

I SPEAK, THEREFORE I AM:  
ANNE ELLIOT'S VOICE IN PERSUASION

A Thesis  
by  
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## **Abstract**

### **I SPEAK, THEREFORE I AM: ANNE ELLIOT'S VOICE IN PERSUASION**

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In *Persuasion*, Jane Austen's last published novel, the heroine surprises her readers with her changeable voice. Anne Elliot's strengths are unveiled gradually through oblique and often ironic methods such as silence and free indirect discourse. In this thesis I will argue that Anne's voice develops intermittently; at times a clear progression towards confident articulation becomes apparent and yet at others, her voice seems to lapse. For this study, the term "voice" encompasses far more than simply the speech that Anne Elliot articulates in conversation and instead extends to her figurative and literal presence in company and discourse. Initially a rather silent character, Anne's part in conversation alters drastically depending on social context, thwarting linear development. Through experiencing the novel's plot, the reader learns to tune in to Anne Elliot's voice as the main signifier of an exceptional inner worth.

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**Dedication**

*For my mother*

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## Chapter One

### The Topic of Conversation

In gaining an understanding of the voices of other Austen characters, I have come to a greater appreciation of the heroine of *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot, whose own distinct voice develops through Austen's last novel. In this thesis, I intend to follow the growth of Anne Elliot's voice and character through her participation in conversation with a diverse range of characters throughout the novel in multiple social climates. Anne's voice changes, from her initial appearance in the novel to the vital scene at The White Hart Inn, and depends greatly on where and in what company she is. This thesis examines how and why Anne's environments have such an effect on her voice in conversation and company. Although Anne is noted for her profound silences, they are possibly a means for her to listen to others, and when she feels compelled, she partakes in a very powerful manner in conversation. Given Austen's attentiveness to her heroine's voice, her ultimate choice of ending seems a far more appropriate conclusion to the book than the original version. In the published ending of the novel, Anne uses her voice to speak not only on behalf of her sex, but also, in a more underlying way, for herself. Thus Austen presents a far more verbally bold heroine than in the beginning of the novel. By studying Anne's voice as she travels throughout the novel, the readers are able to trace its development and by doing so gain more insight into her character. Although generally this advancement is seen as a progression, Austen inserts several instances in which Anne's voice once again becomes unnoticed, and by so doing creates a far more profound heroine for readers to consider. The analysis of discourse and conversation

across Jane Austen's novels has become a very popular vein of research. The principal text on this subject, *The Talk in Jane Austen*, is a collection of essays that recognizes differing elements of conversation including, but not limited to, silence, listening, and speech of both the characters and the novelist herself.

On the whole, quite a few scholars (Carson, Dinkler, Giordano, and Laurence McMaster) insist that silence is a mode of empowerment for many of Austen's heroines, while others study it for its ability to suppress (Leighton and Valerie Shaw). Listening, although very much related to silence, has also been studied on its own right within Austen's novels. Listening as a means of awareness becomes a notable trend for both major and minor characters in Austen's work (Bromberg, Hall, Henneidy, and McMaster), but when taken to the extreme, listening intrudes into others' conversations (Gaylin). Speech, although closely connected to voice, stands on its own account in Austen scholarship, encompassing everything from *what* her characters say (Frantz, Stovel, and Young) to *how* characters choose to speak (Frantz, Harris, Moler "Some Verbal," and Young). In addition to speaking, the more unique form of conversation, gossiping, is also examined for its multiple instances in Austen's texts (Knuth and Roulston). Free indirect discourse (FID) is also a significant subject in Austen scholarship (Elliott, Giordano, Page, and Narelle Shaw). Others link Austen's use of FID to that of her contemporaries (Elliot, Page, and Narelle Shaw). Finally, the voices of Austen's characters in conversation continue to play a key role (Bree and Warhol); however, the voice of collective communities (Moler, "Group Voices") and authorial voice (Gemmill) both play critical functions as well. Prior to entering into the conversation myself, what follows is a survey of criticism on conversation in Austen's novels.

## Silence

One of the most important aspects of silence that is often studied in Austen is the perception of whether a character chooses to be silent or the silence is impressed upon him or her, or, in other words, how silence is used as a means to achieve power and as a means to suppress. Susannah Carson, Michal Beth Dinkler, and Angela Leighton examine silence in *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen's first novel, published in 1811. Carson considers silence as an important "source of feminine power." In her study, which also includes *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, she looks not only at the silence of the heroines of the novel, but also at other secondary characters such as Edward Dashwood and Lucy Steele. Elinor, Marianne, and Edward utilize silence as a means of self preservation; they keep their own counsel and do not reveal the secrets of their hearts; however, silence, as noted by Carson, is also forced on Elinor and Edward in different ways by Lucy and others. Therefore, silence can be a means of self-empowerment and willful restraint, but also can be a means of attempting to control the ability of others to speak.

Much like Carson's, Dinkler's article surveys the many uses of silence and speech and how both are used at different times throughout the novel to gain power. Dinkler asserts Austen's preference for a moderation of speech and silence as portrayed in *Sense and Sensibility*. Silence is described as a restraint practiced by mature women: "Austen juxtaposes Elinor's calculated use of speech and silence with Marianne's indiscriminate loquacity in order to illustrate her admiration of linguistic moderation" (2). To Dinkler, silence is not viewed as a punitive measure as much as it provides a means of power to the one who uses it. Discretion and well-timed silences are adroitly used by many characters, and through their varied use, readers gain insight not only into the heroines' levels of maturity

(especially that of Marianne), but also the author's deliberate consideration of silence throughout the novel.

Although Dinkler extends her examination of silence and speech to a variety of characters from *Sense and Sensibility*, Leighton primarily focuses her study on Marianne's journey with silence throughout the novel. By making the distinction between "Sense" and "Silence," Leighton takes a more somber look at the limited options for nineteenth-century women: "It seems that women are faced with a choice between two versions of an all too familiar defeat: they should either be Silent or come to their Senses" (55). Marianne in particular, Leighton observes, goes through a journey from one sort of silence to another; her romantic notions and spirit have been silenced by maturity gained by experience and the society that surrounds her (64).

Noted Austen scholar Bruce Stovel examines what secrets, silences, and inevitable surprises are displayed in *Pride and Prejudice*. Analyzing narratological silences within the text, which surprise readers as well as the characters that the silences intricately involve, Stovel shows the deliberate means of identification, use, and exposure of silence that become apparent throughout the novel.

The intense silences in *Mansfield Park* are studied extensively by Juliet McMaster, Patricia Laurence, and Valerie Shaw. McMaster, along with Dinkler and Carson, chooses to appreciate silence as a "positive entity" (77). Although McMaster elaborates a great deal on the importance of language and speech to the characters, she primarily focuses on Mrs. Norris's verbal abuse of Fanny and the Crawfords' slick, calculated talk. Fanny's initial overlooked presence, much like that of Anne Elliot, is examined: "In Austen novels, which study characters in their relations with one another, speech is closely related with identity.

Fanny silenced and ignored is in a sense Fanny annihilated, suspended even in her own eyes” (84). As I hope to show in my study, it is important to establish where these subdued heroines begin at the commencement of the novel to track their progression of thought and ultimately speech and conversation by novel’s end. McMaster makes the very important observation that Fanny’s silence is directly intertwined with her identity and agency of personal voice throughout the novel: “Fanny is growing and developing through the novel; becoming healed of Mrs. Norris’s crippling verbal abuse, learning not only to watch and listen, but to assess and ultimately to teach” (88).

Placing Fanny Price, and the work itself, in a gendered historical context, Patricia Laurence discusses the importance of Fanny’s silence, explaining that “Silence is necessary to talk: listening is necessary to speaking; we only know what a listener is because we have speakers. The meaning of talk or silence, or knowledge and ignorance, only exists in a network of differences” (160). By creating these binaries and placing the importance of silence among them, Laurence articulates the need to see the connectivity between elements of conversation. Laurence, therefore, confronts the concern of Fanny’s silence by considering it within general conversation and creating an understanding of women’s place during the earlier part of the nineteenth century.

While Laurence’s article mentions Anne Elliot, it primarily relates Fanny Price to other silenced heroines in other works (of Bronte and Woolf). Valerie Shaw focuses equally on the two “subdued heroines” of Austen’s novels: Fanny Price and Anne Elliot. In her conclusion, Valerie Shaw asserts,

But in *Mansfield Park*, and even more in *Persuasion*, [Austen] too creates isolated heroines who bestow more value on society than they receive from it; she too builds

social novels round these heroines, rather than, as elsewhere, discovering heroines within already constituted, stable societies; she too makes her heroines live more in a consciousness of life's felt complexities than in the rationalistic formulations about life. (303)

In addition to honoring the perceived understanding of these two heroines, this passage goes on to praise Austen's apparent sympathy with her characters.

Although *Emma* itself is filled with a great many talkers and may not seem to fit with Austen's more subdued works, this novel resounds with silence as well as animated discourse. Jane Sturrock mentions the secretive silence of Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill, what their hidden engagement means to the plot and how their silence affects other characters in the novel. Later, Sturrock examines the heroine's own silence as well as Mr. Knightley's promised silence about their confirmed mutual affection. Sturrock states that, on the whole, "Compliance might involve hypocrisy; revolt might be destructive; silence preserves the moral order" (6).

Authorial silence is the avenue of study for Elaine Bander. In comparison to many other English authors, Austen is notable in her ability to "dwell in detail upon misunderstandings, awkward pauses, emotionally charged silences, speeches contemplated but withheld" (47). Making a sharp distinction between what Austen does and what Wayne C. Booth refers to as "authorial silence" (271-272), Bander defines Austen's use of the concept as "a rhetorical device which an author imposes upon the text—or upon herself" (52), implying much more control and purpose than the absence suggested by Booth's definition. Bander goes on to discuss the important "silences of characters within the narrative" (reviewing *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*,

and *Persuasion*) much like other scholars mentioned here; however, it is her valuation of authorial silence that, in particular, makes this essay unique. In regards to Austen's last novel, Elizabeth Fiedler and Julia Giordano discuss the vital nature of silence to the plot. Of the plentiful silences in the novel, Fiedler analyzes those between Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth and discusses the importance of Anne's relationship to the narrator and reader: "Both Anne and the narrator use reticence paradoxically to communicate more to an audience than is possible or appropriate in speech, and to compel the creation and development of intimacy with an audience" (159-160). Giordano refers to Anne's ability to keep "her sanity and her integrity by concealing her emotions from the people who might have been her intimates" (113). This protective, psychological trait has significance for readers: "the combination of [Anne's] startlingly acute perceptions of others and her desperate avoidance of any direct statement of her own feelings, even to herself, seriously subverts narrative reliability" (115). In this light, Giordano suggests that Anne is "an expert at the art of concealment" (116). Like Fiedler, she recognizes Anne's evolution into selfhood both in conversation and person and goes on to say "it is also possible that Anne would never have been able to speak at all had she not been silent for so long" (119). Much like Dinkler, Carson, and McMaster, Giordano sees silence as a positive force, one that can be manipulated not to suppress, but instead to empower a character.

### **Listening**

The art of listening is also an important aspect of discourse that has been studied by Austen scholars of late. In Hugh Henneidy's essay on perception in Austen's novels, he concentrates on seeing in *Northanger Abbey* and listening in *Persuasion*. He discusses Catherine Moreland as a character who "at first sees too little and later sees too much,"

referring to her initial sight through the “unsophisticated eyes” of an inexperienced, young country woman and her later “awakening” to the truths of social and moral reality (25).

