CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: A Sense of War

This book considers how war becomes part of the barely registered substance of our everyday, an experience inextricable from sitting at home on an evening, recalling absent friends, staring at a fire, gazing out a window. As it looks back over two centuries, *War at a Distance* tells how military conflict on a global scale looked and felt to a population whose armies and navies waged war for decades, but always at a distance. For those at home, the task was to find sentient ground for what often appeared a free-floating, impersonal military operation, removed from their immediate sensory perception. The literature and art produced in Britain during its twenty-year conflict with France cultivated this ground obsessively—and in doing so, it established forms for how we continue to think and feel about war at a distance. As a wartime phenomenon, British Romanticism gives its distinctive voice to the dislocated experience that is modern wartime: the experience of war mediated, of time and times unmoored, of feeling intensified but also adrift.

Modern wartime refers first to the experience of those living through but not in a war. As writers in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century went about their everyday routines, their country was sending men to kill and be killed across the globe. In the course of the eighteenth century the newly United Kingdom had crushed two armed rebellions at home; participated in a half dozen wars on the continent; expanded its imperial holdings on the Indian subcontinent, in the Caribbean, and in Africa; increased and then lost a good portion of its North American colonies—through warfare. At the turn of the new century, Great Britain entered a worldwide campaign, fighting first against regicides and Terror and later against an evil despot (the French Revolution and Napoleon, respectively), emerging in 1815 as the world's dominant military power.[1] The intensity and length of fighting have led historians to refer to the eighteenth century as a "Second Hundred Years War," and Linda Colley has shown that British national identity was decisively forged through this century of nearly constant military action.[2] But that military action, again, was undertaken at a remove: after the defeat of Stewart loyalists at Culloden in 1745, distance—either geophysical or temporal—was increasingly built into the British nation's understanding of war. War on home turf happened back then; it was history. If it occurred now, it occurred beyond the reach of eyes and ears, somewhere else, over there.

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[1] Great Britain joined the First Coalition against Revolutionary France after the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793. The rule of Terror in France commenced that fall. Napoleon seized political power on November 9, 1799—the 18th Brumaire.

In trying to capture this modern wartime, the chapters of this book take up materials as varied as meditations on *The Iliad*, the history of meteorology, landscape painting in India, popular poetry in the newspapers and periodicals, theories of history and the everyday, the work of dictionaries, and various modes of prophecy and prognostication; they contemplate forms of war and wartime that range from the early years of the eighteenth century to the present. Yet their primary material (their "hearth" as it were) is the literature of romantic wartime. This material makes clear that wartime responses move in several directions. In some instances the experience of war at a distance prompts a move toward abstraction, an increasing distance from the human body. Here the consolations of system, idea, and purpose hold sway: as from a bird's-eye view, you see patterns emerge; you comprehend why and when, where and how war operates. War becomes an object of knowledge, a universalizing abstraction; indeed, in wartime it threatens to become all you know. In other instances, the reverse occurs: wartime promotes a sense of atomism and despair which folds into the body so completely that inertia and apathy—lack of feeling—are its only signs. Wartime here defeats human responsiveness. There is a third, perhaps more productive response, suspended between and resistant to the polar pulls of abstraction and numbness. The last chapter of this book locates this third response visually and spatially in a "middle distance." But it surfaces throughout the book as a poetic or aesthetic response, a response that strives to produce and give form to feeling. And it is this third term, the productive aspect of wartime writing, which opens wartime—and the romantic writing that conceived it—to the present.

War at a Distance works, then, at the intersection of two academic fields: the study of wartime literature and the study of affect. The scholarship on wartime literature and culture—for example, Paul Fussell's masterpieces, *The Great War and Modern Memory* and *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War;* Bernard Bergonzi's important *Wartime and Aftermath: English Literature and Its Background, 1939–60;* Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert's *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*; Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History;* or more recently, *The Writing of Anxiety: Imagining Wartime*

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[2] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992).

in Mid-century British Culture by Lindsey Stonebridge or *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse* by Carol Acton—has been weighted heavily toward the two world wars of the past century. In recent years, the categories of "wartime" and "wartime literature" have been extended to the period of the American Civil War when, as Drew Gilpin Faust puts it, "the United States embarked on a new relationship with death."[3] Even as I learn from this work, I reach back to a yet earlier, but still self-consciously modern period of war, to acknowledge its continued currency.

Reaching back brings up a question all these studies tend to overlook: the question of "war time" itself. How do we know or measure, how do we *tell* the time of war? What sort of historiography does it require? My answers to these questions derive in part from recent work in the second of the fields I mention, the history of affect, which studies modes of response or apprehension that lie outside of cognition per se. Affect often eludes the usual models for organizing time such as linearity, punctuality, and periodicity; it eludes as well the usual models for organizing history. If we take wartime less as an object of cognition bounded by dates—a period—and more as an affecting experience which resonates beyond the here and now, then wartime literature becomes an attempt to trace and give shape to such affect, to register its wayward power.

This introduction will begin to spell out some of the human consequences of war at a distance. These consequences were of the most fundamental sort: most strikingly, we will see that distant war unsettled basic temporal experiences of the British population. How time and knowledge were registered in daily life became newly uncertain. And with that uncertainty came a set of disturbing affective responses, including numbness, dizziness, anxiety, or a sense of being overwhelmed. In taking romantic writers as architects of modern wartime, I want to bring forth these relations of distance, temporality, epistemology, and affect: the felt distance from crucial events, the limits of knowledge in a mediated culture, the temporal gaps in the transmission of information, and, finally, the difficulty of finding sounds or forms to which feeling can attach itself.

The chapters which then follow divide themselves into three parts. The first deals in particular with the conversion of war at a distance into a matter of time, into wartime. Wartime, as many romantic writers realized in their work, was the effect of war mediated, brought home through a variety of instruments. As the poems discussed in the prelude already suggest, a mediated war sets in motion various and conflicting senses of time, and unsettled times unleash unsettled feelings. This opening section, therefore, sets out the complex temporal structure of wartime, understanding it as a zone of affect which troubles what we can know and especially what we can know of history. The second section, while still underscoring how war conducted at a distance intensifies time-consciousness and charges it with affective resonance, concerns itself more with the ways distant war invades and becomes implicated in the most familiar forms of the everyday. The chapters of this section center on the thought that the everyday itself, its peculiar status in modern thought, derives from its intimate relationship with war. Indeed, writing in the romantic period illuminates how war invades thought itself, threatening to become the very ground of thinking, understood in ways that make it—like the everyday—familiar and routine, easy to overlook. The final section of the book then turns from written to visual texts, in part to demonstrate continuities and discrepancies between romantic mediations of war at a distance and more contemporary mediations which privilege the visual and televisual: our own "films upon the grate." But in directing attention to representations of the landscape of war-torn India in the 1790s, my goal is also to insist upon the global nature of a war often taken to concern only Europe. The very idea of a world war, as it emerged in this period, poses anew a question which lurks throughout the study: the question of our modern intimacy with and response to the suffering stranger who, though seen perhaps fleetingly and at a distance, nevertheless comes almost daily into our homes.

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[3] Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), xi.

War Mediated

Taking up "modern wartime," let alone something called "wartime literature," means entering into the history of war and mediation. When war is conducted at a distance, how one can know or learn of war becomes massively important, as do the obstacles (psychological, ideological, practical) to such knowledge. The epistemology of modern wartime is an epistemology of mediation. Consider again C. K. Williams's "The Hearth," written in the wake of television reports; consider too his poem "Doves," a 2003 response to media reports on the war in Iraq:

> So much crap in my head,
> So many rubbishy facts,
> So many half-baked
> theories and opinions, . . .
> So much political swill.
> So much crap, Yet

> so much I don't know
> and would dearly like to. . . . (1–4, 8–11)[4]

Or consider the familiar stories of soldiers found in remote places, still primed to fight because they have not heard what those back home know already, that peace treaties have been signed months before. These stories, circulating widely in the media, not only advertise the more "accurate" knowledge of the viewer or reader compared to the benighted warrior ("too close" to the action); they also provide an ironic fable of the larger indeterminacies of wartime (when does wartime begin or end? where exactly does it take place?) and their tight links to the work of communication.

But the roots of these familiar stories about the mediation and uncertainties of war reach down to an earlier period. If modern wartime is the experience of noncombatants in a time of war, it is worth recalling that it was in fact during the Napoleonic period that the term "noncombatant" as well as the popular understanding of "civilian" as nonmilitary first emerged in English; and the notion of "wartime" as a distinct category emerged along with them.[5] With the advent of mass media, in the print culture that rose in the eighteenth century, and in an increasingly popular visual culture of prints, panoramas, and theatrical performances, wartime stepped forth as a mediated relationship to distant violence.

Caught within these examples is the revelation that, by calling up questions of epistemology, of certainties and doubts, a mediated war evokes as well the unsettled terrain of wartime affect. Within such conditions of mediated knowledge, feeling responds not only to the war itself but to one's privileged experience of it—the privilege of knowing war at a distance. A 1798 pamphlet, written to raise the alarm of invasion by French forces, could invoke this privilege almost smugly, insisting on the war's distance and invisibility:

> [I]t has been our peculiar privilege, through the whole of this unprecedented War, to triumph over our enemies without ever seeing them, without any exposure of our personal security, without any interruption of our domestic quiet, while a great part of Europe has experienced all the horrors of War, while its cities have been sacked, and its fields drenched with blood. . . . [W]e have it in our power to frustrate the

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[4] Williams read his poem "Doves" in his acceptance speech for the National Book Award in Poetry in 2003. http://www.nationalbook.org/nbaacceptspeech_ckwilliams.html.

[5] The *OED* quotes Gen. Wellington, writing in 1811 and 1813, for the first two instances of the use of the word "non-combatant." A "civilian" originally studied or followed civil, as opposed to canon law. "civilian, *n.*[1]" *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989, *OED Online* (Oxford UP), 30 August 2007, http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50280633.

> designs of the enemy without seeing our Country become the seat of War,—without, even any violation of our Coasts.[6]

This sense of privileged security sits uneasily, though, in a work dedicated to rousing its countrymen to a constant vigilance. Elsewhere, the author paints scenarios of "violence and rapine" on British soil and reports on incendiary speeches in Paris, making visible and proximate the very violence it hopes to defend against. The picture of domestic quiet remains meaningless without this threat of "interruption." Pamphlets like this one—and there were dozens—mediated between the known and the unknown, seen and unseen, prompting wild fluctuations of feeling. They could, for instance, be at once contemptuous of France's ability to fund an invasion, and certain that the threat was real and imminent. They offered the feeling of security always bundled with the feeling of vulnerability.

The arrival—or not—of news from abroad was one determining factor of wartime experience, of what you might know and how you might feel. Already in 1798, Samuel Taylor Coleridge could lament that reading the morning news only dampened his ability to respond feelingly to distant warfare: the papers offer "dainty terms for fratricide; . . . mere abstractions, empty sounds to which / We join no feeling and attach no form!" (113, 116–17).[7] Coleridge's "un-joined" feelings"—un-articulated affect—were encouraged not only by the newspapers' euphemism and abstraction but also by the sheer facts of physical and temporal distance. In the late eighteenth century, news of war came with considerable lag time; reports of a particular event, the loss of a battle or the death of your brother, could take months to be communicated home and confirmed. Today we depend on the illusion of immediacy granted by instantaneous and unceasing news reporting, as if we can always know what is happening elsewhere in the world as it occurs; yet un-joined feelings persist. Such feelings—empty, lacking solid attachment—contribute to the experience of any war at a distance. The wartime writing of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period gives expressive form to this experience of mediated distance—distance spatial, temporal, epistemological, and, in the end, mortal—and the responses it generates. For these reasons, reading this literature has taught me that wartime is not just a period of time that can be got over or settled, but rather a persistent mode of daily living and a habit of mind.

