CHAPTER 2

“You Pierce My Soul”

Feeling Embodied and *Persuasion*

I can listen no longer in silence. I must speak to you by such means as are within my reach. You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope. Tell me not that I am too late, that such precious feelings are gone for ever. I offer myself to you again with a heart even more your own, than when you almost broke it eight and a half years ago. Dare not say that man forgets sooner than woman, that his love has an earlier death. I have loved none but you. Unjust I may have been, weak and resentful I have been, but never inconstant. You alone have brought me to Bath. For you alone I think and plan.—Have you not seen this? Can you have failed to have understood my wishes?—I had not waited even these ten days, could I have read your feelings, as I think you must have penetrated mine. I can hardly write. I am every instant hearing something that overpowers me. You sink your voice, but I can distinguish the tones of that voice, when they would be lost on others.—Too good, too excellent creature! You do us justice indeed. You do believe that there is true attachment and constancy among men. Believe it to be most fervent, most undeviating in F.W.

I must go, uncertain of my fate; but I shall return hither, or follow your party, as soon as possible. A word, a look will be enough to decide whether I enter your father’s house this evening or never.

—Jane Austen, *Persuasion*

1. THE REMARKABLE LETTER OF CHAPTER 23

For eight and a half years, Anne Elliot has longed for the words of Frederick Wentworth’s letter, and we as *Persuasion’s* readers have waited for them as well—twenty chapters of waiting—since Anne’s first murmuring of “he”
at the close of chapter 3. However, I'd like to suggest that we've waited far longer for what this letter holds. If Jane Austen's novels all lead ineluctably to the return of “him” and the proposal (renewed or first offered), the heartfelt moment of declaration between the lovers before _Persuasion_ seems in Austen's writing to be essentially nonrepresentational, though its idea can be alluded to as a shared ellipse between the lovers. We are given words after the proposal of when each realized that he or she loved, and how each feels now that the acknowledgment has been made. But Austen mostly drops a veil over the actual words of love first exchanged—the words of passion spoken in the moment, not recollected in the tranquility of a moment later from the position of the established “us.” ¹ Who then is this writer, Austen as Wentworth? Frederick Wentworth overhears Anne Elliot meditate out loud (apparently to Captain Harville) on what she has longed to tell Wentworth throughout the novel—of her attachment to him, disguised still in general terms as “the nature of a woman’s attachment.” And it calls forth from him not speech, but words written in the moment back to her—her call to his response becomes her longings met. Written in the

¹. If Darcy’s first declaration fails to incite anything like the passionate desire to attach and instead leads Lizzy to name him the “last man on earth” whom she’d marry, his second goes this far: “You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on the subject forever” (375). In _Northanger Abbey_, no words directly spoken are given: “She was assured of his affection; and that heart in return was solicited, which perhaps, they pretty equally knew was already entirely his own” (211). Likewise in _Sense and Sensibility_, the declaration is reported second hand with an added instruction about what it is as readers that we “need” receive as the “said”: “This only need be said;—that when they all sat down to table at four o’clock, about three hours after his arrival, he had secured his lady, engaged her mother’s consent, and was not only in the rapturous profession of the lover, but in the reality of reason and truth, one of the happiest of men” (306). Austen breaks into a narrative of explanation to account for how Edmund in _Mansfield Park_ might move within the week from feeling heartbroken about giving up Mary Crawford to the recognition of his preference for Fanny Price. At the moment of declaration, we stand with Austen at a “subjunctive distance away” from their exchange: “His happiness in knowing himself to have been so long the beloved of such a heart, must have been great enough to warrant any strength of language in which he could clothe it to her or to himself; it must have been a delightful happiness!” And then Austen tells of Fanny’s feelings in response—that which cannot be represented: “But there was happiness elsewhere which no description can reach. Let no one presume to give the feelings of a young woman on receiving the assurance of that affection of which she has scarcely allowed herself to entertain a hope” (455). Knightley manages in his Knightley way to be the most direct and commanding in his address, but the forwardness is really a call for her to speak immediately, which might relieve him of speaking at all: “My dearest Emma,” said he, “for dearest you will always be, whatever the event of this hour’s conversation, my dearest, most beloved Emma—tell me at once. Say “No,” if it is to be said.—She could really say nothing.—‘You are silent! at present I ask no more.’” But then he asks for more: “‘At present I ask only to hear your voice, once to hear your voice.’” Emma continues to meet his inability to speak his love with her own. And then Austen interrupts Emma’s silent run of thoughts with “What did she say?—Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does.—She said enough to show there need not be despair—and to invite him to say more himself” (emphasis mine, 417–18). We do not know what Emma said. However, if _Emma_ is driven by a desire to narrate what a “man ought to be” and what a “woman ought to be,” here words of the heart, or a desire to narrate what “they ought to be,” is strikingly absent.
present tense, this letter, built around the imperative “must,” insists on the emergence of these words that must be said because something must be represented. These words body forth as this letter—this representation of what Wentworth feels now—asserts he has always felt. There is no time to lose, no time for reflection, no time for the separation of felt-experience from thought-experience. And for Austen, I want to assert, there is no time to lose. Austen probably knows by the time of the letter’s final composition in 1816 that she is dying. She is forty years old. If ever there is a moment for Austen to feel pressed by her losing ground with life and able by her maturity in life to write a language of love, the writing of _Persuasion_ is that moment. What can be more pressing than the present tense when death stands near it, still in the future but almost itself the present? Saying it “now,” what one knows now, becomes everything. And the now is language that travels between Austen/Wentworth’s body that feels and Austen/Wentworth’s consciousness that feels, and that constructs between them a meeting place in the space of metaphor. “I can listen no longer in silence. I must speak to you by such means as are within my reach” make the “I” be ears that must act by finding voice in a hand that holds a pen. The “I” becomes a “soul” because it is pierced by “you”—body becomes consciousness in the presence of the beloved other (“you”), but only through a metaphor of physical penetration (“pierce”). “I” pierced by you is a being split in two between two half feelings, agony and hope. “I” therefore is now composed of two feelings, or agony and hope now share equally in being “I.” Feelings are personified when a body/consciousness is said to be them (“Half hope, half agony am I”) and a body/consciousness is made affect when feelings are said to be “I” (“I am half agony, half hope”). The predicate nominative construction tells us that this metaphor holds in both directions: “I am half agony, half hope” and “Half hope, half agony am I” and that what it holds are feelings embodied.