Later, Hennedy goes into an analysis of listening in *Persuasion*. Anne’s role is established as listener to the majority of the other characters in the novel. Touching on the overheard conversations that Anne is privy to, Hennedy tracks her general progression to the end of the novel when Anne gains confidence in her voice and initiates conversation with Captain Wentworth. Hennedy argues that it is now her turn to be listened to and overheard. In my own argument, I will study how Anne’s voice develops in all modes of conversation with the other characters throughout the course of the novel and also will pay particular attention to Anne’s ability to listen to others.

Juliet McMaster, like Hennedy, portrays the heroine of *Mansfield Park* as key listener. She notes that a growth in the consciousness and confidence of Fanny Price becomes apparent throughout the novel; however, McMaster credits this growth to the importance of being *listened to*: “It is as though by lending an ear, he [Edmund] has enabled her to create an identity. Now Fanny has a voice. She is *somebody*—however put-upon—and she has her own space—however confined—in the stately home of her uncle and cousins” (emphasis in original 84). My own argument about *Persuasion* will find quite the opposite situation in that Anne Elliot’s voice increases only after she moves farther and farther away from her home.

Pamela Bromberg takes listening into a slightly unexpected realm with *Emma* in that she pays particular attention not to the heroine of the novel, but to one of the secondary and often overlooked characters: Miss Bates. Bromberg’s pedagogically-gearred essay articulates the importance that should be given to this irritating character. Bromberg points out potential authorial intention behind the creation of such a character. Using Miss Bates as

a reliable source of information and giving her the deference that she is due, Austen assists readers in gaining more from the text and plot of the novel itself.

In addition, the study of listening in Austen's novels takes an interesting turn with Ann Gaylin's book *Eavesdropping in the Novel from Austen to Proust*. Focusing primarily on the gendered implications and social conventions surrounding eavesdropping in society and literature, Gaylin argues for the vital nature of eavesdropping in several scenes in both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion*. While she examines the hedgerow episode in Chapter 10 of *Persuasion* and the later scene in White Hall towards the end of the book in Chapter 23, I will go a step further in analyzing what such events do to the readers' understanding of Anne's voice and its influence over others.

### **Speech**

In *The Talk in Austen*, edited by Bruce Stovel and Lynn Weinlos Gregg, several essays focus on speaking in conversation. Jocelyn Harris's "Silent Women, Shrews, and Bluestockings: Women and Speaking in Jane Austen," talks about the importance of the way that women articulate themselves (if they do) and how their speech is confined to the social conventions under which they operated during that time period.

A bit later in the book, Sarah S.G. Frantz's essay restricts itself to primarily direct speech in each of the proposal scenes, which is quite difficult because "love is never directly exchanged between the hero and the heroine in full view of the reader" (168). Among other novels, Frantz looks at the direct speech differentiation between both the published and unpublished versions of *Persuasion* and how such an examination sheds more light on Austen's desired portrayal of the characters, but also their reunion. I agree that the two endings pose a significant difference in the voice of the heroine, and ultimately, "Anne's

speech, overheard as it is by Wentworth, grants Anne a measure of control over her reconciliation with Wentworth” (174). Kay Young also studies direct speech in her essay entitled “Word-Work, Word-Play, and the Making of Intimacy in *Pride and Prejudice*.” Young follows the rather comical web of communication between the hero and heroine in *Pride and Prejudice* through overheard conversation and witty banter in both private and public conversation. Here, Young discusses not only the material of conversation, but its various ways of being relayed. In much the same respect, Bruce Stovel’s essay “Asking Versus Telling” studies the importance of phrasing in Austen’s works, focusing particularly on questions and the differing ways they can be posed. Stovel states, “In this essay, I have been in the position of telling my thoughts on asking versus telling, real questions and rhetorical questions, telling and asking in proposal scenes, and learning to ask oneself questions” (40). In regards to *Persuasion*, Stovel mentions the significance of “consultative questions,” which play into the development of significance of Anne’s voice, particularly when Captain Wentworth seeks her advice.

### **Gossip**

In *Persuasion*, Bath is a place of busy schedules and idle gossip. Christine Roulston argues that “Gossip, unlike rational discourse, can transform social relations because it has the capacity to generate narratives” and goes on to say, “Gossip is also a discourse of participation which directly and indirectly affects the individuals within it” (55). Although Roulston primarily intends these claims to be applied to *Emma*, the same can easily be said of Anne Elliot’s participation in gossip towards the end of the novel. I would argue that in the final chapters of *Persuasion* Anne exercises immense power over whether or not to use her own voice to further the gossip around her.

Deborah Knuth narrows her study of gossip to *Persuasion* specifically and begins with a quotation from Patricia Meyer Spacks concerning gossip's social uses: "Gossip as a verbal engagement depends on and fosters intimacy. It exemplifies the power of one-to-one talk: a mode not of domination, but of linkage" (qtd. in Knuth 5). Knuth discusses Mrs. Smith, Nurse Rooke, and Anne Elliot's use of gossiping. In spite of Anne's initial fear of gossip and the potential betrayal of confidences, "the denouement of the novel depends on gossip" (6). Knuth's evidence comes from an instance in the novel in which Captain Wentworth overhears a gossiping conversation in Molland's confectioners shop that discusses Anne's possible marriage to her cousin, Mr. Elliot, without which, Knuth argues, Captain Wentworth might not have made the motions to seek out Anne, once again, for himself.

### **Free Indirect Discourse**

Another, more subtly interwoven conversational technique used by Austen is free indirect discourse (FID), also sometimes called free indirect speech. Austen is well known as the first English novelist to incorporate FID extensively in her fiction, and lately a few Austen scholars are re-examining the implications of her distinctive use of this method.

Doris Williams Elliott defines "free indirect discourse" as "a literary technique in which the author subtly shifts the point of view back and forth from omniscient narrator to character until it is difficult or even impossible to separate the two voices" (120). Elliott suggests using the text to identify the heroine's voice and the narrator individually and then to discuss "how Austen blends them in free indirect discourse" (123).

Narelle Shaw writes about the rhetorical use of free indirect speech in the 1816 revision of *Northanger Abbey*. She states that Austen used this technique "to comic effect,

emphasizing the conviction with which Catherine believes in a gothic world. The recourse to free indirect speech is also sound for aesthetic reasons, as the passages produce variation within an extended section of narrative” (594). Shaw’s analysis focuses on the characters of Catherine Moreland and General Tilney.

Julia Giordano examines FID in her essay, “The Word as Battleground in Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*.” Giordano references Margaret Ann Doody’s work on FID practiced during the eighteenth century, particularly as utilized by female authors. Giordano concludes that the female authors of this period “used their characters’ language at once to hide and to reveal their own judgments and thereby avoided the risk of making those judgments aloud, in an unequivocal and univocal language of their own” (110). Later, Giordano again refers to the rhetorical use of FID as a means to step around societal expectation: “[Women writers] triumphed over a society that attempted to silence their voices, by apparently obeying rules of feminine propriety which concealed the essentially subversive nature of the female act of narration” (110-111).

Norman Page writes “Categories of Speech in *Persuasion*,” articulating four differing forms of speech in the novel (narrative, authorial comment, free indirect speech, and direct speech) and provides examples from the text of *Persuasion*. Page states:

In other words, the peculiar advantages of direct and indirect speech are combined to fashion a medium which brings the reader close enough to the character’s consciousness to have a sense of something at times resembling interior monologue, yet at the same time preserves the kind of objectivity, and the frequent reminders of authorial presence, which make explicit comment possible. (738)

Page remarks on the rhetorical importance of strategically using free indirect speech throughout a text: “For Jane Austen, this is perhaps the greatest virtue of free indirect speech: that it offers the possibility of achieving something of the vividness of speech without the appearance for a moment of a total silencing of authorial voice” (740).

Elliott, Narelle Shaw, and Page all compare Austen’s use of free indirect speech to that of her contemporaries, Fanny Burney and William Wordsworth, and also with later authors such as Dickens and even Woolf.

### **Voice**

I saved this category for last to end on a motif that relates directly to my study: the development of a character’s voice. The most pertinent essay to date concerning the subject of my thesis is written by Linda Bree and is appropriately titled, “Belonging to the Conversation in *Persuasion*.” First published in *The Talk in Austen*, this essay is now included in the 2013 Norton Critical Edition of *Persuasion*. In it, Bree situates her reading of *Persuasion* within the historical definition of “conversation,” which “depends on a readiness to exchange ideas and on some degree of ease and quality among the participants” (152). That being said, Bree goes on to state, “my particular interest in the conversation in *Persuasion* is the way in which Austen explores the interplay between the proprieties of conversation and the attempts of honest and open people to achieve communication in a revealing, exciting, and intensely moving way” (152). By studying primarily conversation, Bree analyzes the different moods and mannerisms surrounding different conversational companies (those at Kellynch-hall and Uppercross), but also pays particular attention to Anne’s part in discourse.

In addition to Bree's study on discourse, Robyn Warhol discusses the direct relationship between a character's confidence in her body and her voice in conversation. Coming from a feminist narratological viewpoint, Warhol asserts that Anne Elliot is initially only known through others' perception of her and only knows herself by what others tell her: "she becomes visible in the text only through the comments others make about how she looks" (23). Warhol discusses the perceptions of *Persuasion's* heroine, not in regards to how she listens and is listened to by others, as Hennedy does, but how she views and is viewed by others: "[she] *has* to look, for the conditions of narration depend entirely on her observing everything that ought to be told" (emphasis in original 22). Later, Warhol asserts that "Anne's visual *perceptions* are crucial to the narrative movement, particularly because hers is a world bound by proprieties which dictate so many things" that ought to not be discussed (emphasis added 22-23). Warhol goes on to state her claim: "by gradually bringing together Anne's capacity for looking . . . with the heroine's growing appreciation for the life of the body . . . the text blurs the strictly binary divisions between external appearance and intrinsic value, between seeing and being seen, between the public and private realism that have operated under patriarchy . . . to keep women oppressed" (24). Anne's gaze develops throughout the novel, and she is able to gain her own voice as a result. This study enables readers to discover yet another way that Anne progresses as the story unfolds. Although I agree that Anne's perception has some lasting effect on her by the end of the novel, I argue that Anne finds her own voice by, among other things, coming to an appreciation of her own worth in company.

In her book, *Women, Reading, and Speech in the Age of Austen*, Patricia Howell Michaelson argues that in *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice*, "Austen poses a challenge to

the feminist binary of ‘having a voice’ and ‘being silenced’” (215). Michaelson also mentions that, interestingly enough, some of *Persuasion*’s characters who are noted for their voices and speech are not very much liked or appreciated (Mr. Elliot, Mrs. Clay, e.g.) (214). Therefore, it is important in my study to examine how those who are the most loquacious are sometimes perhaps not all that they may seem, while others, who are perhaps less articulate initially, are far more genuine in character.