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[6] *An appeal to the head and heart of every man and woman in Great Britain, respecting the threatened French invasion, and the importance of immediately coming forward with voluntary contributions.* London, 1798, 118–19. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (*ECCO*). Gale Group. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO. My thanks to Lily Gurton-Wachter for pointing out this passage.

[7] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Complete Poems*, ed. William Keach (New York: Penguin, 1997), 95.

In such circumstances, mediation itself becomes an object of emotion: of comfort, complacency, relief, anxiety, impotence, complicity. In response to the mediated versions of war we receive, we may admit, as William Cowper did while reading his newspaper in 1783, that "The sound of war / Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me; / Grieves, but alarms me not" (IV: 100–2).[8] Yet, at the next moment we may discover in the safe space of our living rooms, as he did, the fleeting presence—however imagined—of towering warriors and cities in flames, or towers in flames and cities full of warriors. Distant violence becomes at once strange and familiar, intimate and remote, present and yet not really here. "Being a spectator of calamities taking place in another country," Susan Sontag noted, "is a quintessential modern experience."[9] In saying this, she echoes a well-known radical preacher of the romantic period, Joseph Fawcett, who published his famous anti war poem, *The Art of War*, in 1795. In his later *War Elegies* (1801), Fawcett put succinctly the operation of wartime affect as it fluctuates somewhere between minds, hearts, and bodies, here and elsewhere. The misery of war, he remarks, consists in part "in the pain it inflicts upon the mind of every contemplator of its ravages, *at whatever distance* he stand from its theatre . . . whose heart can bleed at home along with the thousands whose bodies are bleeding in the field."[10] Appealing without apology to the bleeding heart in wartime, Fawcett asks us to reexamine this overworn figure as it presses closely on the problem of mediation: of what is far brought close, what outer made inner. Fawcett expects hearts and minds to respond to war conducted anywhere at all, at whatever distance from "home"—and yet it is difficult to pinpoint where and when such misery takes place. For Fawcett, what is at a great distance seems also somehow (through some unspoken mediation) to penetrate us.

As this thought suggests, war itself does not necessarily *make sense*. Indeed, wartime is often the experience of an undoing or damaging of rational sense—which is to say that war, even at a distance, works to dismantle the forms that prop up our sense of the world and our place in it. In *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, Elaine Scarry anticipates this thought, arguing that war has as its target "a people and its civilization (or . . . the realms of sentience and self-extension)."[11] In the face of such absolute destructiveness, she tries to give voice and shape to the "interior and inarticulate . . . sentience" that accompanies and registers the prosecution of war (60). Deprived of the fortifications of intellect and understanding, deprived even of the immediacy of empirical evidence, the inhabitants of modern wartime often rely on another and less categorizable "sense" of what war is and does; affect is this alternate sense or sentience. Usually associated with the body and autonomous sensation, it names an awareness, not distinctly psychological or physiological but sharing aspects of each, that remains at some remove, at a distance, from rational comprehension.[12]

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[8] William Cowper, *The Task*, in *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. H. S. Milford, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967), 129–241.

[9] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003), 18.

[10] Joseph Fawcett, *War Elegies* (London: J. Johnson, 1801), vii; emphasis added.

[11] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985), 61.

Fawcett and his contemporaries respond to the wars they live through according to this more extensive view of distance, knowledge, and affect. In this they run athwart twentieth-century theorist Carl Schmitt, who, arguing from the aftermath of the Treaty of Westphalia (1711), famously called up the Lines of Amity to "bracket" eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European warfare from violence conducted elsewhere on the planet. Warfare in Europe was so-called limited war: limited to familiar and respectable enemies (*justis hostes*), limited in scale, and, ultimately, limited in its ethical consequences.[13] Fawcett's view partakes instead of the cosmopolitan perspective provisionally outlined by Immanuel Kant in "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" (1795).[14] This perspective admits the claims of that stranger we saw in the prelude, coming from no matter how remote a place, who might intrude upon the winter evenings of contemplators such as Fawcett, Cowper, or Coleridge. For Kant, the stranger may claim

> a *right of resort*, for all men are entitled to present themselves in the society of others by virtue of their right to the communal possession of the

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[12] See Kevis Goodman's discussion of the "*history* of the *sense of history*" in *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 5, 145–46n12; Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996); and Julie Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999). For more general discussions of affect and feeling, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003); Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the "Death of the Subject"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001); Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002); and Denise Riley, *Impersonal Passion: Language as Affect* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005).

[13] In *The* Nomos *of the Earth* (New York: Telos, 2003), Carl Schmitt called the "bracketing of war" the great accomplishment of the European powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This "bracketing" depends upon the concept of *justis hostes*, the just or respectable enemy, which structures war as a duel between personified sovereigns and as "war in form." His influential account argues that after the Treaty of Westphalia an international law prevailing within the Lines of Amity marked Europe as the supposed zone of limited war (among *justus hostes*). Outside these lines—notoriously in the colonial holdings of European states—war was exempted from this law. Schmitt can see the Napoleonic period only as an anomaly (140–47). See Garrett Mattingly, "No Peace beyond What Line?" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th Ser.* 13 (1963): 145–62; Eliga H. Gould, "Zones of Law, Zones of Violence: The Legal Geography of the British Atlantic, circa 1772," *William and Mary Quarterly* 60.3 (July 2003): 471–511.

[14] Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991).

> earth's surface, . . . since the earth is a globe, they cannot disperse over an infinite area, but must necessarily tolerate one another's company. (106)

Taking the globe as a finite space, Kant sees the line between near and far dissolving. The principle of hospitality consequently extends beyond the realm of the "civilized states . . . especially the commercial states" of Europe to all "foreign countries and peoples" (106).[15] To give that principle force, to make it felt, Kant turns from the abstraction of states (his main concern) to the figure of an individual stranger knocking, as it were, on the door to your home. Kant understands such visitations in a quite literal and geographically grounded sense: "when he arrives on someone else's territory" a stranger should not be "treated with hostility" (105–6). For Fawcett and other romantic writers, the visitations from other lands are stranger, both more intimate and more metaphysical. Fawcett draws his lines not geopolitically, but as the difference between an inner and an outer "bleeding": in the heart or on the field, invisible or visible to the outward eye. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the bleeding that is not visible because it takes place at a geographical distance elicits this other invisible bleeding, located in the inner terrain designated by the conjunction of "heart," "mind," and "body." Such mediation between inner and outer worlds provides no improved access to sensory perception. Indeed, it puts the problem of distance on a new footing: how remote or accessible is this inner world? And yet the mediation produces a "sense" that movements across the globe can be felt and registered, can even inflict with pain the wartime "contemplator."

The wartime affect described by Fawcett, produced in response to wars which cannot be seen or heard, smelled or touched, might thus recall the "sense of History" Alan Liu describes as "the absence that is the very possibility of the 'here and now.'"[16] But precisely as a "sense" of History, the affect of wartime also resists such abstraction (resists the sheer negativity of "absence" or Kant's "infinite distances") to attach itself to a feeling body. Throughout *War at a Distance*, writing and art are attuned to this new sense of a war that has potentially no limits or end, whose scope expands both internally and externally. They ask: how can the human form, with its mortal limits, register and check what remains beyond its ken?

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[15] Here Kant states his difference from the Grotius-Pufendorf school of international law and its Westphalian view of European exclusivity. In his critique of colonial violence (105–6), Kant echoes William Godwin's concurrent thoughts in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness*, vol. 2 (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1796), 156–57. See also Richard Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 219–25.

[16] Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989), 39. Liu takes the concept of history structured as "absent cause" from Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading "Capital,"* trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1970), 188.

As I've been suggesting, and as the next chapter will develop at length, wartime is an affective zone, a *sense* of time that, caught in the most unsettled sort of present, without knowledge of its outcome, cannot know its own borders. It indicates a dislocation of the bounded terrain usually associated with war, and the extension of war into a realm without clear limits. To consider wartime then shifts attention from war on the battlefield to the experience of those at home, but also moves from objective events to this other, subjective arena, much harder to locate. When Paul Fussell introduces his book *Wartime* as a study of the "psychological and emotional culture of Americans and Britons" during World War II, he is following a course laid down two hundred years earlier, in a previous wartime.[17] His explanation of "wartime" confirms my sense of its pervasive as well as its elusive nature. Even as it is not easily amenable to reason, wartime makes war a matter of mind:

> The damage the war visited upon bodies and buildings, planes and tanks and ships, is obvious. Less obvious is the damage it did to intellect, discrimination, honesty, individuality, complexity, ambiguity, and irony, not to mention privacy and wit.

Such damage happens every day, imperceptibly, in the most trivial instances or utterances. And yet *War at a Distance* discovers not only the damaging but also the creative or productive nature of wartime: that wartime may establish something that war would otherwise destroy, namely a culture; and that wartime writing and art might be able to make the imperceptible felt. However fragile or compromised, the psychological and emotional culture called wartime provides its own responses and sometimes its own resistance to the destructiveness of war. The wartime culture called Romanticism has been tremendously influential precisely because it was a culture that could be felt and questioned and imitated in response to a war threatening to destroy the realm of sentience and the realm of its extension.

The task of capturing this history, torn as it is with knowing and not-knowing, feeling and not-feeling, was felt acutely by William Hazlitt, a writer supported but also troubled by the wartime growth of the periodical press.[18] Studying his writing will give a more concrete sense of the mediation of distant war in its seemingly endless complexity. Indeed Hazlitt's essay "The Letter-Bell" is an act of creative re-mediation, a self-reflexive meditation on the very material conditions of mediation in wartime.[19] In this, the last essay he wrote, Hazlitt broods over an unresolved age. As if in response to Coleridge's worries about the "empty sounds" of journalism and Cowper's musing on the sounds of violence muted by the newspaper, Hazlitt makes the memory of sounds and various media of communication the objects of his attention. And, in doing so, he draws together various strands which regularly follow from this preoccupation with media: the structure and feeling of time; a sense of historical eventfulness that falls away into eventlessness; and wordless sounds or "voices" which, if we could only discern them properly, would describe a world of affecting interest.

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[17] Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford UP, 1989), 1.

[18] David Minden Higgins, *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 102–26, gives a lively account of Hazlitt's struggles with writing for the periodical press.