This chapter grows out of my desire to try to account for the letter of

2. Linda Raphael in _Narrative Skepticism_ writes, “In the summer of 1815, when Austen began work on _Persuasion_, she was finding her illness, Addison’s disease, ‘so baffling and elusive that she knew it might be incurable’” (31). Claire Tomalin, in _Jane Austen: A Life_, complicates the diagnosis by wondering if it really was Addison’s disease. Austen’s illness distinguished itself from the usual course of Addison’s disease in that her skin color was described by her niece Caroline to be “pale” as opposed to tan; she suffered from fevers and was not said to suffer from sudden faintness and collapse on standing. Because of these differences, Tomalin with the help of her contemporary Dr. Eric Beck suggests: “One possibility is that she suffered from a lymphoma such as Hodgkin’s disease—a form of cancer—which would lead to recurrent fevers and progressive weakening, leading to death” (282). Austen was born December 16, 1775, and died July 18, 1817, at the age of forty-one.

3. Tomalin’s account of Austen’s composing of chapters 23 and 24 (as written, discarded, rewritten) coupled with her descriptions of Austen’s physical pain during the time of their revised composition in the summer of 1816 supports my sense of Austen’s urgency. See Claire Tomalin’s _Jane Austen: A Life_, in particular her own chapter 23, 252–64.
chapter 23. It is so unlike any other letter in Austen’s writing in the sustained depth of its embodied language of feeling. Frederick Wentworth’s words represent the deepest feelings of attachment in the moment, something Austen for the most part does not represent in her work but does write in *Persuasion*, and they represent the feeling of attachment in the moment as embodied. At issue for me is, how does this letter work both to mirror and to be the culminating expression of the novel and the writing career that it concludes?

2. THE FEELING OF KNOWING

From 1796 to 1797, twenty years prior to her writing of *Persuasion*, Austen at age twenty-one writes this about the twenty-one-year-old Elizabeth Bennet: “Elizabeth, agitated and confused, rather knew that she was happy, than felt herself to be so” (Pride and Prejudice 381). What does it mean that Elizabeth Bennet has knowledge of her emotional happiness but not the feeling of it? As Lizzy makes her way toward what Austen will define as “rational happiness” by the end of *Pride and Prejudice*, what stands between her knowing happiness and feeling it, I would assert, is her body, and perhaps as well the youthful Jane Austen’s body. Elizabeth questions, doubts, judges, ponders, examines, and concludes—quickly—always quickly. True to her quickness, most of all, she is a wit. She and Darcy meet regularly in energetic conversation in which their words bring their minds, as it were, “face to face.” Darcy comes to know her mental capacities as he comes to see her “fine dark eyes,” the most distinguishing somatic marker of Lizzy’s presence, whose beauty is rendered mental when he defines them as “intelligent” (70). Elizabeth’s being moves. Like her “quickness” of mind, she walks by “crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity” (79), but in an almost formless way. Essentially unbounded and undefined, her movement or activity is not deeply housed in a body. We don’t experience her body’s contours pressing upon us as her readers or hold some kind of whole sense of her as a physical being; instead, we imagine her at moments with some separate, distinguished physical particularity. While, with the exception of these few references to eyes and movement, we don’t much feel Elizabeth’s physical presence in the text, we do feel her thinking presence. The bounty of Lizzy’s words, her meditations on language, the rational delight she takes in which nouns to choose to define experience, give her a mental presence that creates a container for quickness and motion, until her mental alacrity comes to be arrested after she collides with the
physical presence of Darcy’s letter. Forced to slow down, even stop, her thoughts move from “Till this moment I never knew myself” to in the end a description of Elizabeth as a primarily mental state that frames her feelings of confusion: “Elizabeth, agitated, confused, rather knew that she was happy, than felt herself to be so.”

