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Exploring Interiority in Jane Austen's Persuasion and Pride and Prejudice

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Exploring Interiority in Jane Austen's Persuasion and Pride and Prejudice

By
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An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Graduation from the
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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Abstract

As an author, Jane Austen has remained hugely popular with audiences worldwide ever since her death over two hundred years ago. Her novels—charming, thought-provoking, and witty—have showcased numerous heroines whose unique personalities recommend them to a wide variety of readers. This exploration, in particular, focuses on the inner lives of Anne Elliot and Elizabeth Bennet, the protagonists from *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Through utilizing writing techniques such as free indirect discourse in these novels, Austen was an early pioneer in crafting characters whose innermost thoughts were accessible to her readers.

In order to explore the development of these characters' inner lives, I constructed a framework with which to examine the moments where they display characteristics of interiority. From analyzing instances of characters seeking solitude to them showing regret about past attitudes, items in this framework provide a structure that helps me to examine how these characters' respective moments of interiority endear them to Austen's readers. This analysis aims to encourage a broader discussion regarding the portrayal of characters' interior lives in novels and the impact that such portrayals can have in forming connections with readers.

Introduction

When interacting with literature, there has to be something within the text that keeps readers engaged—something exciting, something unexpected, something they can relate to. Often times, it can be difficult to identify exactly what this thing is. One author who has managed to procure a consistent, fervent readership for hundreds of years is Jane Austen, author of such novels as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Persuasion*. While several of the customs and values that Austenian characters dealt with have gone out of style and practice since the nineteenth century, there are many others that have not. And these relatable situations and themes have kept readers laughing, thinking, crying, and daydreaming over their own eligible matches and societal problems for over two hundred years.

Austen's novels have remained extremely popular. Critics have described this widespread admiration with remarks such as, "200 years later, everyone knows Jane Austen. She's not just a writer, she's a cult, a brand and a cultural touchstone" ("Jane Austen"). Austen's works continue to be the motivation for many film adaptations, fan fiction pieces, and other creative works. While impossible to pinpoint only one reason why, her novels have received support from fresh readerships all around the globe for a number of generations. One thing which illustrates this in a quantitative way is that, as of July 2019, each of Austen's full-length novels has been ranked above 3.8 stars

on Goodreads, a website where readers are able to review and recommend books that they read. And, among these six novels, the works that are rated the highest by readers are Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion*, the two novels I aim to explore in my analysis. Both of these novels have a dedicated fanbase, and there are a number of qualities in the novels that justify these devout followings.

When looking at the distinct attributes of Austen's novels that have likely led to their success, one prominent trait emerges in a variety of scholarship: the way that Austen vividly conveys characters' inner lives as a means to endear them to the readers. Although this is something that is not exclusive to Austen as a writer, it is very often the focus of her novels' scholarship, especially for *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice*. With *Persuasion*, common issues addressed regarding Anne Elliot's inner life are the trust that the reader develops in Anne's perspective based on her strong sense of morality, the isolation that Anne experiences from the people around her which causes her to remain silent, and the intensity of Anne's emotion that Austen depicts which allows readers to develop an attachment to her and relate closely to her experiences. For *Pride and Prejudice*, some of the different ways that Austen explores the development of Elizabeth Bennet's inner life include Elizabeth being deemed the voice of reason within her family, the depiction of hasty judgments that Elizabeth forms, and then the

later reversal of Elizabeth's first impressions that leads her to contemplation. Throughout all these moments in her heroines' lives, Austen has engaged scholars in the analysis of these characters.

To understand Austen's rendering of inner lives in the framework of academia, it is critical to explore the concept of interiority, which is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "inner character or nature; an inner element" (oed.com). When people are reading a novel, one of the significant ways that they can become invested in the story at hand is through an attachment to the novel's primary character. In fact, E.M. Forster asserts that "it is the function of a novelist to reveal the hidden life of its source," or, in other words, the protagonist of the book (45). In doing so, the author attempts to reveal some truth about human nature through the characters that they write about.

One example for how interiority can be looked at in the context of a literary character is modeled by Susan Greenfield when discussing Fanny Price, an Austen character who—in many ways—resembles Anne Elliot. Examining the way that interiority was an especially important concept for women during this time period, Greenfield stated that there are two significant denotations of interiority that impact a woman:

Because conduct books also stressed the importance of woman's role inside the home, the ideal female came to stand for interiority in a dual sense: as a model of moral behavior, woman contained and resented

the proper space inside the mind; as domestic governor, controlled and epitomized the sanctity of the middle-class home, that side space, removed from the supposedly corrupting influences of the external world, where good minds could be developed. (315)

As is detailed in this quotation, Fanny exhibits interiority in both a physical sense and in the sense that she has a developed inner world. The primary form of interiority for this analysis will be that of the mind, but there will still be a small element of spatial interiority alluded to in moments where heroines seek solace by retreating to a physical location where they can be alone. Adding to this concept of interiority in *Mansfield Park*, Greenfield shares a specific example of how Fanny's interiority is analyzed within the context of her novel: "Fanny is mentally superior not only because she has 'acute' feelings (14) and moral awareness but also because she has unique insight into other people's feelings and is able to attend to their needs" (315). In this analysis, Fanny is lauded for her emotional consciousness and ability to use this in helping the people around her. A similar sense of interiority can also be examined in Elizabeth Bennet and Anne Elliot.

Looking at another aspect of Austen's portrayal of interiority, the connection that readers form with characters—based on their inner worlds—is unique because we are unable to fully experience this type of relationship with other human beings; no matter how close we may feel to a person, there

will always be some small doubt as to how accurate our understanding of their private thoughts actually is. Forster claims that an author's portrayal of characters' inner worlds allows us to grasp them in a way that we can't even comprehend those closest to us because, in our lives, "neither complete clairvoyance nor complete confession exists. We know each other approximately, by external signs, and these serve well enough as a basis for society and even for intimacy" (47). Therefore, the ability to understand a person entirely is unique to literature and, if the author chooses to divulge that information, it can be extremely useful in helping the reader to be engaged with their story. With novels, we are often able to witness the full, unfiltered consciousness of another person, including the "dreams, joys, sorrows, and self-communings which politeness or shame prevent [them] from mentioning" (Forster 46). These thoughts, which the characters purposefully do not share with others, provide an inside view into the consciousness of the characters which works subconsciously on the mind of the reader to form a connection between them and the characters they read about.

One of the ways Austen develops her characters' internal voices is by using a technique that is most commonly called free indirect discourse. Literary critic Wayne Booth explains that Austen's mastery of this technique sets her apart from many other authors because it showcases her ability to

bring the reader intimately into the protagonist's thoughts. Although Austen's novels are written in third person, she employs free indirect discourse to provide this intimate look while still maintaining the use of a narrator. Free indirect discourse utilizes third-person narration that is written as though the narrator is shifting in and out of the protagonist's consciousness in pivotal moments—ultimately blending the credibility of an outside narrative voice with the emotional vulnerability of the protagonists themselves. According to Booth, “the sustained inside view leads the reader to hope for good fortune for the character with whom he travels, quite independently of the qualities revealed” throughout the novel (246). In his analysis, Booth uses the example of Emma, who has several bad qualities but is not malicious; he highlights that, in several ways, she has actually deceived herself (248). Without this information, it would be much harder for a reader to be sympathetic to a character as flawed as Emma. Many of these things can also be said about the use of free indirect discourse in Elizabeth Bennet—she is very stubborn and quick to judge others, but she genuinely believes she is doing what is right in the moment, so she feels great remorse after she learns how wrong she has been. These examples, along with numerous others, highlight the way that free indirect discourse is one of the frequent tools that Austen utilizes to connect her readers to her characters.

The main difference between the use of free indirect discourse to accentuate interiority in *Emma* and *Persuasion* is that Anne is less flawed of a character, so Austen is able to have more of *Persuasion* be from Anne's point of view than she is able to have with Emma in *Emma*. One of the many places where we can witness free indirect discourse in *Persuasion* occurs when Anne has first interacted with Captain Wentworth after having been apart for years. After their sudden, brief meeting, the narrative voice describes Anne's emotional state, all the while slipping into a voice that sounds as if it is Anne's:

Soon, however, she began to reason with herself, and try to be feeling less. Eight years, almost eight years had passed, since all had been given up. How absurd to be resuming the agitation which such an interval had banished into distance and indistinctness! What might not eight years do? Events of every description, changes, alienations, removals--all, all must be comprised in it, and oblivion of the past--how natural, how certain too! It included nearly a third part of her own life. (*Persuasion* 57)

Moreover, Booth asserts that "once the ethical and intellectual framework has been established by the narrator's introduction, we enter Anne's consciousness and remain bound to it much more rigorously than we are

bound to Emma's" (251). Both descriptions of point of view highlight the fact that Jane Austen highly values portraying interior thought and manipulating it within her novels. Jane Austen's own nephew even stated that "the subtle irony of the author [is] that we are quite aware of her intention to make us understand more of the heroine's state of mind than the heroine herself does, and to distinguish between her conscious and unconscious thoughts" (Austen-Leigh 264). Austen enjoyed playing with different methods of portraying a character's inner life, and the wide variety of personalities that she wrote about with her heroines provided her with an ideal opportunity to do that.

One direct comparison of the inner worlds of Anne and Elizabeth can be found in Valerie Shaw's article "Jane Austen's Subdued Heroines." Shaw explains that Austen primarily wrote two different types of heroines in her novels: high-spirited ones like Elizabeth and subdued ones like Anne. She goes on to explain that the type of heroine can largely reflect the way that Austen portrays the emotional state and interiority of the character. In Shaw's framework, "*Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* are both partly about problems of expression and communication. In *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, on the other hand, it is assumed that people can communicate and that, on the whole, social institutions and conventions convey inward patterns of character and emotional adequacy" (283-4). Therefore, while characters like

Emma and Elizabeth are prodded into personal growth throughout their respective novels, Fanny and Anne are not given the same opportunities to do so, as their powers of communication are stifled by those around them. This idea is further emphasized in Shaw's statement that "both Fanny Price and Anne Elliot are in the predicament of not even being invited to make the effort [to communicate with others]. Their natures and circumstances combine to keep them silent; meditateness is forced on them as much as it is chosen" (284). Choosing a subdued heroine, then, lends itself to Austen having more freedom to develop their interior worlds, since they are largely kept from using their voices.

Another effect that Austen's interiority has on readers is that the inside look at the characters allows people to empathize with the way they are feeling, which again brings them a deeper connection and attachment to the characters. In Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, he describes this phenomenon:

When [the character] feels anxiety or shame, we feel analogous emotions. Our modern awareness that such 'feelings' are not identical with those we feel in our own lives in similar circumstances has tended to blind us to the fact that aesthetic form can be built out of patterned emotions as well as out of other materials. It is absurd to pretend that because our emotions and desires in responding to fiction are in a very real sense disinterested, they do not or should not exist. Jane Austen, in

developing the sustained use of a sympathetic inside view, has mastered one of the most successful of all devices for inducing a parallel emotional response between the deficient heroine and the reader. (248-49)

This passage highlights the fact that, even though people may not necessarily feel like they have a reason for experiencing similar emotions to a fictional character, it is a natural response, and it is not beneficial to pretend that these parallel feelings in readers are not real, as they can actually help us grow if we are in-tune with them. Additionally, since Jane Austen is one of the forerunners in developing these vivid inner worlds for her characters, it is beneficial to analyze this successful element within her novels.

First, to provide context for the analysis, I examine Anne and Elizabeth's personal attributes as well as family relationships, so as to establish a foundation that could be built upon with a lens of interiority later on. Next, I develop a working model that is designed with five characteristics that examine the amount each character showcases different elements of interior thinking as well as behaviors that help to support this thinking. The reason that I elect to create such a model is because, even though interiority has already been written about by a number of Austen scholars, there is not a definitive structure in place for me to follow in my analysis. With this in mind, I identify a number of common threads throughout discussions of interiority

that I have incorporated into a model; however, I am not suggesting that this is the only lens with which to examine this concept.

Within my framework, the first trait of a character who showcases a highly developed interior world would be if they are willing to admit when they're wrong about something. If a character is unwilling to be reflective of their own conduct to the point where they become deluded to reality, it suggests that they do not spend much time actively developing their inner world. Related to this, the second characteristic in my framework is the amount that a character opts to process their circumstances and emotions internally versus externally. When they decide to ask another person for advice when sorting out feelings instead of seeking to first understand it themselves, it shows that their reflex is not to trust their own thought process, and it also opens them up to opinions from others which could be faulty. One other way that the characters exhibit that they have not spent much time processing emotions on their own relates to the way that the character either does or does not experience shame and regret. As the next characteristic in my model, a character who is depicted as feeling shame or regret is one who also has a high level of interiority. This type of self-awareness is indicative of someone who has spent time analyzing their own thoughts and actions. A by-product of interior thinking that is also accounted for in my model is the number of times that a character is described as

seeking solitude. Each opportunity where a character ventures off on their own to use the physical space in order to think through the situation at hand shows that they are looking to be contemplative before rushing to any conclusions. Finally, one other element that is prevalent within Austen's novels, which I also chose to include in my framework, is the extent to which the characters are willing to be vulnerable about their romantic interests. When these characters can move beyond generic musings about their appearance and general amiability into some of the intricacies of their personality, they are letting their defenses down about a topic that is traditionally very sensitive to discuss.

The aim of this, ultimately, is that discussing each of these five characteristics in turn would help me glean more about the overarching interiority of each character. From this point, once I have explored the interiority exhibited by Anne and Elizabeth, I will be able to extrapolate from these minor details what the major significance of a character's interiority might be on the work as a whole. So, even though there is not an exact science possible in what I am endeavoring to accomplish, I believe that it is valuable to establish a process defined ahead of time, so as to better prevent my preconceived ideas from interfering with my analysis. In order for my examination to achieve its desired outcome, then, I first examine *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice* individually—addressing each of the five

characteristics of my model—and then I will synthesize my findings in a way that ties their individual actions to an overarching conclusion about the significance of interiority in Austen’s novels. By acknowledging existing scholarship for both of these novels and adding new evaluations about interiority, my exploration seeks to provide another useful lens with which to view these topics.

Persuasion

Anne's Family

From the very beginning of *Persuasion*, Jane Austen makes it clear to her reader that Anne Elliot is the outcast of her family. Even though she hasn't directly done anything to offend them, she is so good-natured that they feel comfortable excluding her and using her for their own selfish purposes. In the eyes of her father and older sister Elizabeth, Anne is merely someone who tries to limit their reckless spending. She is pretty, but not as pretty as Elizabeth; she is well-liked, but she doesn't have the social standing that comes through marriage like Mary does. Even though Anne was viewed as a desirable match for multiple men in her youth—including Mary's husband, Charles—her choosiness in selecting a mate combined with her obedience to Lady Russell puts her in a position of singleness later in life. Therefore, because of Anne's social isolation, when her family is forced to rent out their home at Kellynch-hall because of their financial state, Elizabeth suggests that one of her friends go with them to the city instead of Anne. To them, "her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way;—she was only Anne" (*Persuasion* 5). Since she has no power over them, it is easiest to comply with what they ask of her.