"The Letter-Bell" surveys Hazlitt's career as a writer, beginning with the present moment in 1830 as he learns of the July Revolution that has driven the Bourbons (again) from France, and extending back almost forty years to the time of the execution of Louis XVI and the opening days of Britain's wars with France.[20] Then was "my first entrance into life, the period of my first coming up to town, when all around was strange, uncertain, adverse—a hubbub of confused noises, a chaos of shifting objects" (203). Amid these reflections, the ringing of a letter bell announcing coming news and departing missives organizes the chaos, awakening the young Hazlitt from "the dream of time" into a sense of the momentous present (203). Enunciating that moment, the bell calls Hazlitt into life and into writing. But its ringing simultaneously calls him into what Scarry would call sentience and its extension: "[T]his sound alone . . . brought me as it were to myself, made me feel that I had links still connecting me with the universe, and gave me hope and patience to persevere" (203). The musical sound thus grants Hazlitt a sense—heard and felt—of history; it situates him in the world and in his work. Thus he describes the end of a wintry day, as he sits by the fireplace "while the Letter-Bell was the only sound that drew my thoughts to the world without, and reminded me that I had a task to perform in it" (205). Yet even as the sounding bell calls him to his historic role, it recalls the distance between the world without and the world within: he has, in fact, withdrawn from the world and lapsed in his attention to his task. In signaling the moment, the letter bell also exposes the surrounding drift of unsounded eventlessness; its punctuality carves out the alternative time of his "reveries" and the unsorted "dream of time" (203).

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[19] On remediation, see Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), esp. pp. 2–15 and 20–50. Celeste Langan and Maureen McLane argue for the specifically romantic preoccupation with remediation. "The Medium of Romantic Poetry," in James K. Chandler and Maureen McLane, eds., *Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 239–62.

[20] "The Letter-Bell" was first published posthumously in *The Monthly Magazine*, March 1831. Hazlitt probably wrote in the aftermath of the "*trois glorieuses*"—the three days of revolution in Paris that ousted Charles X and resulted in Louis-Philippe's constitutional monarchy. *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. Duncan Wu, vol. 9 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), 255n.

Hazlitt wants the play of these everyday sounds and rhythms to evoke their own historiography:

> The punctuating of time at that early period [during his early adulthood]—every thing that gives it an articulate voice—seems of the utmost consequence; for we do not know what scenes in the *ideal* world may run out of them: a world of interest may hang upon every instant, and we can hardly sustain the weight of future years which are contained in embryo in the most minute and inconsiderable passing events. (205)[21]

For a man of Hazlitt's generation, the letter bell might have announced the coming news of victories and defeats; and he drops in the word "alarm" (the bell "was a kind of alarm," he says) to hint at the years of invasion scares that troubled Britain during the wars; the bell was then a potent medium of wartime (204).[22] Yet Hazlitt asks us to understand the past four decades not by the content of the news which, presumably, we already know, but by these resonant forms or sounds which tell of what we may yet know and its companion feelings: anticipation, awakening, longing, regret, hope. For Hazlitt, the sound of the bell collapses content and form into a kind of history, an "articulate" if wordless voice that emerges from the chaotic "hubbub" to suggest the possibilities—still wordless, and perhaps never realized and only "ideal"—of any instant. The passing of the letter bell—its echoes passing through the streets of London, but also, now, passing away as a viable medium—itself becomes one of those "minute and inconsiderable passing events" that challenge the historian. The poignancy of the essay derives from the potential confusion of one instrument of communication (the writer's own words, printed up in the periodical press) with this other (the repeating, ringing bell of the moment); the identification of his evocative prose with this wordless sound; and the recognition that these passing "voices" carry a sense of the failures as well as the fullness of times.

And so Hazlitt ends by giving a history of wartime (that is to say, a history of war mediated) in the guise of an essay on aesthetics. In the final movement of the essay, he turns first to Cowper's *The Task* (the model for his own "task to perform") and quotes at length from the opening of Book IV, the noisy arrival of the post-boy. This poetic passage (and Hazlitt remains ambivalent whether poetry may be another passing instrument) underwrites his closing meditation:

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[21] Hazlitt's "On a Sun-Dial" also reflects on time-telling as a way into ideas of history. In *Selected Writings*, 153–60.

[22] Compare with Thomas De Quincey's triumphant "The English Mail Coach," in *Confessions of an English Opium Eater and Other Writings*, ed. Grevel Lindop (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 183–233.

> In Cowper's time, Mail-Coaches were hardly set up; but he has beautifully described the coming in of the Post-Boy. . . . [He quotes IV: 1–22, where, in fact, Cowper describes both the coming and the passing of the post-boy.] And yet, notwithstanding this, and so many other passages that seem like the very marrow of our being, Lord Byron denies that Cowper was a poet!—the Mail-Coach is an improvement on the Post-Boy; but I fear it will hardly bear so poetical a description. The picturesque and dramatic do not keep pace with the useful and mechanical. The telegraphs that lately communicated the intelligence of the new revolution to all France within a few hours, are a wonderful contrivance; but they are less striking and appalling than the beacon-fires (mentioned by Aeschylus), which, lighted from hill-top to hill-top, announced the taking of Troy and the return of Agamemnon. (207–8)[23]

It would be easy, and probably not incorrect, to ally Hazlitt to a reactionary and nostalgic view of warfare. But we should understand first that his critique applies to the mechanization and systemization of communication, not warfare itself; and that he mourns there (even as he reproduces) the passing of something "poetical," which mixes matters of geopolitical information with timing or "pace" and aesthetic effects. In calling attention to the "poetic" (for him a synonym for the aesthetic), Hazlitt's purpose is not necessarily to promote a spectacular and sublime view of history or warfare: "appalling" fires and the fate of Agamemnon surely short-circuit sublime uplift. Rather he accentuates the lived sense and structure of history that such mediating instruments—be they bell or telegraph, film or Web site—might convey. From them, Hazlitt constructs his version of wartime as an everyday experience.[24]

The aesthetic investigated in the chapters to come, as in Hazlitt's essay, will shy away from the spectacular and sublime effects usually associated with the representation of war, inclining more toward the unconsidered or the commonplace, akin to what Anne-Lise François describes as "uncounted experience."[25] In not calling attention to themselves, such aesthetic strategies are nonetheless—and maybe all the more—affecting, as they glide into the rhythms of ordinary life. Found in moments of gazing at the fireplace or hearing a bell, they also disclose themselves, I will show later, in the scene of a snow-covered field, in unremarkable accidents, in a drifting cloud, a makeshift bridge. Such figures invite the condescension we give to the picturesque, even though they all carry with them, like Cowper's post-boy, a sense of distant calamity. Like "The Letter-Bell," the chapters that follow will look backward to what is known to have happened, but put the backward turn in the service of contemplating "the weight of future years" pressing on that past. In making the present and past answerable to a distant future, wartime writers sustain in history a form of prophecy. They write, that is to say, both of and out of their time.[26]

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[23] Walter Scott lights similar signal fires in the opening of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), then subjects them to mild parody in his novel *The Antiquary* (1816). Charlotte Smith invokes signal fires in "Beachy Head" (1807). More recent signal fires appear in Peter Jackson's film adaptations of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Return of the King* (2003).

[24] Celeste Langan and Maureen McLane understand romantic "controversies surrounding the disputed term 'poetry' as precisely an attempt to generate both media theory and media history" "The Medium of Romantic Poetry," n.p.

[25] Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2007), xix. François explores representations of uncounted experience in order to remove the

"The Letter-Bell" demonstrates how the "task" of the poetic or aesthetic inspires Hazlitt and infiltrates his prose, even though that task is always at risk of being forgotten or passing unnoticed. In this tradition, *War at a Distance* takes its bearings from what may seem a singularly unlikely source, William Cowper's *The Task*, with its post-boy and its "Winter Evening" set by the hearth. Though Cowper's masterpiece has long been taken as a hymn to domesticity and Christian piety, Hazlitt and many other romantic writers recognized that in *The Task* Cowper provided materials and techniques that helped them construct a complex aesthetic for modern wartime; these materials and techniques have since been overlooked. When Hazlitt suggests that Byron, a poet more associated with the spectacular and sensational, might relearn how to read Cowper and thus rediscover the "marrow of our being," he challenges us to reread as well. In doing so, we may learn anew how to read and write about war.

Worlds Without and Within

What Cowper gave to his contemporary readers has been variously described as a model of nineteenth-century domestic subjectivity tinged with evangelical piety; an uneasy rehabilitation of the bachelor figure as suburban man; and a sensibility critical of the inhumanity of slavery and imperial expansion.[27] Francis Jeffrey could claim in 1802 that "every one is internally familiar" with

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subject from ethical "claims" or "demands" and provide instead a certain "grace" (11–13, 10). In my account of the eventlessness of wartime, however, claims and demands still permeate the experience of the ordinary.

[26] Fussell suggests that wartime presents a world in which deadly blunders "are more common than usual" and explanatory narratives are difficult to achieve (35).

[27] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987), 162–67; Andrew Elfenbein, "Stricken Deer: Secrecy, Homophobia, and the Rise of the Suburban Man," *Genders* 27 (1998); Tim Fulford, Debbie Lee, and Peter J. Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era: Bodies of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 18–20, 62–66.

the "private feelings" offered in *The Task*; by 1838 the poem had been given the status of "household words."[28] Yet there remains a neglected aspect of the remarkable bequest of Cowper's poem, sent out from his refuge in Olney to a larger world. For romantic writers of modern wartime, a world hangs in nearly every line of Cowper's "The Winter's Evening," a world of barely discerned consequences and violence. I will frequently reread these lines in the pages that follow. For the moment, I want to note the "worldliness" of Cowper's thinking: the "world" and its putative distance are both the objects of his thought and the enabling conditions of that thought. Here is Cowper's description of reading the newspaper "at a safe distance" from the "roar" of that world:

> . . . I seem advanc'd
> To some secure and more than mortal height,
> That lib'rates and exempts me from them all.
> It [the world] turns submitted to my view, turns round
> With all its generations; I behold
> The tumult, and am still. (IV: 95–100)

The description is remarkably vexing but also canny: the poet might as well be watching the evening television news (and its trademark spinning globe) with the sound muted. "The sound of war / Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me," he adds (IV: 100–1). The modern experience of wartime can certainly adopt this detached, rational, and obviously privileged stance. But detachment and rationality sometimes give way in his poem to a closer, more intimate sense of war. Even as he reads the paper and remarks upon his peaceful parlour, Cowper glances up to see a fleeting image of the enemy warrior Goliath in the mirrors of the room (IV: 269–70). And later, though apparently exempt from the effects of war, Cowper discovers in the "indolent vacuity of [his] thought," uncanny reminders of war even within his cozy retreat (IV: 297). As Kevis Goodman discovers in her reading of *The Task*, the poem opens onto "certain haunted strangers that wander through it, each of them dispossessed or vagrant subjects touched by the effects of imperial expansion" (92). Goodman's reading upends conventional interpretations of the poem by finding in it a sophisticated and anxious outlook on the news and a larger world of suffering. Cowper's masterpiece fits within her larger theorizing of the complex mediation of affect and consequent revisions of history at work in the poetry of the long eighteenth century. Her insights have profoundly influenced this study, as subsequent chapters will make clear. For now it is enough to say that in discovering these haunting reminders, affective rather than intellectual, Cowper sketched a bridge from immediate feeling and perception to a sense of distant suffering. It is true that this bridge is tentative and uncertain: those crossing it are liable, at any moment, to fall back into detachment or affective paralysis, to behold the tumult and be still. But romantic writers after Cowper found in his poem the tools by which to express their affective, un-joined, inarticulate response to battles fought afar.[29]

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[28] Jeffrey writes of Cowper in his review of "Hayley's Life of Cowper," *Edinburgh Review* 2 (1803): 64–86; the last citation comes from George Godfrey Cunningham, ed. *Lives of Eminent and Illustrious Englishmen*, 8 vols. (Glasgow: A. Fullarton, 1838), 6: 327. Jeffrey and *Lives* are cited in Elfenbein 11.