William James in his chapter “Emotions” from *The Principles of Psychology* makes necessary the link between emotions and their physical enactment. He writes: “A purely disembodied human emotion is a nonentity . . . for us, emotion dissociated from all bodily feeling is inconceivable . . . whatever moods, affections, and passions I have are in truth constituted by, and made up of, those bodily changes which we ordinarily call their expression or consequence” (II, 452). For James, we feel an emotion because our body feels itself change in the emotion’s expression. Lizzy’s absent access to her feeling of happiness happens because of, I want to assert, its disembodiment. Feeling happiness is for her a “nonentity.” If “fine dark eyes,” as the outermost manifestation of brain, feed an intelligent mind within observations for it to judge in *Pride and Prejudice* without much by way of a containing body to hold the process of representation, what results is few instances of the feeling of knowing—with one great exception. Lizzy has a body when she feels shame—she feels what it is to know that. Unlike “fine dark eyes” and quick motion, Elizabeth’s other chief physical attribute—her blushes—are a somatic marker of how she feels. Her body marks shame when Darcy is witness to her family’s social failures: her body glows the red her consciousness feels. Lizzy’s embodied knowledge of the feeling of shame is shared by Austen’s women protagonists. Blushes and tears are how the bodies of Austen’s heroines express at times the feeling of knowing shame. Shame works in Austen’s writing as the first feeling on the way to an expanded consciousness begun from the demand for separation from others. In knowing feelings of humiliation, Catherine Morland expelled from Northanger Abbey returns home alone an “ordinary” heroine, Marianne Dashwood finally breaks from Willoughby and conceives of a later, second attachment, Fanny Price “experiences and expresses real feeling” often as silence or as a negation of who or what surrounds her (Marshall 87), and, as I discuss in chapter 1, Emma Woodhouse moves from her extraordinary tears of mortification, to her exiling of Harriet, to her imagining the loss of Knightley and what that might mean. As much as the blush is a response to the social, its feeling state—shame—prompts Lizzy to turn away from the

4. As I note in the introduction, James’s theory of emotion is often referred to as the “James-Lange theory” because of the near-simultaneous publication of their ideas, Professor Lange’s as a scientific pamphlet in 1885 (which James cites and about which makes comments in *The Principles*) and James’s as an article in *Mind* in 1884.
object that causes her to feel the emotion, an act which makes her a body that separates from others. Darwin writes of this in his chapter on “Blushing” from *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*: “Under a keen sense of shame there is a strong desire for concealment. We turn away the whole body, more especially the face, which we endeavor in some manner to hide. An ashamed person can hardly endure to meet the gaze of those present, so that he almost invariably casts down his eyes or looks askant” (320–21). In Lizzy’s moments of shame, she invariably turns her eyes away from Darcy’s, even divides herself physically from him. Elizabeth, I want to suggest, feels shame, has (in her blushes) an embodied consciousness of shame and feels the accompanying desire to separate from its object, but she does not yet feel happiness and its accompanying embodied feeling of attachment to its object. How Lizzy can know happiness that she does not yet feel works as a metaphor for what James calls “the vital point of my whole theory, which is this: If we fancy some strong emotion, and then try to abstract from our consciousness of it all the feelings of its bodily symptoms, we find we have nothing left behind, no ‘mind-stuff’ out of which the emotion can be constituted, and that a cold and neutral state of intellectual perception is all that remains” (II, 451).

