outset, we haven't had a *batalla campal*', but declares that he is nevertheless keeping his eyes open, to which Gervase rejoins 'Don't mistake shadows for the enemy!' and Chard assures him 'I *have* been posted as vedette in my time, me lord' (209).

Chard may indignantly disclaim any thought of fighting, but it soon becomes clear that Gervase's whole outlook and behaviour have been shaped by his military service. Having had three horses shot under him at Orthes (29), he has called his chestnut that (88), and when he meets a young boy while out riding on Orthes he immdiately addresses him as 'Ensign' (89). At the ball, we are told that 'He, as was to be expected of an officer under the Duke of Wellington's command, was an excellent dancer, performing all the most difficult steps with ease and grace' (123). Even one of the styles he chooses for his cravat is called the Napoleon, and when he asks Ulverston 'Do you think I ought not to wear it?' (151) we cannot doubt that it is because he is remembering Waterloo. In fact he is making war even when he does not know it, for long before he has any thought of her, Miss Morville's heart 'had crumbled under the assault of the Earl's first smile' (246). It is hardly surprising that it is because he views Miss Morville's anger on his behalf in military terms that the earl is moved to propose instantly: when she declares that she will not allow him to be imposed upon,

> 'My dear sir, I wish you will give me leave to address your daughter *at once*!' said the Earl, quite entranced by this sudden and unexpected declaration of war on the part of his chosen bride.
>
> (306)

This in itself leads to a further conflict between Mr Morville and the Dowager over which is more reluctant to allow the marriage: 'It was now apparent to everyone that battle was fairly joined. Mrs Morville gave it as her opinion that it would be useless to attempt the distraction of either combatant' (307), but Gervase does not trouble to do that; he merely picks Miss Morville up and bears her off. Early in the novel Miss Morville observes that 'it is a favourite saying of my brother Jack's - my *military* brother - that one should always try to get

over heavy ground as light as one can' (37), and this becomes in effect the watchword for Gervase's own conduct in his domestic encounters. When he dislodges Martin from Marianne Bolderwood's side by swapping places with him at Martin's own unwary request, Martin's friend Barny Warboys, 'a mournful witness of his discomfiture, was ill-advised enough to say to him … "Rolled-up, dear boy! Very shabby stratagem! Fellow must have been on the Staff, I should think!' (50). Later, when Martin confronts him about it, Gervase instantly offers him a choice of foils, and they fence (Gervase wins), and when Theo accuses him of only pretending to care what the Dowager thinks, '"Military training, Theo: a show of strength to deceive the enemy!" said Gervase firmly' (77); Theo replies in kind when he says of Martin and Aunt Dorothea, 'It has been my unhappy fate to act as mediator in several skirmishes, and it is my firm resolve not to be present at their Waterloo!' (173). When things become more serious and the attempts on his life begin, Gervase muses that 'I have a strong notion I shall take my pistols to bed with me while I remain at Stanyon! It will be quite like Peninsular days' (91), and his friend Lord Ulverston is right to think that 'I might as easily be killed in the streets of London as on any military service' (93).

The arrival of Ulverston does nothing to diminish the use of military language: even an expedition to Marianne Bolderwood's home at Whissenhurst becomes 'an exercise in manoeuvres' which 'was won by the Earl, not, as his indignant friend told him, so much by superior strategy as by inner knowledge' (111) of the household routine, and when Ulverston begins to rival Martin as a suitor for the hand of Marianne Bolderwood, he not only 'entertain[s] her with a few of the military anecdotes so much frowned on by the Dowager' but also outflanks Martin, who is left 'regretting what had seemed at the time to be a piece of good strategy' (125). Even at the ball, Ulverston accuses the earl, 'Ger, you are a base fellow, and are trying to steal a march on me! Miss Bolderwood is promised to me for this

dance!' (127). It is also Ulverston's military experience that enables him to grasp instantly how Gervase's horse came to fall; as soon as he sees the piece of cord he says, 'Saw a whole front rank brought down by that trick once' (152), and when Gervase is shot Ulverston rouses him with 'Stand to your arms, dear boy! not dead this engagement!' (212); later he posts Chard as 'sentry' outside Martin's room (229). The reader is entirely unsurprised when these two experienced officers outflank, defeat, and disarm all their enemies in the household.