One reason Cowper's poem was so powerful for those writers lay in its engagement with that powerful tradition in eighteenth-century moral philosophy which insists that our feelings diminish as the objects of suffering are removed by distance, temporal or geographical. Cowper reacts, that is, against what we might call a prior theory of mediation. Thus for David Hume the news is mildly but not deeply affecting:

> Any recent Event or Piece of News, by which the Fortunes of States, Provinces, or many Individuals, are affected, is extremely interesting even to those whose Welfare is not immediately engag'd. Such Intelligence is propagated with Celerity, heard with Avidity, and enquir'd into with Attention and Concern. . . . The Imagination is sure to be affected; tho' the Passions excited may not always be so strong and steady as to have great Influence on the Conduct and Behaviour.[30]

Intelligence from abroad grabs your attention, but does not move or penetrate you. Elsewhere, in fact, Hume warns against making distant suffering "present and intimate":

> [I]f we confine ourselves to a general and distant reflection on the ills of human life, *that* can have no effect to prepare us for them. If by close and intense meditation we render them present and intimate to us, *that* is the true secret of poisoning all our pleasures, and rendering us perpetually miserable.[31]

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[29] Cowper does this in response to, even in competition with, the reigning media form: the newspaper (*Georgic Modernity* 78–91). See also Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005), 238–39.

[30] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (London: A. Millar, 1751), 90.

[31] David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London: George Caw, Cadell and Davies, 1800), 1:188; emphasis original. Adam Smith reiterates and extends this thought in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2000): "All men, even those at the greatest distance, are entitled to our good wishes. . . . But if, notwithstanding, they should be unfortunate, to give ourselves any anxiety upon that account seems to be no part of our duty" (197). On Smith and long-distance sympathy, see Ellison 10–11; Baucom 234–41; and Christopher Herbert, *Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991), 79–89.

This passage, from Hume's essay "The Sceptic," provides an extreme counter to the sentimental tradition, promoting instead the fantasy of a formidably insular individual. Nevertheless it shrewdly highlights the two faces or "two cosmopolitanisms" available in the sentimental tradition: on the one hand the "general and distant reflection" usually assigned to a figure like Adam Smith's "impartial spectator," kin to Cowper's "lib'rated and exempted" reader; and on the other the "close and intense meditation" of the melancholic, one who cannot help, as Smith also says, "changing places in fancy with the sufferer . . . and be[ing] affected by what he feels" (4).[32] As Cowper showed with special force, this oscillation between abstraction and intimacy, detachment and invasion, proves fundamental to the psychological and emotional culture of modern wartime.

When prosecuted on the scale of the planet, as it was at the turn of the nineteenth and again in the twentieth century, war took shape as forces spanning the globe. But as Cowper realized, recognition of the global sweep of the war lent only new urgency to the cultivation of an interiority which comprehended the interior spaces of England itself, its cottages and hearths, its "domestic quiet," but also, and increasingly, its inner psyche. As both Cowper and Hazlitt understood it, wartime was a matter of both the world "without" and a world within.[33] If, as Georg Lukács argued, the "inner life of a nation is linked with the modern mass army in a way it could not have been" prior to the French Revolution, the inner life of individuals cannot escape this militarized context. Indeed, as the three poems in my prelude, and as Hazlitt's bell—it was "like an alarm" and "brought me . . . to myself"—all suggest, wartime makes it hard to determine whether or not those psychic spaces had been conjured precisely to register war's intrusion.

Describing the "calamitous years" of foreign warfare in "The Ruined Cottage" (1797), William Wordsworth begins to develop some of the affective and rhetorical possibilities that lie within this conception of wartime.[34] In that temporally layered and highly mediated tale, written in 1797 but first published in 1814, the poet works out a "strange discipline" to coordinate the operations of worlds without and within.[35] The poem's narrator tells of repeated visits to Margaret in her rural cottage and charts her decline into poverty and misery after "the plague of war" hits. First come disease and drought, the effects of which push her husband Robert to sell himself to join "a troop / Of soldiers, going to a distant land" (I: 676–77). The historical referent seems to be the American War of Independence, but the timing remains unclear; in any case the poem rehearses and then is itself rehearsed as a wartime narrative.[36]

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[32] In his analysis of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Baucom identifies "the two cosmopolitanisms": that of the disinterested spectator, with its systematic view of the world; and that of a "dejected" system of a widely ranging sympathetic fancy independent of distance (Baucom 240).

[33] Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983), 24.

[34] William Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, book I, line 549 in *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, rev. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1904; 1981), 597. All further citations from this text.

[35] William Wordsworth, "Reconciling Addendum" to "The Ruined Cottage," in *Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), 5: 400.

Margaret is left no note, just a blank sheet of paper with the money Robert raised; she understands little but that he wanted to keep her from following and "'sink[ing] / Beneath the misery of that wandering life' "—that is, the not uncommon practice of accompanying her husband to war (I: 680–81). Yet as the effects of distant war accumulate, Margaret does take to a desperate wandering:

> "I have been travelling far; and many days
> About the fields I wander, knowing this
> Only, that what I seek I cannot find;
> And so I waste my time: for I am changed;
> And to myself," said she, "have done much wrong." (I: 764–68)

When her body grows too weary, her mind wanders in a sort of vacancy or waste of time reminiscent of Cowper's "lost hour":

> . . . in yon arbour oftentimes she sate [the narrator reports]
> Alone, through half the vacant sabbath day;
>   . . . On this old bench
> For hours she sate; and evermore her eye
> Was busy in the distance, shaping things
> That made her heart beat quick. (I: 876–77, 879–82)

This wandering of body and mind, answering to and mirroring the invisible movement of troops in distant lands, proves infectious not only to Margaret, but to the storyteller, later named "The Wanderer" in the version that appears in Book I of *The Excursion*. He too has "wasted" an hour staring at a "desolate" "spot" (I: 730, 740). Often in his walks, the Wanderer says, "A momentary trance comes over me; / And to myself I seem to muse" on someone who has either died or been "borne away" (I: 784–86).

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[36] In its first version, the narrator tells of his visits to Margaret's cottage and relays her version of what happened. In the later version, embedded in *The Excursion*, the narrator now known as the Pedlar repeats a tale told him by the Wanderer, who conveys Margaret's tale in a narrative full of interruptions and digressions. In a note dictated to Isabella Fenwick, Wordsworth does not exactly clarify the history, mixing the War of Independence and the more recent wars with France:

> I was born too late to have a distinct remembrance of the origin of the American war, but the state in which I represent Robert's [the husband's] mind to be I had frequent opportunities of observing at the commencement of our rupture with France in '93. . . . (Qtd. in William Wordsworth, *The Poems*, ed. John O. Hayden vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977), 955n)

This vagrancy of affection derives in part from the epistemological quandary these characters inhabit. Margaret, for instance, "had . . . [n]o tidings of her husband" gone to war (I: 818). "She knew not that he lived; if he were dead, / She knew not he was dead" (I: 819–20). But the wandering of affect has another source, one closely related to this unanswerable question of living or dead, and one which makes evident the relation between the trope of wandering and the oscillation of detachment and intimacy we first saw in Cowper. As Alan Liu argues, Wordsworth's poem portrays a world where feeling humanity wavers before a system or "pattern" of unfeeling things (I: 320–21): the "uncouth figures" carved by a disconsolate Robert "on the heads of sticks," the broken bowls, the omnipresent weeds, the ruin of the cottage. For all the Wanderer's belief that the "secret spirit of humanity" survives in the "plants, and weeds, and flowers" that cluster around the ruins of the cottage (I: 927–29), Liu points out that "*there is also something shockingly dehumanizing about* [such] *imagery*" (320; emphasis original).[37] Not merely the individual objects but patterning itself, the translation of disparate things (and persons) into formal or conceptual organization, powerfully challenges a felt or feeling life. Even as Robert exchanges his vital presence for much-needed cash (which is soon dispersed); even as his happy domesticity with Margaret yields to larger economies that put him in a "troop" transported to a "distant land"; even as Margaret neglects her infant because her mind is pathologically "busy at a distance"; so the pattern of the poem leaves the reader, like Margaret, gazing after absent people while "shaping things" in a futile effort to "made [the] heart beat." " 'Tis a common tale," according to the Wanderer: part of a pattern, one might say, and common now to Margaret and reader alike (I: 636). And in becoming common, the poem pulls away from felt immediacy: "A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed / In bodily form" (I: 638–39). (Wordsworth's tropes are characteristically complex: read backwards, the sentient body is a "form"converted through metaphor to insensate clothing, which is then nearly removed from the "tale.") Indeed, as Liu implies, in its complex formal patterning, in its layers of temporal and narrative mediation, "The Ruined Cottage" provides as much distanced comprehension of a "common" situation as moving testimony grounded in the suffering of human bodies.

The poem's affective and epistemological unease is located in the discrepancy between these two realms: between sensible feeling and comprehensive pattern. This discrepancy serves, in fact, as the motor for the poem's vagrancy, its restlessness of mind and body. In his momentary trance, Wordsworth's Wanderer calls up a figure from the purgatory between the felt and the unfelt: "I seem to muse on One . . . / A human being destined to awake / To human life, or something very near" (I: 785–89). Margaret performs her own constant "tracing" and retracing of this purgatorial zone, a moving into the distance and returning to the cottage, toward absent people and back to present things. Each performs this perpetually frustrated sort of cognitive mapping, the movement of their feet in the outside world corresponding to the wandering of their minds. Against Cowper's more privileged newspaper reader, sitting at home while the world turns submitted to his view, these characters are externally and internally moved, unsettled, sent wandering from home. Even as they attempt to map this sentient ground, they realize nothing will be settled or ascertained here. "I wander," Margaret explains, "knowing this / Only, that what I seek I cannot find" (I: 765–66). Such purgatorial figures, "not dead but never fully alive, either animated things or deanimated persons," haunt Wordsworth's poetry more generally, as David Simpson notes. They are "ghosts who are not fully of the present yet seem bereft of accessible pasts—haunting the present from the present itself."[38]

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[37] Liu takes his cue from Cleanth Brooks, "Wordsworth and Human Suffering: Notes on Two Early Poems," in *From Sensibility to Romanticism* (London: Oxford UP, 1965), 373–88. On the Stoic *apatheia* or un-feeling at work in *The Excursion*, see also Goodman 118–26.

When Wordsworth wants to disclose the coordination of the world within and the world without, he stages it as an incursion on what we might call the present frame of mind by distant violence. Like Cowper, Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Williams, Wordsworth literalizes this incursion in a winter scene by the hearth. For poor, abandoned Margaret, the security and exemption Cowper found in his retreat are far past. Her home and the very frame of her inner world are permeable to the ruinous forces of the world without, in ways that belie the supposed division of inner and outer:

> Meanwhile her poor Hut
> Sank to decay; for he was gone, whose hand,
> At the first nipping of October frost,
> Closed up each chink. . . .
> And so she lived
> Through the long winter, reckless and alone;
> Until her house by frost, and thaw, and rain,
> Was sapped; and while she slept, the nightly damps
> Did chill her breast; and in the stormy day
> Her tattered clothes were ruffled by the wind,
> Even at the side of her own fire. (I: 900–10)

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[38] David Simpson, "Derrida's Ghosts: The State of Our Debt," *Studies in Romanticism* 46.2 (Summer–Fall 2007): 183–202.

