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Brianna Phillips

Playing with Noise:

Anne Elliot, the Narrator, and Sound in Jane Austen's and Adrian Shergold's *Persuasion*

In Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1817), Anne Elliot occupies a noisy world of piercing voices, slamming doors, cutlery scraping plates, children running, laughing, and a "hundred" other sounds. Because she is often noiseless in this loud narrative world, the presence of sound is thrown into relief and profoundly affects Anne's body and consciousness. Throughout the novel, Anne's responses to noise within a crowded room parallel her inward feelings in that when the noisiness bewilders her senses, her response reflects her simultaneous discomposure at seeing or interacting with Captain Frederick Wentworth, whom she was persuaded not to marry eight years before. Adrian Shergold's 2007 adaptation of *Persuasion* builds on Austen's use of noise in order to engage with both the significance of female emotion and the slippage between Anne and the narrator in Austen's novel. Although both Austen and Shergold use narrative and filmic sound respectively as guideposts for Anne's inner emotions, they do so differently: Austen lays out a narrative landscape of boisterous voices and everyday sounds, but Shergold, in contrast, amplifies and defines single sounds, such as Sir Walter Elliot's voice or the door slamming, and incorporates nondiegetic musical scores in connection to Anne's emotional states as she undergoes a series of painful re-encounters with Wentworth. As such, Shergold's film legitimates female emotion, both rejecting women's emotions as a source of ridicule and confuting a critical tradition that views female silence or listening in relation to passivity and powerlessness.

The recent study of sound in relation to Austen tends to either focus on sound in her novels or the role of noise in Austen adaptations, but this essay seeks to analyze how the novel

and its adaptation use sound in an ongoing, reciprocal conversation with each other rather than viewing the two mediums as distinct or incompatible in terms of their noise. Many critics recognize Austen's use of noise in her novels and others argue for the expressiveness of sound in related adaptations, but rarely, do they position the novel with its corresponding film in the ways that they both use noise. In "Incarnating Jane Austen: The Role of Sound in the Recent Film Adaptations," Ariane Hudelet offers a similar analysis in that she also recognizes "series of parallels between some of Austen's strategies in her written dialogues and the performances given," but even here, Hudelet concentrates on the sound of *dialogue* in Austen films in relation to the dialogue in the novel, primarily examining actors' vocal techniques (175). Such a focus proves problematic in Shergold's *Persuasion*, where there is very little dialogue on Anne's part, but where sound is still expressive.

Nonetheless, Hudelet provides key concepts for exploring the use of sound in Austen adaptation, noting that each director makes deliberate "technical choices ...to enhance or lessen bodily noises" and that regardless of its origin, "sounds give material and emotional value" to the scene (175, 182). Moreover, she argues that "the use of sound definition is a way for some directors to subtly recreate a type of expressiveness and indirect communication that, in the novels, relies...implicitly on the body." Shergold makes use of "sound definition," using the sounds of Anne's world more than "verbal language," to reveal the emotional undercurrents so seamlessly embedded in Austen's novel (Hudelet 176, 177). She goes on to say that "materializing sound cues...can create effects of intimacy or uneasiness" implicit, though not necessarily explicit, in the novel, such that Hudelet indirectly relies on the correlative relationship between the novel and the film especially because noise enhances the inherent aspects of a text that the reader may miss on their first reading. On a similar note, Andrew

Elfenbein draws attention to the hidden aspects of Austen's novels and her "skilled, odd omissions" that naturally pose challenges for the director (332). He argues that "given all the developments in eighteenth-century culture...Austen ought to have crammed *Pride and Prejudice* with detail. We should read minute descriptions of faces, dresses, houses, gardens, landscapes and prospects, all understood as metaphors for their owner. Instead...[we get] a strange lack of detail" (335). Although he doesn't discuss *Persuasion*, the prevalence of "Austen's minimalism" in her work illuminates the significance of the fact that she "crams" *Persuasion* with details about noise, seemingly working against her own minimalism. Shergold, it seems, picks up on this Austenian cue or shift in his adaptation as he "[makes] us hear these stories as vividly as [he makes] us see them" (Hudelet 180). For Elfenbein, "what counts in Austen is what happens in a room," and Shergold literalizes that with his noisy rooms (336).