The Unknown Ajax echoes *The Quiet Gentleman* by having a veteran of both Waterloo and the Peninsula return to his ancestral home, where he is instantly greeted with a hostility which rivals anything he is likely to have experienced on campaign. Major Hugo Darracott has grown up in Yorkshire, which leads his southern relatives to fear that he will be unable to read and write and will eat with his knife. Now that he has unexpectedly fallen heir to the Darracott title and property, they are determined to foist onto him a process of gentrification of which he stands in no need, since he has in fact been to Harrow (not to mention the fact of having served in the Light Bobs). Even before he arrives at Darracott Place, an atmosphere of war prevails among the other members of the family, with Anthea 'intervening to draw her grandfather's fire' (5) away from her meeker-spirited mother (whose Christian name of Elvira imparts a Spanish flavour to the home atmosphere). Anthea is correct in prophesying, however, that her grandfather will soon find another target, and that Hugo 'will arrive to find himself under fire' (24). Lord Darracott may say that 'he desired to hear no talk about the war at his dinner-table' (65), but it is at that very same meal that Hugo first 'drew my lord's fire' (65). Soon he finds that even his bedroom has 'suffered an invasion' (120), in the shape of his two cousins' rival valets, with one employing a 'devilish stratagem' (122) to get the better of the other, while Hugo's cousin Richmond, who wants to join the army, is comparing local sympathy for smugglers to the exploits of 'Guerrilleros' (136), which prompts their

cousin Claud to develop the Spanish theme further by telling Richmond that he had 'windmills in your head!' (137), an obvious glance at *Don Quixote*. When Hugo and Anthea visit the Dower House, they are greeted by the caretaker like 'hostile invaders' (157), and later Darracott Place itself is in fact invaded by two locals bent on revenge for the seduction of their daughter and sister; they are repelled only when Hugo floors one of them and tells him that he has had his 'marching orders' (214). Finally Richmond sustains a dangerous wound while dabbling in smuggling, leaving Hugo to mount a rearguard action to save him from arrest during which military metaphors start flying thick and fast: the Preventive officer Lieutenant Ottershaw deceives himself into believing that Hugo has had 'to flounder from one position to another, and finally to capitulate' (307) but is himself 'manoeuvred' (314) into a corner; Claud 'took command' (314); and Hugo observes that 'once her ladyship's guns had broken the square' he himself had 'nothing to do but to harass the retreat' (332). As a result even the previously hostile Vincent concedes that 'Your staff work is admirable, coz' (338) and offers to act 'as - er - rearguard' (339) while Richmond is got away to safety.

Another novel in which the spirit of the Peninsula comes to England is *Sprig Muslin*, where the first sentence is 'Mrs Wetherby was delighted to receive a morning call from her only surviving brother'.[12] We soon learn that her other brother, Arthur, was killed at Salamanca (6). The name is suggestive, and so too is the fact that Hester has a 'slightly myopic gaze' (13), like the Duchess of Wellington.[13] Wellington himself is mentioned only once, when Amanda says 'if Neil is wounded again, *I* am going to nurse him, and I shall not permit *anyone*, even Lord Wellington himself, to put him on one of those dreadful spring-wagons, which was harder to bear than all the rest, he told me!' (31), but he is remembered in other, less open ways. Amanda does not question Mr Theale about his travel plans because 'Successful generals did not allow their minds to be diverted by irrelevancies: they tied knots,

and went on' (96); this directly echoes a remark attributed to Wellington, as *The Foundling* informs us when Mr Liversedge says, 'I have heard it related that the Duke - I refer, Captain Ware, to his Grace of Wellington, not his Grace of Sale - once said that he made his campaigns with ropes. If anything went amiss, he tied a knot, and went on. A valuable maxim, sir, and one on which I have striven to mould my own campaigns'.[14]