When Anne is excluded from her family's trip to Bath, she is recruited by her younger sister Mary to go and take care of her and her children because she was "always in the habit of claiming Anne whenever anything was the matter," and she had found herself sick on this particular occasion (*Persuasion* 32). With this attitude, Mary also made a habit of requesting that Anne stay home from social gatherings while she stayed at Uppercross, providing herself with the opportunity to dine with their neighbors. Finally, Anne's entire family also feels entitled to an opinion about who she marries, speaking out when they did not find her youthful engagement to Colonel Wentworth prudent. And, at first, Anne is persuaded to break off this engagement because she desires to please her family. All in all, each of the members of her family were so cruel and inattentive to her that she had "become hardened to such affronts" from those people who should have valued her as one of their own (*Persuasion* 33). However, despite the Elliot family's mistreatment of Anne, she is still culpable in a sense because she neglects to stand up for herself.

In the end, the only time that Anne seems conscious of the abuse that occurs in her family's behavior towards her comes after she has become attached to Wentworth again and she starts to see how their actions impact him as well. Beginning with Mary, she is only glad to have Wentworth in her family because it highlights her side of the family's superiority to her

husband's: "it was very agreeable that Captain Wentworth should be a richer man than either Captain Benwick or Charles Hayter," the in-laws she had on her husband's side of the family (*Persuasion* 235-6). She takes pride in this connection, even though it does mean that Anne goes back to having seniority over her in their social standing. Furthermore, Anne also gets embarrassed about the fact that she doesn't see the rest of her family as being respectable enough to present to her new husband, remarking that their possessing "nothing of respectability, of harmony, of goodwill to offer" his gracious family "was a source of as lively pain as her mind could well be sensible of, under circumstances of otherwise strong felicity" (*Persuasion* 237). She is made aware of how toxic Mary, Elizabeth, and her dad have been, and she doesn't want to be associated with their corruption. So, although Anne's in-laws her kind and respectable, her blood relations leave much to be desired. In both situations, only after she has Wentworth back in her life is Anne able to recognize the mistreatment she has endured by her family.

Anne's Attributes

Perhaps the most distinct trait of Anne Elliot's is that she is level-headed—someone people always feel comfortable turning to when they're in trouble. One situation which clearly exhibits this occurred when Mary was whining because she wanted to go to a dinner at the Musgroves' house.

However, “a little farther perseverance in patience, and forced cheerfulness on Anne’s side, produced nearly a cure on Mary’s” (*Persuasion* 38). When her sister is inclined to be stressed because she doesn’t think she will be able to attend this gathering, Anne steps in with a solution—sacrificing her own ability to be at the dinner in the process. Another situation which accentuates her calm and collected nature happens after Louisa Musgrove falls off a wall and injures herself. In this moment of crisis, Charles and Captain Wentworth “both seemed to look to her for directions,” since she is the one who is able to think rationally about what needs to be done in such a situation (*Persuasion* 106).

Connected to her level-headedness, Anne also displays a wise quality of thriftiness that helps her father and sister make it through a difficult financial season. From the very beginning of the novel, Anne attempts to convince her father to be sensible when looking to cut back on expenses, as “every emendation of Anne’s had been on the side of honesty against importance” (*Persuasion* 12). She knew that, in the end, the grandeur of their living was not sustainable and that it wouldn’t do them any good to pretend that they were free from financial difficulty. Complementing her frugality, Anne is not as concerned about her social standing and image as many of the other characters in *Persuasion* are. For instance, when she is staying at Uppercross cottage, she observes the gaiety with which Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove

behave, and she thinks that “she would not have given up her more elegant and cultivated mind for all their enjoyments” (*Persuasion* 39). She is not acting with arrogance here; rather, she is self-aware of her own values and is working to become the best version of herself.

Another quality of Anne’s that is commonly overlooked by her family is that she is pretty. Attracting the attention of Captain Wentworth, Charles Musgrove, and Mr. Elliot, Anne is not showy about her looks, but it is evident that “a few years before, Anne Elliot had been a very pretty girl,” even if “her bloom had vanished early” (*Persuasion* 5). So, while there are a number of individuals who noticed a beauty in her, she was not at all praised for this by her family. Although he naïvely believes that he and Elizabeth are just as youthful as ever, he is quick to “see how old all the rest of his family and acquaintance were growing” (*Persuasion* 6). In particular, he found “Anne haggard” and held very little hope of her making a good match after she denies Charles (*Persuasion* 6). With this unsupportive attitude prevalent in her life, Anne is very humble about her own situation in life, both concerning her looks and her overall importance.

Since she is a highly rational person, there are not many around her that she is comfortable confiding in. Her sisters and father are both irrational and self-absorbed, and she is somewhat shy in venturing beyond her small social circle. The few people who she does open up to and trust at various

points in time are Lady Russell, Mrs. Smith, and Captain Wentworth. From early in childhood, Lady Russell has been a figure in Anne's life who she looks up to almost in place of a mother. However, when she became engaged to Captain Wentworth, she felt torn whether or not she ought to break it off because "Lady Russell, whom she had always loved and relied on, could not, with such steadiness of opinion, and such tenderness of manner, be continually advising her in vain" (*Persuasion* 26). Later on, though, she began to think more for herself and "it was now some years since Anne had begun to learn that she and her excellent friend could sometimes think differently" (*Persuasion* 138). Although she still respected and loved her, Anne did not wholly trust Lady Russell's judgments.

Another person who has a profound connection with Anne is Captain Wentworth. Despite the fact that a large portion of *Persuasion* takes place while Anne and Frederick aren't talking intimately, he is still an important figure in her life both before the novel takes place and, presumably, after the novel ends. While Lady Russell serves the role of a loving parental figure, Captain Wentworth provides Anne with a romantic interest. Reminiscing about their early interactions, Anne recalls that "there had been a time, when of all the large party now filling the drawing-room at Uppercross, they would have found it most difficult to cease to speak to one another... there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison,

no countenances so beloved" (*Persuasion* 60). This former passion ultimately means that the separation from Wentworth is significant enough to cause Anne to keep people around her at arm's length.

Lastly, one person who Anne begins to form a genuine friendship with throughout the second half of *Persuasion* is her childhood companion, Mrs. Smith. In light of the challenges that Mrs. Smith bravely faces as a young widow, Anne is impressed that her friend possesses the "power of turning readily from evil to good, and of finding employment which carried her out of herself" (*Persuasion* 145). Just as Anne strives to make the best of a difficult situation, so too does she admire Mrs. Smith for the attitude with which she tackles her own struggles. Moreover, Anne finds joy in the fact that "their interest in each other [was] more than re-kindled" by their visits together (*Persuasion* 144). All things considered, Anne has the capacity to form strong interpersonal connections, but she is shy and unlikely to do so without a worthy subject with whom she can converse easily.

One final quality that is pertinent to Anne's personality is her strong sense of duty, which presents itself early on in the novel. One way that Anne experiences duty is in desiring to keep her family's finances in order, as was mentioned earlier. As the most responsible member of the Elliot family, Anne sees it as "an act of indispensable duty to clear away the claims of creditors," which highlights the fact that Anne looks past their undervaluing and

dismissal of her in order to try to improve the situation of their family (*Persuasion* 12). Anne also bends to the will of her family in the moment when they decide that she ought to stay in the country instead of travel with her father and Elizabeth to Bath. Anne is compelled by a “different duty” when her sister Mary would call upon her obliging sister to come and stay with her, claiming to be ill (*Persuasion* 32). Finally, the ultimate example of Anne’s sense of duty was her breaking off her engagement with Wentworth. Even though she was still unquestionably in love with him, she felt that it was proper to listen to the advice of Lady Russell, believing it would ultimately be for Wentworth’s benefit as well: “had she not imagined herself consulting his good, even more than her own, she could hardly have given him up.—the belief of being prudent, and self-denying principally for his advantage, was her chief consolation, under the misery of a parting” (*Persuasion* 27). So, while many of Anne’s actions are initially motivated by a sense of duty, she is eventually able to recognize the value in trusting her own opinion instead of relying on any external obligation.

Anne’s Interiority

Characteristic 1: Admitting When You Are Wrong

Looking at Anne’s interiority in terms of the attributes I previously established, the first thing to be analyzed is the degree to which she is willing

to accept that she could be wrong about a past decision or opinion. Although Anne may be more conscientious in her decisions than many of Austen's other leading figures, she is generally willing to admit when she has erred in thought or action. One early, prevalent example of this can be seen when Anne is being described. The speaker states that "her attachment and regrets had, for a long time, clouded every enjoyment of youth; and an early loss of bloom and spirit had been their lasting effect," which accentuates the fact that her self-examination is a substantial part of her life (*Persuasion* 27). So, even though the specifics of her regrets aren't listed in this moment, she is notably impacted from lamenting her rejection of Wentworth.

As a chiefly logical and practical person, Anne does not make many rash judgments; however, after she was persuaded by Lady Russell to call off her engagement with Captain Wentworth, she came to her own realization that her guardian's judgment was flawed. Arising chiefly from her sense of duty, Anne was willing to accept her guardian's advice in her youth, but this submission is later questioned to the point where "Anne, at seven and twenty, thought very differently from what she had been made to think at nineteen" (*Persuasion* 28). Because she is able to experience remorse over her actions, she gains the self-knowledge that "she had given him up to oblige others. It had been the effect of over-persuasion. It had been weakness and timidity" that had caused her to stumble (*Persuasion* 59). This type of reflection

demonstrated in the narrator's free indirect discourse about Anne shows a self-awareness which is indicative of her having an active inner life.

Another instance which highlights Anne's ability to admit her own propensity to error is when she must interpret her interactions with Wentworth once she is left on her own to think. On one such occasion, she finds herself giddy because of his kindness towards her and remarks that "she hoped to be wise and reasonable in time; but alas! alas! she must confess to herself that she was not wise yet" (*Persuasion* 168). She hypothesizes about what his kind gestures toward her could mean, but then she reprimands herself quickly afterwards because she is aware of the harm that could come with a miscalculation. Again, this type of contemplation can be seen after Anne overhears Louisa telling Wentworth about when Anne had refused her brother Charles, and she emotionally concludes that she "saw how her own character was considered by Captain Wentworth; and there had been just that degree of feeling and curiosity about her in his manner, which must give her extreme agitation" (*Persuasion* 85). Here, the anxiety that Anne experiences in considering the impact that her previous actions have on Wentworth shows that she is deeply affected by the mere possibility of any unbecoming characteristics that he might perceive in her. Anne is aware of her own fallibility, and she tries to limit any decisions that could ultimately lead to regret.

Finally, a third situation where Anne experiences regret in *Persuasion* happens when she realizes that Captain Wentworth has been discouraged in pursuing her again because he believes that she is connected to Mr. Elliot. Allowing herself to be associated with him, Anne instantly experiences frustration with herself for not having prevented this misunderstanding. Then, in pondering the situation later, Anne believed “it was altogether very extraordinary.—Flattering, but painful. There was so much to regret. How she might have felt, had there been no Captain Wentworth in the case, was not worth enquiry; for there was a Captain Wentworth” (*Persuasion* 181). She recognizes her desire for attention from Wentworth, and she sees that her behavior has, in essence, driven him away again.

In this kind of openness and vulnerability about mistakes, Anne is a unique character. In fact, Anne is the first of Austen’s protagonists, and one of the first characters ever in English fiction, to be alienated. This is valuable to acknowledge because it helps to see why Austen might portray her interiority in a different manner than she had with her previous characters. So, even though Anne is morally superior to other characters in many ways, she is limited to being recognized for her situation instead of being acknowledged for her intellect and character. However, this is largely because Anne is aware that “estranged consciousness is better than communal stupidity,” and continuing to affirm this to herself ultimately contributes to her isolation

because she minimally confides in most of the people around her (Simons 130). Since Anne has a maturity that was uncommon until this point, “Austen is able to explore female independence without being obliged to explore the concomitant impertinence which always seems to accompany the self-assurance of younger heroines” (Simons 151). Anne’s struggle, then, is less about dealing with avoiding youthful errors associated with one’s own wit; instead, she must learn “how to overcome the suffering that follows the awareness of error,” which involves a great deal of self-reflection (Simons 166). Even though Anne can avoid most of the foolhardy errors of youth, she cannot help but dwell on the biggest regret of her past: ending her engagement with Wentworth.

All in all, when examining the extent to which Anne Elliot maintains confidence in her original opinions compared to how much she is willing to alter her original beliefs, there are several instances which show a commitment to the pursuit, even when this comes at the cost of her pride and first impressions. This reevaluation is also something she prizes in others, asserting that “she felt that she could so much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a careless or a hasty thing, than of those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped” (*Persuasion* 151-2). With this philosophy, it is clear that Anne’s humility is not eclipsed by her intelligence, and she accepts that she has the

capacity to be wrong. Anne knows her own mind, but she can be persuaded to act against it when she feels obligated to for the sake of duty, which is something she generally comes to regret later on. She is usually open to the idea that she could be wrong in her opinions, and she accepts any new information that she receives as being something that could alter her current perceptions. Each of these examples support the idea that she is willing to admit when she is wrong, which also indicates a strong sense of interiority.

Characteristic 2: Internal vs. External Processing

A second attribute of Anne's which suggests that she has an active interior life is that she predominantly elects to process things on her own instead of talking about them with another person. Since *Persuasion* is not written in the first person, Jane Austen skillfully incorporates a writing technique that allows her to communicate Anne's emotions without completely having her as the narrator. By using free indirect discourse, the narrative voice in *Persuasion* often sounds similar to what Anne would be thinking whenever her inner thoughts need to be expressed—thereby melding these entities together for a time. There are a number of significant occasions when Anne processes her circumstances or emotions on her own, choosing ultimately not to share her musings with anyone around her.

When Anne reflects on Wentworth's coming to Uppercross at the beginning of the novel, she remarks that "she was assisted, however, by that perfect indifference and apparent unconsciousness, among the only three of her own friends in the secret of the past, which seemed almost to deny any recollection of it" (*Persuasion* 29). In saying this, she is not only electing to process her anxiety in solitude, but her comment also highlights the fact that she had only told three people about her former engagement—a surprisingly low number considering how much the relationship meant to her. Another way that Anne avoids discussing this worry with those in her life is shown when Mrs. Croft states that her brother is coming to visit them. Because she doesn't want to arouse any suspicion by asking which brother she is referring to, Anne keeps her anxiety bottled up: "Anne was left to persuade herself, as well as she could, that the same brother must still be in question. She could not, however, reach such a degree of certainty, as not to be anxious to hear whether any thing had been said on the subject at the other house" (*Persuasion* 47). In this sense, the reader perceives that Anne's behavior has a practical element in that nobody will be able to mock her for her emotions, but there is also something destructive in this tendency because it isolates her from anyone who might be able to help work through her anxiousness. This solitary worrying about Wentworth's arrival demonstrates that, while

Anne does have a substantial inner life, she rarely elects to let others be a part of it.