Although Austen and Shergold both use noise in connection with the playing out of Anne's emotions within her mind, their techniques differ slightly, but the novel and the film are both sensory mediums that form a conversation around a shared conception of Anne Elliot as heroine. Austen filters Anne's thoughts and experiences primarily through noise, detailing the sounds or people that Anne hears or overhears, as Anne mingles with the Elliots, the Musgroves, Crofts, and others. Involving music and crowds of chatting people, the concert, the first of its kind in any Austen novel, exemplifies her preoccupation with sound and a narrative that hinges on what Anne hears and how it affects her. As a heroine inundated with sound, Anne at one point desires that she could be "insensible" to everyone's constant talking about Wentworth and sees the "various sounds of the room" as a "trail to [her] nerves" (Austen 38, 129). With its focus on Anne's senses and the sensations of piercing sounds and of Wentworth's presence, the novel becomes a sensory text, awake to emotions, feelings, and perceptions. Anne, although quiet,

listens, observes, and feels throughout the novel. As Megan Quinn notes in “The Sensation of Language in Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*,” Austen’s language “imparts the sensation of touch or sound to readers” and “is the formal mirror of Anne’s senses” (243, 254). Shergold also relies on Austen’s sensorial language while also scaling back on filmic dialogue for Anne in order to more fully engage with her emotions, establishing his own form of Austen minimalism, echoing Elfenbein. Furthermore, Quinn and Hudelet, although acknowledging the importance of sound in the novel and Austen adaptations respectively, do so in regards to either linguistic or discursive modes, but Shergold’s film is interested in the effect of sounds (of an unlocking door, a ticking clock, etc.) themselves.

In his adaptation, Shergold shares and intensifies Austen’s portrayal of Anne as overwhelmed and disorientated both by the spaces she inhabits and how she is emotionally affected by Wentworth’s presence. The film centers around an Anne who “hope[s] she had outlived the age of blushing; but the age of emotion she had certainly not” (Austen 36). Shergold grounds his interpretation of the novel “in all the confusion that was natural” when Anne and Wentworth tensely occupy the same room. He brings Anne’s “disordered feelings” to the surface and visually translates how Wentworth “produce[s] such confusion of varying, but very painful agitations, as she could not recover from.” Aware of her discomposure, Anne is “ashamed of being so nervous, so overcome by such a trifle; but so it was; and it required a long application of solitude...to recover her” (57). Shergold emphasizes what Anne feels and how she inwardly responds so much so that Anne speaks *less* in the film than she does in the novel. When Anne “speaks,” she is reading her diary rather than talking directly to anyone. In this way, both Austen and Shergold depend on the same portrayal of Anne as an intensely perceptive and sensorial character who is “disordered” and overwhelmed by the noises and people in her atmosphere.

Moreover, both use noise as a sounding board for Anne's confusion of feelings, but rather than establishing a detailed soundscape like Austen, Shergold deliberately singles out certain sounds and enhances them to an extreme degree to indicate the personal, individuated effects on Anne's consciousness and senses. Ultimately, he departs slightly from this conception in his engagement with Anne's relationship to the narrator. Nonetheless, Shergold's translation is made possible because of the cues she gleans from Austen's use of noise.

In her use of narrative sound, Austen connects Anne's consciousness and her private emotions with her auditory perception in that her responses to rooms teeming with sound parallels her own emotional states as she faces the tension of her and Wentworth's relationship. The novel pivots around what Anne perceives in her world (sounds, uncomfortable settings, tense conversations, Wentworth's deliberate indifference) as well as her inward feelings in response to that full world. As Anne moves between Kellynch, Bath, and Lyme and their respective social sets, her impressions of the continual dinner parties, gatherings, and outings are primarily given through her observations of the sounds in each atmosphere. When Anne learns that Wentworth's sister, Mrs. Croft, is letting Kellynch Hall, she is the "attentive listener" in a drawing room full of voices competing to be heard; Because of Sir Walter, Mr. Shepherd, and Mrs. Clay's loudness, Anne is relieved to leave the room and "seek the comfort of cool air for her flushed cheeks" (Austen 19). In this early scene, Austen connects noise to Anne's senses because the loudness here is explicitly related to Wentworth. All three characters are discussing Mrs. Croft's brother so that Anne is agitated by both the noise and the sensations that Wentworth's name provokes within her. Shortly after, Anne connects the noise of people talking endlessly about Wentworth with her senses: "To hear them talking so much of Captain Wentworth, repeating his name so often, puzzling over past years...was a new sort of trail for