Sprig Muslin is Austenian in its romance format, and indeed Sir Gareth could almost be describing Jane Austen herself when he suspects that Lady Hester, 'has a lively sense of the ridiculous' (7), but it differs from Austen not only in the attention given to Amanda, who is *not* the heroine, but also in that Amanda, whose grandfather is a general, regards herself from the outset as on a military mission. Sir Gareth asks 'What *is* your plan of campaign?' and Amanda is 'not displeased to describe what she plainly considered to be a masterpiece of generalship' (30), which essentially consists of disappearing with a view to getting herself into trouble so that her grandfather will be forced to consent to her marriage to Neil, currently 'home on sick leave from the Peninsula' (27); she is not concerned about her grandfather's anxiety because 'it is my campaign, and you can't consider the sensibilities of the enemy when you are planning a campaign!' (32), and she dismisses the idea that she is too young to be married because 'Neil knows an officer in the 95th who is married to a Spanish lady who is *much* younger than I am' (29) - obviously Juana Smith, heroine of *The Spanish Bride*. The parallel between her escapades and the Peninsular War is cemented when she says that Neil is a Brigade-Major and 'it is nonsense to suppose he can't take care of me. Why, he can take care of a whole brigade', to which Sir Gareth replies, '*That*, I fancy, would be child's play, in comparison!' (28).

Along the way, Amanda is nearly diverted into a skirmish with Lady Hester's sister-in-law, another Almeria (20) - Sir Gareth says to Hester 'I shudder to think of the battle royal which would rage between her and Lady Widmore! You would be utterly crushed between them!' (79); she also 'ceased from further argument because she had perceived how deftly [Sir Gareth] was cutting the ground from beneath her inexperienced feet. It made her very angry, but she could not help admiring, secretly, a strategy which she recognized to be masterly; nor, in spite of a strengthened determination to put him utterly to rout, did she think the worse of him for having got the better of her' (137). Meanwhile Joseph, the kitten, 'engag[es] in a protracted form of guerrilla warfare with a ball of screwed-up paper' (149). The sense that the Peninsula has been brought to the home front is increased when Sir Gareth is shot in the shoulder in England just as Neil had been in Spain, after which Amanda gets the post-boy to help her by saying 'I - I *command* you!' (175) and quarrels with Hildebrand: 'Battle was now fairly joined' (188).

A similar effect is created in *Bath Tangle*, where Major Kirkby has been six years in the Peninsula (and presumably at Waterloo, since the story is set in 1816) but says 'Nothing of any consequence has befallen me'.[15] Instead the campaign is fought at home, with the main set of hostilies between the Marquis of Rotherham, who like Sir Gareth Ludlow had a brother who was killed in the Peninsula, and the heroine Serena, 'never a fighter who resented a knock in exchange' (9) and also, in classic Austen style, 'always quick to perceive the ridiculous' (24). There is also a subsidiary battle between the marquis and Lady Laleham, who is determined to catch him for her daughter Emily and conducts a campaign which is purely Peninsular in its flavour. When she first achieves an introduction to the marquis 'Lady Laleham, having achieved her object, now judged it to be good tactics to take her leave. Her carriage was called for, and she bore her daughter off, well pleased with the success of her

morning's campaign' (47); later Serena says 'I can't but admire the Laleham-woman's generalship! To have stormed the Rotherham stronghold is something indeed!' (90) and marvels 'what tactics the Laleham-woman employed … and which of the Patronesses she outgeneralled into surrendering vouchers for Almack's, I would give a fortune to know' (111); she also describes Lady Laleham as 'lay[ing] siege' to potential suitors for Emily (140), and ultimately Lady Laleham is defeated only by her mother, who 'routed her daughter in one swift engagement' (191). In comparison, Major Kirkby, the actual Peninsula veteran, recedes wholly into the background: Serena 'was as accustomed to command as he' (130), and though she chooses the subject of Spain 'because it was one of which the Major could speak with authority' (168), he has nothing to say about it. Only when it is clear that Rotherham is going to propose to Serena does the major's language finally become military, as he asks Fanny, 'Do you think I have no interest in the outcome of this battle?' (300).