Another early situation which highlights Anne's inclination for internal processing occurs when she has finally has the opportunity to interact with Wentworth, experiencing a wide variety of emotions as a result of his hard-to-interpret reactions to her. In these moments, when many people might be inclined to seek the input of someone close to them, Anne feels that it is safer to experience these confusing situations on her own. After Anne and Wentworth's first reunion at Charles and Mary's house, Mary thoughtlessly tells her sister how Captain Wentworth had shared with the company that, in their brief encounter, he had found her much changed from how he had previously known her. In response to this, Austen uses free indirect discourse in the narration to accentuate Anne's feelings in the moment: "so altered that he should not have known her again!" These were words which could not but dwell with her. Yet she soon began to rejoice that she had heard them. They were of sobering tendency; they allayed agitation; they composed, and consequently must make her happier" (*Persuasion* 58). With this situation, Anne attempts to use her feelings of dejection and embarrassment to calm her worries; however, this cannot quiet her emotions on this topic for long.

When Anne is sitting at the Musgroves' house and listening to Wentworth talk about his experiences in the war, she also showcases her

preference to process her emotions alone as opposed to sharing them with others. Despite being alarmed to hear all he endured, Anne elects to keep her thoughts unsaid: “Anne’s shudderings were to herself, alone: but the Miss Musgroves could be as open as they were sincere, in their exclamations of pity and horror” (*Persuasion* 63). Here, Anne would seem to have very little to lose if she were to share what she was thinking—but her habit compels her to suffer in silence. Anne’s hesitancy to share feelings about Wentworth is accentuated again when Mrs. Smith imparts the truth to her about Mr. Elliot’s character, and she begins to see him as a hinderance to her future connection with Wentworth. She plans to open up to Lady Russell about some of this struggle, but she also comments that “her greatest want of composure would be in that quarter of the mind which could not be opened to Lady Russell, in that flow of anxieties and fears which must be all to herself” (*Persuasion* 200). In moments like this, it is difficult to definitively state whether or not Anne is saying that they “must be all to herself” for reasons of wisdom and caution or solely reasons of fear. Either way, the behavior that Anne exhibits shows an abundance in interior thought, which comes as a result of her distrusting those around her.

Beyond her musings about Wentworth, there are a number of situations where Anne shows herself opposed to voicing her own opinion when different ones have been expressed by those around her. One such

occasion which shows Anne's silencing of her own voice occurs when she first comes away from Kellynch and interacts with the people at Uppercross.

Although her mind is filled with the affairs of her family's home, those around her brush past this topic, and she decides to simply drop the matter—hoping to learn the “art of knowing our own nothingness beyond our own circle” (*Persuasion* 40). Despite having her own topics of conversation that she could have contributed, Anne opts to let her new hosts talk about the area of Bath that her father and sister have recently settled down in. Furthermore, Anne shows the diminished value that she ascribes to her contributions when she reflects on the way her musical giftings compare to those of Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove. Even when her talents are ignored, Anne does not seem bothered by her circumstances:

In music she had been always used to feel alone in the world; and Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove's fond partiality for their own daughters' performance, and total indifference to any other person's, gave her much more pleasure for their sakes, than mortification for her own.
(*Persuasion* 45)

With this putting aside of her own interests, Anne decides it is not worthwhile to assert herself and her music— again showing that her natural inclination is to keep feelings and desires to herself. One last example of Anne keeping her

less urgent opinions to herself can be seen when the narrator describes how much Lady Russell enjoyed the busyness of Bath, the narrator also comments that “Anne did not share these feelings [about the city]. She persisted in a very determined, though very silent, disinclination for Bath” (*Persuasion* 127). Throughout each of these scenes, it becomes clear that Anne is generally uninterested in imposing her opinions where they are not necessary or explicitly requested.

Before moving on, however, one notable exception to Anne’s silence concerning her opinions should be addressed: a conversation between Captain Harville and Anne concerning the constancy of men and women. When examining Captain Benwick’s choice to move on and be with Louisa after his fiancé, Fanny, has died, the two wind up debating which sex hangs on to lost love the longest. Anne makes a claim about the nature of women, saying “we certainly do not forget you, so soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit. We cannot help ourselves. We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us” (*Persuasion* 219). Bold and confident, Anne is quick to make a generalization about the plight of women since this is something she feels strongly about. So, even though this example goes against the common pattern of Anne holding in her opinions, it highlights the fact that this is something she feels strongly enough about to

mention, and it also suggests growth from her timid presence at the beginning of the novel.

All in all, Anne's docile disposition is ultimately rewarded and seen for its power, even though she does not frequently advocate for herself in the same way that outspoken Austenian heroines like Elizabeth and Emma do. Scholars have noted that Jane Austen is revolutionary because she subverts expectations for the role of women in literature, as well as the endings that become them as a result of their actions. Even though women like Anne may not have had a traditional sense of power at this time, Karen Newman shares that "Austen's novels in fact suggest that space, time, and human relations—what we might call ideology—are understandable and controllable, that power is in self-mastery, internal not external" (706). Although they aren't granted authority within society, Austen shows how a woman's internal self-mastery gives her power in a way that many might not have traditionally considered possible. Initially, "Wentworth seems to have the power of choice over Anne. He has all the advantages of male power and privilege—travel, the opportunity to make his fortune, the power to choose a wife—but he must return to the limits of the neighborhood of Kellynch Hall and finally wait for Anne to choose him, for her words to pierce his soul" (Newman 706-7). As a man, Wentworth is given the autonomy to act for himself, while Anne's prospects are limited due to her sex. What Newman argues, though, is that

Anne has power in her silence, and the words that she does speak are seen as even more valuable than they might have otherwise been if she were more outspoken.

Characteristic 3: Experiencing Shame and Regret

Another element of interiority which can be observed in the life of Anne Elliot is the degree to which she continues to hold on to past emotions and experiences—allowing her regrets to remain fresh in her mind. Even though this excessive dwelling on the past is not particularly healthy, it is one way in which an individual can have an active inner world, one that they have developed even more than the things which exist in their external reality. With Anne specifically, the narrator asserts early on that breaking off her engagement with Wentworth is something that continues to bother her, remarking that “a few months had seen the beginning and the end of their acquaintance; but, not with a few months ended Anne’s share of suffering from it” (*Persuasion* 27). From an early moment, then, it is made clear that Anne is someone who has the tendency to torment herself with feelings of regret longer than she needs to.

This pattern can be observed in Anne, as well, when she is fretting about the possibility of Wentworth coming to visit the Crofts at Kellynch-hall, and she begins to reprimand herself for assuming that Mrs. Croft is talking

about Frederick Wentworth instead of her other brother: “She immediately felt how reasonable it was, that Mrs. Croft should be thinking and speaking of Edward, and not of Frederick; and with shame at her own forgetfulness, applied herself to the knowledge of their former neighbour’s present state, with proper interest” (*Persuasion* 47). Here, Anne is overly apologetic about her misunderstanding, an act which accentuates the shame that she sometimes imposes too harshly on herself. One other situation where Anne is harsh with herself for some trivial offense occurs when Captain Wentworth sees that Anne has been trying to get her two-year-old nephew to stop tormenting and climbing on her, and he comes to relieve her by removing him. Anne is shaken up by this gesture more than she feels she ought to be, and the narrator remarks that “she was ashamed of herself, quite ashamed of being so nervous so overcome by such a trifle; but so it was; and it required a long application of solitude and reflection to recover her” (*Persuasion* 77). On both of these occasions, Anne takes what would be reasonably interpreted as a mildly embarrassing situation and severely rebukes herself later for her responses to them.

Even though much of the time Anne experiences regret it stems from trivial flaws that she perceives in herself, there are also several occasions when she feels shame over other areas that she shouldn’t be—such as being depressed, isolated, or in pain. One of the first situations where this can be

seen occurs as Anne is trying to force herself to be comfortable around Wentworth, and she gets frustrated that she is still hurting from their broken engagement because it had taken place a number of years earlier. Attempting to push aside her pain, the narrator notes that “she began to reason with herself, and try to be feeling less. Eight years, almost eight years had passed, since all had been given up. How absurd to be resuming the agitation which such an interval had banished into distance and indistinctness!” (*Persuasion* 57). Despite having legitimate reasons to feel pain, Anne gets upset with herself for experiencing intense emotion.

Beyond this example of Anne trying to repress pain, there are several other instances which suggest moments of depression in Anne; since she does not confide in anyone about her problems, she holds these feelings inside and wishes that they didn't exist. An early instance of this way of thinking can be seen when Anne observes Wentworth's interactions at Lyme with Captain Harville and Captain Benwick. Reflecting on the congenial way that they all interacted with each other, she ponders to herself that “these would have been all my friends,” a fact which further accentuated that “she had to struggle against a great tendency to lowness” (*Persuasion* 94). Here, when the narrator casually remarks that she has a “tendency to lowness,” this is something that would be likely acknowledged as depression in modern society. However, since Anne does not fully wish to acknowledge it, and since

there was far less research on this type of mental illness during her life, this element of her mental health remains exclusively in her inner world.

This sort of dismissal of mental health concerns can also be seen when Anne notices the way that Captain Benwick engages with poetry. In this moment, Anne becomes nervous that he is allowing himself to soak in too many strong emotions, hoping instead that he would “taste [the emotions of poets] but sparingly” (*Persuasion* 96). She is aware of the power that her emotive language can have on someone who is in a dark place, and she desires to help him. After suggesting that Captain Benwick seek out other literary forms, however, the narrator makes an observation about the relationship she has with her own advice:

When the evening was over, Anne could not but be amused at the idea of her coming to Lyme, to preach patience and resignation to a young man whom she had never seen before; nor could she help fearing, on more serious reflection, that, like many other great moralists and preachers, she had been eloquent on a point in which her own conduct would ill bear examination. (*Persuasion* 97)

Although she advocates for “patience and resignation” in order for Benwick to feel better, she senses hypocrisy in her words because she knows that she has not been patient with herself and has not been willing to accept her

emotions as they come. Anne knows how much she regrets parts of her past, and she speaks up because she does not want the same fate to befall Benwick.

At the end of *Persuasion*, there is one moment which shows that Anne is learning to free herself from continually living in the same state of regret and shame that she had been for several years. After censuring herself for much of the novel because of how she acted in her youth, Anne finally begins to have grace and understanding for the position she was in at the time after she has gotten back together with Wentworth. Having expanded her understanding, Anne remarks to him: “I must believe that I was right, much as I suffered from it, that I was perfectly right in being guided by the friend whom you will love better than you do now” (*Persuasion* 232). She recognizes that she was probably prudent in listening to Lady Russell—the woman who has acting in place of her mother at the time—and that, despite the pain she experienced from calling off her engagement, she was not at fault in her youthful actions. Therefore, despite spending the majority of the novel as someone who is not willing to move past the shame-inducing memories of her past, she eventually comes around to a place of acceptance and forgiveness of herself.

Characteristic 4: Seeking Solitude

The next quality that helps to determine the degree of interiority in a character is the amount that they opt to spend time in solitude versus the amount that they seek out the company of other people. Behaving in this way frequently indicates that the individual prefers to spend their energy developing their internal world instead of strengthening connections with those around them. With Anne's character specifically, there are several occasions near the beginning of *Persuasion* where the narrator shares that Anne seeks solitude in order to process something that has happened. One of the first times occurs when she has just been having a conversation with their family lawyer, Mr. Shepherd, and her father and sister. This was the first time that Anne had heard about the possibility of Wentworth coming to Kellynch-hall, and she is overwhelmed at the thought of it: "Anne, who had been a most attentive listener to the whole, left the room, to seek the comfort of cool air for her flushed cheeks; and as she walked along a favourite grove, said, with a gentle sigh, 'a few months more, and he, perhaps, may be walking here'" (*Persuasion* 24). In this moment, Anne is attempting to deal with a number of new emotions, so she decides that going outside will be the best way to alleviate her stress.

This overwhelmed feeling at the prospect of Wentworth's visit is also described a bit later— after the narrator spends time discussing the history between Anne and Wentworth. Following this recounting of their engagement and subsequent breakup, the narrator affirms that Anne “could not hear that Captain Wentworth's sister was likely to live at Kellynch, without a revival of former pain and many a stroll and many a sigh were necessary to dispel the agitation of the idea” (*Persuasion* 29). In both of these scenarios, when Anne is overcome with emotion at the prospect of having to interact with Wentworth again, her first reaction is to find a place where she can be alone to sort out struggles from her past that are coming back to haunt her.

Anne's next significant moment where she seeks solitude—to be alone with her thoughts—occurs when she learns that Louisa Musgrove is engaged to Captain Benwick, not Captain Wentworth as she had previously believed. Desiring to maintain her composure, she does her best to remain calm among her companions, but then she rushes off on her own as soon as it is socially appropriate. Upon receiving a letter from Mary, in the company of her father and Elizabeth, that had contained the news about Wentworth being single, the narrator noted that “it was with the greatest effort that she could remain in the room, preserve an air of calmness, and answer the common questions of the moment” (*Persuasion* 156). A couple minutes later, though, Anne is

quick to find a quiet space where she can examine the joy that has overwhelmed her. If Louisa had moved on to Benwick, it might also have implications for her: “In her own room she tried to comprehend it. Well might Charles wonder how Captain Wentworth would feel! Perhaps he had quitted the field, had given Louisa up, had ceased to love, had found he did not love her” (*Persuasion* 157). Unlike the earlier situation where Anne seeks solitude to deal with feelings of anxiety, this scene presents Anne in a state of joy. In both cases, however, Anne has important information that she possesses, but she chooses not to involve anyone else with it, showing that she has more trust in her internal processing than the people she knows.

Another fascinating element of Anne’s relationship with solitude is that she primarily seems to crave it, but it can also happen where her health is damaged by the fact that she exists largely on her own—being unmarried—and does not trust her father and sisters to be reliable confidantes. Looking at a later instance where Anne prescribes being alone to cure her social ills, when Wentworth sends her a letter confessing his feelings of love, she must attempt—once again—to control her wave of emotions in the midst of a crowd. The narrator explained that “such a letter was not soon to be recovered from. Half an hour’s solitude and reflection might have tranquilized her; but the ten minutes only, which now passed before she was interrupted, with all the restraints of her situation, could do nothing towards tranquility.

Every moment rather brought fresh agitation. It was an overwhelming happiness" (*Persuasion* 224). Here Anne assesses her situation by saying that what she requires in order to recover is "solitude and reflection," and this further accentuates the degree to which Anne relies on her own internal musings to solve her problems instead of believing that others could aid in this process. She even states later on, when she feels unable to escape in a moment, that "would they only have gone away, and left her in the quiet possession of that room, it would have been her cure; but to have them all standing or waiting around her was distracting and, in desperation, she said she would go home" (*Persuasion* 224). This passage also highlights the frantic and anxious feeling that Anne has while interacting with people when she would rather be alone. Overall, both of these passages accentuate an attitude that Anne frequently has towards solitude.