Anne's nerves. She found, however, that it was one to which she must enure herself...[and] teach herself to be insensible on such points" (38). It is a trial both to listen about and to anticipate Wentworth's renewed presence in her world, again aligning the effects of noise on Anne with the same effects of Wentworth on her own emotions. Austen, then, uses noise as a signpost for Anne's emotional states because the sensory strain that noise produces further suggests the same strain on her inner feelings.

Similarly, when Anne and Wentworth verbally interact for an extended period, beyond the "common civilities," at the concert hall, it is significant that the room is so loud that it distracts Anne during their conversation because this scene marks the first emotional peak of their relationship as she allows herself to admit that it's possible that Wentworth still loves her (72). The crescendo of noise as the band begins playing, then, imitates the height of what they are feeling at this moment. Suggesting her sensitivity to sound, a "whispering between her father and Elizabeth [catches] her ear" when Wentworth approaches her. Through the "various noises of the room, the almost ceaseless slam of the door, and ceaseless buzz of persons walking through, [Anne] had distinguished every word, was struck, gratified, confused, and beginning to breathe very quick, and feel an hundred things in a moment" (Austen 129). In this scene as well, the room's sounds affect her as painfully and shockingly as Wentworth himself, connecting her feelings of surprise at speaking with him with the startling sensations from the chaotic room. Anne receives Wentworth's attentions with the same degree of confusion and bewilderment with which she perceives the slamming door and the "buzz" of the guests. For Shergold, Anne's being "struck, gratified, [and] confused" marks the emotional upheaval that she experiences from the opening sequence of the film to the ending scene with Wentworth's letter. The mastery of

Shergold's adaptation is its focus on how Wentworth's reappearance emotionally disrupts and affects Anne, a focus that Austen herself foregrounds.

One challenge in translating *Persuasion* from novel to screen is how to effectively convey Anne's silence and the novel's emphasis on her inner consciousness, and on the point of silence, Shergold's film aligns itself with feminist critic Joan Retallack's view that "silence is not empty at all, but densely, richly, disturbingly full. Full of just those things which we had not, until now, been ready to notice; or reluctantly noticing, had dismissed as nonsense or noise" (345). For most readers, the novel's loudness goes unnoticed because Anne makes no noise herself, but Shergold illuminates the "densely, richly, disturbingly full" nature of Anne's silence and inner consciousness by replacing dialogue with constant diegetic/nondiegetic sound and filling Anne's silences with a mind reeling and adjusting to startling sounds and the painful sensations of Wentworth's return into her life. The constant everyday sounds and the perpetual playing of the same music theme throughout the film represents this "fullness" because Anne's silences are never actually silent. The film opens, for instance, with Anne gazing directly into the camera as servants bustle around her, getting Kellynch Hall ready to be let by the Crofts. The opening shot is inundated with both diegetic and nondiegetic sounds and establishes the music theme that will follow Anne throughout. We hear the rattle of china as it's carried out, Anne's footsteps down the hall, the servants' footsteps, birds crowing, clicking noises of cutlery or doors being locked, her heavy breathing, and glasses clinking for the first two minutes of the film.

As she travels from the bottom floor, up the stairs, and onto the second floor of Kellynch, each of these sounds are individually heard and sharply defined. They aren't overlaid onto each other but heard as separate noises that penetrate when Anne passes. The sounds of servants cleaning, throwing sheets over furniture, scrubbing the fireplace grate, and taking down the

chandelier fill Anne's intense silence, immediately establishing Anne's world as loud and affecting (0:0:00-0:2:15). From the opening shot to the end of the scene marked by Lady Russell's arrival, a nondiegetic music sequence plays for the scene's entire duration, and as different sounds materialize, the music continues unbroken, interweaving with the diegetic noise. The film reuses this same music theme throughout the film, notably in connection with Anne during private scenes, such as when she's writing in her diary or envisioning Wentworth in the same room with her. The score begins with soft piano notes that gradually intensify in their loudness and the length of the notes as Anne walks through the house. When she climbs the staircase, dramatic violin notes supplement the piano, further increasing in pitch. Her arrival on the top floor coincides with the peak of the music so that this increasingly suspenseful music follows Anne as she retraces her path down the stairs and into the foyer after seeing Lady Russell, who persuaded Anne out of marriage with Wentworth, from a second floor window. The intense music, then, occurs in relation to Anne's association of Lady Russell with Wentworth, creating a (sonorous) emotional disturbance.