In an extension of Michaelson, other scholars discuss the relationship between not only the voice in conversation and the presence of the character in company, but also how events that affect a character physically may have a strong impact on the character’s mental state. Alan Richardson goes into great detail regarding the relationship between Louisa Musgrove’s accident at Lyme Regis and her personality change. Richardson does so by going into a historical and scientific understanding of the body at the time the work was written and Austen’s potential knowledge of it. Richardson also relates his study to Anne Elliot: “Anne’s blend of exemplary rationality and heightened sensibility, her susceptibility to surges of emotion with her marked cognitive and physiological effects, and the mental splitting or fragmentation she regularly manifests together find voice in the stylistic innovation critics have noted in *Persuasion*” (151). Richardson concludes that *Persuasion* is “a Jane Austen novel like no other, and its difference owes a great deal to its affinities with the biological psychologies just then becoming notorious through the debates on phrenology and the materialist-vitalist controversy” (157). This reading provides a strong tie between the physical body’s wellbeing and a character’s personality. As other scholars have noted (Warhol and Henedy), Anne’s physical and mental transformation mirrors the evolution of her voice.

This significant body of research implies steadily building interest in the study of conversation in Jane Austen's works. Some scholars prefer to study silences, listening, and speech; however, I argue that the mode of development of a character's voice deserves further examination. Anne Elliot's voice is so much a part of her very existence that readers are able to see how she quite literally speaks herself into being in her society, in conversation and in love. A character's voice pertains to not only his or her articulation of ideas, but his or her physical and literal presence in company. Austen gives Anne more depth by creating instances that can make readers question Anne and also see a very dynamic development. Instead of providing readers with an already powerful heroine, Austen narrates a slow unveiling of Anne's voice. In this thesis I assert that Anne Elliot's voice goes through a magnificent transformation from its initial disadvantage of being little fostered by her immediate family, to strengthening steadily in new company, and finally peaking at the end of the novel where she proves that she not only is able to speak for herself, but becomes an individual worth being listened to by others.

## **Chapter Two**

### **“Her Word Had No Weight”**

This review of the study of discourse in Jane Austen scholarship leads directly into my own argument. Anne’s discourse with Captain Wentworth and the relationship between Anne’s speech and reticence have often been the focus of scholarship. However, the metamorphosis of Anne’s own individual voice in conversation and the manner in which her discourse with others changes in length, confidence, and content depend greatly on her location. Tracing such a development, therefore, deserves greater attention. Because an individual’s voice is so often synonymous with his or her personhood, the progression of Anne’s voice in conversation is directly tied with how she is appreciated in company. Through a close analysis of Anne in differing companies and locations, as well as her development of voice in and through the events that unfold in the plot, I find Anne Elliot’s voice progression allows readers significant insight into her character. Although Anne’s voice is much stronger in the end of the novel than when she initially speaks in Chapter 3, Austen does not simply create a linear progression of Anne’s voice in conversation. This thesis will emphasize those scenes particular to positive growth in the establishment of Anne’s voice. This study will show that, contrary to her family’s belief, Anne Elliot has a strong voice and, when comfortable, has no qualms in using it. In the first few chapters of the novel, Austen depicts Anne at her home, Kellynch-hall, with her father, Sir Walter, and her sister, Elizabeth. What is notable about this particular environment to Anne’s voice is that

here, in her own home, Anne's voice is not valued but instead purposefully ignored and negated by her immediate family.

**“Nobody with either father or sister”**

Austen establishes Anne's insignificance within the Elliot household by writing extensively on the characters of Anne's father, Sir Walter, and her elder sister, Elizabeth. Austen creates a very stark contrast between Anne who has “an elegance of mind and a sweetness of character” and those who do not, namely, her immediate family. Austen establishes the fact that Anne's father and sister particularly lack the “real understanding” needed to appreciate Anne's voice in conversation, and by extension herself. In reference to Anne's relationship with her immediate family, Carson states, “Anne lives with a father and sister who speak only to defer or to be deferred to.” Needless to say, Anne's voice and presence in this household are very little appreciated.

Austen depicts the cold and stifling social environment created by her father and sister that Anne is forced to endure. Sir Walter is anything but what would be desired in a father. He is unashamedly deluded with his own self-importance and physical image, all the while belittling others of lower social standing and appearance. Being judgmental of others is his forte. His desire to critique others and appreciate them only for their monetary value or attractiveness extends to his own children. In his eldest daughter, Elizabeth, he sees much of his own image, if not physically, then at least in character. Elizabeth maintains Sir Walter's own sentiments concerning the importance of their family (and connections with others) and her social ambition matches his own petty concerns. However, beyond his eldest daughter's worth, he sees little in his other daughters to recommend them to his favor. The narrator goes on to say “his other two children were of very inferior value” to him (5).

The language that the narrator uses when describing Sir Walter's opinions of his daughters is filled with criticism. Sir Walter judges his children on the potential value (or lack thereof) they could return to him. Mary, the youngest, is relatively nothing to him other than the fact that she "had acquired a little artificial importance, by becoming Mrs. Charles Musgrove," which would eventually lead to a bit of property close to the Kellynch estate (5). Sir Walter's language is loaded with appraisal of his children's potential for commoditization. The vital importance that he places on respectability and social connection is suggested by his obsession with *The Baronetage of England*. More is said about Sir Walter's fixation with his place in society than is ever said about Anne (and especially *from* Anne) in the initial chapters of the novel. Sir Walter's displeasure in Anne's inability to find an affluent husband appears when the narrator plainly states, "He had never indulged much hope, he had now none, of ever reading her name in any other page of his favorite work" (5). Sir Walter's obsession with physical appearance is also noted as the narrator records his disappointment in Anne: "he had found little to admire in her" (5). Because his middle daughter is not really worth looking at and therefore not able to enhance the family's social standing, he sees little need to have anything to do with her. Therefore, he critically judges her (and probably discusses her with Elizabeth) when he is not ignoring Anne's person altogether.

Elizabeth and Anne's relationship is one that can be placed in stark contrast with that of Austen's established sister characters, Elizabeth and Jane Bennet and Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. The latter pairs of women show desirable friendship and respect between sisters. Such a positive relationship is based on mutual respect, closely followed by loyalty, admiration and appreciation, as well as love and concern for one another. Elizabeth and Jane

seek out one another's confidence and counsel, while Elinor and Marianne (although they struggle with their communicative abilities) are completely devoted to one another's happiness and welfare. Not so with Elizabeth and Anne Elliot. Readers might expect Elizabeth to shun Anne because of Anne's superiority of character; however, that is not the case as Elizabeth merely finds her father's self-serving, practiced ways of life more socially acceptable. Elizabeth silences and slights Anne whenever possible, and instead prefers the flattering company of Mrs. Clay who poses no (known) threat either in beauty, intellect, or social standing. Elizabeth, like her father, sees nothing of value in Anne as a sister, as a counselor, or even as an assistant.

Anne and Elizabeth's difficult relationship deteriorates further when Elizabeth prefers the company of Mrs. Clay, who is of lower social standing and lesser beauty than herself, to that of Anne. In Mrs. Clay, Austen creates a character who tells Elizabeth whatever she wants to hear and makes her the center of attention. In this connection, readers see how utterly stubborn and prideful Elizabeth is. Indeed, it can be contended that if others (Anne and Lady Russell) had not attempted to show Elizabeth the impropriety of such a connection and advised her against it, she might not have been so determined to attach herself to Mrs. Clay. However, "Elizabeth would go her own way—and never had she pursued it in more decided opposition to Lady Russell, than in this selection of Mrs. Clay; turning from the society of so deserving a sister to bestow her affection and confidence on one who ought to have been nothing to her but the object of distant civility" (13). As the family is planning their move to Bath, Elizabeth even goes so far as to request Mrs. Clay's company rather than Anne's. This slight cannot be ignored by Lady Russell and Anne, although it goes without notice by Sir Walter. Mrs. Clay's ability to so adroitly secure Anne's place is remarkable,

and Austen registers all of the unsuitability and disrespect in such an arrangement through the response of the upright characters of Lady Russell and Anne.

The youngest sister, Mary Musgrove, much like her father and eldest sister, takes a very selfish view of Anne. Unlike her father's indifference and her sister Elizabeth's contempt, Mary sees in Anne a sister who desires being of use, and to Mary, Anne is best utilized when caring for Mary's needs. Instead of ignoring or abusing Anne, Mary uses Anne to her own advantage:

Mary, often a little unwell, and always thinking a great deal of her own complaints, and always in the habit of *claiming* Anne when anything was the matter, was indisposed; and foreseeing that she could not have a day's health all the autumn, entreated, or rather *required* her, for it was hardly entreaty, to come to Uppercross Cottage, and bear her company as long as she *should want her* instead of going to Bath. (emphasis added Austen 25)

Anne is only seen as she can be of use to Mary. Anne's own desires are not taken into account in this particular instance or likely at all.

Lady Russell, Anne's godmother, is the closest person to a true friend and ally in Anne's family or acquaintance. However, although Lady Russell recognizes Anne and appreciates Anne's voice in conversation, which is more than Anne's father does, and respects Anne, which is more than Elizabeth does, and consults Anne, which is more than Mary does, Lady Russell still may have her own agenda behind such affection. The narrator creates this distinction: "To Lady Russell, indeed, she was a most dear and highly valued goddaughter, favorite and friend. Lady Russell loved them all; but it was only in Anne that she could fancy the mother to revive again" (5). Lady Russell's respect for Anne's mother is

much to her credit, as is her affinity for Anne; however, it is slightly unclear whether Lady Russell's affection for Anne is the result of admiration for Anne's own individual person, or occurs because Anne is the closest person in character and disposition to Lady Russell's dead friend whom Lady Russell loved. Perhaps it can be a bit of both. Therefore, to Lady Russell, Anne's voice is perhaps not appreciated for its own selfhood, so much as it is representative of a placeholder for her mother's voice.

Although this section is entitled "Nobody with either father or sister," it is significant to note Anne's central position in the Elliot household whether or not it goes acknowledged by the characters in the text. First, Anne is the middle child of the Elliot children. Second, it is through Anne, and not her sisters, that Lady Russell believes Anne's mother's spirit lives on. Third, it is Anne who attempts to keep the household together in as debt-free a manner as possible. She, not her father or her older sister, attempts to honor the family's obligatory debts and then desires to return to live in Kellynch under much altered, but honest conditions. And finally, although they do not appreciate her, Sir Walter, Elizabeth, and even Mary rely on Anne to do their bidding, which only solidifies her vital place in their household.

### **"Her word had no weight"**

Because Anne is the heroine of the novel, her silence speaks volumes to the readers: Anne is silent on the page much like Anne is generally silent in her immediate society at Kellynch-hall. The lack of dialogue from Anne and the little that has been spoken of her is extraordinary in comparison to the presence of Sir Walter, Mr. Shepherd, and even Mrs. Clay. Sir Walter dominates conversation much as he dominates his household with his views, and Mr. Shepherd and Mrs. Clay's sycophantic chatter only seeks to fill the void in conversation that his own family does not fill.

Austen creates a remarkable effect when she finally does bring Anne into the conversation. Austen proclaims this vital change with the deliberately chosen and placed phrase “Here Anne spoke,—” on its own solitary line in the text (15). This simple phrase, which is confidently articulated by the narrator, holds so much meaning as Anne finally materializes as her own character; however, because of the bold simplicity of the narrator’s phrase a patronizing and sarcastic tone could potentially be implied. It is about time that Anne Elliot shifts from a topic of discussion into an audible individual who is capable of her own speech. Not only does this bold introduction potentially elevate readers’ expectations, but it is followed by Anne’s own opinion that does not match her father’s. Anne’s history with Captain Wentworth leads her to greatly admire the navy and forces her to speak out loyally in their defense: “The navy, I think, who have done so much for us, have at least equal claim with any other set of men, for all the comforts and all the privileges which any home can give. Sailors work hard enough for their comforts, we must allow” (15). In Anne’s defense of the navy, she maintains some degree of not necessarily doubt so much as hesitation to insert her opinion. She knows that naval men do deserve as much as other men yet is reluctant to speak against her father. Through this nuanced distinction, Austen shows the readers exactly the sort of dominating man Anne’s father can be.