I will have more to say later about the long winter of wartime and the chilling numbness that it spreads. For the present, I merely want to note that if "The Ruined Cottage" seems a raw or stripped down version of the wartime created in the other poems, it nonetheless comes to us through the mediation of the man of letters, Wordsworth's initial narrator and then the Wanderer. In each case, the narrator works diligently to put this history and its woes to rest. "My Friend! enough to sorrow you have given," the Wanderer chides his listener, as if sorrow had its own economy (I: 932).[39] Yet, as we have seen, the tale itself presses against all manner of laying to rest and moves in upon the present audience, eliciting that troubling sorrow. In its emphasis on the turnings and re-turnings that place the narrators on common ground with Margaret—"I turned aside in weakness," says the narrator for a second time, when the tale is done, "Then towards the cottage I returned" (I: 919, 925)—we see how the poem constructs wartime as a particular and recurrent (retraceable) geopolitical condition, the very ground of an experience that is nevertheless always in some sense removed, re-moved.

If the conduct of the Napoleonic wars prompted General Carl von Clausewitz to theorize "war without limits," an idea which led a century later to the theory and practice of what we now call total war, that military theory was accompanied and supported by another feature of those wars. As Wordsworth's "strange discipline" hints, writers found the capacity to represent war as an adaptive system with a global reach, moving impassively and extensively but also intensively and minutely—without limits. War in this era was shown to operate both globally and, simultaneously, within the everyday, cultivating what Samuel Taylor Coleridge calls, in "Frost at Midnight," "dim sympathies" between present and absent realities. Taken as a ubiquitous system, war was at once unremarkable and nearly imperceptible; something nonevident that could not always be made evident. Felt and unfelt, impersonal and intimate, war became for those experiencing it at a distance a not-fully-conscious awareness that could flare up and flicker out, even as they went about the routines of the day, read the paper, watched TV, or turned and stared, as many did, at something else—or nothing at all. In their histories of modern wartime, the texts of Romanticism do not disclose what had been hidden or repressed, but ask us to attune ourselves to the signs of what was always elsewhere.

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[39] The Wanderer was strongly influenced by Wordsworth's encounters with Joseph Fawcett, the preacher and poet cited earlier. Wordsworth mentions that Fawcett's "Poem on War [*The Art of War*, 1795; later published as *Civilised War*, 1798], which had a good deal of merit . . . made me think more about him than I should otherwise have done" ("Notes" in *Poetical Works* 315).

Wartime Without Limits

Periodization flourishes within wartime. The desire is powerful to put period to and step outside of the time of war, to contain and manage it, to behold it and be *still*. This is one form by which war at a distance is mediated, a form which replaces geographical distance with the distance of chronological classification, even in the simple form of today's news occluding the news of yesterday. As we'll see Raymond Williams remark in the next chapter, such mediating structures of feeling (like any form of mediation) can allow both the transmission of experience and its obstruction. Channeling war into delineated periods of time with definite beginnings and ends—or, thinking spatially, with obvious insides and outsides—allows and heightens certain responses to war but also keeps it at a remove. Periodizing, in other words, resists or aims to close off the ongoing "presentness" or incomplete "present tense" of history, as Williams conceives it. The "periodization strategy," Russell Berman has argued polemically, is "designed to separate the readers of th[is] present from the claimants of the past"—that is, from the claimants of a present marked as different and over: yesterday's news.[40] It's not hard to understand, then, why wartime generates a rush to such forms of separation and ending, a warding off of those troubling ghosts that Simpson perceives "haunting the present from the present itself" (185).

And yet my survey of wartime writing indicates wartime also has trouble measuring its distance from other times of war: it produces a history of the present always permeable to other presents, other wartimes. Recall the structure of Wordsworth's "Ruined Cottage," its turns and returns fusing the wartime of the early 1800s with that of the 1770s, and those with an imagined future wartime of the reader. In another way, the "films" that Coleridge sees on the fire grate anticipate the strange films that invade our living (or media) rooms. And so my writing also, now and then, lets in such strangers from another time, hazarding a confusion of proper historical placement, introducing anachronism. It does so not—or not simply—to shake off the constraints of historicism, with its emphasis on periodizing, nor to generate topical relevance. (In fact, the anachronism of wartime is as likely to fling up wars from the ancient past as more historically recent conflicts.) Instead, this study participates in anachronism in order to be true to its topic.[41] Rather than provide the history of a past period, it records the vestiges of an unlimited present, sentient of a war without limits. These vestiges are ways of experiencing and telling war that have not been fully acknowledged, yet affect us still.

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[40] Russell Berman, "Politics: Divide and Rule," *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly* 62.4 (2001): 325.

[41] On anachronism see Srinivas Aravamudan, "The Return of Anachronism," *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly* 62.4 (2001): 331–53; James Chandler, *England in 1819* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998), 107–8, 500–2; and Jerome Christensen, *Romanticism at the End of History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000), 3–41.

Over the ten years while I was writing it, *War at a Distance* became, as if by accident, a wartime history of modern wartime. When and where it actually begins thus is difficult to say: During the first Gulf War, when I initially turned my attention to this earlier wartime? Or during the Vietnam era, when Betty T. Bennett assembled her anthology of *British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism*, the discovery of which stimulated my own research?[42] Or, indeed, during the years of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, to which my reflections on twenty-first-century wartime return, again and again? Under the ever-present possibility of unlimited war, wartime itself seems increasingly difficult to restrict or seal off, always vulnerable to invasion from other wars. The problem is not solely mine. Throughout this contemporary wartime, the questions remain hotly debated: Is the United States again fighting in the quagmire of Vietnam? Or is it engaged in the noble mission of World War II? Or a reopening of the Crusades? Where and when did this time of war begin? And why do these past wars suddenly seem not to have been settled, once and for all? Elsewhere, perhaps more quietly, the present wartime gives increasing currency, if not explanatory value, to the Napoleonic adventure and its worldwide effects, as in Peter Weir's recent screen adaptation of Patrick O'Brien's novels *Master and Commander*: *The Far Side of the World* (2003), in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie franchise, or in the 2005 public vote on "The Greatest Painting in Britain," which went to *The Fighting Temeraire*, J.M.W. Turner's rendering of a battleship celebrated for its role in the 1805 battle of Trafalgar (an event whose bicentennial was celebrated with enormous fanfare throughout the British Commonwealth).[43] But I note also the brooding presence of this earlier wartime among intellectuals. In 1999, Booker Prize–winner Barry Unsworth published *Losing Nelson*, narrated by a man obsessed with, and compelled to reenact in contemporary London, the career of Admiral Horatio Nelson, hero of Trafalgar. Susan Sontag's eloquent essay on war photography, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), has as its cover a (prephotographic) image from Francisco Goya's chilling series *The Disasters of War*, his record of the ravages of war in Spain circa 1810–14. Economist and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman tells readers that his eyes were opened to the chicanery of the George W. Bush administration when he began to study the political maneuverings of Castlereagh and Metternich in Europe in 1812–15 (Krugman had been reading *A World Restored*, a study of the two statesmen written years earlier by Henry Kissinger, architect of foreign policy during the latter part of the Vietnam era).[44] I have already cited C. K. Williams's poem "The Hearth," with its echoes of Cowper and Coleridge; it is the most reprinted poem from his prize-winning collection *The Singing* (2003). In the acclaimed last novel by the German émigré W. G. Sebald, the lost history of his hero is filtered through a name, Austerlitz, which asks the reader to recall Napoleon's great victory, as well as the grand train station in Paris which commemorates that triumph and serves as the switchboard of Europe. But *Austerlitz* (2001) also insists that we hear in its title the garbled transmission of a more recent history, for which Auschwitz serves as the proper noun. Why does the Holocaust survivor Austerlitz, orphaned by the Nazi concentration camps, wandering adrift from his own past, carry with him a talismanic relic from the grave of Marshall Michel Ney, Napoleon's great accomplice in war? Sebald's work worries over the pained forgotten-ness of European history and in *Austerlitz*, as in his previous novel, *Vertigo*, the Napoleonic era marks the heart of what, forgotten or unnoticed, yet moves and motivates our world.

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[42] Bennett's anthology remained more or less neglected by scholars of Romanticism until this century, when an updated edition was made available online under the auspices of *Romantic Circles* at http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/warpoetry/.

[43] The vote was sponsored by BBC Radio 4's *Today Programme* in association with the National Gallery.

Several years ago, Jerome Christensen proposed that Romanticism, the intellectual and aesthetic movement that accompanied the rise of Napoleon and its aftermath in Europe, had rehearsed (or previewed?) the predicament of the turn of the twenty-first century: that is, it had wrestled with the "end of history" in ways that might illuminate our own condition.[45] That proposition was offered before the "end of history" was blown apart by the events and aftermath of September 11, 2001. It seems now that the condition of the romantic period which speaks most pressingly to the current day is its sense of a history of warfare that, however distant, keeps not ending: not in 1793 with the death of the French King; not in 1795 with the end of the Terror; not in the 1802 Peace of Amiens; not in Napoleon's first abdication in 1814; not in the seemingly decisive battle of Waterloo in 1815 (echoed in 1819 at the disaster of Peterloo); and certainly not in 1989 or 2001. If anything, it is a traumatized sense of history we have inherited from the romantic and Napoleonic era, one that disrupts any settled sense of period, context, or linearity.[46] When, for instance, Katie Trumpener characterizes the genre of the national tale circa 1814, she characterizes as well an aspect of other contemporary wartime writings: the exploration of "the coexistence of multiple layers of time in place and the discontinuities of place in time."[47] In contrast to the progressivist histories of the Scottish Enlightenment, given imaginative form in many of Walter Scott's *Waverley* novels, this alternate view attends to "the long-term effects of historical trauma, the deliberate or amnesiac repression of historical memory, and the neurotic mechanisms developed to contain its explosiveness" (Trumpener 151). Such a history is recognizable to any reader of Sebald's novels. It is recognizable also, I would suggest, to readers of Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" or "Kubla Khan" (1798) with its "ancestral voices prophesying war" (30). And it is recognizable too in Cowper's *The Task*.

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[44] Paul Krugman, *The Great Unraveling: Losing Our Way in the New Century* (New York: Norton, 2004).

[45] Christensen, see esp. 1–41.

[46] Philip Shaw probes the unclosed "wound" of the battle of Waterloo in *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1–34.

All of this suggests that the wartime of those first modern and global wars demands the sort of historiography suggested by Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History"—also written in wartime, in a "moment of danger."[48] This earlier wartime asks the present to "take cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era"—our own, but the Romantic era as well—"out of the homogeneous course of history" (Benjamin 263). The violence of Benjamin's language should not be overlooked: he wrote even as the Nazi regime strove to blast entire peoples and their cultures out of the present (his word is *Jetztzeit*) and into an irrevocable past.[49] "*[E]ven the dead*," Benjamin famously urges, "will not be safe from the enemy if he wins" (255; emphasis original). This is what, in Scarry's account, wars do: they destroy the very "extension" of a people in time, space, and, Benjamin would add, in history. As I have said, the time of war, wartime, may contribute to the zeal for endings; putting an end to the claims of others, putting an end to feeling, to wartime's own "psychological and emotional culture."[50] But wartime can also entail a countereffect, a melee of temporal synchronies and discontinuities that results not in the end of history but its reopening. In this sense, *War at a Distance* brings into the present the experience of a distant violence, the wartime of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with all its strangeness and familiarity.