Like Austen, Shergold both accounts for Anne's noisy world and uses sound to unpack the disordered state of her feelings, but unlike Austen, he stresses designated sounds that significantly startle Anne and impinge on her consciousness, such as the opening of doors or the sudden clamor of people entering a room where she sat alone and absorbed with her thoughts. In this way, the diegetic china rattling, the resonant footsteps, and the birds crowing intimate how inward-turned Anne is because the outside world often startles her and its attendant noise brings her back to reality, and the nondiegetic music connotes the emotional effects of that world for her. For that reason, the film's opening scene connects Anne's emotional distress over her family's financial situation and her "unspoken sadness" from the loss of Wentworth eight years

before with noise, both from the narrative world and nondiegetic music (Carpenter). Moreover, Shergold's emphasis on Anne's sadness through noise further demonstrates how Austen and Shergold work around a shared conception of Anne because Austen too reveals that "a few months had seen the beginning and end of their [Anne and Wentworth's] acquaintance; but, not with a few months ended Anne's share of suffering from it" (Austen 21). The unusual sharpness of ordinary noises and the way the central music theme begins softly and gradually builds in intensity, only to drop back to the soft piano score, imitates the back-and-forth nature of Anne's thoughts as she experiences her "share of suffering" while being constantly around Wentworth and struggling to compose herself.

Accordingly, the diegetic and nondiegetic noise in the film reaches its crescendo when Anne's emotional turmoil reaches its climax, notably during two parallel events: when she receives Charles' misinformed letter that Wentworth will marry Louisa (and thus believes she has lost Wentworth forever) and when she discovers that Louisa has married Captain Benwick instead. These two scenes represent the two extremes of Anne's emotional spectrum: profound pain and profound hope, and for both, noise becomes just as extreme. In the former scene, the sequence begins with Charles's voice narrating the letter while Anne reads it, and when the camera cuts to a dark, high angle shot of Anne at her writing desk, the theme from the film's opening plays in the background. Her bedroom serves throughout as an intensely private space where she engages with her deepest thoughts and feelings, often weeping as she writes. We hear her sobbing over Wentworth's expected marriage while the nondiegetic music (primarily dramatic violin tones) quickly amplifies, and the length of the notes are the longest here than in any other scene, suggesting the depth and severity of her distress. The subsequent shot reveals the clock in the foyer, and we can hear the "ticking" of the clock's seconds hand, which is

another ordinary sound that Shergold sharply enhances even as the music theme continues over the cut from Anne to the clock. Next, her father Sir Walter, Elizabeth, and Mrs. Clay are in the foyer waiting on Anne, and Sir Walter shouts “Anne!” three consecutive times, each one growing louder until the third time when Sir Walter’s voice disturbingly reverberates through the house and Anne’s mind, all the while the music is consistently swelling. The echo of his voice continues over Anne’s appearance in the next shot as she shuts her bedroom door behind her, the thud of which follows the ticking clock in its distinctness (1:00:30-1:01:40). This is arguably the loudest scene in the film because all of these sounds merge, interweave, and escalate; sounds echo and build in such a way that Anne cannot escape her agony so much so that it seems she cannot even hear her own name over the intensities (auditory and emotional) that fill her mind. The deafening pitch of this scene correlates with the overpowering degree of her own emotions.