On the other hand, Anne also seems aware, in some moments, that there is pain associated with her solitude—inflicted both by herself and others. This other side of isolation starts to appear first when Mary insists that Anne stay home with her son while she goes to the Musgroves' house. Even though Anne initially seems to support her sister's plan, there are undertones of loneliness and melancholy that can be observed as well. To start, Mary nonchalantly asserts that "they want me excessively to be acquainted with Captain Wentworth, and I know you do not mind being left

alone,” dismissing the potential for Anne to want any involvement with the group (*Persuasion* 55). With this attitude portrayed by those in her family, Anne feels that “she was left with as many sensations of comfort, as were, perhaps, ever likely to be hers,” believing that others did not desire her company and that she would remain alone (*Persuasion* 56). Adding to this interaction with Mary, it is also evident that Anne’s family makes negative assumptions about her isolated lifestyle when her cousin, Mr. Elliot, casually dismisses her opinion based on the fact that she has lived in a quiet manner. He addressed her, stating “pardon me, dear cousin, you are unjust in your own claims. In London, perhaps, in your present quiet style of living, it might be as you say,” but that in the bigger cities they knew more about the subject at hand (*Persuasion* 141). In this manner, then, her family speaks to her in a way that is not intentionally belittling, but that points out the perceived inferiority of her way of life.

Looking beyond the attitudes of her family members to the way that Anne herself is impacted by her isolation, there are moments where she also seems upset about the way that she processes her emotions. One of the first instances where this can be witnessed occurs when Lady Russell is contemplating Anne’s health at the beginning of *Persuasion*, and she claims that her going to Bath would be beneficial since “Anne had been too little from home, too little seen. Her spirits were not high. A larger society would

improve them" (*Persuasion* 14). From the start, one of Anne's closest relations hints at Anne's perpetual estrangement from people being harmful to her well-being, and she also suggests that it would be improved if she would only be willing to be more social. It is less clear from the text whether Anne believes this to be true about herself, but the widespread perception of her is damaging, regardless.

Another situation which highlights the harm that comes from Anne's isolation takes place after she comes back from Lyme and is one of the only people remaining at Uppercross. Beginning to be absorbed by her loneliness, the narrator observes Anne's surroundings, saying that a "few months hence, and the room now so deserted, occupied but by her silent, pensive self, might be filled again with all that was happy and gay, all that was glowing and bright in prosperous love, all that was most unlike Anne Elliot" (*Persuasion* 115). In remarking that the silence was lacking in happiness, the narrator insinuates that she does not have a joyful life because of her solitude. This is directly conveyed in claiming that things which are "glowing and bright in prosperous love" are "most unlike Anne Elliot" (*Persuasion* 115). So, despite having a number of occasions where she longs to be alone and it is a healthy thing for her, it is clear that her isolation is also causing her pain.

One final situation which accentuates the sadness in Anne's solitude occurs when she talks with Captain Harville about Captain Benwick's plan to

marry after the death of Fanny, his fiancé who had died less than a year prior. In discussing whether she would have forgotten him as quickly, Anne tells Harville that “we certainly do not forget you, so soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit. We cannot help ourselves. We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us” (*Persuasion* 219). As someone who is regularly on her own, she has the opportunity to ponder her emotions in great detail, but, without someone else to share this burden with, it can feel to her like they are “prey[ing] upon” her. In this sense, Anne’s instincts may lead her to lean towards seeking isolation, but there is a deeper part of her soul that suffers from loneliness because of it.

Characteristic 5: Vulnerability about Romantic Interests

In the beginning of the novel, Anne has not had contact with Wentworth for eight years, which leaves her to regularly reflect on the way that things used to be and wonder how it would be if they were to meet again. One of the first instances where readers can see the way that Anne feels about Wentworth is when the narrator remarks that “no one had ever come within the Kellynch circle, who could bear a comparison with Frederick Wentworth, as he stood in her memory” (*Persuasion* 27). Even though he is no longer a part of her life, she has a memory of him preserved that will remind her of their time together. The narrator also shares that Anne’s mind was spoiled to

any other man because of him, so “no second attachment, the only thoroughly natural, happy, and sufficient cure, at her time of life, had been possible to the nice tone of her mind, the fastidiousness of her taste, in the small limits of the society around them” (*Persuasion* 27). Despite having other men around her following breaking off their engagement, she is not able to involve herself in the type of enjoyment that many other women do at her age—getting married—since she knows that a man like Frederick Wentworth still exists in the world.

Furthermore, before Anne interacts with Wentworth again, one of her other tendencies is to ponder what his attitude would be towards them meeting again. Once, after she is left alone when Mary and Charles go to the Musgroves’ to meet Wentworth, Anne begins to contemplate how he would have reacted to her coming along as well. Trying to be analytical and remove her emotion from the situation, she offers a hypothesis:

She would have liked to know how he felt as to a meeting. Perhaps indifferent, if indifference could exist under such circumstances. He must either be indifferent or unwilling. Had he wished ever to see her again, he need not have waited till this time; he would have done what she could not but believe that in his place she should have done long ago, when events had been early giving him the independence which alone had been wanting. (*Persuasion* 56)

With these thoughts in her mind, Anne concludes that Wentworth must not have positive feelings because he hasn't contacted her up until this point. She wants to believe that he could be desiring to interact with her again, but the evidence she finds does not support this conclusion, and she will not let herself dwell on an unlikely outcome—one with the power to crush her if it didn't come about.

Once the two of them begin to see each other on a regular basis, Anne starts both to hypothesize about his feelings for her and reminisce about the way that their interactions used to be. When her brain shifts to musing about how his remembrance and pain might compare to hers, the narrator shares how “Anne felt the utter impossibility, from her knowledge of his mind, that he could be unvisited by remembrance any more than herself. There must be the same immediate association of thought, though she was very far from conceiving it to be of equal pain” (*Persuasion* 60). Anne's openness about the fact that she is experiencing pain is shown. Although a prouder person might be tempted to pretend that they were no longer affected by their former fling, Anne is transparent enough in her personal reflections to admit to herself that she is still struggling.

Another of Anne's initial reactions is to look back on the way that they used to be together—an experience which is both pleasantly and painfully nostalgic. Reflecting on the profound change in their behavior, she exclaims

that at one point they were “so much to each other! Now nothing! There had been a time, when of all the large party now filling the drawing room at Uppercross, they would have found it most difficult to cease to speak to one another,” but that now it was if that time had never existed because they refused to acknowledge what had been (*Persuasion* 60). Furthermore, Anne also showed her melancholy at being separated from him when the narrator bemoans that, as they had been before, “there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison, no countenances so beloved. Now they were as strangers; nay, worse than strangers, for they could never be acquainted. It was a perpetual estrangement” (*Persuasion* 60-1). This quotation poignantly draws attention to the way Anne and Wentworth had been so intimate in spirit—a vulnerable thing to admit—and that their current situation was torturous for her because she felt they could never be connected again. All in all, the first interactions that Anne has with Wentworth highlight the transparent attitude she has in continually examining her emotional state, whether it is positive or negative.

After she moves past this initial stage of interaction, her thought process slowly develops to the point where she is overanalyzing each moment she shares with him, allowing his little behaviors to impact her overall mood. For example, when she is visiting the Musgroves, Anne spends much of her time playing piano, but she is consistently looking about the

room to see if Wentworth is paying attention to her. She believes him to have been watching her once, and another time he apologizes for taking her seat, but that is all. This casualness begins to deeply agitate her, however, and the narrator comments that “Anne did not wish for more such looks and speeches. His cold politeness, his ceremonious grace, were worse than any thing” (*Persuasion* 69). Although there is nothing directly rude that he does, the fake normalcy that they try to establish is more maddening than a confrontation would have been.

Similarly, Anne finds another reason to closely examine Wentworth’s manner when she is attempting to make her nephew get off of her back and Wentworth comes in to rescue her. Disoriented and overwhelmed by him helping her, the narrator shows that Anne’s thoughts come in a disorganized, raw form before she is able to pull her wits together:

His kindness in stepping forward to her relief—the manner—the silence in which it had passed—the little particulars of the circumstance—with the conviction soon forced on her by the noise he was studiously making with the child, that he meant to avoid hearing her thanks, and rather sought to testify that her conversation was the last of his wants, produced such a confusion of varying, but very painful agitation, as she could not recover from, till enabled by the entrance of

Mary and the Miss Musgroves to make over her little patient to their cares. (*Persuasion* 77)

The near stream of consciousness exhibited in this section showcases a woman who does not hold herself back from feeling whatever comes; nevertheless, it is not always simple for her to sort through the meaning of different emotions and how she should deal with them.

One last instance where Anne struggles with negative emotions due to overly scrutinizing the meaning of Wentworth's behavior takes place when she is resting during their walk and she overhears Louisa and Wentworth talking through the bushes. Between Wentworth criticizing inconsistencies in people's character and Louisa recounting to him how Anne had turned down Charles Musgrove before he married Mary, Anne is quite overcome with her thoughts. Although Louisa had not said anything negative about her, the narrator expresses that she "saw how her own character was considered by Captain Wentworth; and there had been just that degree of feeling and curiosity about her in his manner, which must give her extreme agitation" (*Persuasion* 85). In this moment, she cannot help but to guess at his thoughts, and she simultaneously feels powerless in knowing there is nothing she can do to alter them.

Despite there being a number of occasions when Anne is transparent about the pain that interacting with Wentworth causes her, there are also

several times when she is open about the unbound joy that comes from beginning to connect with him and feel that he cares for her again. One notable situation where this occurs is directly after she hears that Wentworth is not engaged to Louisa as she had previously believed. Beginning to notice an intense physical reaction as she digests the news, the narrator explains that “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!” (*Persuasion* 158). Without any sort of filter, the pure feeling that stems from Anne is displayed and she is embracing it in its fullness. Even though she has not fully processed her thoughts yet, she is willing to be honest with herself and work to pursue understanding.

And, although there are definitely scenarios where Anne feels predominantly hopeful or dejected based on an interaction with Wentworth, there are a large number of cases where Anne expresses that these encounters have left her with a mix of emotions. One such instance takes place when Wentworth comes to Bath earlier than expected and she has to deal with seeing him suddenly. Since she sees him momentarily before he notices her, the narrator shares that “all the overpowering, blinding, bewildering, first effects of strong surprise were over with her. Still, however,

she had enough to feel! It was agitation, pain, pleasure, a something between delight and misery” to see him approach her (*Persuasion* 165). A situation which elicits a similar reaction takes place when she is talking with Wentworth at a party, and he shares his opinions on Benwick and Louisa’s engagement with her. After stating that “a man does not recover from such a devotion of the heart to such a woman,” Anne cannot help but wonder if he is trying to comment on their relationship as well (*Persuasion* 173). To describe the impact that this statement has on Anne’s mind, the narrator says that “Anne...had distinguished every word, was struck, gratified, confused, and beginning to breathe very quick, and feel an hundred things in a moment” (*Persuasion* 173). In this moment, she wants to believe that he might be insinuating that he still has feelings for her, but she does not fully allow herself to get to that point because she knows what kind of pain it would bring her to be wrong.

Kay Young writes in her essay, “Feeling Embodied: Consciousness, Persuasion, and Jane Austen,” that for both Anne and Wentworth, “it is the feeling of physical and emotional loss that leads them to consciousness of the pain of being alive, and then to consciousness of ‘senseless joy’ when they feel physical and emotional reunion—the wonder of return bound to ‘always the hope of more’—in feeling embodied together again” (89). In this assessment, Young asserts that both the positive and negative emotions that Wentworth

and Anne experience throughout the course of the novel help to bring them to a point of eventual bliss once all of their issues have been worked through. Her article contrasts this situation to Elizabeth Bennet, who, even once she is engaged to Mr. Darcy, is described as not being fully in touch with how she feels: “Elizabeth, agitated and confused, rather knew that she was happy than felt herself to be so” (*Pride and Prejudice* 271). So, while *Persuasion* is often considered to be the most autumnal of Austen’s novels, the payoff is all the more rewarding when the reader finally gets a glimpse at Anne’s eventual joy and contentment.

Finally, one last occasion which incites a mixture of reactions in Anne occurs in the meeting following the party when Wentworth comes in again and all the Musgroves are visiting. She recalls the encouraging things he had said to her, but she also remembers that he had left suddenly from their last gathering—something she worries had to do with his beliefs about Anne’s connection to Mr. Elliot. Being both eager and fearful to interact with him again, the narrator explains that “their last meeting had been most important in opening his feelings; she had derived from it a delightful conviction; but she feared from his looks, that the same unfortunate persuasion, which had hastened him away from the concert room, still governed” (*Persuasion* 209). So, even though she feels that there could have been some progress made in the development of their relationship, it is difficult for her to avoid reading

into the meaning behind Wentworth's actions. In this way—through sorrow, joy, and all manner of things in between—Anne tries to be as transparent as she can in her inner reflections about Wentworth. Even though she rarely voices any of these aloud, they are significant part of her internal world and identity. All in all, because Anne is willing to be vulnerable in her interactions with Wentworth, even though it scares her at times, she is eventually able to overcome the circumstantial barriers that have kept them apart, and she and Wentworth find a happy life together at the novel's conclusion.

Pride and Prejudice

Elizabeth's Family

Elizabeth Bennet is twenty years old and is the second oldest of five daughters. Elizabeth and her older sister Jane are extremely close, but her three younger sisters—Mary, Kitty, and Lydia—are not as mature or reasonable of people, which prevents a closer attachment. Their father is a gentleman, although they are still less wealthy and have a lower social standing than the majority of main characters in the novel, such as Lady Catherine De Bourgh, Mr. Bingley, and Mr. Darcy. This lower status is noted explicitly when Elizabeth is preparing to go visit Lady Catherine for the first time and Mr. Collins attempts to comfort her by saying “Lady Catherine will not think the worse of you for being simply dressed. She likes to have the distinction of rank preserved” (*Pride and Prejudice* 119). In this way, it is suggested that the type of clothes that Elizabeth wears will reveal that she is not of the same social class as the De Bourgh family.

Another instance where the Bennet family's social standing and wealth is mentioned negatively occurs after Mr. Darcy has just proposed to Elizabeth and he is upset at the fact that she has turned him down, saying he was not behaving as a gentleman. In his anger, Darcy exclaims, “Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections?—to congratulate myself on

the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?" (*Pride and Prejudice* 142). And, although this class difference does not matter to Darcy later on in the novel, it is suggested a number of times that the Bennet girls should not be able to make a very good match for themselves because their father's money is entailed away from them and because they do not come from a particularly affluent lineage. All in all, this matter is something that is not something that Elizabeth fixates on as being very important, but the personal finances of the Bennets is a topic that is brought up by other characters on a number of occasions.

In addition to the suitability of the Bennet family's financial situation, another important element of their dubious respectability is the fact that there are a few of them who show good judgment and character, but that there are several of them who are exceedingly impolite and foolish in their behavior. To start, Mrs. Bennet is commonly acknowledged to be an unbearable person, with the narrator describing her as "a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news" (*Pride and Prejudice* 3). As someone who spends her days gossiping and feeling sorry for herself, Mrs. Bennet is someone Elizabeth feels distant from and wishes she could control her tongue.

For her youngest daughters, Kitty and Lydia, though, this selfish, imprudent behavior is something that they pick up on—to the point of making their family an object of public ridicule. When Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are talking and Mrs. Bennet states that she believes all her children to be clever, Mr. Bennet retorts by saying, “I had hoped that our sentiments coincided in every particular, but I must so far differ from you as to think our two youngest daughters uncommonly foolish” (*Pride and Prejudice* 21). Here, there is a stark distinction in wisdom and maturity among the Bennet daughters: Elizabeth and Jane possessing sense and Kitty and Lydia lacking it, with Mary falling somewhere in between.