I approach wartime and its unsettling sense of chronology as forever challenging the "settlements" of history by drawing in part on its affective reservoir: the sense, for example, that current wars call up old conflicts, that old conflicts have not fully passed away. In place of the tunnel of empty homogeneous time through which one sort of history glides, wartime finds its history in a dangerous and unpredictable minefield. This latter view of history is particularly romantic. Wartime calls forth something similar to what Ian Baucom (also drawing on Benjamin) calls a *melancholy* or *romantic* historicism. For Baucom this romantic historicism "insists on its ability to return to the lost or absent scene, person, or thing imaginatively, fancifully, but also, crucially, *truthfully*." The "paradigmatic . . . case" of such melancholy history is "the lost news of the news of loss" (Baucom 217; emphasis original). The *melancholy* of this form of history indicates a condition Freud famously diagnosed, the repeated introjection of the lost object so that the healing work of mourning is suspended, never finished. In this way, the loss remains an open psychic wound.[51] The truthful return Baucom identifies can never effect a full recuperation: it is rather this opening or suspension, not a return *of* the lost object, but a return *to* its loss or absence—like the retracings described in "The Ruined Cottage," the compulsive turning back to the abandoned house by Margaret, the Wanderer, and his listener. What a romantic history offers in its returns is a haunted awareness that calls up powerful feelings of loss and sorrow so that they are never put to rest. Baucom's thinking derives from the history of the slave trade, and its signal moment is the lost news of fallen bodies. He follows the case of the slave ship *Zong*, where 133 slaves considered sick and unmarketable were thrown overboard in 1781 by order of the captain and drowned. The owners of the ship subsequently collected insurance money to compensate them for their "lost" merchandise. In Baucom's treatment of this story, romantic or melancholy history arises at the end of the eighteenth century in reaction to a specific historical situation: the increased role of speculative finance (in enabling the long-distance transactions of the slave trade) and correlative modes of thought: those which attempt to account for human experience "in the aggregate" or average (as "common tales"), and those which redeem an event by assigning it a compensatory meaning or value (as "interest" or a satisfactory return on your investment).

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[47] Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997), 151.

[48] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. and intro. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 255. The "Theses" were completed in spring of 1940 (267n).

[49] "History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time," asserts Benjamin, "but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]" (261).

[50] Benjamin's critique of historicism has been taken up as a critique of periodization per se. See for example Berman (325).

The historical situation revealed by a romantic history, however, could also be derived from the lost news and the news of loss produced by distant global warfare. The system of modern global war, like the slave trade, did not emerge all at once: certainly the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence contributed to a new understanding, especially in Britain, of the geopolitics of warfare.[52] But by the opening of the nineteenth century, the British national economy had refined its systems of credit so as to support prolonged wars with mass armies across the globe: William Pitt not only successfully instituted income tax but in 1797 suspended specie payment by the Bank of England, promoting the use of credit almost to the point of bankruptcy in order to pay off coalition forces on the continent.[53] Finance capital, in other words, was as formative for global warfare as it was for the Atlantic slave trade; indeed the two practices were tightly implicated, one in the other. At the same time, the translation of men like Robert in "A Ruined Cottage" into the numbers needed for mass armies had become proverbial, though more slowly in Britain than on the continent (Napoleon was said to have boasted that as a military commander "A man like me does not give a shit about the lives of a million men").[54] Worldwide, the war advanced a vision of men taken in the aggregate. In a near-parody of the numbers that came increasingly to represent the war, Philip Shaw gives the statistics of the battle of Waterloo: "Within an area of land measuring just less than three miles from east to west, and less than a mile and a half from north to south, over 40,000 men"—and 15,000 horses—were killed in a mere eight hours, "short even by modern military standards" (20). Attritional battles were now the norm. Napoleon aimed to dominate by sheer force of numbers; among his reasons for proceeding to India was the thought of the enormous reserves of conscriptable bodies there (Lefebvre 112, 163; Bayly, *Modern World*, 86). Cannon fodder was also on the mind of Charles William Pasley, whose influential *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire* (1811) advocated using colonial bodies to bolster Britain's fighting strength.[55] As many as five million

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[51] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Angela Richards (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1984), 11: 257–58.

[52] Recent work on this topic includes C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), esp. 86–120, and *Imperial*

Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830 (London: Longman, 1989); J. G. A. Pocock, "Political Thought in the English-Speaking Atlantic, 1760–1790," in *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004); and Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1995).

[53] By 1809, the risks of Pitt's financial system had unleashed wide debate about the principles of political economy. See critiques by William Cobbett, *Paper against Gold: The History and Mystery of the Bank of England* (1810) and David Ricardo, *The High Price of Bullion a Proof of the Depreciation of Bank-notes* (1809). On the growth of the military fiscal state in eighteenth-century Britain, see John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (London: Routledge, 1989). On the late century more specifically, see Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, 92–96; Georges Lefebvre, *Napoleon* (New York: Columbia UP, 1990), 108–9; Arthur Hope-Jones, *Income Tax in the Napoleonic Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1939), 1–4, 72–125; and Jerome-Adolphe Blanqui, *A History of Political Economy in Europe*, trans. Emily Josephine Leonard (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1885), 454–61.

[54] David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 251.

[55] Charles William Pasley, *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire*, 2nd ed. (London: A. J. Valpy, 1811), 205–25.

soldiers in Europe—there are no reliable numbers for civilian deaths or deaths on other continents—died in the Napoleonic venture.[56]

More significantly, perhaps, the impulse to understand the enormity of these wars through enumeration was supported by new scientific methods for calculating war fatalities and casualties. A distinct strain in romantic writing identifies and attacks the impulse, evident in early demographical studies like Thomas Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1807), to convert human bodies to the abstraction and speculation promoted by numbers. Here again is Joseph Fawcett, aghast at the "arithmetical eyes" encouraged by modern, mediated war:

> There is nothing perhaps, so shocking in all the horrible perversion of nature, which the monstrous and prodigious state of war exhibits to the contemplative mind, as the coldness, with which . . . [readers] throw their eye over the sum total of the slain in battle, which the . . . [news]paper presents to them. No emotions of horror are excited in them by the largest amounts of these military murders, which the public prints can announce. They look at the sum with only arithmetical eyes. They see nothing but figures in it. They consider it with the cold, mathematical feelings of an accomptant, as if it consisted only of abstract units. They do not seem to reflect, for so much as a moment, that one of these units denotes a MAN; that it is the little summary mark of a volume of anguish and of ill. . . . (*Elegies* 10–11n)

Affective response seems a cure to the arithmetical eye: "a horror . . . should cause his [the reader's] head to swim, and strike a sickness into his heart" (*Elegies* 10–11n). More often, though, these fallen bodies were quickly exchanged as promissory notes for nation, culture, and religion.[57]

In returning to the wartime of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, I am looking for signs of this persistent romantic history. An intellectual tradition since Kant and Hegel has organized its history around a singular sign or event, the French Revolution. For his part, Baucom steps away from this tradition by introducing the *Zong* as an alternative event, the unacknowledged truth of what he calls "our long contemporaneity."[58] I share Baucom's desire to let something other than the French Revolution cast its light upon this ongoing, unsettled history. Since its inception, the French Revolution has appealed to intellectuals as an event that, retrospectively, has granted considerable historical agency to intellectuals great and small.[59] The Revolution—along with British counterrevolution—has also provided the primary axis for a long and familiar tradition of scholarship interpreting romantic texts. Focusing on the French Revolution in these ways has contributed to an emphasis on political discourse, ideological struggle, utopian possibilities, and the modern orientation toward an open future.[60] But such a focus has not encouraged us to attend to the response—felt and unfelt—to fallen bodies.[61]

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[56] Historians debate these numbers; the count of war dead in Europe varies from two to four million; civilian deaths may have reached one million. For a list of varying statistics and their sources, see http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/wars19c.htm.

[57] In *A History of the Modern Fact* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998), Mary Poovey argues that Coleridge, Southey, Hazlitt, and others found Malthus's use of numbers could be "heartless and amoral—. . . the few who used them could inflict actual damage on the many who were powerless to resist" (294). See also Frances Ferguson, "Malthus, Godwin, Wordsworth, and the Spirit of Solitude," in *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. Elaine Scarry (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1988), 106–24; and Maureen N. McLane, *Romanticism and the Human Sciences: Poetry, Population, and the Discourse of the Species* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

If the modern is an era of revolution, of dramatic social and political upheaval, then it is worth remembering that the revolutions which inaugurated this modernity—in America, France, and Haiti—were accomplished through state-sponsored violence against bodies. The bloody nature of these revolutions distinguishes them from the earlier Glorious Revolution in England and inaugurates the modern meaning of the word. Thus Reinhart Koselleck ends his historiographical essay on "The Modern Concept of Revolution" by noting that, as the declarations of the American, French, and Russian revolutions all make clear, modern expressions of Revolution "all . . . spatially imply a *world revolution*" (52; emphasis original). Turning then to the example of Napoleon, Koselleck observes sadly that the notion of worldwide revolution has produced a planet where "all wars have been transformed into civil wars," "regionally limited but globally conducted"; where civil wars, "boundless" in their "awfulness," are held in check only by the prospect of total nuclear destruction (56).[62] For Koselleck, the warlike heart of revolution is "the unspoken law of present international politics"; it is our long contemporaneity (57). And so this work steps away from the French Revolution as the signal event of our contemporaneity because for all its *éclaircissement* of modernity, its brightness throws into shadow crucial situations and systems: finance capital with the increasingly speculative traffic in fallen bodies is one; the unbounded awfulness of modern warfare, paid for by finance capital and legitimated by the discourse of revolutionary freedom, is another.

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[58] "It is now well past time," Baucom complains, "for anyone wishing to speak of the European discourses on and of modernity to have done with this monomania of historical vision [directed at the French Revolution]" (227).

[59] Roger Chartier, "Do Books Make Revolutions?" in *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991), 67–91. Chartier targets works like Robert Darnton's influential *Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982).

[60] On the "open future" of modernity, see Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time, trans. Keith Tribe* (New York: Columbia UP, 2004), esp. 223–55.

[61] The shift in emphasis from revolution to war has begun. The second essay in the 1999 *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age*, ed. Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), is titled "War"; the first essay is "Revolution." Other signs of change are Philip Shaw's *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination* and his edited collection, *Romantic Wars: Studies in Culture and Conflict, 1793–1822* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000); Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793–1815* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Simon Bainbridge, *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Visions of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003); J. R. Watson, *Romanticism and War: A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). More telling is the recent work by David Simpson. His essay "Remembering the Dead: An Essay upon Epitaphs," in *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006), reflecting on the aftermath of September 11, 2001, draws deeply on Wordsworth's "Essay on Epitaphs" (21–51).