How differently does Anne Elliot experience happiness: “No, it was not regret which made Anne’s heart beat in spite of herself, and brought the colour into her cheeks when she thought of Captain Wentworth unshackled and free. She had some feelings which she was ashamed to investigate. They were too much like joy, senseless joy!” (178). The rational mind is put away or at least overtaken (“ashamed to investigate”; “senseless”); Anne feels something “like joy,” which is “senseless joy” in her very present body—the heart that beats “in spite of herself” and the color brought to her cheeks. Austen describes in *Persuasion* what William James first suggests and Anto-

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5. I am deliberately focused on Lizzy’s blush of shame because it marks her emerging consciousness in separation from its object, as opposed to the blush of aggression or eros that urges a consciousness toward its object in some form of attachment. I have chosen this focus because I take it to be the case that Austen’s predominant account of embodied feeling before *Persuasion* is her representation of shame. If feeling happiness requires knowing the feeling of “desired-object-attachment,” Lizzy’s knowledge of the feeling of shame (and separation from its object) will not take her there. Mary Ann O’Farrell’s wonderful account of the blush in Austen treats the blush not just as a marker of separation—the mortification that divides—but as the social sign of embarrassment that leads to a recovery of the erotic body in a world of manners. She writes: “Embarrassment’s colloquial relation ‘mortification’ describes with punning aptitude the process by which the social body draws repeatedly to its surface its own blood . . . Jane Austen discovers pleasures in the ability of embarrassment’s pangs to recover a sense of the body in manners” (26–27). See Mary Ann O’Farrell’s *Telling Complexions: The Nineteenth-Century English Novel and the Blush*, especially chapters 1 and 2. See as well Anita G. Gorman’s “Blushing and Blanching: The Body as Index of Emotion” in *The Body in Illness and Health: Themes and Images in Jane Austen* (127–62), which takes up the blush across Austen’s works in its many guises as “embarrassment, shame, self-consciousness, anger, and passion.”
Damasio now builds on to posit how we come to consciousness—in “the feeling of knowing.” Damasio hypothesizes: “We become conscious when our organisms [our particular beings] internally construct and internally exhibit a specific kind of wordless knowledge—that our organism has been changed by an object—and when such knowledge occurs along with the salient internal exhibit of an object. The simplest form in which this knowledge emerges is the feeling of knowing” (*The Feeling* 168–70). Coming to consciousness, Damasio imagines, depends on our capacity fundamentally to do three things: represent ourselves as organisms to ourselves, represent an object to ourselves, and re-represent how being in relation to the object changes ourselves, all of which we do in wordless narratives that are feelings as mental images (images here mean all forms of sensorimotor representation—not just visual). Damasio’s and William James’s ideas on emotion and “the feeling of knowing” help open our eyes to how Austen writes the representation of self-consciousness in *Persuasion*—as embodied feelings.

3. NO BODY

A radical shift in language and, therefore, in representation occurs as we move inside the world of *Persuasion* from that of *Pride and Prejudice*. Loss—unbearable yet borne—and recovery—wondrous yet never felt without still knowing the loss that came before it—live embodied as felt-language in *Persuasion*. If Elizabeth Bennet’s body remains mostly out of focus and so too does her language of feeling (except in her consciousness of shame), Anne Elliot’s body is the object by which all is known because felt in the language of emotion of *Persuasion*. At first it seems that this—a body—is what Anne is without. She is, we are told again and again, a woman without “bloom”:

> A few years before, Anne Elliot had been a very pretty girl, but her bloom had vanished early; and as even in its height, her father had found little to admire in her, (so totally different were her delicate features and mild dark eyes from his own); there could be *nothing in them now* that she was faded and thin, to excite his esteem. (Emphasis mine, 37)

As an object before Sir Walter’s representing consciousness, Anne does nothing to “excite his esteem”—her bloomless body does not bring him to emotion, which reduces her to a nonpresence for him. Austen tells us this when she writes,
Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody with either father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way;—she was only Anne. (Emphasis mine, 37)

Anne with “no weight,” as disembodied to them, erases Anne as a mental image for her remaining family. She has no words that can enter Elizabeth and Sir Walter and so she gives way because she has no other way to be with them. To be “only Anne” means for Anne not to be to them. Anne Elliot is not held in her family’s consciousness.

Damasio’s model focuses on how the self comes to consciousness in the representations generated by the organism of self, object, and self changed by object. But what of the representations by another of oneself as his or her object? Isn’t having oneself be represented by another as an object who changes the representer’s consciousness necessary to the emergence and maintenance of one’s own feeling of being known and knowable, as well as knowing? For Anne to be a nonobject to Sir Walter and Elizabeth, for her not to be contained in their consciousnesses, works to subtract from her feeling of knowing. While to have bloom suggests a “state of great beauty” and works as a metaphor for sexual ripeness, at its core I want to suggest in *Persuasion* it means for a woman to be perceivable—redness can be seen, whiteness cannot. Having “bloom” makes a woman visible because marked in red as desirable, admirable, sexual, while being “faded” makes her invisible because marked in white as bloodless, sexually erased. Anne needs to feel perceived as present to support her own feeling of knowing herself to be present. And she needs to feel seen in bloom to feel conscious of her sexuality, beauty, embodiment as a woman of twenty-seven.