Contrasting Mrs. Bennet and her youngest daughters, Mr. Bennet and the two oldest daughters may have certain faults, but overall, they are more rational and willing to listen to reason. Elizabeth’s father is described early on as “so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice,” which highlights his eccentric nature, but it also points to a more developed, multidimensional personality than that of his wife (*Pride and Prejudice* 3). He takes great pleasure in teasing incompetent people like his wife and Mr. Collins, but he is generally good-natured and cares a great deal for Elizabeth. When Elizabeth and Jane are gone, Mr. Bennet deeply misses their sensible conversation around the house.

Finally, Jane Bennet is probably the best example of a moral exemplar in the family. Of all her relations, Elizabeth is most attached to and defensive of Jane and her happiness. A much quieter and sweeter person than anyone else in her family, Jane is often looked at by Elizabeth as someone to be protected. For instance, when Elizabeth first detects a partiality in Jane and Mr. Bingley for each other, “she considered with pleasure that it was not likely to be discovered by the world in general, since Jane united, with great strength of feeling, a composure of temper and a uniform cheerfulness of manner which would guard her from the suspicions of the impertinent” (*Pride and Prejudice* 14). Recognizing that Jane is very subtle in the presentation of her feelings, Elizabeth knows that people will not mistake her behavior for anything other than her usual happiness. Furthermore, Elizabeth’s protectiveness of Jane is also evident when the Bennet family hears that Jane has fallen ill at Netherfield Park, Mr. Bingley’s house, and she declares her determination to visit her, even though it means she will need to go by foot. When she arrives and is able to witness the care that Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst have offered her sister, she is even willing to forego her original dislike of them for Jane’s sake. The narrator remarked: “Elizabeth began to like them herself, when she saw how much affection and solicitude they showed for Jane” (*Pride and Prejudice* 24). This sudden change of heart accentuates how beloved Jane is by Elizabeth.

An additional reason that Elizabeth shows so much partiality to Jane is that she sees her as being one of the only truly virtuous people she knows. After another friend she held in high esteem, Charlotte Lucas, decides to marry the obnoxious and senseless Mr. Collins, the narrator observed that Elizabeth's "disappointment in Charlotte made her turn with fonder regard to her sister, of whose rectitude and delicacy she was sure her opinion could never be shaken, and for whose happiness she grew daily more anxious," because Mr. Bingley had not returned (*Pride and Prejudice* 95). Compared with Charlotte, then, Elizabeth feels that the one figure who she trusts to remain constant is Jane, and she adores her for it.

While Jane and Elizabeth have a very close relationship, one family member who Elizabeth is notably distant from is her mother. Because of the close relationship that Elizabeth has with her father and the fact that she does not buy into her mother's self-serving tendencies, Elizabeth is marked as her mother's least favorite child on a number of occasions. The first of these instances takes place when Mrs. Bennet is trying to convince her husband to go see Mr. Bingley and he says that his plan is to talk up Elizabeth to him. Objecting strongly to this idea, Mrs. Bennet states, "I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving her the preference" (*Pride and Prejudice* 2). Through situations

like this, it becomes evident that Mrs. Bennet is irritated by the special treatment Elizabeth receives, and she does not want to contribute to it. Another instance where this can be seen occurs when she believes that Jane is likely to become engaged to Mr. Bingley and Elizabeth is going to get engaged to Mr. Collins. In that moment, she is content because she believes that to be a fitting end, since "Elizabeth was the least dear to her of all her children; and though the man and the match were quite good enough for her, the worth of each was eclipsed by Mr. Bingley and Netherfield" (*Pride and Prejudice* 77). To her, Jane is worthy of the wealth and status that comes with a marriage to Bingley, but Elizabeth is worth substantially less, with Mr. Collins as an appropriate match that she would be content to have Elizabeth settled with.

One figure in *Pride and Prejudice* who does serve as more of a motherly character to Elizabeth is Mrs. Gardiner, the Bennet sisters' aunt. The narrator's initial description of her expresses what kind of woman she is and what kind of connection she has to the family:

Mrs. Gardiner, who was several years younger than Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Phillips, was an amiable, intelligent, elegant woman, and a great favourite with all her Longbourn nieces. Between the two eldest and herself especially, there subsisted a particular regard. They had frequently been staying with her in town. (*Pride and Prejudice* 104)

The reader is set up to understand that Mrs. Gardiner is another person who Elizabeth trusts, and this status as confidante is established more and more throughout the course of the novel. In addition to enjoying each other's company, this relationship is beneficial to Elizabeth because Mrs. Gardiner challenges her in moments where she is jumping to conclusions too hastily. One such situation occurs when the two of them are talking about whether or not Bingley was persuaded to not be with someone who he was "violently in love with only a few days before" (*Pride and Prejudice* 105). While Elizabeth asserts that it would be impossible for a man of sound mind to be persuaded in this way, Mrs. Gardiner challenges her conclusion by stating "that expression of 'violently in love' is so hackneyed, so doubtful, so indefinite, that it gives me very little idea. It is as often applied to feelings which arise from a half-hour's acquaintance, as to a real, strong attachment," so she wanted to be sure that he really did have that strong of regard (*Pride and Prejudice* 105). Although she says it in a kind way, Mrs. Gardiner calls Elizabeth out for probably speaking too strongly of Mr. Bingley's emotions, showing that she will think critically about Elizabeth's words in a way that she is unused to.

Through instances like this, then, it is clear that Elizabeth respects her aunt more than she does a number of other older figures, which explains why she is willing to seriously consider the things she says. This inclination is

further highlighted a little later on when Mrs. Gardiner and Elizabeth discuss that Elizabeth ought to be careful around Wickham. This interaction prompts Elizabeth to ask if her aunt is satisfied with her response about the irresponsible suitor, and the narrator then describes how “her aunt assured her that she was, and Elizabeth having thanked her for the kindness of her hints, they parted; a wonderful instance of advice being given on such a point, without being resented” (*Pride and Prejudice* 108). She is willing to listen to correction, not being threatened by her aunt’s advice. Finally, at the end of the book, after Mr. Darcy has been added to their family, the narrator makes a point of adding that “with the Gardiners, they were always on the most intimate terms. Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved them; and they were both ever sensible of the warmest gratitude towards the persons who, by bringing her into Derbyshire, had been the means of uniting them” (*Pride and Prejudice* 282). So, although there is still a place in her heart for her parents, Elizabeth’s aunt and uncle are very important to her, much like Lady Russell is important to Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*.

Elizabeth’s Attributes

Of the many elements of Elizabeth Bennet’s personality, one of the things that she is most known for is frequently bragging about being a great judge of character, but she is often hasty in her assumptions—not very in

tune with her emotions or those of other people. While the most obvious times where Lizzy errs in judgment are in her assessments of Mr. Wickham and Mr. Darcy, there are a number of smaller instances where she is quick to pass judgment without having sufficient evidence. One of these occasions takes place when the Bennets meet the Bingleys for the first time, as Elizabeth and Jane develop differing opinions about Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst. While Jane is inclined to think well of them because of her sweetness and partiality to their brother, the narrator comments that Elizabeth's opinion was formed "with more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than her sister, and with a judgment too unassailed by any attention to herself," which meant that "she was very little disposed to approve them" (*Pride and Prejudice* 10). In this case, while she is not necessarily in error with what she thinks, it is clear that the harsh conclusions she comes to are from a place of subjective bias instead of coolheaded logic. Another instance that highlights Elizabeth's hasty tendency occurs when she is arguing with Mr. Darcy about the main weakness that each person has a propensity towards. When Elizabeth starts by saying that Darcy's flaw is that he hates everyone, he counters by claiming that Elizabeth's "is willfully to misunderstand them" (*Pride and Prejudice* 42). To him as well, then, it is apparent that she is eager to pass judgments on others, but that she is not believing it to be a problem.

Further accentuating her lack of awareness in terms of people's feelings, Elizabeth's romantic life is also an area that shows how much she overestimates her own knowledge. To start, when Darcy first starts becoming attached to her, Elizabeth is completely unaware of it, as the narrator explains: "Elizabeth was far from suspecting that she was herself becoming an object of some interest in the eyes of [Mr. Bingley's] friend... Of this she was perfectly unaware" (*Pride and Prejudice* 16). Here it is evident that, despite believing herself to understand what Mr. Darcy is thinking, she is completely wrong in her guess. In addition to this, even at the end of the novel when she and Darcy are happy, she still is not fully in tune with what her own happiness feels like. The narrator explains this by remarking that "Elizabeth, agitated and confused, rather knew that she was happy than felt herself to be so" (*Pride and Prejudice* 271). So, even though she can logically tell herself something and she has come a long way in terms of her awareness, there is still a disconnect between the rational and emotional parts of herself.

Beyond Elizabeth's belief in her own intuition, another quality of hers that is discussed frequently is that she is pretty, but her beauty is not recognized as often as Jane's by her family members. Although the narrator affirms that Elizabeth is "equally next to Jane in birth and beauty," certain people who dislike her attempt to dismiss this fact (*Pride and Prejudice* 52). Caroline Bingley is quick to downplay Elizabeth's beauty and Mrs. Bennet

even goes as far as to say, “I often tell my other girls they are nothing to [Jane]” (*Pride and Prejudice* 30). Although this type of insult can be seen in several different places, Mr. Darcy is someone who initially does not find her particularly appealing, but he quickly feels that he was wrong. Elizabeth may not have had the same type of beauty as was stylish in high society, but the narrator communicates that “he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing; and in spite of his asserting that her manners were not those of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness” (*Pride and Prejudice* 16). In this way, then, even though a number of characters have different attitudes about it, Elizabeth is a beautiful person, and this is important to understanding her character as a whole.

Another attribute of Elizabeth’s that is crucial to understanding her motivations is the fact that she likes to be known for her wittiness. For instance, when Elizabeth is talking with Jane after they first met Bingley, she jokes with her older sister that, in addition to his other qualities, “He is also handsome...which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete” (*Pride and Prejudice* 9). Through a number of examples like this, she finds joy in entertaining others, and she thinks that her quick mind shows a level of superiority over the intellects of the people around her. This attitude is expressly stated when she and Darcy dance together at the Netherfield Ball and she claims, “I have always seen a great

similarity in the turn of our minds. We are each of an unsocial, taciturn disposition, unwilling to speak, unless we expect to say something that will amaze the whole room" (*Pride and Prejudice* 67). Although she says it in jest, there is an underlying truth in her remark.

So, even though she has pride in the way that she views herself, she is generally pretty unconcerned with the way that she is viewed by those she doesn't care about or respect. For instance, when Elizabeth resolves to walk to Netherfield to see Jane and her mother remarks in horror that she will be covered in mud, which would make her unpresentable at such a great house as Netherfield Park, Elizabeth dismisses her mother's concern. Not caring about her opinion, Elizabeth counters by saying, "I shall be very fit to see Jane—which is all I want." (*Pride and Prejudice* 23). Although the Bingleys might look down on her for it, Elizabeth is unbothered because she knows that her appearance is not what is important. Another pertinent situation where this can be seen is when Lady Catherine visits Elizabeth to say that she would disapprove of a union between her and Darcy, and Elizabeth explains how little her threats impact her:

"In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal.'

'True. You are a gentleman's daughter. But who was your mother? Who are your uncles and aunts? Do not imagine me ignorant of their condition.'

'Whatever my connections may be,' said Elizabeth, 'if your nephew does not object to them, they can be nothing to you.' (*Pride and Prejudice* 258)

Again, it is apparent that Elizabeth is far more concerned with the opinions of people she trusts and her own opinion than she is of people she doesn't respect like Lady Catherine. All in all, this is a quality that tends to serve her well throughout the novel, but it does establish her as a tough, self-confident—maybe even arrogant—woman in her social circles.

One last quality of Elizabeth's that is critical to record is that, even though she doesn't care about very many people's opinion of her, she does get easily embarrassed by her family's disgraceful behavior. Among other occasions, this embarrassment is evident when Mrs. Bennet is bragging about Jane's beauty in front of Mr. Darcy and the Bingleys. Out of horror at her impropriety, the narrator states that "the general pause which ensued made Elizabeth tremble lest her mother should be exposing herself again. She longed to speak, but could think of nothing to say" (*Pride and Prejudice* 32). Although status is not her ultimate concern, she is aware in situations like this

that her family is in the wrong and that their actions come with a tainted familial reputation. On top of this, Elizabeth's family—namely Mr. Collins, Mary, and Mrs. Bennet—draw unnecessary, disgraceful attention at the Netherfield Ball. In this scene, Elizabeth looks on and feels the shame of their actions without being able to do anything about it. Observing what is going on around her, then, the narrator explains: “that his two sisters and Mr. Darcy, however, should have such an opportunity of ridiculing her relations was bad enough, and she could not determine whether the silent contempt of the gentleman, or the insolent smiles of the ladies, were more intolerable” (*Pride and Prejudice* 75). Despite not caring about their opinions in other situations, she is deeply impacted when she knows that their judgments are founded in truth.

Elizabeth's Interiority

Characteristic 1: Admitting When You Are Wrong

For the first half of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet is extremely confident in her opinions, believing herself to be a better judge of character and reality than those around her, but she is forced to reconsider this notion when she receives a letter from Mr. Darcy and realizes that all of Mr. Wickham's claims might not be true. From this point on, she displays far more signs of self-reflection than she did before she recognized how faulty her first

impressions were. An early instance where this type of misplaced confidence in her own opinions can be noticed is when she is at the Lucas family's house, interacting with the Bingleys and Mr. Darcy on a second occasion. In this scene, Elizabeth comes to some rather harsh conclusions about the intentions of Mr. Darcy, even though the narrator has just described in detail how Mr. Darcy was coming to find Elizabeth quite beautiful. When she observes him watching her, she tells her friend Charlotte that "if he does it any more I shall certainly let him know that I see what he is about. He has a very satirical eye, and if I do not begin by being impertinent myself, I shall soon grow afraid of him" (*Pride and Prejudice* 16). In this way, she asserts—without actually interacting with him—that Darcy is a sardonic person, and she resolves in that moment to be impertinent back to him so that he will see that she isn't intimidated by him. For a long time after, Elizabeth blindly holds this resolve and in each of her interactions with him she shows an open disdain towards him. In fact, later in the same evening, when Sir William Lucas suggests that Elizabeth and Darcy dance together, Darcy asks her, and she is unwilling to consider it: "Elizabeth was determined; nor did Sir William at all shake her purpose by his attempt at persuasion" (*Pride and Prejudice* 18). Through both of these instances, then, it becomes apparent that Elizabeth becomes immediately attached to her opinions to the point where she will not entertain any other views on the matter.