After her initial entrance into conversation, Anne serves as a careful listener and informant, showing that although not an instigator of conversation herself, she engages by paying active attention to others and providing necessary information when needed. She speaks twice more in Chapter 3, and both times she supplies pertinent information and facts to the subject being discussed. Both statements are preceded by a significant pause in discussion only after which Anne feels able to join the conversation. Later on in the chapter,

Sir Walter states, “And who is Admiral Croft?” to anyone who would listen (17). Although he could also have posed such a question rhetorically, perhaps musing to himself, Sir Walter more than likely desires a response. “[A]fter a little pause which followed,” Anne obliges him, “He is a rear admiral of the white. He was in the Trafalgar action, and has been in the East Indies since; he has been stationed there, I believe, several years” (17). Following her called-for response, her father does not thank her for her help but continues on with what he desires to talk about, the disagreeable appearance of naval men, completely disregarding the information she imparts. He again ignores Anne’s worth in not only the family, but also in simple conversation. Giordano aptly states that Anne

has kept her sanity and her integrity by concealing her emotions from the people who might have been her intimates. In the early parts of the novel she is an attentive listener who makes short, astute comments which are immediately overwhelmed and negated by her family’s replies. Her own conversation is simply not recorded; Anne’s voice is silent. And she is not only unheard, but also unseen, ‘nothing,’ to her sister and father. (114)

I concur with Giordano with respect to Sir Walter and Elizabeth’s “negation” of Anne’s voice and presence; however, Anne’s voice is still, in some way, apparent. When Mr. Shepherd, trying to supply Sir Walter with the name of an old acquaintance, is assisted by Anne who testifies, after a pause, “You mean Mr. Wentworth, I suppose” (18), Mr. Shepherd acknowledges her warmly. The narrator states that “Mr. Shepherd was all gratitude,” which provides a completely differing response than that of Sir Walter.

Anne’s language at this point in the novel has a distinct lack of surety, which I argue is the effect of her social and logistical environment. All three of her responses, although

filled with truth, are clouded by hesitancy. This detail echoes her overlooked or underappreciated position in the household and, in my mind, does not speak of false modesty by any degree. She qualifies her responses with “I think,” “I believe,” and “I suppose” (15, 17, and 18), conveying a lack of confidence in her place in the discourse and the company at hand.

Not only do Anne’s utterances “hold no weight,” but they are at times also interpreted offensively by her sister. Although mostly silent, Anne is by no means without the ability to observe or maintain and defend opinions of her own. Anne informs her sister of her suspicions related to Mrs. Clay’s potential ulterior motives with Sir Walter. Either perhaps out of fear of upsetting Sir Walter or being utterly ignored, Anne chooses to confide her concerns to her sister Elizabeth instead of her father. Elizabeth rebuffs Anne for such a foolish notion: “Elizabeth could not conceive how such an absurd suspicion should occur to her; and indignantly answered for each party’s perfectly knowing their situation” (26). Even though Anne’s reservations are disregarded by her confident sister, they are uttered. At least now, because of Anne’s due diligence, Elizabeth can be perhaps more aware of the situation than she would have been otherwise. Once again, Anne’s word appears to matter little to her family, even if it is in their best interest to listen to her.

Ultimately, readers must examine Anne’s lack of voice early on in this novel and its implications for the character herself and the rest of the novel. Anne, much like Fanny Price of *Mansfield Park*, is initially a quiet heroine. The question then arises: why is Anne’s voice so rarely heard? Her domineering father and sister often cut her off, and perhaps Anne herself sometimes chooses silence since opposition to her family would be ineffective and create

needless contention. These possibilities exist to be examined and considered by the readers. Laurence discusses possible authorial intentions for creating a quiet heroine:

By preserving their female characters' silence in the text as a space to think, feel, dream, or observe, these authors preserve and develop female insight into self and society from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Silence is the space in narration where culture and feminine consciousness do sometimes reveal themselves, if only we can learn to decipher the psychological and cultural meanings. Ideologically, we are trapped as critics if we cannot shift the reading of silence in women from one of essence to one of position or even, at times, choice. (166)

When Austen creates the ambiguity of Anne's initially meager conversation, readers may be unsure of Anne's character and her ability to ever express her voice.

**“Her convenience was to always give way”**

Anne's resourceful, albeit unappreciated voice in conversation at Kellynch-hall mirrors her desire to go where she is needed. Anne is not one to be pampered; she is more likely to take care of others. Both physically and verbally, she simply goes wherever she is needed and stands by as others make important decisions for her, which of course was the plight of the unmarried aging woman in the early nineteenth-century social context. This character trait of submission is first exemplified in Anne's acknowledgement and later obedience to Lady Russell's will concerning Anne's attachment to Captain Wentworth. Anne thought that she knew her own mind until Lady Russell convinced her of the imprudence and disadvantages of such a match. The narrator reveals, “Such opposition, as these feelings produced, was more than Anne could combat” (21). Anne could not bring herself to go against Lady Russell: “—but 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. She was persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing—indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it” (21). Knuth states,

These ascriptions to Lady Russell of almost super-human powers of persuasion would be almost humorous, except for the fact that the novel is clear, in hindsight, on the point of Lady Russell’s original advice regarding Frederick Wentworth: Anne has decided not that she herself was wrong (at the age of nineteen) to follow this advice, but that Lady Russell was probably wrong to give it.

This quotation articulates not Anne’s sentiments and reasoning behind the decision at the time, but the conclusion she has come to over the years since her separation from Captain Wentworth. Once he proposed, Anne thought that by refusing Captain Wentworth’s hand she served both of the people she loved: Lady Russell and, more importantly, Captain Wentworth. The narrator goes on to recount Anne’s rationalization of her final decision to refuse him, “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—a final parting” (emphasis added 21). Anne’s choice to break off her engagement with Captain Wentworth is prompted not out of selfish reasons, or even from giving in to persuasion, but out of her sense of duty to *him* and *his* needs over her own.

Anne’s desire to please others and not herself is also manifest in her obedience to Mary’s summons. When conversing about what is to be done with Anne, Mary states, “I cannot possibly do without Anne” to which Elizabeth acquiesces, “Then I am sure Anne had better stay, for nobody will want her in Bath” (25). Anne is handed about, much like a parcel,

and her personal preference is not considered or even sought. However, following this rather heartless exchange between sisters, the narrator inserts, “To be claimed as a good, though in an improper style, is at least better than being rejected as no good at all; and Anne, glad to be thought of some use, glad to have any thing marked out as a duty, and certainly not sorry to have the scene of it in the country, and her own dear country, readily agreed to stay” (25).

This selfless account describes how little Anne really considers her own worth as both a member of her family at Kellynch-hall and her place in conversation therein. Although Anne does not regard the slights from her two sisters as significant, the utter replacement of her person in the form of Mrs. Clay in Bath is not to be borne without acute and lasting pain.

At Kellynch-hall, then, readers are exposed to a rather small heroine. Anne Elliot is small in speaking parts, small in desires, small in her family circle, and small in character. Austen creates Anne Elliot as a character in her home of Kellynch-hall with initially little to say, little to do in the household, and no influence whatsoever with her family. As Anne’s company and location change, so do her comfort level and voice in conversation. Up until this point, readers have seen Anne ignored, slighted, and silenced in conversation. In regards to the conversationally cold climate at Kellynch-hall, Bree argues, “since conversation depends on a readiness to exchange ideas and on some degree of ease and equality among the participants, it is hardly surprising that it does not exist in any recognizable form at Kellynch Hall” (152). Anne’s position and voice at Kellynch-hall are almost altogether overlooked, and she is far from feeling comfortable conversationally in her own home. At Uppercross, although Anne’s presence is recognized, her situation in company is limited to what she can do for others: how well she can comfort, assimilate into their society, and listen to their own concerns.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Anne's Selective Articulation**

Up until Anne travels to Uppercross, her dialogue with others is extremely limited. In the first three chapters of the novel, Anne only speaks 95 words, while others like Sir Walter, Mr. Shepherd, and Mrs. Clay speak a great deal. In Chapter 4, Anne does not speak at all. Then readers are utterly surprised when, in Chapter 5, Anne speaks roughly 350 words when at her sister Mary's house at Uppercross. What could have caused this transformation? It is important to note that Anne's participation in discourse expands just a few sentences after she leaves her home at Kellynch-hall. This could be due to the fact that the atmosphere at Kellynch with her family is anything but calm and inviting in contrast to Uppercross's busy and lively company. Anne still does not participate a great deal in conversation outside of her own family. In Chapter 5 when she speaks the most yet, she is having a private conversation with Mary, who "was not so repulsive and unsisterly as Elizabeth, nor so inaccessible to all influence of hers," at Uppercross, which was not "inimical to comfort" (31). This change of company and environment enables Anne to feel more at ease socially and in conversation. However, that being said, Anne is not an equal member of Uppercross society. She is cast as an attendant, an outsider, and an audience member. At Uppercross, Anne's voice is ignored not out of maliciousness as it was at Kellynch, but instead out of lack of consideration. I will first attend to how Anne is perceived by her sister upon her arrival at Uppercross. I argue that here Anne's person is seen merely as an attendant and distraction to her sister Mary. In their extensive conversation, Anne's voice is at least heard by Mary; however, Mary does not

actively listen to Anne at all. Mary's attentiveness only persists so long as she can turn the conversation back on her own suffering and lack of care. In the character of Mary, Austen provides a milder example of the "Elliot pride" and unfeeling company that Anne has just left at Kellynch-hall (115).

### **Anne as Articulate Attendant**

In this section, Anne speaks in a lengthy dialogue with Mary, whereas earlier Anne's voice interjects oddly in discourse with little or no response. At Uppercross, Anne's voice is used to soothe the small distresses of her sister. Even here, though, she is sometimes silenced, as Mary's convenience and prerogative overtake those of Anne. Within the first few minutes of Anne's arrival, poor Mary exclaims, "Oh! Anne, I am so very unwell! It was quite unkind of you not to come on Thursday" (28). In her response, Anne, ever the one to "give way," states that due to the fact that Mary gave her no notice of her indisposition, and was "perfectly well, and in no hurry for me" she felt obliged to carry out other tasks that were left to her before leaving Kellynch (28). However, in the sensitive tone of her response and what little the readers know of Anne, we can assume that had she known of her sister's ailment, she would have taken great pains to expedite her chores and travel to her sister's aid. Anne defends her own judgment and sense of duty, but does not really challenge Mary. In much the same attitude Anne uses towards her father, and especially Elizabeth, Anne realizes that no sort of disagreement with her family will ever be worth the pains it would take to express her opinion because she knows she simply *cannot* win.