Anne knew once, and then briefly again, what it was to be held as an admired object in another’s mind:

She knew that when she played she was giving pleasure only to herself; but this was no new sensation: excepting one short period in her life, she had never since the age of fourteen, never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste. (73)

In the loss of her mother, Anne lost the sensation of being held in her mother’s consciousness, which meant the sensation of feeling her own

6. See Anita Gorman on Austen’s use of the word “bloom” in “Blushing and Blanching: The Body as the Index of Emotion” in *The Body in Illness and Health* (156, 158).
presence as an object worthy to be held as “listened to” and “encouraged” by an equally worthy mind of “just appreciation” and “real taste.” She lost the feeling of having another make space for her inside and admire her. As well, Anne lost the chief object of her own representing mind and the chief object that had most deeply defined Anne’s own relational re-representation of herself as changing in response to the presence of her mother. Such a physical/emotional loss finds itself with a kind of fairy-tale horror repeated in her attachment to Frederick Wentworth at nineteen—he holds her in his consciousness; he is the object of her consciousness. And what each holds in mind is something like “perfection”: “They were gradually acquainted, and when acquainted, rapidly and deeply in love. It would be difficult to say which had seen highest perfection in the other, or which had been the happiest” (55). Persuaded to give him up, Anne relinquishes the sensation of being held in his mind and too the capacity to be fully conscious. The object that prompts her to feel her own being as present and loved, as well as his, is gone, and no substitute is possible: “No one had ever come within Kellynch circle, who could bear a resemblance with Frederick Wentworth, as he stood in her memory. No second attachment” (57).

With no second object of attachment, Anne’s consciousness or feeling of knowing “retrenches.” And all this before the novel begins. The novel’s present, where we enter, is years after Frederick’s departure and after the process of Anne’s “retrenchment of being” have begun. Lady Russell’s capacity to see Anne still and hold her in esteem offers Anne’s being some internal room in which to reside as herself. But Lady Russell’s holding in mind is itself a retrenched one. While she resembles her mother, she is a poor substitute. Lady Russell is never mentioned in the passage defining Anne’s pleasures of being listened to by others of just appreciation: “[E]xcepting one short period in her life . . . never since the loss of her dear mother [had she] known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste” (73). Her as-if motherly persuasion (spawned by her inability to really listen?) brings Anne misery: Lady Russell initiates Anne’s loss of Wentworth, the “one short period in her life” of happiness. If then Lady Russell gives Anne a space of being seen, what Anne sees reflected back is what she has lost, her mother and her lover. And if Anne’s memory of Wentworth—her emotional memory of their relational past—enables her still to have him and herself, it is a having in memory only? The pressure of Wentworth as a living object represented in her consciousness becomes a memory of an attachment worn down by time. Austen writes of Anne

7. For a fine discussion of emotional memory as the “felt residue of the relational past,” see Donna Orange’s Emotional Understanding: Studies in Psychoanalytic Epistemology (105–24).
at the start of the novel, after more than seven years of separation from him interrupted by no live encounter: “[T]ime had softened down much, perhaps nearly all of peculiar attachment to him” (57). Apparently Anne does not fully know how much of that “peculiar attachment to him” she still feels.

The outward signs of Anne’s consciousness are hidden or at least in retreat: the surface of her body of faded bloom shows feeling withdrawn; her language has collapsed into just a few uttered phrases set next to vast stretches of pause, separated from the flow of narrative with phrases such as “Here Anne spoke” (49), or “After the little pause” (51), or “After waiting another moment” (52). The felt-quality of loss throughout the opening is what we experience as what outwardly remains of Anne registered through her body—faded, thin, quiet—traces of a consciousness that has lost its relational objects.

4. SENSATION

But the horrible fairy tale of loss repeats itself with a difference—he is not dead. Frederick Wentworth returns from war very much alive. And with his return, Austen narrates a remarkable account of how coming back to consciousness, full consciousness, from such loss is possible. What has remained inwardly in Anne of her being—her invisible trace of the feeling of knowing—is understanding. Silently, Anne registers his presence to herself, wonders what he feels about their meeting now that he is but a half mile away, feels their having no conversation together now when once there was so much, catches a glance of his eye and curl of his lip and so sees what others miss of his real response to a moment, and most of all lets herself take in “that he could not forgive her” (113). Damasio’s nonverbal narratives of representation of consciousness-making are here the nonverbal encounters between Anne and Frederick that create a space between them. George Butte calls this the space of “intersubjectivity” in Austen where “groups of selves, of perceiving identities [are set] into motion together in a new dance of subjects, of consciousnesses. The energies of this dance build from tensions, as it were negotiations, among these consciousnesses that are present (partially) to each other, in body, gaze, or language as self and Other.”