Moving on in the novel, another set of opinions that she forms almost instantly are those that pertain to Mr. Wickham: while Darcy is deemed a villain, Wickham is considered the victim. After Mr. Wickham shares his account of how Mr. Darcy had wronged him during his first private conversation with Elizabeth, she is eager to believe all of his claims and convey them to Jane. Although Jane has a harder time believing all that he claimed, Elizabeth attempts to prove her point:

I can much more easily believe Mr. Bingley's being imposed upon, than that Mr. Wickham should invent such a history of himself as he gave me last night; names, facts, every thing mentioned without ceremony.—If it be not so, let Mr. Darcy contradict it. Besides, there was truth in all his looks. (*Pride and Prejudice* 63)

So, while Elizabeth claims to be a rational and logical person, she is willing to condemn Darcy and listen to Wickham simply because she thinks that his appearance was truthful. Then, when Jane responds to this by admitting that the situation is upsetting and that “one does not know what to think,” Elizabeth retorts, “I beg your pardon;—one knows exactly what to think” (*Pride and Prejudice* 63). In this moment, even though Elizabeth generally trusts Jane's perspective, she is so caught up in her own hunches that she is almost hostile to any questioning by her sister. All in all, this type of closed-off

attitude and unwillingness to reflect on other possibilities shows that Elizabeth has a hard time developing a critical inner voice at the beginning of the novel, so her interiority has a long way to progress before she is able to accurately develop her understanding of reality.

With both of these rushed, flawed conclusions in place, Elizabeth moves forward with the determination to be protective of Wickham and hateful towards Darcy. So, when she learns that Wickham did not come to the Netherfield Ball, she assumes that it is Darcy's doing and grows bitter at both him and at Bingley for supporting him. With Elizabeth determined to stay upset, the narrator explains that she "was resolved against any sort of conversation with him, and turned away with a degree of ill-humour which she could not wholly surmount even in speaking to Mr. Bingley, whose blind partiality provoked her" (*Pride and Prejudice* 66). Continuing in this way throughout the rest of the evening, Elizabeth also jokingly gets upset when she accidentally agrees to dance with Darcy and Charlotte suggests that it may not be as bad as she is anticipating. In response, she declares, "Heaven forbid! That would be the greatest misfortune of all! To find a man agreeable whom one is determined to hate! Do not wish me such an evil" (*Pride and Prejudice* 66). And while that quote is said in somewhat of a playful manner, it accentuates her dislike of him as well as her desire that her hate wouldn't go away.

One way that *Pride and Prejudice* showcases Elizabeth Bennet's interior development is how this novel highlights her being forced to re-evaluate her initial conclusions, eventually coming to see the areas where she has been too hasty. In his book, *Jane Austen*, Tony Tanner shares that this novel is fundamentally about "prejudging and rejudging. It is a drama of recognition—re-cognition, that act by which the mind can look again at a thing and if necessary make revisions and amendments until it sees the thing as it really is" (105). This story is revolutionary, in part, because it forced its readers to also consider how they know what they know—to engage in self-reflection and develop their inner worlds. Although Elizabeth has a lively mind and a quick tongue, she is initially very caught up in her own ideas, which aren't always based in reality. Tanner comments on Elizabeth's tendency to be carried away by her thoughts, noting that "the individual needs to be *both* an experienter *and* a reasoner: the former without the latter is error-prone, the latter without the former is useless if not impossible" (110). In other words, the experiences that people have must be accompanied by thorough reflection, or the conclusions that come from these experiences cannot be trusted. And, on the opposite end of the spectrum, an individual who is so caught up in contemplation that they forget to experience new things are also in a bad position. Unfortunately, this lesson of balance is one Elizabeth must learn the hard way throughout the course of her novel.

To begin learning how to balance her proclivity to action and her new life of reflection, Elizabeth's habits are first challenged and she is able to grow in her interior processing after she declines Mr. Darcy's first proposal and receives a letter from him offering a defense against a couple of accusations she made. Emphasizing her stubborn attitude, the narrator shares how reluctant Elizabeth is to accept that anything he says is true. Before Elizabeth even reads it, the narrator describes how "with a strong prejudice against everything he might say, she began his account of what had happened at Netherfield" (*Pride and Prejudice* 149). With beliefs like this that she holds firmly, Elizabeth shows a weakness in her usually rational self where she closes her mind to outside ideas. Once she gets into the letter and reads Darcy's account of all that had taken place with Wickham, her attitude shifts from one of closed-mindedness to one of shock, agony, denial, and a slew of other negative emotions. The narrator explains that Elizabeth's "feelings were yet more acutely painful and more difficult of definition. Astonishment, apprehension, and even horror, oppressed her. She wished to discredit it entirely, repeatedly exclaiming, 'This must be false! This cannot be! This must be the grossest falsehood!'" (*Pride and Prejudice* 149). So, in this pivotal moment of Elizabeth's internal development, she starts to recognize—with great dismay—that she has been rash in her judgments about both men.

After this turning point, Elizabeth becomes more and more willing to develop different conclusions from those she had previously held. For instance, while she had initially thought Wickham to be brave for sharing what he claimed had happened to him, she looked back later and “was now struck with the impropriety of such communications to a stranger, and wondered it had escaped her before. She saw the indelicacy of putting himself forward as he had done, and the inconsistency of his professions with his conduct” (*Pride and Prejudice* 151). Once she has opened her mind to what Mr. Darcy had to say, other areas of the past are made clearer as well, and she is able to accept that she hasn’t always been right in her assumptions.

In addition to the capability of seeing Mr. Wickham’s faults, Elizabeth also grows in her examination of herself. In a telling speech where Elizabeth admits her own errors, she speaks about the self-serving patterns of thinking that got her into trouble:

‘How despicably have I acted!’ she cried.—‘I, who have prided myself on my discernment!—I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candor of my sister, and gratified my vanity, in useless or blameable distrust.—How humiliating is this discovery!—Yet, how just a humiliation!—Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly.—Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect

of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself.' (*Pride and Prejudice* 152)

During this speech, Elizabeth reaches a point where she is no longer convinced that she is a great judge of character, which ultimately opens her up to a feeling that self-examination is healthy and does not indicate weakness.

From this moment until the end of the novel, Elizabeth is anxious to pursue truth and spend more time listening to others instead of assuming that she already knows all of the necessary information. Even at the end, when she is happy and all of the loose ends of her problems have been tied up, she still looks back and wishes that she had been willing to be more restrained in expressing her views. One time that she encounters trouble because of her old views takes place when she is attempting to convince her father that she will be happy with Darcy because she has been so adamant about disliking him before. In this instant, the narrator expresses "how earnestly did she wish that her former opinions had been more reasonable, her expressions more moderate! It would have spared her from explanations and professions which it was exceedingly awkward to give" (*Pride and Prejudice* 274). So, at the end of the day, Elizabeth does not initially show a

great deal of self-awareness in the way that she expresses her opinions, but she is eventually able to realize that she is not always right, which leads her to consider alternative viewpoints.

Characteristic 2: Internal vs. External Processing

In a similar way that Elizabeth transitions in her beliefs about her own knowledge throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, so too she initially spends most of her energy talking through whatever comes to her mind and eventually transitions to pondering more of her thoughts on her own instead of turning to the people around her to understand them. At the beginning of the novel, Elizabeth Bennet has very little to hide in her life and, since she believes herself to be always right, she is very open and eager to share her thoughts and impressions with the people around her. She also has a hard time imagining that there are other people who conceal their emotions, which leads her to the perception that people are simpler to understand than they actually are. One of the first moments when this can be observed is when Elizabeth is reflecting on Bingley and Jane and she states, “if I can perceive her regard for him, he must be a simpleton, indeed, not to discover it too” (*Pride and Prejudice* 15). This quotation accentuates just how much Elizabeth believes that the things which are apparent to her must be apparent to everyone—an idea that will get her into a great deal of trouble in the future.

Elizabeth also has a hard time, later, understanding that the things that people are willing to openly express are not necessarily a direct link to the range of thoughts that are occurring in their mind. Having that mindset, she quickly becomes convinced that because Mr. Bingley is open in his speech, she understands him fully. At first, she claims, “Oh! yes—I understand you perfectly,” and a moment later she follows up by saying that “it does not necessarily follow that a deep, intricate character is more or less estimable than such a one as yours” (*Pride and Prejudice* 30). Here, Elizabeth clearly demonstrates that she believes a person’s depth to directly correspond to the amount and quality of their speech. Since she takes the things that Bingley says at face value, she falsely assumes that there is nothing else to be learned about him, neglecting the fact that there could be a number of things which go unsaid as well.

In her own life, Elizabeth starts the novel by being very open with certain people about the things that happen to her, but, as the story progresses, she discovers more and more things that she feels are necessary to hide. One of the earlier moments when she is described as sharing all of her new information takes place when she has just witnessed the first awkward interaction between Wickham and Darcy, and she feels compelled to share it with Jane. The narrator explains that “as they walked home, Elizabeth related to Jane what she had seen pass between the two gentlemen; but though Jane

would have defended either or both, had they appeared to be in the wrong, she could no more explain such behaviour than her sister" (*Pride and Prejudice* 54). Here, even though Elizabeth doesn't really understand what has happened, she still makes the decision to discuss it with her sister. Another time when something similar happens is when she learns that Wickham is not going to be at the Netherfield ball, and she finds consolation in being able to complain to her friend about what she believed had happened. So, the narrator explains that "Elizabeth was not formed for ill-humour; and though every prospect of her own was destroyed for the evening, it could not dwell long on her spirits; and having told all her griefs to Charlotte Lucas, whom she had not seen for a week, she was soon able to make a voluntary transition to the oddities of her cousin" (*Pride and Prejudice* 66). Elizabeth chooses, in this moment, to find something which will cheer her up and allow her to process what has happened. She does not think it through on her own beforehand; instead, she focuses her energy on communicating her circumstances to the people around her.

Beyond these simple occasions when she casually decides to communicate what is going on in her thoughts, there are also times when she feels an urgency to express something verbally. For example, when Elizabeth is visiting Charlotte after she has married Mr. Collins and they go to visit Lady Catherine at her home, Rosings Park, the narrator observes that "they then

sat down, and when her inquiries after Rosings were made, seemed in danger of sinking into total silence. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, to think of something" (*Pride and Prejudice* 131). Since Elizabeth does not feel comfortable with her company in this situation, she is afraid of being in silence with them. If she continues to talk, there is a safety in controlling the conversation and avoiding the remarks of those she doesn't care for. In another context, Elizabeth also exhibits a resolve to speak when she is preparing to reject Mr. Darcy's first proposal. In this scene, the narrator depicts that "though her resolve did not vary for an instant, she was at first sorry for the pain he was to receive; till, roused to resentment by his subsequent language, she lost all compassion in anger. She tried, however, to compose herself to answer him with patience, when he should have done" (*Pride and Prejudice* 140). Here she is also strongly compelled to speak, not by silence, but by something that was said which angered her.

At this point in the novel, Elizabeth begins her transition from being compelled to share her thoughts with others to feeling constrained to silence. This change can first be seen when Elizabeth is travelling back from visiting Charlotte and talking with Charlotte's sister Maria about their trip. When Maria remarks that she has so much to tell people, Elizabeth adds to herself: "And how much I shall have to conceal!" (*Pride and Prejudice* 159). Despite knowing how much Jane would be interested to learn about Mr. Darcy's

proposal to her and the content of the letter that followed, she is growing more aware of her own propensity to error, and she does not want to say anything without being a little more certain of its truth. Furthermore, Elizabeth is aware of the sensitivity that would come with imparting the information to Jane about Darcy's work in breaking up she and Bingley, and she is also being conscientious of the impact that it would have on Georgiana Darcy if the story about she and Wickham was made public. In both these situations, Elizabeth has the foresight to recognize that her words could bring harm, so she keeps them to herself for a while. Then, a little while later, when she does decide to tell Jane about some of what had transpired between her and Darcy at Hunsford, she maintains that it would be best not to reveal anything about Bingley. She felt that "here was knowledge in which no one could partake; and she was sensible that nothing less than a perfect understanding between the parties could justify her in throwing off this last incumbrance of mystery" (*Pride and Prejudice* 165). In each of these instances, there is evidence that Elizabeth is learning discretion in how and what she communicates to others.

Other circumstances that teach Elizabeth to conceal her thoughts are moments that shape her ever-evolving feelings for Darcy near the end of the novel. Even though she spends a long time hating him, this starts to change when she visits his house at Pemberley, and he shows kindness to her and Mr.

and Mrs. Gardiner. Once he offers to have Mr. Gardiner come fishing on his grounds, Elizabeth becomes overwhelmed at what his change of demeanor could mean, but she ultimately keeps it to herself:

Elizabeth said nothing, but it gratified her exceedingly; the compliment must be all for herself. Her astonishment, however, was extreme, and continually was she repeating, 'Why is he so altered? From what can it proceed? It cannot be for me—it cannot be for my sake that his manners are thus softened. My reproofs at Hunsford could not work such a change as this. It is impossible that he should still love me.'

(Pride and Prejudice 185)

And for a great while after their visit, Elizabeth did not share this thought with anyone. In this time, she spends more time sorting through issues on her own, and when she does choose to speak, her words have been thoughtfully processed ahead of time.

One other moment which highlights her choices not to speak about her internal emotional changes can be seen when Bingley and Darcy unexpectedly show up at the Bennets' house near the end of the novel. In that moment, Elizabeth feels tension because of her sister's unresolved situation with Bingley, but primarily the stress comes because of her own relationship with Darcy. Since Jane is unaware of what has transpired between them,

Elizabeth must process her emotions on her own. The narrator describes this by saying, “Elizabeth had sources of uneasiness which could not be suspected by Jane, to whom she had never yet had courage to shew Mrs. Gardiner's letter, or to relate her own change of sentiment towards him. To Jane, he could be only a man whose proposals she had refused, and whose merit she had undervalued” (*Pride and Prejudice* 241). So, even though this situation is not hindered by Elizabeth’s trust in Jane, Elizabeth is stuck in a place of solitude because she has unresolved issues within herself that she wants to understand more before expressing them aloud.

Finally, nearing the end of *Pride and Prejudice*, there reaches a point where Elizabeth’s secrets are brought to light because the situations with Lydia and Wickham, Jane and Bingley, and she and Darcy have reached their resolutions. Only at this time is Elizabeth able to go back to speaking openly with Jane, although she is not unchanged in her motives for doing so. When the two sisters come to be in each other’s confidence again, Jane confronts Elizabeth about the fact that she hadn’t told her almost anything about what had happened. The narrator then explains` that “Elizabeth told her the motives of her secrecy. She had been unwilling to mention Bingley; and the unsettled state of her own feelings had made her equally avoid the name of his friend. But now she would no longer conceal from her his share in Lydia's marriage. All was acknowledged, and half the night spent in conversation”

(*Pride and Prejudice* 272). In this moment, Elizabeth is able to go back—at least partially—to the way that she and Jane interacted at the beginning of the novel. The primary differences between the two periods of interaction are that now she is more cautious about the way that her speech impacts other people, and she has gained an understanding that sometimes it can be beneficial to examine things by herself before communicating them to others. In the end, then, Elizabeth is able to combine traits of her extraverted personality with skills for internal processing to make her a healthier and more conscientious person.