Unfortunately, even with this kind of sympathetic response, Anne is belittled by her younger sister who asks, "Dear me! what can *you* possibly have to do?" (emphasis in original 28). Although Mary's accusation could be due to the fact that Anne, as the second daughter

of Kellynch-hall, should be exempt from such chores, her words also imply disparagement of Anne's person and place in the Kellynch household. What is more, the tasks that Anne reports to her sister are given to her by other people or are done on the behalf of others. She catalogues books and pictures, selects Elizabeth's plants that are to be removed to Lady Russell's, and performs the familial duty of calling on "every house in the parish, as a sort of take leave" (25). All of these tasks should have been allocated to the individuals directly responsible for them. Therefore, by articulating how unimportant Anne's voice is to herself and to the Kellynch household, Mary is aligned with her father and eldest sister in belittling Anne's presence in the family. Even though younger, Mary now takes precedence over Anne because Mary is a married woman performing her duty as a woman and daughter in finding herself a suitable situation beneficial to her family, while Anne is not.

In such a conversation with her sister, Anne understands that she cannot prevail against Mary's self-interest and therefore appeases Mary's discourteous, self-centered claims: "A little farther perseverance in patience, and forced cheerfulness on Anne's side, produced nearly a cure on Mary's" (29). Once again, Anne gives way to her sister, a behavior that Mary perhaps is aware of provoking and Anne is used to obliging. After this conversation in which Anne speaks a great deal, she is once again silenced as an outsider of the Musgrove family circle.

### **Anne "Knows Her Own Nothingness" at Uppercross**

When Anne leaves Kellynch-hall for an extended stay at her sister Mary's house at Uppercross, she grows interested in the disinterest in the current and important affairs at Kellynch-hall. The narrator records the discrepancy: "[Anne] had never been staying there before, without being struck by it, or without wishing that other Elliots could have her

advantage in seeing how unknown, or unconsidered there, were the affairs which at Kellynch-hall were treated as of such general publicity” (31). Sir Walter and Elizabeth regard themselves as the subject of discourse throughout the land in spite of the fact that those nearest them, even remarkably their own relations by marriage, could not care less, excepting perhaps Mary. The narrator goes on to say, “yet, with all this experience, [Anne] believed she must now submit to feel that another lesson, in the art of *knowing her own nothingness* beyond her own circle, was become necessary for her” (emphasis added 31). It is ironic that Anne considers “her own nothingness” outside of her own family to be of concern when she has little “being” within her own family circle. Indeed, I would argue that she needs to consider instead “her own nothingness” inside and outside of her family circle both at Kellynch-hall *and* Uppercross.

In truth, at this point, she knows nothing *but* her own nothingness, except perhaps from Lady Russell who uses Anne as a proxy for her dead beloved friend. In the article, “The Art of Knowing Your Own Nothingness,” Greiner states, “Anne is called on to ‘submit to’ the ‘lesson’ of her ‘own nothingness,’ and it is clearly painful to learn. But of course Anne knows her own nothingness all too well even at this early point in the novel. The difference hinges on understanding that nothingness extends beyond her and everything else she knows” (908).

Anne’s understanding of her own overlooked state at Uppercross becomes strikingly apparent in her conversations with the Musgroves. Civility prompts Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove to inquire after Anne’s situation; however, they do not really want or expect an answer; therefore both her voice in conversation, as well as her personhood within their society is established and negated in one breath. When Anne first arrives at Uppercross, Mr. and Mrs.

Musgrove ask, ““So Miss Anne, Sir Walter and your sister are gone; and what part of Bath do you think they will settle in?” and this, without much waiting for an answer;—or in the young ladies’ addition of, ‘I hope we shall be in Bath this winter’” (31). Not surprisingly, much like Mary’s conversation with Anne, the conversation abruptly moves back into their own circle and how the subject material can be related to themselves, which, on the whole, is understandably human. Austen establishes the fact that even though the Musgroves are not as malicious as Sir Walter or Elizabeth in conversation, Anne’s voice and person are still belittled out of their ignorance. Her voice and person are both deliberately and non-deliberately silenced in the first two settings of the novel. Anne “acknowledged it to be very fitting, that every little social commonwealth should dictates its own matters of discourse; and hoped, ere long, to become a not unworthy member of the one she now transplanted into” (31). Anne’s hope is not an extraordinary one, no matter how formidable the bonds within such connections are. Beyond Anne’s general desires for acceptance, she comes to the realization that she *needs* to make her own place in this new society. In order to do this, Anne realizes that she must meet the Musgroves where they stand, prioritize what they do, and in essence be a resident of Uppercross if she is ever to succeed in being anything more than “nothing” to them: “With the prospect of spending at least two months at Uppercross, it was highly *incumbent* on her to clothe her imagination, her memory, and all her ideas in as much of Uppercross as possible” (emphasis added 31). Anne realizes that immersion in this social circle might bring her greater recognition and acceptance, finding potential for change that had been unavailable to her at Kellynch-hall.

### **Anne as Audience Member and Confidant**

At Uppercross, Anne is, for the first time in the novel, sought out, whereas she had been previously discarded at Kellynch-hall. Austen thus establishes that Anne can be appreciated by people other than Lady Russell. However, Anne, although family by marriage, remains an outsider to the Musgroves: someone not a part of, but privy to their familial concerns. Anne, aware of how she is perceived at Uppercross, finds that “One of the least agreeable circumstances of her residence there, was her being treated with too much confidence by all parties, and being too much in secret of the complaints of each house” (32). The residents of the two houses, Uppercross Cottage and the Great House, welcome her into their company as arbiter in *their* petty differences. Indeed, “Anne’s patience as a listener is put to the test in other ways while she is at Uppercross” (Hennedy 31). On Anne’s role in conversation at Uppercross, Hennedy argues, “The confidences seem especially to be a burden to her because she sees little that she can do directly to correct the situations which she hears about” (31).

In such an intimate, confined company, disagreements of one kind or another are sure to manifest themselves, and in everyone’s mind, who better to report them to than Anne? Referring to Anne’s desire to be helpful to others, Carson states, “she willingly sacrifices her own voice so that those around her may find her to be of some use.” Anne’s “use” is to appease her acquaintance by listening to their grievances, yet as Hennedy mentions, there is little hope that Anne can actually solve the problems her relations present to her. Anne’s plight resembles that of Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*: “Fanny is continually being consulted, and yet hardly ever allowed a real voice” (McMaster 83). Anne, too, is sought for conversation, but her advice and opinion are not desired.

Oddly enough, part of Anne's value as a sounding board is her supposed conversational influence over Mary. Here, by having other characters come to Anne for her verbal ability to influence others, Austen establishes that Anne *does* have a powerful voice and the ability to use it to affect others. Because Anne is "Known to have some influence with her sister [Mary], she was continually requested, or at least receiving hints to exert it beyond what was practical" (32). However, in their own conversations with Anne, the Musgroves do not desire her to verbally respond to their own complaints so much as they solicit her ability to persuade others. In Chapter 6, Anne is talked to by Charles, Mary, Mrs. Musgrove, and the Miss Musgroves, but her responses are not recorded in the text (32). First, Charles and Mary both seek Anne out for her influence. Charles states, "I wish you could *persuade* Mary..." and then a few lines later Mary states, "if you would, you might *persuade* [Charles]" (emphasis added 32). They seek Anne out for her ability to speak and have power over others even though they do not allow her the same courtesy within their own private discourse. The appeals intensify as Mrs. Musgrove and the Miss Musgroves attempt to exploit Anne's vanity, if she has any, in addition to taking advantage of her influence. Mrs. Musgroves confides, "but I shall tell *you*, Miss Anne, because you may be able to set things right," and later one of the Miss Musgroves discloses, "I have no scruple of observing to *you*, . . . but I wish any body could give Mary a hint" (emphasis in original 33). Both of these confidential exchanges condescend to Anne, yet are meant to make Anne feel like she is the exception: she can succeed where others have not.

Anne does not speak a word during or after these conversations, even though she is asked to influence Mary; because of its absolute nature, her silence deserves to be examined. Anne knows what a precarious rhetorical situation she occupies. In an intimate circle such as

Uppercross, offense can be easily given and not so soon forgotten. If indeed she were to exceed “practicality” and attempt to take a stance between husband and wife in regards to Mary’s “always fancying herself ill,” it would not bode well for all concerned. Mary would be put out, Charles would be even more vexed, and Anne would be forced to remain in a tenuous position for the rest of her stay at Uppercross (32). Also, if Anne were to choose sides between Mary and Mrs. Musgrove concerning the upbringing of Mary’s children, it would only cause increased dissention between the families (32). Finally, if Anne were to take the Miss Musgroves’ advice to humble Mary’s vanity, Anne would set herself at odds with her sister (32). Anne is aware of her surroundings and deems it not worth the trouble to actually say anything in the conversations or after them. Nevertheless, the aggrieved parties certainly appear to enjoy voicing their opinions and unburdening themselves to Anne.

Thus, Anne remains silent in her new surroundings, but the atmosphere at Uppercross varies greatly from that of Kellynch-hall. Bree notes that “there is no real future for Anne at Kellynch. With her visit to Uppercross, her prospects, in a general sense, improve” (157). Here Anne is sought out for her help as an enlisted listener; Bree mentions “the difference is significant for the way in which [Anne] is regarded. Here she is no longer silent, and her views are respected; indeed she is appealed to on all sides for intervention in family rows and difficulties. But still she is not entirely at ease. Noticeably she hides behind conscious conversational strategies” (157). I agree with Bree that Anne is no longer necessarily silent at Uppercross; however, those who seek her help in conversation do not take the time to listen to what she may have to say, and her views are not even expected to be uttered. The Musgroves are very much entwined in their own circle and company, yet their lack of consideration for Anne is not out of malice or snobbery, but out of haste and ignorance. The

general spirit of Uppercross, from Louisa and Henrietta's girlish frivolities to the boys' misbehavior, is far more relaxed than the self-important nature of Kellynch-hall. This alteration in environment enables Anne to express herself more freely in conversation and company. Although Anne is unappreciated and silenced at Kellynch-hall and not given the ability to speak by those at Uppercross, she *is able* to speak for herself. Austen complicates the mystery of Anne's restricted voice to add suspense to the eventual entrance of Captain Wentworth.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Articulation and the Moment of Crisis**

Conversation at Uppercross reveals Anne's ability to speak comfortably with her sister Mary, as well as Anne's relative ease in the company of the Musgroves. Nevertheless, we are surprised by Anne's exemplary, instinctive verbal ability to navigate the emergency situations that arise there; through this insight into Anne's ability, readers view a heroine who at times prefers silence and at others cannot hope to fill the intensely awkward conversational void.

#### **Anne Takes Charge**

At Uppercross, when Anne's nephew falls and receives a serious injury, which "roused the most alarming ideas," Anne is able to rise to the occasion (39). The speed with which she does this is astonishing because Anne's character to date has been relatively muted and hesitant. Through FID we learn,

It was such an afternoon of distress, and Anne had every thing to do at once—the apothecary to send for—the father to have pursued and informed—the mother to support and keep from hysterics—the servants to control—the youngest child to banish, and the poor suffering one to attend and soothe;—besides sending, as soon as she recollected it, proper notice to the other house. (39)

According to the rushed tone of this passage, Anne, in the heat of the moment is able to do what is necessary and required. Her detachment from the Uppercross family circle allows her to make the decisions that need to be made without being too emotionally involved. This

instance of Anne's ability to maintain reason in the midst of a crisis is a small preview of what will later happen at Lyme.