8. George Butte (57). Considering how consciousness in Austen is intersubjective, Butte presents a graceful treatment of her texts in intersubjective relation to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology in “Shame or Espousal? Emma and the New Intersubjectivity of Anxiety in Austen” (54–65).
and the sound of him in relation to others prompt back into being her understanding created from their past—that part of her representation of him as an object begins to return. But it is a representation gathered from the past and from observing him from afar. Being conscious of what she feels in relation to him now, in her body, is what Anne cannot yet do because an embodied Anne is barely present—until his touch brings her physical relief and begins to bring back the sensation of her presence in the present:

[S]he found herself in the state of being released from him; some one was taking him from her, though he had bent down her head so much, that his sturdy little hands were unfastened from around her neck, and he was resolutely borne away, before she knew that Captain Wentworth had done it.

Her sensations on the discovery made her perfectly speechless. She could not even thank him . . . His kindness in stepping forward to her relief—the manner—the silence in which it had passed . . . produced such a confusion of varying, but very painful agitation, as she could not recover from. (103)

And:

Captain Wentworth, without saying a word, turned to her, and quietly obliged her to be assisted into the carriage.

Yes,—he had done it. She was in the carriage, and felt that he had placed her there, that his will and hands had done it, that she owed it to his perception of her fatigue, and his resolution to give her rest. She was very much affected by the view of his disposition towards her which all these things made apparent. This little circumstance seemed the completion of all that had gone before. She understood him. He could not forgive her,—but he could not be unfeeling. Though condemning her for the past, and considering it with high and unjust resentment, though perfectly careless of her, and though becoming attached to another, still he could not see her suffer, without the desire of giving her relief. It was a remainder of former sentiment; it was an impulse of pure, though unacknowledged friendship; it was proof of his own warm and amiable heart, which she could not contemplate without emotions so compounded of pleasure and pain, that she knew not which prevailed. (113)

Wentworth’s wordless “kindness in stepping forward to her relief” and his “desire of giving relief” are about his silent noticing of Anne’s suffering—
little Walter about her neck, fatigue from walking too long. He engages in something like what Daniel Stern calls “affect attunement,” 9 which I reframe here as “embodied attunement”: Wentworth expresses the feeling of a shared affect/physical state without imitating its exact expression. In his noticing of her body’s pain and sharing in it, she has again a perceivable body to him, not a body in bloom, but a body in pain. He acts in attunement to what he imagines of her body’s sensations. And in the touch of his hands on her skin, she has a physical feeling of absence—a burden lifted, fatigue removed—and of presence—his hands on her neck, his hands helping her into the carriage—accompanying by an emotional feeling created in tandem with the physical of “painful agitation” and “emotions so compounded of pleasure and pain that she knew not which prevailed.” Wentworth makes her his object of wordless representation. And, in response to his attunement to her, touches Anne’s body. Relieved to discover through the touch of his hands on her that she has a body—that she can feel physical relief—in coming to consciousness of her body not in pain and brushed into momentary contact with his body, emotional pain and pleasure come again into being as the feeling of knowing, however confusing that knowledge might be. Physical pain, physical pleasure are felt by Anne as emotional pain, emotional pleasure. The object of her consciousness—Wentworth—again affects her body, agitates her mind, creates new feelings that she re-represents to herself. Wentworth’s touch brings her to somatic knowledge conscious of itself, of who she was, of who she is. Anne’s relief is to awaken to full being.

Awakening to being, for Anne Elliot, has everything to do with returning to a set of original sensations that first defined being. In his chapter “Sensation,” William James asks, “Where, then, do we feel the objects of our original sensations to be?” And replies:

For the places thus first sensibly known are elements of the child’s space-world which remain with him all his life; and by memory and later experiences he learns a vast number of things about those places which at first he did not know. But to the end of time certain places of the world remain defined for him as the places where those sensations were; and his only possible answer to the question where anything is will be to say “there,” and to name some sensation or other like those first ones, which shall identify the spot. (Emphasis mine, II, 35)

We can imagine Anne’s mother to be the object of her original sensation

who called her to being in the prenarrative of Anne’s feeling her mother’s presence. However, the text makes it be otherwise: “‘[A] few months more, and he, perhaps will be walking here’” (54). The poignancy and mystery of the italicized he that concludes chapter 3 finds its source in how the narrative uncovers how he is Anne’s “there,” or “where those sensations were” that grant her a “space-world.” The irreplacibility of Wentworth for Anne as the object of representation has something to do with how he carries “there” to Anne, and with how in her sensation of him she comes to know herself relationally, as the feeling of knowing what it means to be “here.” Anne here is Anne in bloom—visible, alive, embodied.