Characteristic 3: Experiencing Shame and Regret

In analyzing the next characteristic of interiority—the degree to which Elizabeth feels shame or regret due to her past failings—it can be observed that Elizabeth does not openly regret the things that she does before she reads Mr. Darcy’s letter to her. Exploring why Elizabeth initially has such a hard time moving past her erroneous conclusions, Marcia McClintock Folsom shares that it takes a certain amount of intellectual work in order for Elizabeth to ultimately correct herself. Folsom muses that “readers can compare the ways Elizabeth and her sister Jane make sense of such people as Miss Bingley and her brother. Each sister perceives certain actions and hears certain spoken words; each attempts to fit these perceptions into a coherent

account that satisfies her sense of what is probable” (102). In this statement, she is acknowledging that Elizabeth makes an effort to comprehend the information she receives but that her personal bias often gets in the way of her interpreting things correctly. She claims that, in order for Elizabeth to move beyond her preconceived notions, she must first realize that “achieving understanding may be time-consuming, laborious, and personally painful; it may damage self-esteem. It demands intellectual effort and may force one to relinquish cherished opinions of oneself, one’s family, and others” (Folsom 108). This task is much easier said than done. In the end, however, when she is willing to take a more honest look at her internal world, she is able to grow in the knowledge of both herself and the reality of the world and people around her. Elizabeth is a character who is not malicious in her misunderstandings; nevertheless, she must endure a great deal of inner turmoil in order to correct her first impressions.

Until the point in *Pride and Prejudice* where Elizabeth reads Darcy’s letter, the only times when she experiences any sort of shame are when it is due to her family’s thoughtless behavior. In this first phase of the novel, one such instance of familial shame takes place during the Netherfield Ball when she has to dance with Mr. Collins, and he embarrasses her. Describing this moment, the narrator depicts how “Mr. Collins, awkward and solemn, apologising instead of attending, and often moving wrong without being

aware of it, gave her all the shame and misery which a disagreeable partner for a couple of dances can give" (*Pride and Prejudice* 66). Knowing that she couldn't have avoided him, however, she does not blame herself for what has happened with him. A little while later the same night, Elizabeth experiences a similar shame because her mother is talking with a group of people about the triumph of matching Jane with Bingley, calling out that she does not care whether or not Darcy hears her say so. Since Elizabeth feels helpless to stop her, the narrator portrays how horrified she feels in this moment:

Elizabeth blushed and blushed again with shame and vexation. She could not help frequently glancing her eye at Mr. Darcy, though every glance convinced her of what she dreaded; for though he was not always looking at her mother, she was convinced that his attention was invariably fixed by her. (*Pride and Prejudice* 74)

Because Elizabeth is aware of how poorly her mother is behaving, she appropriately feels shame regarding her actions. At this time, however, Elizabeth's embarrassment is only present when her family acts dishonorably. She doesn't realize that she also is acting rashly, so this same shame is not something she has felt on her own account.

The one earlier situation where Elizabeth does experience some semblance of shame because of her own behavior occurs, once again, during

the Netherfield Ball: she gets irritated with herself for not coming up with an excuse not to dance with Mr. Darcy. After Elizabeth is startled by Mr. Darcy asking for a dance and she accepts him without realizing what she is doing, the narrator shares that “he walked away again immediately, and she was left to fret over her own want of presence of mind” (*Pride and Prejudice* 66). Even in this, however, her regret is more over an accidental agreement than a larger flaw that is cause for deeper regret. All things considered, she may not realize that she is doing it, but through closing herself off to the possibility of questioning her own ideas, she has inadvertently closed herself off from experiencing regret as well.

Once Elizabeth reaches the point in the novel where her ideas are flipped on their head after learning about Darcy and Wickham’s true pasts, she is finally able to feel a sense of shame for having been so judgmental and naïve before. After reading through his letter and eventually realizing that he is being truthful, the narrator shares that Elizabeth “grew absolutely ashamed of herself.—Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudice, absurd” (*Pride and Prejudice* 152). In her mind, she feels pain because she is newly aware of how poorly she has behaved, even without intending to. From that time on, Elizabeth strives to be more in touch with how she ought to be feeling, having a new awareness that she could be at fault as well as those around her. With time to reflect on the

situation after Darcy leaves Hunsford, Elizabeth still has moments of indignation when she thinks about how he addressed her, but she is not able to fully condemn him because she is conscious of how unjust she had been in her assessment of him. With regards to “her own past behaviour, there was a constant source of vexation and regret” (*Pride and Prejudice* 155-6). In this season, this more contemplative side of Elizabeth begins to be seen more as she is growing in her self-reflective skills—which ultimately opens her up to feelings of genuine regret for the first time in the novel.

Moving on in the novel, there are still a number of times when Elizabeth begins to feel some sort of regret or shame but then quickly moves on from it because it is not something she likes to dwell on long. One such instance occurs when Lydia has been invited to go to Brighton, but Elizabeth feels that this is only an opportunity for her to make a fool of herself before a larger audience. Having told her father her opinion, though, she desires to rid herself of any anxiety by telling herself that whatever happens next would not be her fault because she had already done her part in warning him. The narrator expresses this by saying that “it was not in her nature, however, to increase her vexations, by dwelling on them. She was confident of having performed her duty, and to fret over unavoidable evils, or augment them by anxiety, was no part of her disposition” (*Pride and Prejudice* 169). In this manner, despite feeling a sense of guilt about certain things, she does not

cause herself to feel guilty about too much since it is not in her nature. Another situation which elicits a similar reaction from Elizabeth takes place when she is visiting Pemberley. As she walks the grounds, she decides that she doesn't want to take on any remorse when it hits her that she could have been mistress of this beautiful estate, had she accepted Darcy's proposal. Attempting to make herself feel better, she convinces herself that "I should not have been allowed to invite them," referring to her aunt and uncle, even if she had been married to Darcy (*Pride and Prejudice* 178). The narrator further expounds on Elizabeth's feelings by saying that "this was a lucky recollection—it saved her from something like regret" (*Pride and Prejudice* 178). With this situation, too, Elizabeth feels that she could have made a mistake in what she had done, but she ultimately comes back to the conclusion that she isn't in the wrong, which makes her feel better about her behavior.

So, despite the fact that Elizabeth chooses not to take on guilt about certain things, there are a number of others that she does come to accept as—at least partially—her responsibility. In fact, following up on each of these issues that she doesn't initially feel regret about, there does come a point in each situation where she does find something regrettable in her conduct. For instance, when Lydia and Wickham run away together from Brighton, Elizabeth feels that she should have intervened before this took place by

telling people about Wickham's true nature. The narrator expresses this regret in her by saying, "when I consider...that I might have prevented it! I, who knew what he was. Had I but explained some part of it only—some part of what I learnt, to my own family! Had his character been known, this could not have happened. But it is all—all too late now" (*Pride and Prejudice* 200). With this set of events, Elizabeth did not feel, at first, that it would have been appropriate to share details about his conduct due to the implications it had for Georgiana, but she changes her tune once it had unforeseen, tragic consequences for her family.

By the end of the novel, Elizabeth has had several instances where she refuses to see cause for regret in her own life, but she also notices her own failings and is duly remorseful of them after reading Mr. Darcy's letter that sheds truth on the characters of both he and Mr. Wickham. So, despite being naïve in the early scenes of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth is not so stubborn that she won't eventually see reason when it is presented more obviously to her. In this light, when Mr. Darcy reminds her of some of the harsh things she told him in turning down his first proposal, she is pained to remember how wrong she had been in her original judgments—ultimately accentuating the transformation her character has undergone. Responding to Darcy, she begs, "Oh! do not repeat what I then said. These recollections will not do at all. I assure you that I have long been most heartily ashamed of it" (*Pride and*

Prejudice 267). Ultimately, Elizabeth has acquired balance so that she is able to have increased self-awareness without letting guilt from her faults consume her.

Characteristic 4: Seeking Solitude

Throughout the first half of *Pride and Prejudice*, there are very few occasions that explicitly mention Elizabeth going into any silent or solitary state in order to contemplate things that have happened to her. And, in the couple of rare instances where she is described as silent, it is not with the heart of being receptive to what she is hearing. She has her own active agenda, and she is still working towards it. As the story progresses, however, she has more information that she feels the need to process alone, which shows that she is choosing to actively develop her inner world instead of expressing her feelings openly, as she had done before. One of the earliest instances where the narrator shares that Elizabeth is listening occurs when she and Jane are dissecting what had happened at their first encounter with the Bingleys, and Elizabeth pauses to listen to her sister's perspective: "Elizabeth listened in silence, but was not convinced; their behaviour at the assembly had not been calculated to please in general" (*Pride and Prejudice* 10). In this instance, she is striving to reflect on her sister's words, but this is not possible because she is already fixed on ideas contrary to those that her

sister is expressing. Another instance where Elizabeth is shown on her own is when she travels to Netherfield to visit Jane. However, this isolation is more coincidental than intentional, as she is in the pursuit of her own destination after parting ways with Kitty and Lydia. The narrator describes this situation by saying, “in Meryton they parted; the two youngest repaired to the lodgings of one of the officers' wives, and Elizabeth continued her walk alone, crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity” (*Pride and Prejudice* 23). Therefore, while this is technically an example of Elizabeth in solitude, it is not intentional or sought out for the purpose of reflection, as it would be if it were contributing to her interior life.

Beyond this point, however, moments where Elizabeth chooses to be alone are often motivated by a strong emotion or by new information that she wants to process by herself. One of the first moments when Elizabeth seeks this type of solitude happens after she has been told that Charlotte is engaged to Mr. Collins, and she is attempting to deal with her feelings of disapproval. The narrator then describes how Elizabeth uses her time in solitude:

Charlotte did not stay much longer, and Elizabeth was then left to reflect on what she had heard. It was a long time before she became at all reconciled to the idea of so unsuitable a match... And to the pang of a friend disgracing herself and sunk in her esteem, was added the

distressing conviction that it was impossible for that friend to be tolerably happy in the lot she had chosen. (*Pride and Prejudice* 93)

So, since she does not have her feelings in order, Elizabeth makes an effort to spend time in examination so that she will be able to appropriately respond later on. In addition to this, Elizabeth also intentionally schedules a moment alone, while staying at Hunsford, to remain at the Collins' house when the rest of her party goes on to Rosings Park. Having been so consumed with anxiety about how accurate the criticism of her family that was shared with her by Colonel Fitzwilliam had been, the narrator conveys that "the agitation and tears which the subject occasioned, brought on a headache; and it grew so much worse towards the evening, that, added to her unwillingness to see Mr. Darcy, it determined her not to attend her cousins to Rosings, where they were engaged to drink tea" (*Pride and Prejudice* 138). In both of these situations, then, Elizabeth intentionally separates herself from the group when she is overwhelmed—an act which builds upon the perceived valuing of interiority in her life.

Furthermore, in addition to the times when Elizabeth experiences both incidental and premeditated isolation, there are also moments when she is driven to spend time on her own because of an intense feeling that she is unable to push past in certain moments. One of these later emotion-driven instances takes place after Darcy's first proposal to her that she hadn't been

expecting. The narrator expresses Elizabeth's shock and disbelief: "the tumult of her mind was now painfully great. She knew not how to support herself, and from actual weakness sat down and cried for half an hour. Her astonishment, as she reflected on what had passed, was increased by every review of it. ... She continued in very agitated reflections" (*Pride and Prejudice* 143). In this moment, primarily since she feels it to be the only thing she can do, she sits on her own and ponders her own emotional state.

More and more, as Elizabeth must take in overwhelming information without any outlet nearby, she resorts to time on her own. One blatant situation where this occurs during the scene when Lady Catherine is incessantly questioning Elizabeth about how she plans to return home. Having just answered a myriad of questions about her arrangements, Elizabeth longs for a period where she can be on her own: "Reflection must be reserved for solitary hours; whenever she was alone, she gave way to it as the greatest relief; and not a day went by without a solitary walk, in which she might indulge in all the delight of unpleasant recollections" (*Pride and Prejudice* 155). In this way, Elizabeth has become someone who requires time alone in order to deal with the trying people in her life.

Nearing the end of the novel, Elizabeth has openly come to a place where she is comfortable being introspective after dealings with Lydia and Wickham have forced periods of contemplation on her. Although she used to

be someone who said what came into her mind in any immediate moment, she now prefers to spend much more of her time on her own, showing a dramatic change as a result of her experiences. In reflecting on this change, the narrator describes Elizabeth at one point as “by this time tolerably well acquainted with her own feelings” (*Pride and Prejudice* 216). Reinforcing this view of her, once Elizabeth has become comfortable with interior reflection, she has a number of other occasions in the last section of the novel when the narrator remarks that she is escaping from a situation to have a moment of peaceful contemplation. For instance, when Mrs. Hill, one of the Bennets’ servants, begins congratulating the Bennet girls about Lydia’s impending marriage, the narrator notes that “Elizabeth received her congratulations among the rest, and then, sick of this folly, took refuge in her own room, that she might think with freedom” (*Pride and Prejudice* 222). So, as is seen in both of these examples, Elizabeth’s times of inner turmoil make it clear that she has formed a new pattern of being alone in order to process her thoughts and emotions.

Continuing in this pattern through the resolution of the novel, we are able to see that, in the end, Elizabeth also chooses this type of solitude when she is going through something happy. After Mr. Bingley and Jane get engaged, Jane leaves the room to go talk with her mother, and the narrator remarks that “Elizabeth, who was left by herself, now smiled at the rapidity

and ease with which an affair was finally settled, that had given them so many previous months of suspense and vexation" (*Pride and Prejudice* 251). She keeps her emotions in check while she is with a group, even with her sister, but she begins to feel the full joy of the situation when she is left on her own. Furthermore, this type of situation also occurs when Elizabeth has just finished telling her father that she and Mr. Darcy are engaged—something she was initially very hesitant to share because of how overtly she had disliked and criticized him in the past. Once this tension is resolved to Elizabeth's content, she is able to finish processing the situation alone and move forward: "Elizabeth's mind was now relieved from a very heavy weight; and, after half an hour's quiet reflection in her own room, she was able to join the others with tolerable composure" (*Pride and Prejudice* 275). Throughout the course of the novel, Elizabeth evolves from someone who seldomly sees the benefit of spending time on her own to someone who routinely seeks out solitude to process her interior state before sharing her opinions with others.

Characteristic 5: Vulnerability about Romantic Interests

Of all of the transformations that Elizabeth undergoes throughout the course of *Pride and Prejudice*, one of the most explicitly stated is the vulnerability with which she is willing to talk about Mr. Darcy. At the beginning of the novel, it is apparent in the way that she judges a number of

men that she is quick to jump to conclusions about people, and these surface-level interpretations that she constructs allow her to skate on through life without having to think critically about whether or not her snap judgments stand up under scrutiny. From very early on, Elizabeth speaks quite bluntly about her opinions on various men after first meeting them. Amongst the harshest, and most incorrect, of her judgments is the way that she talks about Mr. Darcy after first meeting both him and the Bingleys. Since Darcy slighted Elizabeth by expressing a wish not to dance with her, the narrator remarks that “Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings towards him” (*Pride and Prejudice* 8). On top of this, the narrator shares how Elizabeth, along with other people at the party, had quickly made up their minds about the miserable man: “His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again” (*Pride and Prejudice* 7). As is shown in both of these comments, gut feelings are largely what drives this community’s prejudices, and, for a long time, Elizabeth is no exception to this mentality.