In a parallel scene where the false rumor about Wentworth’s marriage is replaced with his hearing of the alleged rumor that Anne will marry Mr. Elliot, Shergold again enhances the sounds of a ticking clock and an opening door, doubling the noises of lost time and opened opportunities for Anne and Wentworth. This scene opens with Anne’s reading a letter from Wentworth notifying her that he wants to see her at eleven o’clock. The ticking of the clock fills the shot, growing louder when Anne glances at the time. Afterwards, the unexpectedly acute sound of a fist pounding on the front door startles Anne and the viewer because it dominates over all other noises in the background. As her anticipation increases so does the pitch of the pounding, and she hears, as if in a concert hall, of bolts sliding and the knob turning as the butler opens the door. These everyday sounds ultimately dissolve into each other and reach a shrill pitch because of the way they impress themselves on Anne’s mind, revealing her anxiety and anticipation that she is not too late after all (1:18:50-1:19:40). Moreover, when Anne is shown

writing in her diary, these moments contain the deeply personal outpouring of Anne's otherwise pent-up emotions as she pens those feelings, and the only place where she outwardly shows emotion is while writing. She is often crying as she writes, and for that reason, in each of these diary scenes, Shergold incorporates the most intense part of the musical score, where the subtle piano notes give way to resonant violins. In this way, Shergold makes distinctions between the noises that Anne can hear and what the audience hears (the nondiegetic music), but he reconciles them on the basis of how they represent her "intense emotional journey." In visualizing that "emotional journey," Shergold also had to visualize Anne's interiority, and as Sally Hawkins commented, "Adrian was inside Anne's head all the time" (Carpenter).

Working from "inside Anne's head," Shergold further uses noise in order to translate Anne's free indirect discourse from the novel by enacting a consciousness of emotion, belonging to Anne, on screen, by which I mean the unraveling of Anne's sensations within her mind as she encounters Wentworth by accident or by appointment. At one point, for instance, he materializes Anne's mental space as a physical space, engaging this consciousness of emotion. Austen writes of Anne's musing over Wentworth while she is playing the piano during dinner with the Crofts, and she notes that "these were some of the thoughts which occupied Anne, while her fingers were mechanically at work...once she felt that he was looking at herself—observing her altered features, perhaps, trying to trace in them the ruins of the face which had once charmed him" (52). In the film, Anne is shown alone at the piano, even though a second before the room was filled with people, suggesting that her mind transcends that reality. By clearing it of all other people, Shergold transforms the room into the interior of Anne's mind that is filled with thoughts of Wentworth. Representing Anne's "feel[ing] that he was looking at herself," Wentworth appears in the frame, watching Anne, and then disappears when she looks up (0:24:00-0:26:44). Even

though she “mechanically” plays, her consciousness is “full” of Wentworth and the emotional “disturbances” that Wentworth provokes.

For that reason, without the startling nature of certain sounds or the apprehensive music, Anne seems, for the unaware viewer, composed and unbothered by Wentworth, but Shergold explores the underside of Anne’s composure to reveal the tensions and “disturbances” occupying her consciousness. More so than in any other *Persuasion* adaptation, Anne, played by Sally Hawkins, breathes heavily, weeps over her diary, nervously withdraws into silence, and maintains a sense of being unable to contain her feelings for Wentworth as she watches him court Louisa Musgrove. Sally Hawkins, in short, acts through her senses more than through dialogue, a decision that harkens back to Austen’s novel. The audience sees her emotions behind closed doors and through the music itself rather than through Anne’s publicly reacting in any way. When Anne and Wentworth see each other for the first time in the film at Charles and Mary Musgrove’s house, Anne has been dwelling on and agonizing over this first meeting, writing in her diary that being reminded of her loss with his presence is “more than [her] spirits can bear” (0:11:20-0:11:50). We hear her reading the diary entry, narrating her thoughts as subdued piano notes play in the background. Before Wentworth unexpectedly arrives in the doorway, the scene opens with Anne’s back to the camera as she intently gazes out of a window, the piano music continuing. She then visibly jumps at the abnormally sharp sound of the door being opened as Louisa and Henrietta enter, boisterously interrupting her reverie over Wentworth’s impending appearance. She remains silent as everyone enthusiastically gives their opinions of him and Charles stomps in, but Anne, in contrast, tenses up and doesn’t know how to react. Her nervous “agitations” are reflected in the abrupt swell of the nondiegetic piano theme when he

steps into the doorframe. The pacing of the music, then, reflects the quickening of Anne's nervousness, and her consciousness is once again "full."