Anne’s second spring of youth and beauty is somehow missed by Frederick. If he has felt her presence since his return, he hasn’t seen her return from “altered beyond his knowledge” (85) to “something like Anne Elliot again” (125). Seeing Anne again requires that she be seen first by another man so that Wentworth’s eyes can follow as the “again.” But more than that, his new seeing of her, which is an old seeing of her, seems to require an out of body or to another body shift as Wentworth’s eyes go from the gentleman’s to Anne’s. Turning from him becomes returning to her. Here is the her he returns to:

She was looking remarkably well; her very regular, very pretty features, having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion, and by the animation of eye which it had also produced. It was evident that the gentleman, (completely a gentleman in manner) admired her exceedingly. Captain Wentworth looked round at her instantly in a way which showed his noticing of it. He gave her a momentary glance,—a glance of brightness which seemed to say, “That man is struck with you,—and even I at this moment, see something like Anne Elliot again.” (125)

Blown back to life, touched from without to become animated within, Anne is again visible, admired, in bloom. She becomes in this momentary glance of brightness the object toward which Wentworth’s consciousness (re)turns. If the first half of the novel—“half agony”—has been about the return of Anne’s being as fully conscious because fully embodied and Wentworth as the relational object that enables that representation, the second half—“half hope”—is its mirrored reflection. With Anne now present as here, in bloom, Wentworth surrenders to an uncontrolled shift in consciousness toward her as the chief object of his representation of longing. The surrender is given an assist by the glance of the gentleman’s eye, which functions like
the dawning of an aspect.\textsuperscript{10} When Frederick sees the stranger admire her, his own seeing shifts from seeing her “altered beyond his knowledge” to altered back to his knowledge. She is something like Anne Elliot again. But the shift requires more than seeing the object again—it demands being in relation for a full re-representation to occur.

Louisa’s fall makes her body fall away from Wentworth. Her falling-away body clears the space from Louisa’s prior blocking presence from which Frederick now can call and Anne now can answer. “Is there no one to help me?” (130). These are the words of Frederick vulnerable, Frederick needing, Frederick open. Anne fills in the open space. The “no one” becomes her presence as an embodied presence of mind, commanding in words what Wentworth has lost consciousness of, namely what to do, in the falling away of Louisa and in the opening of himself. In his drawing a blank, he becomes vulnerable to Anne again because he has space for her to enter him again as his relational object. No more does he defend himself against her “power,” as he had at the outset of the text, when Austen takes us inside the only instance of his consciousness displayed in something like Anne’s dramatized consciousness, though cast more as summary: “He had been most warmly attached to her, and had never seen a woman since whom he thought her equal; but, except from some natural curiosity, he had no desire of meeting her again. Her power with him was gone forever” (86). His consciousness shifts to allow in her power with him. If Anne a moment after first meeting Frederick again finds that to “retentive feelings eight years may be little more than nothing” (85), Frederick must witness another’s seeing of Anne and another’s blow to the head (having sense knocked in) to recognize by sight and then insight his own enduring attachment.\textsuperscript{11} Anne’s attachment to him is called up immediately in her as somatic knowledge—what Donna Orange in \textit{Emotional Understanding} describes as “the way experience encodes itself in our whole being as memory” (111). Anne’s feeling of attachment is encoded memory “remembered” by the sight of him. It will take his touch for the attachment to be embodied in her again literally as his hands

\textsuperscript{10} I’m drawing here on Wittgenstein’s idea from \textit{The Philosophical Investigations} of the “dawning of an aspect” (193–94e). To illustrate how the dawning of an aspect differentiates itself from “continuous seeing,” Wittgenstein looks at Jastrow’s drawing of the “duck–rabbit.” When the object is seen continuously as a rabbit or as a duck, but not as one and then the other, then the observer engages in “continuous seeing.” However, when the duck or the rabbit is seen, where before the other was not seen, then the observer experiences the “dawning of an aspect.” If Wentworth engages in a continuous seeing of Anne as “altered beyond his knowledge,” seeing her admired in the gentleman’s glance prompts in him the “dawning of an aspect”—a new seeing of her.