I should say as well that I step away from Revolution to distance myself from its aesthetics of the spectacular and sublime. In taking the singular and awful event of the *Zong* murders, Baucom very much hopes to put his readers in the position of eyewitnesses of that spectacular horror. His chapter "The View from the Window" imagines the scene from the perspective of an eyewitness, watching the bodies fall past his cabin window, close enough to count each one, and being called later to testify to this event. "The view from the window," Baucom discovers, "is . . . the viewpoint that, indeed, *produces* humanity *as* a testamentary effect of bearing witness to the massacre" (201; emphasis original). Baucom's imagination wants to bypass the obstacles of time and mediation and forge immediacy. Not unlike the war photography Sontag discusses, or the great panoramas of the romantic period (to which we will turn in chapter 5), Baucom's melancholy history hopes to erase distance and make the absent unflinchingly present to our minds. The wartime perspective, by contrast, sees very little out its window—sees, if anything, darkness, slashing sleet, or only Cowper's uncountable "downy flakes / Descending, and with never-ceasing lapse" (IV: 326–27). This wartime view acknowledges without overcoming obstruction and distance. What is evident of distant massacres appears second-hand or as intimation, a fleeting apparition, a *sense*. And wartime's history, though touched with melancholy, draws from a more vexed and varied affective store. It is not, then, the history of a signal event illuminating a situation; it takes up instead the "not obvious" that fascinates Paul Fussell; it takes up Hazlitt's "minute and inconsiderable passing events." It takes up eventlessness as the very texture of the situation of distant war.

These last remarks suggest that wartime translates war from the realm of sublime event to an underlying situation or condition of modernity. In doing so, the wartime perspective shares with some recent philosophers and intellectuals an understanding of war as an absent presence that infiltrates political and cultural institutions and moves through everyday life.[63] This approach, for instance, turns away from just-war theory, based as it is on a notion of war as a delimited event with identifiable decisions and actions, to investigate the preexisting conditions that lead to war and render military violence plausible or inevitable. When war is not an event but a condition, then its distinction from peace becomes harder to see; in a militarized society, in other words, it may always be wartime. Thus, speaking about the contemporary situation, Chris Cuomo makes the link between a wartime experienced by those at a distance from the fighting and (an illusory) peacetime, where military bases uphold local economies, military service provides education and social advancement, and popular culture routinely identifies masculinity with the figure of the citizen-soldier. She could be describing the late eighteenth century in Britain. "Neglecting the omnipresence of militarism allows the false belief that the absence of declared armed conflicts *is* peace. . . . It is particularly easy for those whose lives are shaped by the safety of privilege, and who do not regularly encounter the realities of militarism, to maintain this false belief" (31; emphasis original).

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[62] Bayly notes that the "most potent legacy" of the so-called age of revolutions was "the creation of yet stronger, more intrusive states, European, colonial, and extra-European" (*Birth of the Modern World* 88).

Authors of romantic literature, privileged as they were, did not necessarily share this negligence or false belief. Jane Austen, for instance, understood in quite specific terms the significance of the militia encamped at Meryton.[64] Both Joseph Fawcett and Mary Robinson, two of the most powerful antiwar poets of their generation, understood the emergence of something Fawcett called "inactive war" or "armed peace": the transformation of society not by warfare per se, but by a militarization of institutions, social systems, and sensibilities.[65] The absence of open fighting in their midst did not always deceive those in England that they lived in peace. I share with writers like Cuomo the desire to conceive of war beyond the limits of the (often spectacular, often distracting) event, to trace its extension throughout a culture, even to those whose lives appear "shaped by safety and [the] privilege" of distance. I look for signs of the infiltrating sense that a system of war, waged on a global scale, year after year, conditions the movements of your day: where you walked, what you talked about, how your mind wandered.

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[63] War as "presence" is the thought of Robin May Schott, "Gender and 'Postmodern War,'" *Hypatia* 11.4 (1996): 19–29. Others who move war away from the realm of "event" include Chris J. Cuomo, "War Is Not Just an Event: Reflections on the Significance of Everyday Violence," *Hypatia* 11.4 (Autumn 1996): 30–45; Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004); Lucinda Peach, "An Alternative to Pacifism? Feminism and Just-War Theory," *Hypatia* 9.1 (1994): 152–72; and Manuel de Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

[64] Tim Fulford, "Sighing for a Soldier: Jane Austen and Military Pride and Prejudice." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 57.2 (September 2002): 153–78.

[65] Fawcett's discussion will be treated below. Mary Robinson's poem "The Camp" (1800) testifies to the social transformation effected by a militarized society. On military camps, see Russell's discussion of "Camp Culture" in *Theatres of War*, 26–51.

War as All Wars

In its permeability and temporal waywardness, in its collapsing of event into condition or situation, modern wartime risks flattening all wars into one War, standing apart from any specific occurrence. Wartime enables the word "war" to congeal into a universal and collective entity which "appear[s] to unite within itself the course of all individual" wars, to borrow again from Koselleck (50).[66] This is not an entirely new turn: ancient cultures, for instance, understood war in a transhistorical way, enjoining codes of conduct beyond all particular manifestations of its power. In modernity, however, the turn takes particular forms: in modern wartime, war becomes understood as a concept, an absolute, and ultimately as purification.

First, war "becomes a regulative principle of knowledge in addition to action and conduct" (Koselleck 50). Writing in the aftermath of these wars, Hegel would famously take War as a principle of the Idea of History. He offers a glancing analogy between the career of Napoleon—the general willing to sacrifice the lives of a million men—and the "general idea" which operates with the cunning of reason:

> It is not the general idea that is implicated in opposition and combat, and that is exposed to danger. It remains in the background, untouched, uninjured. This may be called *the cunning of reason*—that it sets the passions to work for itself, while that which develops its existence through such impulsion pays the penalty, and suffers loss. . . . The particular is for the most part of too trifling value as compared to the general: individuals are sacrificed and abandoned.[67]

Hegel's analogy relocates the terrain of warfare to the realm of the intellect, where the passional and particular, embodied and mortal, suffer in the service of a transcendent and impervious Idea. More crucially, War supplies that governing Idea. Against an Enlightenment view of war as anarchy, savagery, and confusion, Hegel posits a War that makes sense of History (even as it sacrifices specific wars).[68] This transformation, from wars to War and from specific acts of violence to a principle of knowledge, will be charted repeatedly in the pages that follow: in a history of historicism, in critiques of theories of the everyday, and in a survey of eighteenth-century definitions of the word. Indeed, one aim of this project is to call attention to our unquestioned reliance on a metahistorical War as the very substance of some of the most radical and progressive contemporary intellectual work, where it yields a fascination with strategies and tactics or a commitment to unending conflict.

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[66] Koselleck uses this phrase to describe the fate of the word "Revolution."

[67] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover, 1956), 33.

[68] Michel Foucault redirects this tendency, seeing in history, especially the writing of history, the prosecution of war "by other means," and a way of undermining the legitimacy of the state. See Foucault, "*Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the College de France, 1975–76*, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 141–66.

Even as it promotes a malleable, heterogeneous, and indefinite sense of time, romantic wartime generates its hyperrational alternative. This is the second way by which the wartime of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century pressed individual wars into War: not just through the conceptualization of war as universal and abstract, but through its conceptualization as total—war "to extremes."[69] Roger Chickering rehearses the reigning master narrative of Total War among military historians, which stresses its "natural" progression and inevitability over the course of the past two centuries. This narrative, he notes, "informs all the standard histories of modern warfare."

> It begins in 1792, when the armies of republican France, backed by the mobilized citizenry at home, revolutionized combat by virtue of their sheer numbers and the intensity of their commitment to the cause they were serving. The French Revolution thus foretold developments during the next two centuries.[70]

In this story, "the growth in both intensity and expanse that marked the modernization of warfare en route to totality" was further augmented in the nineteenth century by the growth of industrialization, new technologies of transportation and communication, and, finally, developments in weapons technology. Together, these forces increasingly extended the theater of operations to civilians, until in the twentieth century it culminated in the "calculated and systematic annihilation of civilians, both from the air and in the death camps" (14–15). This is a "romantic" story, by which Chickering means its plot centers on the "growth and fulfillment" of modern war, and its *Selbstbehauptung* (self-assertion) and self-transcendence in gas chambers and nuclear bombs. Sacrificing historical facts (many wars in this period were not fought "to extremes"), the common story of War becomes the story of Total War.

In *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare As We Know It*, historian David A. Bell specifies some of the particular ways that this totalizing impulse took shape at the end of the eighteenth century. To do so, he charts the historical conjunction of two forces: an Enlightenment philosophical tradition that sought the end of all wars, and a political reality that furnished mass armies ready to fight to extremes for ideals. Together, "the dream of perpetual peace and the nightmare of total war" gave birth to the modern understanding of war.[71] The desire to repudiate war as barbaric and outdated was joined to the desire to envision each new military conflict as a final, apocalyptic struggle "that must be fought until the complete destruction of the enemy and that might have a purifying, even redemptive effect, on the participants" (Bell 3). One result of this modern tangle is a mix of enlightened and preenlightened ideas of warfare: modern wars are at once technologically advanced and savage, secular and sacred. Another is the abstraction or generalization of war that takes it out of history: debate focuses less on the specifics of this or that conflict, or even over who has the sovereign right to declare war, than over the idea of War. Bell maps that shift in the debate in the French National Assembly in May 1790, opening his book with an apt quotation from the French General Dumouriez in 1792, as he contemplates the coming war in Europe: "This war will be the last war" (1). Eventually, this vision of war carried over the Channel to Great Britain. Twenty years after Dumouriez's pronouncement (after his defection to the Allied armies, and after his removal to London, where he advised the British War Office), the *Times of London* of 1812 announced what lay within Dumouriez's vision: that the war to end all wars also entailed a war of extermination: "We are engaged in a war—a war of no common description—a war of system against system, in which no choice is left us, but victory or extirpation" (qtd. in Shaw 8). Such rhetoric suggests a new mindset, replacing the idea of limited war with the modern idea of a war to end all wars, Clausewitz's "absolute war." As a general idea, such war admits of no subtraction or diminution: all or nothing, without remainder.

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[69] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New York: Oxford UP, 2007), 15.

[70] Roger Chickering, "Total War: The Use and Abuse of a Concept," in Roger Chickering and Stig Forster, eds., *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP and Washington, DC: The German Historical Institute, 1999), 14.

Ironically, this reorientation dissolves any war into the one War, so that the war to end all wars never, in fact, ends. The war to end all wars can be understood semantically as the subsumption of individual wars, here and there, now and then, into one universal War, everywhere and always.[72] It is an idea of war we have inherited. Even as he dates the emergence of this view of war as total, Bell reminds his reader that his description "applies equally well to two different centuries" (1). As his subtitle announces, he is interested in "the birth of warfare as we know it," which is to say, War as Idea or "regulative principle of knowledge"—as if it were something we might, finally, know.

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[71] Here Bell follows closely the work of Jean-Yves Guiomar, *L'invention de la guerre totale, XVIIIe–XXe siècle* (Paris: Le Félin Kiron, 2004).

[72] To his credit, Kant understood the danger of this view of perpetual peace: a "war of extermination," he maintained "would allow perpetual peace only upon the vast graveyard of the human race" (96).

World Wars

The idea of a last war is always the idea of a world war, a war on behalf of the world (conceived as civilization, or humanity) that nevertheless threatens the end of the world, apocalypse, or a new world. The idea of a last war legitimates the emergence of a planet where, as Koselleck says, civil wars are "regionally limited but globally conducted" (*Futures Past* 56), where, since the late eighteenth century, any war can conceivably take as its outcome the fate of the world. We might say that each last war dreams (again) of being finally the only world war. Counting (first, second, third) marks the repeated failure of this dream.