The most detailed and suggestive of Heyer's engagements with both Austen and the effects of the war at home comes in *A Civil Contract*, where Heyer echoes Auden by implicitly understanding Austen as an author fundamentally concerned with money. When Judith in *Regency Buck* shows Bernard Taverner an extract from *Sense and Sensibility*, it is one which focuses on Edward's financial status and culminates in John Dashwood saying 'Elinor, I wish with all my heart it were *twice* as much for your sake' (123). In *A Civil Contract*, the first thing we are told about the heroine Jenny is that 'she looked as though she had more sense than sensibility' (58). We begin to guess that there is more to her when she tells Adam that she has been enjoying a novel: 'It is by the author of *Sense and Sensiblity*, which - b-but I daresay you might not recall! - I liked, but M-Miss Oversley thought too humdrum' (63); as Barbara Bywaters notes, the narrative goes on to identify Jenny as Sense and her friend Julia, Adam's first love, as Sensibility (Fahnestock-Thomas 503). Only once she has mentioned

Austen do we learn that Jenny's name is actually Jane; as for Jane Austen herself, Jenny is a pet name, and there is a further connection implicit in her surname, Chawleigh, which is a portmanteau of Jane Austen's home at Chawton and her mother's family name of Leigh. That Jenny should be an admirer of Austen is obviously intended as a signal to the reader, but it is a slightly unclear one, because we cannot be quite sure what the book is: 'It is by the author of *Sense and Sensibility*' (63), and given that news of the Battle of Orthes (fought in February 1814) has recently reached England (3), one might suppose this to be *Mansfield Park*, published in May 1814, especially when Lydia suggests a game of speculation (169), which is played in *Mansfield Park*; however months later, shortly after the Carlton House fête in July 1814, Jenny is explicitly said to be reading *Mansfield Park* (227). Since it seems unlikely that it could have taken her two months to do so, could the book she was reading after Orthes have been *Pride and Prejudice*? If so, there would be an ironic comparison between the tension obtaining when she and Adam first meet and the mutual antagonism between Darcy and Lizzy. *A Civil Contract* as a whole comments on Austen's attitude to marriage, not least in that its hero marries for money, while Jenny says that the marriage she has contracted 'wouldn't do for people who have a great deal of sensibility, but I don't think I have much' (99); Julia, the Marianne figure who eventually finds happiness with a significantly older man, endorses this assessment when she accuses Jenny, 'If you had sensibility -' (147); she herself faints when she sees her lost love Adam. The book also reverses both Austen, by beginning with a marriage, and Heyer's own *Infamous Army*, since we see England awaiting the news from Waterloo, although Julia, unlike Barbara, has no wish to hear about the battle because she wants everything to be all about her.

Adam, the hero, has left the army because of his father's death, but has in any case been left with a bad limp by a wound he had sustained in the Peninsula which makes it unlikely that he

could have continued to serve. Nevertheless, his fundamental identity is that of an officer. When we first see him, at the very opening of the book, sitting in his library, he feels completely out of place:

> He should not have done so: the Priory was his birthplace, and he owned it; but his adult years had been spent in very different scenes from the placid fens and wolds of Lincolnshire, and his transition from the grandeur of the Pyrenees had been too sudden, and attended by circumstances of too much horror to make it seem to him anything other than a bad dream from which he would presently be awakened by a call to arms, or by a stampeding mule brought down by the guy-ropes of his tent, or by the mere bustle of a camp at first light.
>
> (1)