\textsuperscript{11} Alan Richardson’s fine “Of Heartache and Head Injury: Minds, Brains, and the Subject of Persuasion” in his \textit{British Romanticism and the Science of Mind} and “Of Heartache and Head Injury: Reading Minds in \textit{Persuasion}” address Louisa’s “blow to the head” in relation to the neuroscience of Austen’s day and what the fall and change it produces in Louisa’s character reveal about Austen’s writing of the embodied mind.
attached to her, freeing her emotions to know themselves as attached to him. For Frederick, the attachment lives in him as the “unthought known,” Christopher Bollas’s phrase for the tacit or inarticulate knowledge that we know but for which we have no words, “the more than we can say that we know.” Wentworth makes evident his unthought known attachment to Anne when he lets Louisa drop. John Wiltshire writes of the moment this way: “He is not feeling and responding as she is feeling: their missing each other’s hands at ‘the fatal moment’ is a sign that he cannot ‘attach himself’ to her which he already unconsciously knows” (188). His hands have already “caught” Anne twice by relieving her of little Walter and handing her into the carriage—these are other moments of his unthought known attachment to Anne. Once his unthought known has been transformed into the “thought known,” Wentworth articulates how his attachment had lived in him as the “unthought known” when he tells Anne, following their mutual reacknowledgment of their attachment to each other when at last linked arm in arm, “that he had been constant unconsciously, nay unintentionally; that he had meant to forget her, and believed it to be done” (244).

When Anne delivers her “true attachment and constancy” of women speech to Captain Harville and the overhearing Frederick, she explains how it is that Frederick might have come to lose consciousness of his attachment. A man needs an “object,” she claims, for his attachment to live on, present to him as the woman who loves him and who lives for him. Wentworth had lost his “object,” and with this loss had gone consciousness of his attachment. With the return of his relational object, Frederick can again know himself in conscious articulation of his attachment. Yet the articulation of the attachment as Frederick’s “final” coming to consciousness of his feelings happens in relation to another, before himself. Like the other gentleman’s glance and the wrong lover’s blow to the head, Frederick comes to articulate his attachment to Anne only after his encounter with an object outside of himself that mirrors his position or enables him to encounter himself through his identification with the object. Frederick finds the words to express to Anne not his own but Benwick’s attachment to Fanny Harville: “‘A man like him, in his situation! With a heart pierced, wounded, almost broken! Fanny Harville was a very superior creature; and

12. About the idea of “the unthought known,” see the literary-psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas’s work on object relations in *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*; the philosophical-psychoanalyst Donna Orange’s discussion of unconscious encoded emotional memory in *Emotional Understanding* (107–11); and the philosopher Michael Polanyi’s work on “the ineffable” in *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*.

13. No more does Wentworth mistake Louisa’s brash pigheadedness for firmness of mind—her infirmity of mind to follow the second failed catch makes this change in understanding impossible to miss. Louisa’s head, it turns out, does not resemble the firmness of a nut.
his attachment to her was indeed attachment. A man does not recover from such a devotion of the heart to such a woman!—He ought not—he does not” (192). In conceiving first of Benwick’s attachment, Frederick is trying on the words that he will come to attach to himself, “A heart pierced, wounded, almost broken!” rehearse, “You pierce my soul . . . a heart even more your own than when you almost broke it . . . .” From uttering words about another’s devotion from which there is no recovery, Frederick can articulate the words about himself as a re-representation in writing—as a letter.

5. “I AM HALF AGONY, HALF HOPE”

Frederick comes to consciousness of his feelings from the outside in—he perceives objects external to himself, conceives of them as themselves, and then uses them as mirrors to reflect back to him himself. The movement from perception to conception to identification draws forward his own emotions, buried within. Unlike Anne, Frederick never lost his bloom, his sense of self as fully embodied. Whereas when they first meet after the years of separation he thinks her “altered beyond his knowledge,” she thinks, “No; the years which had destroyed her youth and bloom had only given him a more glowing, manly, open look, in no respect lessening his personal advantages. She had seen the same Frederick Wentworth” (emphasis mine, 86). Wentworth returns to her “openly” in his body, his somatic being all aglow, but not openly in his feelings. And if Anne, in the moment she lays eyes on him again, returns to feel the charge of her former feelings, she does so at first in an almost disembodied way. For Anne to recover her body—feel herself in her body—and for Frederick to acknowledge that from such an attachment there is no recovery—feel himself in his feelings—each must recover the lost relational object that enables them to experience happiness again, as an embodied feeling of attachment. In her most poignant speech of the novel, Anne claims a woman’s heart needs no object to continue to feel her devotion, even “when existence or when hope is gone” (238). While Anne may not need the “the object” present to remember the idea of her devotion to Frederick, the course of Austen’s *Persuasion* reveals how she does need him to be present to bring back to full consciousness the feeling of her devotion to him in the present, to feel fully herself again, to experience the feeling of knowing again—that Anne is alive and in love.

What Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth feel from before the opening pages of *Persuasion* is loss. And it is the feeling of loss that transforms to “senseless joy” when each experiences the other’s physical and emotional
return that leads to self-consciousness—of the pain of being alive and
the wonder of return bound to “always the hope of more”—in feeling
embodied together again. For Jane Austen, to represent such deep feelings
of attachment as she is dying meant, I’m imagining, her own coming to a
new self-consciousness of feeling—half agony, half hope.