In Chapter 7, the use of FID conveys the power not only of Anne's voice, but also of her character. Under pressure, Anne does not fall apart, but keeps a rational focus. Curiously enough, this is an instance when Anne's voice might have been very importantly recorded in direct speech, but it is not. Why place more emphasis on Anne and Mary's conversation about dinner parties, and scant this instance that would have established her strong and able character? Perhaps FID conveys the stress of the moment, and the quick succession of events denoted by the dashes, in a way that direct speech cannot. Upon a first reading of this section, however, it might be possible to gloss over the important impact and central part that Anne plays throughout these events.

Responding immediately to the tragic circumstance of the boy's fall, Anne surprises readers and comes into the power of her own voice when she is able to direct others in a critical situation. Judging from her previous behavior, Anne seems a rather quiet, reserved individual who desires to be told what to do as opposed to instructing others. However, Austen has lulled her readers into thinking so little of this heroine and only later reveals Anne's natural resourcefulness and rationality. Anne's style of leadership is much like the rest of her character, quiet but effective. Free indirect discourse reinforces this impression as readers are not exposed to Anne articulating orders to the needed persons. Instead, Anne sees what needs must be met and meets them accordingly, enlisting others' help as necessary.

This new facet of Anne's character causes readers to pause and look back on Anne's experiences at Kellynch in perhaps a new light. Now, Anne becomes a perceptive, conscious character who chooses to remain silent when at Kellynch-hall because she knows her

opinions could only be assumed a challenge to her father and Elizabeth. Anne can exert rational, focused speech if she needs to; however, there are other instances when she maintains purposeful silence.

### **Love's Language Lost**

The dramatic eruption of messages, requests, comfort, and direction concerning Anne's nephew is contrasted with a simultaneous slow-moving crisis of social awkwardness and pain. Chapter 8 calls attention to another form of emergency that the voice cannot easily redress. Captain Wentworth comes to Uppercross and sees Anne for the first time in seven years. It pains Anne that she and Captain Wentworth, in light of everything that had passed between them, have to remain aloof. Beyond the loss of their love for one another, Anne internalizes the loss of their communion that was possible through intimate conversation: "there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison, no countenances so beloved" (46). This intimate connection is formed through the conversation of the best company. Anne considers how, unlike the present, "There *had* been a time, . . . [when] they would have found it most difficult to cease to speak to one another" (emphasis in original 46). Now, Anne and Captain Wentworth "had no conversation together, no intercourse but what the commonest civility required" (46). Anne's memories and feelings of loss encourage the readers to resent Captain Wentworth. Readers sit with Anne on the sidelines, while the Miss Musgroves playfully flirt with Captain Wentworth over the navy lists. His distant manner with Anne contrasts his good-humored conversations with Louisa and Henrietta, a difference acutely noticed and felt by Anne. Carson states, "His conversation conceals a silent attack: Wentworth communicates his appreciation of the Miss Musgroves

with nonchalant speech as he communicates his disdain for Anne with pointed silence.” The cold tone of the narration conveys how stale their former love has become.

Captain Wentworth cannot even bring himself to speak to Anne. Carson wonders, “Does Wentworth find that he must respond to Anne in her own medium of communication, silence?” For instance, instead of simply asking Anne why she only plays the piano and never dances, Captain Wentworth asks his “partner” (52). The narrator states, “*once* [Anne] knew that he must have spoken of her;—she was hardly aware of it, till she heard the answer; but then she was sure of his having asked his partner whether Miss Elliot ever danced? The answer was, ‘Oh! no, never; she has quite given up dancing. She had rather play. She is never tired of playing’” (emphasis in original 52). Once again, Anne is not given the opportunity to answer for herself, and is forced to stand by and listen to others state her own mind for her.

Captain Wentworth’s inquiry about Anne leaves readers to expect more interaction between the hero and heroine of the novel, and yet Austen subverts this natural reaction in order to raise the tension between the two characters. Shortly after Captain Wentworth asks after Anne, Austen includes a snippet of direct discourse between the two. The scene at the piano in which Captain Wentworth is startled from his seat at the presence of Anne conveys the cold civility that he forces himself to adopt with her. The narrator records the event: “Once, too, he spoke to her . . . ‘I beg your pardon, madam, this is your seat’” (52). In this interaction, Captain Wentworth cannot begin to even name Anne: she is “madam” instead of even “Miss Elliot.” Anne acutely feels Captain Wentworth’s lack of warmth and does “not wish for more of such looks and speeches. His cold politeness, his ceremonious grace, were worse than anything” (52). Because of Captain Wentworth’s aloof and unfeeling actions towards her, Anne prefers that he *not* speak to her. Anne would sooner have the two maintain

a silent void, than make any attempt at distant civility. Yet again, as in her actions at Kellynch-hall and Uppercross, readers see Anne's preference of silence over conversation. This choice, however, is reactive to the reception she receives.

### **Anne at a Loss for Words**

Anne's silence has thus far originated from others' disregard for her own voice; however, the scene when Captain Wentworth comes to Anne's aid by taking her young nephew off her back leaves Anne speechless: she is unable to speak, not because she is silenced, but because she does not know what to say.

This scene is also the first conversation that includes direct speech by both Anne and Captain Wentworth. Bree suggests, "The strain [Anne's absence by choice from the conversation] imposes on both Anne and Wentworth is reflected by the way in which the most basic cultural and linguistic expectations break down when the two find themselves unexpectedly alone together, except for little Charles, at Uppercross" (158). Anne is surprised by Captain Wentworth's presence and finds it hard to even make small talk. The tension is only increased by the entrance of Mr. Hayter, who, at this point in the novel, is not on favorable terms with Captain Wentworth. To Mr. Hayter, Anne "only attempted to say, 'How do you do? Will not you sit down? The others will be here presently,'" which is more than she felt capable of saying to Captain Wentworth (57).

Austen then shows the idea of strain when Anne's nephew promptly jumps on her back and refuses to get off. Anne only admonishes young Walter after other attempts at making the child heed her fail: "She spoke to him—ordered, intreated, and insisted in vain. Once she did contrive to push him away, but the boy had the greater pleasure in getting upon her back again directly" (58). Anne no longer considers her nervousness in front of Captain

Wentworth and berates the child. Mr. Hayter is obliged to petition the child on behalf of Anne, but he does so like someone who does not want to be bothered.

The scene plays out as a sort of conversation in which Captain Wentworth adopts Anne's characteristic skill of seeing a problem and then meeting its solution silently, directly, and effectively. Captain Wentworth hears Anne's plight and silently takes the child off of her back. This action is, in and of itself, fascinating. It *should have been* Mr. Hayter to come to Anne's aid and release her from the child's grasp, as he is the closest relation; however, readers are astonished when Captain Wentworth silently swoops down and removes the troublesome child from Anne. Apparently, although the captain is at the window, he is still very aware of the situation unfolding behind him. Like Anne, in this instance, Captain Wentworth senses a need and meets it directly. His actions respond directly to her need like a reply in a conversation.

What Captain Wentworth does dumbfounds Anne: "Her sensations on the discovery made her perfectly speechless. She could not even thank him" (58). Captain Wentworth's actions speak volumes even though he does not actually say a word. If anything, Captain Wentworth does not desire to talk to Anne or hear her thanks at all: "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, this meant to avoid hearing her thanks, and rather sought to testify that her conversation was the last of his wants . . . ." (58). Captain Wentworth acts to remove the child from Anne so that he does not have to speak, while Anne speaks to Walter so she does not have to further act against the child. Mr. Hayter's failed verbal attempts to ask the child to leave Anne alone and Anne's continued distress prompt Captain Wentworth to his actions.

Anne could not order the child off, and Mr. Hayter could not scold the child off; therefore, Captain Wentworth, like the military man that he is, takes action.

Since there are no words exchanged between Anne and Captain Wentworth, what exactly do Captain Wentworth's actions mean? Are Captain Wentworth's actions meant to be an affront to Mr. Hayter for his lack of gallantry in not rescuing Anne, or is Captain Wentworth frustrated with the boy to such an extent that the officer seeks to dislodge the unmindful child, or does Captain Wentworth come to Anne's assistance and help her when she cannot effectively help herself? Only later will readers learn that "still he could not see her suffer, without the desire of giving her relief" (66). This event, therefore, embodies what is later articulated in Anne's thoughts; Captain Wentworth's actions indicate that he, as well as Anne, is having difficulty navigating their renewed acquaintance.

Events at Uppercross change the readers' perceptions of Anne and make her a more complex character. At Kellynch-hall with Sir Walter and Elizabeth, Anne's silence is ambiguous. Later upon her entrance into Uppercross society, Anne's silence seems a calculated, rational choice, an interpretation later affirmed for the reader when Anne resourcefully and rationally makes herself of use in a family crisis. When the crisis is over, Anne's voice recedes and she slowly and quietly slips into the background; however, when Anne is quiet, she often becomes the subject of conversation.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Anne as Subject of Discourse**

The pivotal scene of Chapter 10, the foray into the hedgerow, is significant not only to the overall plot of the novel, but also to Anne's consciousness of herself and her own voice. In this chapter, Louisa Musgrove and Captain Wentworth discuss Anne while she, although hidden, overhears. This discourse can be connected to earlier scenes where Anne is the subject of conversation. In Chapter 5 of the novel, as previously discussed, her sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, consult upon where Anne should stay, and, in short, what is to be done with her. Later in Chapter 7, Anne's appearance is subject to criticism by Captain Wentworth who remarks to Henrietta how Anne "was so altered he should not have known" her anymore (44). Lastly, as we have most recently seen in Chapter 8, Anne's customary behavior is asked about by Captain Wentworth who inquires "whether Miss Elliot never danced?" (52). These instances are few and scattered throughout the text and therefore barely noted by readers unless looked for. However, these comments lead up to the scene in Chapter 10 where Anne, yet again, is the subject of discourse. What makes this particular instance more significant? I argue that this overheard conversation establishes for readers vital information not only of past plot details, but also unveils sentiments between the hero and heroine through the intended and unintended audience members, the intended and unintended messages that are relayed, and the overall effect and acknowledgement that the event gives Anne. Austen's

choice of overheard conversation in order to relay these details mirrors reality and emphasizes a form of communication that is common and, at times very significant. The realism of this scene aligns the readers more closely with Anne, drawing them alongside her in the intrigue. This scene also allows the narrative to proceed with readers having greater insight into Captain Wentworth's own struggle. Previously Captain Wentworth indicated through his coldly civil speech and actions that he cared nothing for Anne; however, now we can see that Captain Wentworth is still at least curious about how she has passed her time since she refused him. His character gains even more complexity for both the readers and for Anne.

### **The Audience(s)**

In Chapter 7, the Musgroves, Captain Wentworth, and Anne set out on a "long walk" with the intended destination of Charles Hayter's establishment. Their talk is in the open air and public. The group's plans of visitation are slightly foiled when Mary lets her Elliot pride get the better of her and refuses to pay her respects to her husband's less privileged, extended family. As Mary cannot be left alone to wait on the hillside unattended, Louisa, Captain Wentworth, and Anne stay with her. Then "Louisa drew Captain Wentworth away, to try for a gleaning of nuts in an adjoining hedge-row, and they were gone by degrees quite out of sight and sound" (62). Leaving the rest of the company "by degrees" implies that, after their departure, whatever Louisa and Captain Wentworth say to one another is private.