With this attitude established, Elizabeth is hesitant to accept anything that exists outside the schema of things she already believes to be true. For example, when Mr. Darcy starts paying more attention to Elizabeth when she is visiting Jane at Netherfield, Elizabeth struggles to interpret what is going on:

She hardly knew how to suppose that she could be an object of admiration to so great a man; and yet that he should look at her because he disliked her, was still more strange. She could only imagine, however, at last that she drew his notice because there was something more wrong and reprehensible, according to his ideas of right, than in any other person present. The supposition did not pain her. She liked him too little to care for his approbation. (*Pride and Prejudice* 37)

In this scene, even though she knows he is staring at her, she is unwilling to think that it could mean anything positive; instead, she comes up with reasons that it could reflect poorly on his character. This instance demonstrates just how entrenched Elizabeth becomes in her views—to the point where she is blinded to reality.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Elizabeth also makes a rash judgment upon meeting George Wickham, but one that is far more generous than he deserves. While Mr. Darcy is harshly chastised for his early behavior, the narrator juxtaposes this with the initial examination of Mr. Wickham: “His appearance was greatly in his favour; he had all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address” (*Pride and Prejudice* 53). In this moment, Elizabeth is already eager to think well of this prospective suitor, which is then built to show greater admiration in later moments. Once Elizabeth has had time to process her initial interactions, her

response at seeing him again is to become convinced that the frequency and praise with which she reflected on her time with him was not outside of appropriate boundaries: “When Mr. Wickham walked into the room, Elizabeth felt that she had neither been seeing him before, nor thinking of him since, with the smallest degree of unreasonable admiration” (*Pride and Prejudice* 55). She wants to see him as noble, so she chooses to interpret his actions as such. On top of this, she becomes convinced that “the commonest, dullest, most threadbare topic might be rendered interesting by the skill of the speaker” (*Pride and Prejudice* 55). Elizabeth is eager to be entertained by anything that comes from Wickham’s mouth, so, even though she does not know him beyond their initial greetings and conversations, she is already convinced that he is worthy of admiration.

Consequently, this pattern of approving of Wickham and disapproving of Darcy continues when Wickham brings forth a story that calls Darcy’s character into question. When Wickham claims that Darcy refused to honor his father’s promise to leave Wickham a living, leaving him with nothing, Elizabeth is confused but quickly accepts it. With a moment’s hesitation, she tells Wickham, “I had not thought Mr. Darcy so bad as this—though I have never liked him. I had not thought so very ill of him. I had supposed him to be despising his fellow-creatures in general, but did not suspect him of descending to such malicious revenge, such injustice, such inhumanity as

this” (*Pride and Prejudice* 59). In this way, she acknowledges her established dislike of Darcy, but she also affirms that this behavior might be beyond the bounds of what she has come to expect from him. The narrator goes on: “After a few minutes' reflection, however, she continued, ‘I do remember his boasting one day, at Netherfield, of the implacability of his resentments, of his having an unforgiving temper. His disposition must be dreadful’” (*Pride and Prejudice* 59). This interaction with Wickham, then, highlights two significant things about Elizabeth: her eagerness to believe Wickham and her willingness to condemn Darcy.

Once both Wickham and Darcy have left Meryton and the surrounding area, Elizabeth is able to get some space from them, which in turn has made her more open to information that she was hesitant to receive before. For instance, after Elizabeth has been challenged in her thinking by Darcy’s letter, she and her aunt and uncle go to visit Pemberley, Darcy’s estate, while they are touring the lakes in that part of the country. While there, the housekeeper gives them a tour of the house, which features a prominent portrait of Mr. Darcy. As Elizabeth looks at it, the narrator observes that “There was certainly in this moment, in Elizabeth’s mind, a more gentle sensation towards the original, than she had ever felt in the height of their acquaintance” (*Pride and Prejudice* 181). This scene showcases the beginning

of Elizabeth's transformation in her feelings for Darcy as well as in the way she makes judgments about people.

Following this moment at Pemberley, Elizabeth begins to experience inner turmoil—she doesn't know what to trust, and she must reevaluate the things she has believed. A couple of places that further accentuate this feeling are when Elizabeth is reflecting on her visit to Pemberley the day before, and the narrator explains that “the perturbation of Elizabeth's feelings was every moment increasing. She was quite amazed at her own discomposure” (*Pride and Prejudice* 188). In this moment of confusion, Mr. Darcy, Miss Darcy, and Mr. Bingley all arrive at the inn where she is staying and invite them to dine with them at Pemberley the following day. This only serves to confuse Elizabeth further. That night, the narrator shares her thought process surrounding these recent events:

She lay awake two whole hours endeavouring to make [her feelings] out. She certainly did not hate him. No; hatred had vanished long ago, and she had almost as long been ashamed of ever feeling a dislike against him, that could be so called. The respect created by the conviction of his valuable qualities, though at first unwillingly admitted, had for some time ceased to be repugnant to her feeling; and it was now heightened into somewhat of a friendlier nature, by the testimony so highly in his favour, and bringing forward his disposition

in so amiable a light, which yesterday had produced. (*Pride and Prejudice* 192)

Elizabeth has reached a place where her overall impressions of Darcy are favorable, but she is still uncertain as to exactly how she feels about him. Instead of jumping to hasty conclusions that allow her to hide behind the wall of her strong opinions, she is willing to be vulnerable and unsure for the sake of knowing the truth.

This indecision about Darcy finally ends when Elizabeth is humbled by Lydia's disgrace. After having confided in him about the whole affair, she begins to regret having told Darcy anything because she fears that it means he will never speak to her again. She is, at long last, convinced that he would make her happy. The narrator expresses this sense of longing in her by saying that "she began now to comprehend that he was exactly the man who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her. His understanding and temper, though unlike her own, would have answered all her wishes. It was an union that must have been to the advantage of both" (*Pride and Prejudice* 225).

However, she also recognizes that this sentiment has come to her too late. Her family, an imprudent group to marry into before, was now beyond repair.

Elizabeth mourns this attention of Darcy's which she had never wanted before. And, after she receives a letter from her aunt conveying that Mr. Darcy had been the one who had brought about Lydia and Wickham's marriage—

effectively saving her family from total ruin—she breaks down and is willing to be emotional and vulnerable in the way that she thinks about him. The narrator communicates Elizabeth’s thoughts through free indirect discourse when she states that “Oh! how heartily did she grieve over every ungracious sensation she had ever encouraged, every saucy speech she had ever directed towards him. For herself she was humbled; but she was proud of him. Proud that in a cause of compassion and honour, he had been able to get the better of himself” (*Pride and Prejudice* 236). Here, the narrator gives us an intimate look at the heroine; Elizabeth is not defensive over her actions like she was before. Instead, she is in-tune with the feelings she has for Darcy, and she has developed a more accurate picture of his true character. Howard Babb shared in his book, *Jane Austen’s Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue*, that once she has learned how wrong she has been in a painful manner, “ultimately, Elizabeth’s mind is more flexible though and she is able to see the error of her ways when they are pointed out to her” (Babb 129). This flexibility leads her to a place where she knows that, even though Mr. Darcy has a predisposition towards pride, he is a good man and that he is working to overcome any shortcomings.

The last step in Elizabeth’s transformation of acknowledging her vulnerable feelings towards Darcy occurs when he proposes to her for the second time at the end of the novel. In this moment, she must express aloud—for the first time—how she has come to love him. However, she has been a

rather proud and private person up until this point, so it is still a bit challenging for her. The narrator shares that Elizabeth pushed past feelings of embarrassment and “forced herself to speak; and immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand that her sentiments had undergone so material a change... as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure his present assurances” (*Pride and Prejudice* 266). Once this is said, she has finally come to a place of complete openness and vulnerability. She even affirms this again to her father in saying “‘I do, I do like him,’ she replied, with tears in her eyes, ‘I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable’” (*Pride and Prejudice* 274). Throughout both of these moments, Elizabeth is finally able to highlight to the most important people in her life just how much of a change she has undergone internally throughout her recent experiences. She is happy, she is authentic, and she is finally in-touch with how she really feels.

Conclusion

By using the model for interiority that I constructed—highlighting five key elements of interiority—and analyzing both Anne Elliot and Elizabeth Bennet with it, I ultimately came to a conclusion that made a lot of sense to me. Looking first at *Persuasion*, these elements of interiority that I was looking for were present pretty much throughout the entire novel. Anne

spends a lot of time developing her inner world, and Babb asserts that the autumnal feel of the book reflects the later stage of Austen's life and her more advanced maturity as well: "it is the same extreme sensitivity, delicate and basically reliable, which underlies Anne's every action—which marks, too, a shift in emphasis from Jane Austen's other novels" (Babb 215). In a sense, this is what I expected. Having read this book before, Anne's self-reflection is one of the defining characteristics of the novel that jumped out to me. The novel that I was less sure about—in terms of the outcome of my interiority analysis—was *Pride and Prejudice*.

In this book, Elizabeth is not short on strongly held viewpoints, but she expresses them in a very different way from Anne. While Anne keeps her thoughts and feelings largely to herself, Elizabeth tends to express them more openly. This much was also not a surprise to me. One thing that I was fascinated to see, however, was that the degree of interiority that Elizabeth shows shifts from the beginning to the end of the novel. While I might have guessed that the indicators of interiority would have been much lower throughout, there is a dramatic shift that occurs when Elizabeth is confronted by Darcy's letter after his first proposal. Upon reading this letter—a note which challenges a number of Elizabeth's presumptions for the first time—she starts to think things through on her own and reflect on her conduct far more frequently and more openly than she did in the first half of the novel. In

this way, while Anne's level of interiority stays consistently high throughout her novel, Elizabeth's experiences a steep incline after this encounter with Darcy.

Once I had figured this out, the next step in gleaning meaning from this analysis was to determine how these differences impacted the characters and their respective novels' perception by readers. Since "the final test of a novel will be our affection for it, as it is the test of our friends, and of anything else which we cannot define," an analysis of reader perception is a powerful indicator of literary success (Forster 23). As I highlighted earlier, these two novels are Jane Austen's most popular works on Goodreads, showing their popularity among readers. The question I posed: why? What is it about these novels that has continued to resonate with audiences for over 200 years? Well, I would posit that there are a number of contributing factors, with one of them being the characters' interiority—something with the power to connect readers to protagonists. Austen herself considered *Pride and Prejudice* to be "her darling child," and she also asserted that she "does not know how she can tolerate people who will not care at least for Elizabeth" (Austen-Leigh 258). Despite any moral failings she has initially, Elizabeth Bennet was designed to be a likeable character. Furthermore, even though Elizabeth's interiority is not developed much until later in the novel—and the audience is not able to be in touch with her intimate thoughts for much of the

time—there are a number of twists and turns in the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* that help to keep readers engaged. Despite the fact that Elizabeth has walls erected between herself and her deeper emotions for much of the plot, *Pride and Prejudice* boasts characters like Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Collins, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh who entertain the audience with their wit and quirks.

Contrasting this, *Persuasion* is a novel that, based on the drama in the plot alone, wouldn't seem like it would be able to compete with *Pride and Prejudice* in terms of reader ratings. While *Pride and Prejudice* tells of characters sabotaging each other, eloping, deceiving all their relations, rejecting marriage proposals, and doing other scandalous things, *Persuasion's* drama does not nearly reach that level. There is some interpersonal drama that Anne witnesses, but it does not come close to the amount that Elizabeth does. With this in mind, I believe that the consistent interiority that Anne exhibits helps to form close connections with the book's readers, which in turn causes them to value the novel in a similar way that they value *Pride and Prejudice*. As a number of critics have noted, *Persuasion* "seems less to move narratively than to accumulate an overwhelming impression of Anne's being" (Babb 214). Instead of focusing on dramatic plot points, Austen pours her attention into developing the character of Anne Elliot as someone who readers are bound to become attached to. This critic also described

Persuasion as “purely a cry of feeling,” a description that highlights the emotional pull that the novel has with many of its readers (Babb 203). So, despite having a different focus from the rest of Austen’s novels, *Persuasion* has also risen to the top in terms of its popularity.

I also gained insights from this exploration that were not directly tied to interiority. For instance, with *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen wrote this novel as a young twenty-one-year-old, and her perspective on the world was one where dramatic romance was desirable, seeing that as something her audience would appreciate, as well. Then, with *Persuasion*, Jane is nearing the end of her life, and, even though she is impacted by illness, she still doesn’t lose hope. Her perspective has merely expanded to show that understated, long-suffering love can be just as beautiful and rewarding as the dramatic, whirlwind relationships commonly found in romantic stories. While Jane, herself, doesn’t wind up with the happy ending she gives her characters, she is not bitter—instead, she writes about a wide variety of human experiences. In fact, at the beginning of both novels, the protagonists are not desperately searching for marriage. They do find it along the way, but that is not the sole purpose of their literary existence. On top of this, Austen also shows her readers that different personalities can each be strong and worthy heroines who eventually procure their own happy endings. These women have

different circumstances, instincts, and priorities, but they are both able to make a connection to their readers.

Austen similarly accentuates the idea that characters in various stages of moral development can make interesting protagonists for a story. It is the popular opinion that characters must work through a substantial moral failing in order to make the development of the story engaging. While dynamic characters—who change dramatically throughout their story arc—do make excellent protagonists, it would be an oversimplification to say that characters whose lives are slightly more static cannot have interesting stories of their own. Anne may be generally more passive as a person, but she has already learned from her youthful mistakes, so she largely remains the same (morally speaking) throughout *Persuasion*. This story structure is relatively uncommon, but it is possible, and it doesn't necessarily result in a lesser novel.

Moving beyond the realm of personality and a character's inner world, another observation that arose from my analysis was that novels like these cannot be placed into perfectly confined boxes. Although Anne has a more developed inner life overall, the novel is more complex than to label Anne “the one who values interiority” and Elizabeth “the one who does not.” Just because literary analysis cannot fully enter the quantitative realm, however, it does not follow that it is futile to analyze various qualities throughout. In the

same way that it is unproductive to limit people to various labels, it is also unhelpful to do with characters. People don't tend to be that simple—either in real life or in fiction. Even without harsh labels, though, I have realized how powerful trends can be. By comparing the presentation of Anne and Elizabeth's inner lives as well as the circumstances of the novels, I confirmed that the dramatic and eventful plot of *Pride and Prejudice* was counterbalanced by the intimate look at Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*. Because of these entertaining story elements, both novels have remained highly popular for over two hundred years. Although each of these novels has been prized in my own life for a number of years, I had never before paused to reflect on what it was about them that endeared them to me. Jane Austen is a uniquely powerful writer, as Wayne Booth observes, because “we can find love scenes in almost any novelist's work, but only here can we find a mind and heart that can give us clarity without oversimplification, sympathy and romance without sentimentality, and biting irony without cynicism” (Booth 266). Anne and Elizabeth are complex characters who show that no matter where you are at in your personal journey, there is time to change. And personal growth, while frequently painful, does lead to brighter things. In the end, Austen wrote stories that force people to reflect, to challenge themselves, and to hope for brighter things—just like her characters. The world of her novels

brought light to many important issues in society, and it continues to do so to this day.

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