Interestingly, Anne and Wentworth's first encounter in the novel embodies this same degree of fullness for Anne as noise and sensations merge in confusing, overwhelming ways, and furthermore, analyzing Shergold's scene alongside the original passage introduces the ways in which Shergold engages the idea of the narrator. In the novel, Anne's first seeing Wentworth after eight years involves both the tumult of noises and the chaos of her own emotions. Her sensory overload at this moment comes through what Ariane Hudelet terms the "physical 'feel'" of Austen's language, which enables the reader to "participate in Anne's bodily experience," as Megan Quinn argues (Hudelet 178, Quinn 254). Shergold, however, takes the sensory noisiness of the scene in another direction, that of translating Anne into her own narrator as he has Anne write the passages that belong to the narratorial voice in the novel in her diary in her own hand and voice. The passage itself mixes free indirect discourse (Anne's thoughts) with the narrator's voice, contributing to the "slipperiness between the acts of focalization and narration" mastered in Austen's novels (Nesbit 452). It begins with the narrator's describing the "morning hours of the Cottage," but when Wentworth appears, the narrative voice slides seamlessly into Anne's rapid consciousness:

"Mary, very much gratified by this attention, was delighted to receive him; while a thousand feelings rushed on Anne, of which this was the most consoling, that it would soon be over. And it was soon over. In two minutes after Charles's preparation, the others appeared; they were in the drawing-room. Her eye half met Captain Wentworth's; a bow, a curtsy passed; she heard his voice—he talked to Mary, said that all was right; said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing; the room seemed

full—full of persons and voices—but a few minutes ended it...the room was cleared, and Anne might finish her breakfast as she could.” (Austen 43)

The novel here aligns with Retellack’s idea that silence, especially Anne’s, is never empty, but “disturbingly full” as the room swells with “persons and voices” while she is left to attend to the “rush” of a “thousand feelings.”

Although it’s difficult to parse Anne’s voice from the narrator’s, the use of dashes suggests the “rushing” (Austen’s syntax) of Anne’s “emotional disarray,” suggesting that the narrator’s voice emerges in moments of omniscient detail in which the narrator seems to be watching the encounter. Such detail includes how Anne’s eye “half met” Wentworth’s, that he bowed and she curtsied in return, and finally, that all had passed and Anne could return to her breakfast. Because these details are not things that Anne *thinks*, Austen indicates that the narrator fills in these narrative gaps in between Anne’s focalizations. Shergold takes into account this narrative switching in his translation of this scene and in the film as a whole. Taking into account his use of noise (mentioned above), Shergold ends Anne and Wentworth’s first meeting with Anne, after she has turned her eyes regretfully to the ground after Wentworth has indifferently dismissed her per Mary’s introduction, abruptly looks directly into the camera as if the viewer is intruding upon this intensely private, painful interaction (0:22:14-0:22:17). Her direct gaze into the camera, repeated multiple times in scenes of equally personal moments, symbolizes the controlling “gaze” or oversight of the omniscient narrator in novels. At times, her gaze seems to “involve the viewer in her thoughts,” but at other times, her gaze is more reproachful at our intrusion, representing the ways in which a narrator both reveals and hides narrative details (Carpenter).

Moreover, how Shergold films the aftermath of Anne's first seeing Wentworth explicitly erases the dualism apparent in the novel between Anne and the narrator when measured against Austen's portrayal of the aftermath. When Wentworth leaves and Anne is left to muse over her "retentive feelings," Austen decides to clearly designate Anne's thoughts in quotation marks rather than maintaining free indirect discourse. She writes: "'It is over! It is over!,' she repeated to herself again, and again, in nervous gratitude. 'The worst is over!'" Following that, Austen again confuses who is talking (Anne or Austen) in the detail: "She had seen him. They had met. They had once more been in the same room!" (Austen 43, 44). If, previous to this, Anne's voice is explicitly bound with quotation marks, to whom are we to attribute this non-marked section? Is the narrator interpreting Anne's feelings for the reader, or is Anne focalizing them herself? However, Shergold erases this duality with the introduction of Anne's diary, which functions as the template for Anne's otherwise unspoken voice and hidden feelings. After Anne's abrupt gaze, the film cuts to a shot of Anne's diary page, and the only visible body part is her hand as she writes about this meeting with Wentworth. She narrates the diary entry, and this act of narration demonstrates Shergold's engagement with Austen's slippery passage because he translates Austen's third-person narrator's sections into Anne's first-person accounts, transitioning Anne into a writer and narrator figure. Anne, in short, becomes her own narrator such that Shergold fuses the intertwining of voices in Austen into one voice—*Anne's* voice. In a voiceover and against the melodramatic violin notes, Anne reads, "The worst is over. I have seen him. We have been once more in the same room. A bow. A curtsy. I heard his voice. Then, he was gone" (0:22:19-0:22:36). We see and hear a tear splatter on the page, and during the narration of the last three lines, her eyes again find the camera, but her narration continues as a voiceover even when the frame reveals her distraught facial expression. Her gaze here both