When they travel close to where Anne has situated herself after having been left by Mary, they cannot see her, and therefore are unconscious of their conversation being overheard. This is shown by the confidence Louisa demonstrates in being so openly honest with her opinions of her sister and Mary.

Although Louisa is satisfied by being honest and unburdening herself to Captain Wentworth, she has no idea that she is overheard, while the readers know that she is. Anne, the unintended audience of this private discourse, finds herself in an embarrassing predicament. Before hearing them come, “Anne, really tired herself, was glad to sit down; and she very soon heard Captain Wentworth and Louisa in the hedge-row, behind her, as if making their way back, along the rough, wild sort of channel, down the centre” (62). Anne’s role as auditor thus falls into the category of “overhearing,” not “eavesdropping” into a conversation. Eavesdropping implies a purposeful desire and action to listen into others’ conversation for one’s own purposes, while overhearing a conversation happens by chance. Anne is simply stuck; she can either move away so as not to hear their discussion (which would make her presence known) or remain as she is in the hope that they will quickly pass (and save Louisa and Wentworth the embarrassment of knowing they were overheard). She chooses to remain and therefore hears the middle of a conversation. Therefore, Anne and the readers are left to speculate about what was said before and after the overheard portion of discourse; what she and the readers do hear is enlightening.

### **The Message(s)**

The conversation between Louisa and Captain Wentworth (and Anne—although, unintentionally) is very layered. As in many conversations, what is said and what is actually meant depend on the message relayed as well as the audience. To analyze the discourse, it must be separated into parts: firstly, that which discusses other people in their circle, and secondly, that which includes Anne as the subject. It is important to split the message into these two sections due to the fact that Anne’s part in the conversation alters. Initially, she is

simply an auditor, then her position alters and she, as the subject of discourse, becomes intimately involved in the conversation.

In Louisa and Captain Wentworth's discussion about Henrietta, more is being said than the surface of their talk suggests. For instance, Louisa says to Captain Wentworth, "And so, I made her go. I could not bear that she should be so frightened from the visit by such nonsense" (62). By speaking in such a way of her sister, Louisa demands, if she has not already done so, the approval of Captain Wentworth. Then after asserting her sister's lack of fortitude, she inserts her own, "What!—would I be turned back from doing a thing that I had determined to do, and that I knew to be right, by the airs and interference of such a person?—or any person I may say. No,—I have no idea of being so easily persuaded. When I have made up my mind, I have made it" (62-63). By slighting her sister, Louisa takes the opportunity to display her own, more decided, character.

This is when the conversation shifts. Captain Wentworth praises Louisa's determined character and states, "Happy for her, to have such a mind as yours at hand!" (63). Later he goes on to flatter her by saying, "Your sister is an amiable creature; but yours is the character of decision and firmness, I see . . . . It is the worst evil of too yielding and indecisive a character, that no influence over it can be depended on.—You are never sure of a good impression being durable" (63). From this statement, Louisa gathers that Captain Wentworth values her bold character in preference to her sister's pliable temperament, and Louisa is highly gratified. Captain Wentworth finishes his longest speech yet by stating, "My first wish for all, whom I am interested in, is that they should be firm. If Louisa Musgrove would be beautiful and happy in her November of life, she will cherish all her present powers of mind" (63).

To the readers, who know the history between Captain Wentworth and Anne, the quoted passage has multiple audiences. Captain Wentworth, although audibly mentioning his position to Louisa, is also talking aloud to himself. Therefore, his acknowledgement of Louisa's presence becomes of minimal importance. His musings take on a more honest, authentic tone as he speaks not for the benefit of others, but only for himself. This meditative tone is particularly indicated when he names Louisa Musgrove in the third person even though he is walking in her company. His kind, soft words to Louisa can then be interpreted as having an underlying layer of bitterness and even anger towards Anne. Louisa, unaware of this previous attachment to Anne, does not pick up on his allusion to his past; however, Anne, the unseen member of the conversation, does. By praising Louisa's strength of character, Captain Wentworth criticizes Anne's persuadable nature. Therefore, from the text readers can gather that this part of the conversation ends with Louisa feeling flattered, Captain Wentworth feeling reflective and perhaps even a bit bitter, and Anne feeling injured.

Then Louisa, perhaps out of not knowing how to reply to Captain Wentworth's "words of such interest, [that were] spoken with such serious warmth!" continues to gossip (63). Louisa finds a safer subject in discussing Anne, hoping perhaps to gain Captain Wentworth's agreement; however, she is not so lucky, for this second part of the discourse also has multiple messages and multiple interpretations. After her complaints concerning Mary, Louisa adds "We do so wish that Charles had married Anne instead.—I suppose you know he wanted to marry Anne?" (63). No, indeed he does not. This newfound intelligence needs to be explained; therefore, he asks, "Do you mean that she refused him?" (64). Captain Wentworth here seems to be probing Louisa for details, and she is more than happy to oblige, even though she is ignorant of his intent in asking or the reported information's full

implication for him. Although this seems an innocent question, readers cannot help but see the obviousness of it: *of course* Anne did refuse Charles because Charles is *married* to Mary and *not* to Anne. Because of the nature of this information from Louisa, however, readers are sure to give Captain Wentworth the benefit of the doubt as he is perhaps very much surprised. Next, Captain Wentworth must discover when Anne refused Charles Musgrove in order to find out whether or not it was before or after he had proposed to Anne. From Louisa's information that it happened around a year or so before Charles married Mary, Wentworth can easily calculate that Anne's refusal was not very long, three years to be exact, after his own engagement to Anne was broken off. In addition to revealing this fact, Louisa goes on to mention Lady Russell who was so instrumental in the destruction of his and Anne's own union: "[the Musgroves] think Charles might not be learned and bookish enough to please Lady Russell, and that therefore, she persuaded Anne to refuse him" (64). Wentworth's mind at this point must be reeling. He perhaps is all the more frustrated at Lady Russell for her strong influence over Anne, angry for his own sake yet glad that Anne refused Charles. All this is in light of the fact that the conversation that Captain Wentworth is presently having is with a young woman whom their social circle is convinced he loves. Therefore, it is ironic that Louisa is having a *tete-a-tete* walk with Captain Wentworth and believes she is sharing confidences with him to bring *their* relationship to a closer level, when what is said only brings Captain Wentworth's previous love, Anne, into his thoughts and concern. Oddly enough, Louisa gets what she wants, to be listened to, and Captain Wentworth gets what he wants, information concerning Anne.

Now, where is Anne in all this? Obviously listening, but how does she, unlike Louisa, comprehend not only Louisa's volunteered information, but also Captain Wentworth's

responses and reactions? Anne too, according to the text, seems to be going through as much turmoil as Captain Wentworth throughout the course of the conversation. Many thoughts are perhaps going through Anne's head; however, the important difference between Anne, Captain Wentworth, and Louisa is that Anne cannot speak to defend herself or shed more light on her past decision because she is not supposed to be there, listening. In the report of her refusing Charles Musgrove, Anne must have felt mortified. Now that Captain Wentworth is aware of not one refusal, but two from the apparent influence of Lady Russell, Anne perceives that she can only fall lower in his regard. In addition, although Captain Wentworth perhaps does not realize it, Anne's refusal of Charles occurred because she desired to remain faithful to her first love, Captain Wentworth. Both the readers and Anne know that Louisa's gossip is mistaken and that Lady Russell actually encouraged her to accept Charles Musgrove, contrary to her previous advice of refusing Captain Wentworth when Anne was younger. Back in Chapter 5 readers are alerted to the difference between the proposals Anne received at 19 and 22 years of age:

Lady Russell had *lamented her* [Anne's] *refusal*; for Charles Musgrove was the eldest son of a man, whose landed property and general importance, were second, in that country, only to Sir Walter's, and of good character and appearance; and however Lady Russell might have asked for something more, while Anne was nineteen, she *would have rejoiced* to see her at twenty-two, so respectively removed from the partialities and injustices of her father's house, and settled so permanently near herself. (emphasis added 22)

Lady Russell's approval was based on property (Charles Musgrove's wealth), duty (Anne's age), convenience (Anne's proximity to herself), and necessity (removal of Anne from her

father's house); however, there is not a word mentioned about Lady Russell's disapproval of Charles' education. Anne is misrepresented in Louisa's gossip, yet unable to speak in her own defense.

### **The Effect(s) on Anne**

Once "the sounds were retreating, and Anne distinguished no more," Anne is left to herself. Stunned, Anne's "own emotions kept her fixed. She had much to recover from, before she could move" (64). Beyond the physical and emotional, Anne looks to the rational: "The listener's proverbial fate was not absolutely hers; she had heard no evil of herself,—but she heard a great deal of very painful import" (64). She hears no "evil," but the misrepresentation of Anne's actions by Louisa goes a degree or two beyond simply painful. Now, Anne sees "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" (64). In light of Anne's distress, Hennedy asserts, "As painful as this experience may be for Anne, it is very helpful for her, because it enables her to discover that, eight years after their separation, Wentworth is still very much aware of her. His feelings for her may no longer be tender, Anne learns, but whatever they are, they are not dead. He is indifferent to her" (34). Although I agree to a great extent with what Hennedy says, I cannot believe that Captain Wentworth is indeed "indifferent" to Anne. His language when he talks about her, or even, for that matter, when he muses on Louisa Musgrove's admirable traits, is all the while consciously comparing her to Anne. From his sweetness of manner towards Louisa, readers cannot help but pick up a degree of remaining pain and perhaps even anger towards Anne; this is by no means indifference.

Indeed, Captain Wentworth hardly seemed indifferent when he came to Anne's aid with the little Musgrove boy. In much the same way, Captain Wentworth assists Anne again by convincing the Crofts to take her the rest of the way home in their carriage after a lengthy walk. These gestures are, in and of themselves, communication that he does still care for her and that he "could not be unfeeling . . . [and] still he could not see her suffer, without the desire of giving her relief" (66). Captain Wentworth's actions are therefore, according to the FID, "a reminder of former sentiment; it was an impulse of pure, though unacknowledged friendship; it was proof of his own warm and amiable heart" (66). These actions are examples of his awareness of Anne. Even if he did let her suffer, it would not have been a product of his indifference, but of his anger and bitterness. Indifference, for Captain Wentworth, is not an option: too much has happened between himself and Anne, no matter what time has transpired.

Now, thanks to this scene in Chapter 10, readers can move forward knowing more about the history between Anne and Charles Musgrove, as well as Anne's consciousness of Captain Wentworth's curiosity about her. Readers are able, therefore, to either believe Anne's analysis or to take the new established facts at hand and perhaps form a new viewpoint. In this section of Chapter 10, Anne says nothing; that in and of itself is significant; however, the chapter is very much about her and her voice. Captain Wentworth and others think that Lady Russell has once again effectively influenced Anne's choice of a husband; however, this is not the case. Readers are aware that Anne is truly capable of making her own decision and refusing Charles Musgrove as a suitor on her own. And, importantly, although Anne's refusal to maintain her engagement with Captain Wentworth is

not mentioned here, it is her words of refusal and severing of the connection between them that resonate throughout the hedge-row scene.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Worth of Anne's Voice Understood**

In Lyme, readers are shown two different situations that interact with one another: Anne and Captain Benwick's discussion of poetry and Louisa's fall off the Cobb. When comparing the two situations, readers are able to see how truly similar they are, as well as Anne's significant verbal part in both. Anne plays a central role in both public and private conversation. She is able to voice her opinion and also to give advice—an ability which, compared to her earlier roles in conversation, shows that her voice and presence have grown in strength and confidence since the beginning of the novel.