Mentally, Adam continues to follow the army; though he is now Lord Lynton, 'it was to be many weeks before he answered readily to any other title than Captain Deveril' (2), and a meeting with Lord William Russell, who has brought the dispatch from Toulouse, makes him feel as though 'he found reality again for a short space' (92). He also thinks in military terms. When he first meets Mr Chawleigh, his future father-in-law, he lets him speak for as long as he wants because it is clear that 'nothing short of a brigade of nine-pounders would halt him' (44), and when he first visits the Chawleighs his first impression is of being greeted by 'a platoon of footmen' (55). Later he tells Jenny that 'if ever I enter upon an engagement with your father I'll take care to choose my ground' (256), while Mr Chawleigh himself, bested by Lady Nassington, 'cover[ed] his retreat with some sharp fire' (127). Adam outrages his friends by refusing to follow his father's tradition of voting Whig because 'I'm not drawn to a set of fellows who have made it their business to snap and snarl round old Douro's heels!' (165). Finally he finds himself having to leave London because he cannot cope with the indifference and military ignorance of its inhabitants in the build-up to Waterloo (328-9).

In *The Spanish Bride*, Mr Meyers attempts to discover the contents of the dispatches Harry brings from America (359). In *A Civil Contract*, the climax of the book is the arrival of the Waterloo Dispatch, and the resulting effect on shares; A. S. Byatt declares of the book 'I know of no other romantic novel in which the high tension is supplied by the Stock Exchange' (264). As Cathcart's *The News From Waterloo* makes clear, there was indeed high tension attendant on the receipt of the news from Belgium and the associated fluctuation of the money markets, specifically the price of omnium. This had already been the subject of deliberate manipulation in a plot in which the naval hero Lord Cochrane was said to be involved[16] (glancingly referred to in *A Civil Contract* [195]); in the wake of rumour after rumour about what had happened in Belgium its price directly reflected the swings between optimisn and pessimism. Though the price of omnium rose slightly on Tuesday 20 June, the city was sceptical about initial reports of a great victory (which were in fact exaggerated accounts of Quatre Bras).[17] Wellington's dispatch did not reach London until late in the evening of Wednesday 21 June, but it has often been said (and Heyer could have believed) that Nathan Rothschild used advance knowledge of the victory to make a huge fortune on the stock exchange; a 1940 Nazi film used the Rothschild story to peddle anti-semitism. Adam's actions, in borrowing as much money as he can to buy rather than sell government stock, clearly rewrite this narrative, not least because they are founded solely on his faith in Wellington rather than on any actual information.[18] At the climax of the book, Adam witnesses from his club the arrival of Major Percy in a coach with captured French eagles sticking out of the windows, echoing Brian Cathcart's description of *The News From Waterloo* of how the route taken by Major Percy 'led down St James's Street and past Brooks's, the gentlemen's club, where at that very moment Sir Robert Wilson and his opposition friend Lord Grey were demonstrating to the satisfaction of members that

Bonaparte must by that time be in full possession of Brussels'.[19] The eagles, though, tell Adam a different story; they assure him that Wellington has won, and the reader will further understand that not only the Battle of Waterloo but the Napoleonic Wars as a whole have been satisfactorily concluded. The long series of battles in the Peninsula and Belgium have, though, been shown by Heyer as fundamentally constitutive of English Regency society, affecting not only those who fought in them but many who were far away from the battlefields.