invites the viewer to empathize and declares her authorial agency because she has *seen* him and is the author of this account.

Moreover, Anne fulfills the job of the narrator in her relation of the details that Austen delegates to the narrator in the novel: “A bow. A curtsy.” Austen’s “She had seen him...They had been once more in the same room!” becomes Shergold’s (and Anne’s) “*I have seen him. We have been once more in the same room,*” enabling Anne to record and account for her own story. Significantly, in connection with the film’s emphasis on sound, he adds the line (not in the book) of “*I heard his voice.*” In a similar line of thought, Kate Nesbit sees *Persuasion* as “a novel about a woman trying to re-author the end of a past romance” because she connects “Anne’s development as an auditor” and “the centrality of hearing and listening [in the novel] to the formulation of narrative and the act of authorship” (455, 464). However, the same can be said of Shergold’s adaptation because his sharp definition of noise in relation to Anne’s consciousness of emotion gives Anne’s point-of-view a legibility that is often blurred within the novel’s narratorial “slipperiness,” and finally, by proposing a new Anne Elliot, a heroine made narrator and author. In his filmic engagement with Austen’s narrative techniques, he interprets Anne as one who noiselessly tampers with the narrator, ultimately subsuming that position herself. For example, Anne claims the arguably narratorial line that “Now they were strangers; nay, worse than strangers, for...it was a perpetual estrangement” as her own in the film, writing/reading it in her journal (0:23:00-0:23:10).

At the height of her “unspoken sadness” and thus during the most vulnerable scene of the film, Anne is again shown at her writing table with Charles’ letter about Wentworth’s expected marriage, but here, in the middle of her weeping, she blows out the candle, leaving the viewer in the dark and thereby controlling what we see (1:01:00-1:01:19). In this way, she, at times,

becomes a controlling narrator as Shergold's adaptation plays with the fact that Anne's emotions fall under *her* jurisdiction rather than the narrator's. Nesbit recognizes the same narratorial quality about Anne in the novel, arguing that "Anne's registering of the sounds and conversations around her controls the narrative ear" (458). Without a doubt, Shergold illuminates this idea that what Anne hears dictates the plot of *Persuasion* such that Anne functions as a shadow narrator with Austen herself. Therefore, even as Shergold explores who Anne Elliot is when she is removed from under the narrator, Shergold and Austen still maintain a shared conversation around the potential of Anne Elliot as heroine.

In her "electrifying" novel, Jane Austen assigns value to female emotion that departs from her earlier hysterical characters, such as Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* or Aunt Norris in *Mansfield Park*. Adrian Shergold's 2007 adaptation, moreover, does not give the audience a Mrs. Bennet. While Mrs. Bennet is often cast as a foolishly, irrationally emotional woman as she flails her handkerchief around, complains about her nerves, and spontaneously bursts into tears or faints, Shergold presents a composed Anne Elliot whose inner self is overwhelmed with contradictory feelings under the surface. She subtly feels her emotions in an authentically sensorial way with "her blushing, heart-palpating, nerve-electrifying body" so that Shergold validates women's feelings rather than relegating them to a site of ridicule as is so often the case with Mrs. Bennet and the "hysterical woman" stereotypes (Nesbit 458). Therefore, it is a mistake, as Kate Nesbit points out, to "[conflate] all acts of listening...[and] silence" with "disempowerment" and "passivity" (455). Austen, Shergold, and Anne Elliot herself, then, play with noise in radical, subversive ways that rewrite the authority and legibility of female emotion and perception. Like Jane Eyre hearing Bertha Mason's laughs at Thornfield, we can hear Austen and Anne covertly at work in the novel and in Shergold's film.

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