Enumerations of world wars, however, do not typically begin with the wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century; those wars, in recent histories, have counted neither as world wars nor as truly modern wars. Despite the fact that they comprehended armed conflict not only in Europe, but in Africa, Asia, and the Americas; despite the fact that they worried waters from the Philippine Islands to the Indian Ocean, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Mediterranean, from the English Channel westward to the Chesapeake Bay and Gulf of Mexico: nonetheless these wars are thought not to encompass the world. And yet, unlike the earlier Seven Years' War, which could boast a comparable geographical reach, these wars from their revolutionary beginning were unequivocally addressed to the world. They took as their object not simply contested territories, dynastic feuds or imperial trade routes, but centrally, as the London *Times* asserted in 1812, world systems.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, and increasingly during the two world wars of the early twentieth century, the general wisdom has been that the Napoleonic conflict could no longer be considered "The Great War," as it had been known through most of the previous century. According to some assumed calculus of violence, and in keeping with a faith in technological progress, the sabers, bayonets, muskets, and cannons of these earlier wars could not keep up with the machine gun, the rocket-launched missile, or the increasingly destructive bombs devised in the twentieth century. Paul Fussell, in his ground-breaking *The Great War and Modern Memory*, insists repeatedly on the inadequacy of the early nineteenth-century wars or their literature (at least in the British tradition) for understanding the conflict of World War I—despite the fact that soldiers in the trenches were reading Wordsworth, Austen, and Byron; despite the fact that that war reconsecrated battlegrounds from the

Napoleonic venture (in France and the Low Counties certainly, but also in Central Europe and the Mideast). The war of 1914–18 could be understood only as an "unparalleled situation," a trauma precisely because nothing comparable had preceded it (Fussell 1975, 139). Fussell is mixing two levels here, that of individual memory and that of history and tradition, when he asserts, "The war [World War I] will not be understood in traditional terms: the machine gun alone makes it so special and unexampled that it simply can't be talked about as if it were one of the conventional wars of history" (153). To say this is to make all previous wars, no matter what their innovations, "conventional." Here Fussell seems unable to imagine that, for many participants, warfare might always be "an unparalleled situation." The desire to mark a conflict as unprecedented, new, and therefore "special" is indeed a reflex of modernity, and was abundantly expressed in the other, first "Great War." Goethe, for instance, having witnessed the first victory of French revolutionary troops at Valmy in 1792, testified to its world-historical novelty: "From this place, and from this day forth begins a new era in the history of the world, and you can all say that you were present at its birth" (qtd. in Bell 131).

Equally we find the commonplace disparagement that "back then" the home front had been insulated, as if in childlike innocence, from the horrors of war. So despite the relentless invasion scares, the economic hardships, and the thousands of widows and orphans produced by the earlier wars, Leslie Stephen could in 1896 condescend to Britain a hundred years earlier (and use "French Revolution" as a stand-in term for the twenty-year-long war):

> when we speak of the misery of a nation at the time of some great trouble—the French Revolution, for example—it is difficult to remember how small was the proportion of actual sufferers; how many thousands or millions of children were enjoying their little sports, utterly ignorant of the distant storm; how many mothers were absorbed in watching their children; and how many quiet commonplace people were going about their daily peaceful labour, pretty much as usual, and with only a vague—and possibly pleasurable—excitement at the news, which occasionally drifted to them, of the catastrophes in a different sphere.[73]

Stephen is not wrong to suggest that a wartime populace, especially the more privileged ranks, could continue in its everyday routines while the "drift" of media reporting supplied occasional, thrilling reminders of catastrophes occurring elsewhere—Sontag's "calamities taking place in another country." For Stephen this is the general condition of "the nation at the time of some great trouble"; the state of Great Britain during the years of the Revolution and Napoleon's rise serves as only one example. A few decades later such generalization would itself look naïve and anachronistic.

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[73] Leslie Stephen, "Forgotten Benefactors," in *Social Rights and Duties* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1896), 242.

For many later wartime readers, the village life of Jane Austen's novels typified this privileged insulation and her wars an outmoded possibility. An anonymous critic, writing of Austen's work in 1941, attempted to draw parallels between her time of national trouble and his own: "Jane Austen, for example, wrote *Pride and Prejudice* when Nelson was patrolling off Spain." But the historical comparison surfaces only to reinforce the sense of absolute difference: "Such parallels," it seems, "fail to carry conviction":

> for there is no precedent in the national history for the present condition of things. Jane Austen's nerves were never set on edge by the strain of continuously expecting sensational news from the outside world. The calm of her Hampshire village was broken by no radio messages of crisis. Even the news of Trafalgar did not reach her till many days after the battle. She was visited by no A.R.P. warden to fit her with a gas mask, nor was she instructed to make provisional arrangements for receiving in her home a number of children suddenly evacuated from London.[74]

A review of Jane Austen's work in the *London Observer*, near the end of World War II, makes the quite specific and familiar charge:

> These Austen characters are the greatest escapists of all time. The year may be 1815, but Waterloo is as far off as Cathay, and the idea of war-work vexes neither strapping youngster nor potential despatcher of the military "comfort" and the nutritive package.[75]

If dismissing the seriousness of the earlier wartime on the basis of distance were not enough ("as far off as Cathay"), the reviewer conjures the presumably gamelike nature of those wars: "Campaigns were then conducted like football tours in foreign countries." In reading Austen, "we can ourselves escape, feeling for an hour or two as remote from the flinty and steel couch of war as were Emma and Mr. Knightley among the settees and strawberry-beds of their tranquil Highbury" (ibid.). It seemed "a pleasant cosy war" to another English reviewer in 1940.[76]

Denigration of the earlier wartime evinces a perverse pride in contemporary technology (our steel vs. their soft beds; our bombs vs. their cannons); but it also wobbles between assumptions about lived experience and interpretations of the literature of the period; one is used to explain and critique the other. Even as perceptive a reader as Virginia Woolf, updating her father, Leslie Stephen's, observations, could not find in the British novels of Napoleon's day even a trace of her own modern awareness of distant catastrophe. In a late essay, completed before the Battle of Britain, she charts her own distance from romantic literature, summarizing the common view:[77]

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[74] Unmarked newspaper clipping, probably 1941 English. Notebooks of Augusta Burke, Burke Collection, Goucher College Library.

[75] Ivor Brown, Review of "Emma" [stage production], "Theatre and Life," *The London Observer*, 11 February 1945: 2.

[76] Review of Royde Smith, *Jane Fairfax*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 September 1940.

> In 1815 England was at war, as England is now. And it is natural to ask, how did their war—the Napoleonic war—affect them? Was that one of the influences that formed them . . . ? The answer is a very strange one. The Napoleonic wars did not affect the great majority of those writers at all. The proof of that is to be found in the work of two great novelists—Jane Austen and Walter Scott. Each lived through the Napoleonic wars; each wrote through them. But, though novelists live very close to the life of their time, neither of them in all their novels mentioned the Napoleonic wars. This shows that their model, their vision of human life, was not disturbed or agitated or changed by war. Nor were they themselves. . . . Wars were then remote; wars were carried on by soldiers and sailors, not by private people. The rumours of battle took a long time to reach England. . . . Compare that with our state today. Today we hear the gunfire in the Channel. We turn on the wireless; we hear an airman telling us how this very afternoon he shot down a raider; his machine caught fire; he plunged into the sea; the light turned green and then black; he rose to the top and was rescued by a trawler. Scott never saw sailors drowning at Trafalgar; Jane Austen never heard the cannon roar at Waterloo. Neither of them heard Napoleon's voice as we hear Hitler's voice as we sit at home of the evening.
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> That immunity from war lasted all through the nineteenth-century.[78]

The passage suggests that the war-torn writer of the twentieth century has a more immediate, less "immune" experience of war than her counterparts from the previous century; even the "private person" cannot now escape the war. And though this will be true for Woolf and her compatriots in a few months, once the blitzkrieg begins, it is not yet true at this moment, as she writes. Look closely at how Woolf herself loses sight of the distinction between war and war mediated. Her war is brought to her by the wireless radio, by disembodied voices in the air. Except for the gunfire in the channel, it is heard secondhand rather than seen. (Has she actually witnessed sailors drowning? planes crashing into the sea? And yet we have no doubt that such mediation could set "nerves on edge," as the anonymous critic in 1941 put it.) Napoleon's voice could not be heard in Britain in 1814, but it could be read aloud or silently; his speeches were frequently transcribed into print form.[79] The media for broadcasting war had changed, but did they truly offer greater immediacy? Their affective force may be markedly different from earlier modes of communication, but was that force necessarily stronger? By what measure? Do feelings, like weapons and communications technology, become more powerful and effective over the course of (a progressive) history? Woolf and her contemporary audience "sit at home in the evening"—not unlike Jane Austen and her contemporaries—and try to imagine the violence happening elsewhere.

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[77] The Battle of Britain, with its bombing campaign by the German Luftwaffe, lasted from 9 July to 31 October 1940. Woolf wrote her essay and delivered it as a speech in May of that year.

[78] Virginia Woolf, "The Leaning Tower," in *The Moment and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1948), 130–31.

The following pages attempt to show that many of Stephen's and Woolf's assumptions—about "distant storms" and the "drift" or force of the news, about "private persons" and the peacefulness of the everyday, about forms of absorption and utter ignorance—were in fact tested and revised by "quiet commonplace people," writers like Austen herself, who lived through those earlier catastrophes. They found themselves incapable of confining catastrophe to a different, distant "sphere"; they allowed it to invade their everyday. Precisely in these registers of the mundane and unspectacular, registers that have mistakenly been read as signs of immunity—or worse, obliviousness—British romantic writers struggled to apprehend the effects of foreign war.

Perhaps the simplest way for me to make the case for reading romantic literature as wartime literature, for understanding its continuing effect on our present world, and for taking seriously the overlooked and unspectacular conditions of wartime culture is to end with a detail from William St. Clair's *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. His materialist account of the publishing business will take the reflections of this chapter and put them before your eyes and in your hands. From the library stacks, pick a book published in Britain in this period two hundred years hence. It could be almost any volume, on any topic. It could be a bound volume of the *Monthly Review* or a book of sermons; it could be the *Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Women* or a chapbook for children. Hold it, touch its pages, and look at the sheets of paper, background to the printed words.

> The paper was made by hand, sheet by sheet. The battlefields of Europe were picked over before the blood was dry for every scrap of cloth that could be sold in the rag fairs and on to the international markets. [In addition t]he cast-off smocks of Hungarian shepherds, the shirts of

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[79] See, for example, ongoing reports in the *Annual Register*, as well as Napoléon Buonaparte, *An Account of the French Expedition in Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Leeds: Edward Baines, 1800).

> Italian sailors, and the bonnets of Irish ladies all made their way to the booming British paper mills which were springing up along many British rivers. Boiled, bleached, and smoothed, the paper from which most English books of the romantic period were made remains white and spotless after two hundred years, shaming all subsequent books.[80]

The pages in your hands, in their hands, on which they read novels, histories, poems, treatises, and tirades; on which they scanned fashion plates and Bible verses; these pages may have traveled—but who could be certain?—from the battlefields of Europe. Not only those wartime readers but readers today can look over these "white and spotless" sheets and witness (or not) this romantic transmutation: from the ground of war to the ground of reading. The difficulty of reading and writing in wartime is made palpable.

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[80] William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 178. I am grateful to Deidre Lynch for calling this passage to my attention.