In her Regency novels, Heyer has taken an Austenian model and supplemented it with echoes of the Peninsular War and the Waterloo campaign. In so doing she has minimised Austen's own focus on courtship as a process of maturation and mutual discovery and presented it more strongly and simply as a battle of the sexes, in which initial antagonism is the norm rather than the exception, unlike Austen where it is found only in the case of Elizabeth and Darcy, and will also inevitably lead to marriage, again a difference from Austen where both Emma and Anne can face with equanimity the thought that they may never marry. The differences may arise partly from the fact that Austen herself never married and Heyer did, or because for Austen the Napoleonic Wars always remained safely overseas (though there were invasion scares), whereas for Heyer, growing up during the First World War and writing many of her books in the thirties and forties, Wellington's wars inevitably prefigured others. Most fundamentally, though, it is because Austen is a novelist and Heyer is a writer of romances heavily laced with comedy, and for her Beatrice-and-Benedick relationships war is an unfailingly productive trope. To tell the stories she wants to, Heyer thus needs both an Austenian model but also what Austen left out. In infusing war into Austen she also performs one final military manoeuvre of her own, for she retrospectively enlists Austen into the ranks of romance writers.

Notes

[1] Georgette Heyer, *An Infamous Army* (London: Arrow, 2004), 145, 398, 309 and 255.

[2] Georgette Heyer, *Regency Buck* (London: Arrow, 2004), 7, 195, and 199.

[3] On Heyer as a romance writer, albeit an unconventional one, see for instance Diana Wallace, *The Woman's Historical Novel: British Women Writers, 1900-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Barbara Bywaters, 'Decentering the Romance: Jane Austen, Georgette Heyer, and Popular Romance Fiction', in Fahnestock-Thomas, *Georgette Heyer*; and Stacy Gillis, 'The Cross-Dresser, the Thief, his Daughter and her Lover: Queer Desire and Romance in Georgette Heyer's *These Old Shades*', *Women: A Cultural Review* 26.1-2 (2015): 57-74.

[4] Marghanita Laski, 'The Appeal of Georgette Heyer', in Mary Fahnestock-Thomas, *Georgette Heyer: A Critical Retrospective* (Saraland, AL: PrinnyWorld Press, 2001), 283-6, 283-4.

[5] Jane Austen, *Persuasion* [1818] (London: Pan, 1969), 34.

[6] Georgette Heyer, *The Reluctant Widow* (London: Arrow, 2004), 17.

[7] Georgette Heyer, *Sylvester* (London: Arrow, 2004), 243-4.

[8] Brian Cathcart, *The News From Waterloo: The Race to Tell Britain of Wellington's Victory* (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), 283.

[9] David Crane, *Witnessing Waterloo* (London: William Collins, 2015), 43.

[10] Georgette Heyer, *The Corinthian* (London: Arrow, 2005), 18.

[11] Georgette Heyer, *The Quiet Gentleman* [1951] (London: Arrow, 2005), 3.

[12] Georgette Heyer, *Sprig Muslin* [1956] (London: Arrow, 2005), 1.

[13] There is also a parallel with *April Lady* in that Kitty, Duchess of Wellington, infuriated the Duke by lending her brother money for a gambling debt (Peter Snow, *To War with Wellington: From the Peninsula to Waterloo* [London: John Murray, 2010], 35). In *The Quiet Gentleman*, the epergne has 'sepoys' (17), the first of several signs that St Erth is a narrative proxy for Wellington, who was scorned by Napoleon as a 'sepoy general' because of his early campaigns in India. Later he accuses Martin of trying to 'humbug' him (81), as Wellington himself said Bonaparte had done to him before Waterloo, and we hear of 'his meticulous neatness' (255), the quality which, as Heyer explains in *An Infamous Army*, led Wellington's aides de camp to christen him 'Beau Douro'.

[14] Georgette Heyer, *The Foundling* [1948] (London: Arrow, 2004), 224.

[15] Georgette Heyer, *Bath Tangle* [1955] (London: Arrow, 2004), 96.

[16] Crane, *Witnessing Waterloo*, 84-5; Jane Austen's brother Francis was one of Cochrane's defenders (82). See also p. 260 on the impact of the news of Waterloo on trading activity.

[17] Cathcart, *The News From Waterloo,* 131-2.

[18] Cathcart, *The News From Waterloo,* 157 and 166.

[19] Cathcart, *The News From Waterloo,* 232.