#### **Context of the Conversation**

The two paralleled events occur as a result of chance: Anne does not deliberately sit close to Captain Benwick or foresee Louisa's accident. She is more than a simple witness, but becomes a participant in these events. In both circumstances, Anne uses the situation to act upon what she most desires to do: "to be thought of some use" (25). With Captain Benwick and the chaotic company at the Cobb, Anne maintains her poise and directs the rescue.

The narrator notes that Anne, who at first suffered Captain Wentworth's general conversation with pain, is becoming almost immune to his presence (in effect, acknowledging her own "nothingness"): "Anne found herself by this time growing so much more hardened by being in Captain Wentworth's company than she had at first imagined

could ever be, that the sitting down to the same table with him now, and the interchange of the common civilities attending on it—(they never got beyond) was become a mere nothing” (72). By hardening herself to Captain Wentworth’s company, Anne also distances herself in conversation from his intended audience which oftentimes includes the Miss Musgroves and the rest of the company; so when “Captain Wentworth and Harville led the talk on one side of the room, and, by recurring to former days, supplied anecdotes in abundance to occupy and entertain the others, it fell to Anne’s lot to be placed rather apart with Captain Benwick; and a very good impulse of her nature obliged her to begin an acquaintance with him” (72). Anne’s efforts to engage Captain Benwick in conversation are initiated out of civility. Anne and Captain Benwick are both similarly displaced from the general lively conversation and therefore have only one another for company. From the tone of the text it seems that if Anne had not said anything, neither would Benwick, and for the rest of the evening Anne and Captain Benwick would remain in silent exclusion from the rest of the animated company. As noted earlier, Captain Benwick “had a pleasing face and a melancholy air, just as he ought to have, and drew back from conversation” (70). With such an unsociable partner sitting next to her at the end of the table, Anne might continue on in silence, rather than initiate conversation.

As much as readers might expect Anne to shy away from a new male acquaintance, who is praised “as an excellent young man and an officer, whom he [Captain Wentworth] had always valued highly,” she does not and instead finds herself to be empathetic to Captain Benwick’s sad situation of suffering the loss of a beloved fiancé (69). Anne, like Captain Benwick, has loved and lost. True to the late eighteenth-century rise of sentimental protagonists, Anne’s rational abilities are directed by her feelings of sympathy. Anne

concludes, “And yet , . . . he has not, perhaps, a more sorrowing heart than I have. I cannot believe his prospects to be so blighted for ever. He is younger than I am; younger in feeling, if not in fact; younger as a man. He will rally again, and be happy with another” (70). Their common experience of loss as well as passion for poetry prompt Anne to draw him out into conversation.

In a much more obvious way, Anne’s role at Louisa’s accident at the Cobb is unplanned. In both scenes, however, Austen leads readers to think of potential outcomes by hinting at what will happen through the descriptions of the characters. For instance, Austen describes Benwick in such a way that makes “him perfectly interesting in the eyes of all the ladies” including Anne. What then could be more natural according to the text, but for them to have an intense conversation? The same foreshadowing occurs with Louisa. Readers are already aware of Louisa’s “character of decision and firmness,” which becomes very apparent in her private dialogue with Captain Wentworth in the hedge-row in Chapter 10 (63). Later Austen also describes other instances in which Louisa must get her own way. When the decision is made to travel to Lyme Regis, the narrator notes, “Louisa, who was the most eager of the eager, having formed the resolution to go, and besides the pleasure of doing as she liked, being now armed with the idea of merit in maintaining her own way, bore down all the wishes of her father and mother for putting it off till summer; and to Lyme they were to go” (68). After listening to Captain Wentworth’s desire for a woman of real strength of mind, Louisa is delighted to show off such a trait in her own character. On the last day of their Lyme visit, the company walk to see the Cobb one last time. The narrator records how, “Louisa soon grew so determined, that the difference of a quarter of an hour, it was found, would be no difference at all” (78). Therefore, all the characters take the time for one more

perambulation of the Cobb, resulting in Louisa's almost deadly fall. The accident could have been avoided if she had listened to Captain Wentworth's pleas that she not jump a second time: "He advised her against it, thought the jar too great; but no, he reasoned and talked in vain; she smiled and said, 'I am determined I will'" (79). Louisa's pride and her strong-mindedness go one step too far and she falls to what could have been her death, if it were not for Anne. By chance, Anne is in the right place at the right time and is able to direct what needs to be done in order to aid Louisa.

### **Anne's Desire to Help**

At the dinner party, after Anne converses with Captain Benwick, she becomes more aware of his mental suffering and desires to help. The narrator states that Captain Benwick "was shy, and disposed to abstraction; but the engaging mildness of [Anne's] countenance, and gentleness of her manners, soon had their effect; and Anne was well repaid the first trouble of exertion" (72). Anne then proceeds to discuss a subject dear to him, as well as to herself: poetry. By so doing, "she had the hope of being of real use to [Captain Benwick] in some suggestions as to the duty and benefit of struggling against affliction, which had naturally grown out of their conversation" (72). The language Austen uses here indicates to the readers that Anne presents a kind, gentle manner, that even the most pained individual cannot refuse her well-meaning attentions. Anne again desires to be a dutiful listener and helper. Because of their common suffering, of which Captain Benwick knows nothing, Anne, much like an older, more experienced sister, seeks to engage him in therapeutic conversation. As Anne patiently and empathetically listens to Captain Benwick, he gains an attentive audience to his troubles. Throughout the course of the conversation, they are able to find

their own private discourse community in a subject that “his usual companions probably had no concern in” (72). The narrator records the conversation:

For, though shy, he [Captain Benwick] did not seem reserved; it had rather the appearance of feelings glad to burst their usual restraints; and having talked of poetry, the richness of the age, and gone through a brief comparison of opinion as to the first-rate poets, trying to ascertain whether *Marmion* or *The Lady of the Lake* were to be preferred, and who ranked the *Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos*; and moreover, how the *Giaour* was to be pronounced, he shewed himself so intimately acquainted with all the tenderest songs of the one poet, and all the impassioned descriptions of hopeless agony of the other . . . . (72)

The majority of these works feature lovers who are, at one point or another, separated. It is perhaps this separation which attracts Captain Benwick to read and seek an understanding of the agonized lovers. Anne’s sincere interest must have seemed refreshing to Captain Benwick. Anne amazes Captain Benwick with her knowledge and their mutual interest in poetry. Anne’s words, conversation, and expressed opinions not only draw him out of his otherwise introverted nature, but also allow Captain Benwick to experience healing through sharing his thoughts. In uttering his passion about certain serious poets, Captain Benwick is able to revisit and seek solace from his own situation. It is Anne and her gentle conversation that encourages this healing.

However, Anne does not let her portion of the conversation simply consist of opinions and preferences, but extends to giving Captain Benwick advice. This definitely shows a strengthening of Anne’s voice. She inserts not only her own opinions, but goes so far as to make suggestions or prescribe possible remedies to his melancholy reflections. Captain

Benwick is suffering symptoms of anguish from his loss of Phoebe Harville: “he repeated, with such tremulous feeling, the various lines which imagined a broken heart, or a mind destroyed by wretchedness, and looked entirely as if he meant to be understood” (72).

Therefore, Anne proposes some other modes of healing “a mind destroyed”: “she ventured to hope he did not always read only poetry; and to say, that she thought it was the misfortune of poetry, to be seldom safely enjoyed by those who enjoyed it completely” (72-73). Here, we observe Anne’s voice. Sensitive in giving advice, Anne modulates her voice to fit her audience. Her voice’s mildness allows her advice to come across as helpful and concerned rather than authoritative and assertive. Shaw argues that Anne “sees the absurdity of solemnly recommending consolatory treatises to Benwick, and the novel as a whole shows that if there is to be solace, it must come from life, not art. Benwick and Anne are both comforted, the one because he is adaptable, the other because she is constant” (299). Anne wants to at least attempt to alter Captain Benwick’s perception through recommending different readings, but she knows that no true change can happen solely through an altered perspective on life and actions based thereon.

Just as Anne is not likely to insert her voice where it is not welcome in the conversation, when it is welcome, she speaks extensively. To some men, Anne’s response and suggestions would have been considered impertinent and rude; however, Captain Benwick, who already enjoys her company, looks on her comments as if they are meant with pure, unadulterated concern. The narrator goes on to say that it is Captain Benwick’s contented response that encourages Anne to say more: “His looks, shewing him not pained, but pleased with this allusion to his situation, she was emboldened to go on” (73). Had Captain Benwick chosen to take offense and feel affronted, Anne would have, no doubt, not

continued; however, with his encouragement “and feeling in herself the right seniority of mind, she ventured to recommend a larger allowance of prose in his daily study” (73). This suggestion, too, finds positive response as Anne is “requested to particularize” and goes on to reference the pieces of “our best moralists . . . collections of the finest letters . . . [and] memoirs of characters of worth and suffering, as occurred to her at the moment as calculated to rouse and fortify the mind by the highest precepts” (73). Her open and honest manner is received well by Captain Benwick who sees in her a genuine person who desires to help him.

Juxtaposed with Anne’s alleviation of Captain Benwick’s mental suffering is the vital part that Anne plays in providing aid after Louisa’s accident. When Louisa jumps from the Cobb steps, “There was no wound, no blood, no visible bruise; but her eyes were closed, she breathed not, her face was like death.—The horror of that moment to all who stood around!” (79). Anne’s rational manner is starkly contrasted with those of the other two ladies present: “‘She is dead! she is dead!’ screamed Mary . . . and in another moment, Henrietta, sinking under the conviction, lost her senses too, and would have fallen on the steps, but for Captain Benwick and Anne who caught and supported her between them” (79). Anne does not scream in hysterics or faint away at the sight of this disaster. As she has done during her nephew’s accident, Anne remains rational and issues unsolicited advice in order to help. Anne frees Captain Benwick to go to the assistance of Captain Wentworth: “Go to him, go to him . . . for heaven’s sake go to him. I can support her myself. Leave me, and go to him. Rub her hands, rub her temples; here are salts,—take them, take them” (79). Although these instructions are cried out with the utmost urgency in tone, Anne is able to do what is rationally required.

Anne rejects Captain Wentworth's next suggestion, "Oh God! her father and mother!," for the more immediate need of a doctor (79). Once the company agrees with Anne's idea, it is Anne who adroitly suggests which of the men ought to go: "Captain Benwick, would it not be better for Captain Benwick? He knows where a surgeon is to be found" (79). Anne, as in the instance with her nephew, tends the needs of the entire company: "Anne, attending with all the strength and zeal, and thought, which instinct supplied, to Henrietta, still tried, at intervals, to suggest comfort to the others, tried to quiet Mary, to animate Charles, to assuage the feelings of Captain Wentworth" and as a result all "seemed to look to her for directions" (80). It is through Anne's verbal suggestion that action is accomplished. The chaotic company needs some sense of order so that what has to be will be done, and that order, much like Captain Benwick's reading list, is prompted by Anne. The entire company looks to Anne for direction and guidance: "'Anne, Anne,' cried Charles, 'what is to be done next? What, in heaven's name, is to be done next?'" (80). Anne then suggests that Louisa be taken to the inn, and the company follow her course. Although Louisa is eventually taken to the Harvilles' house instead, Anne's verbal instruction for the sake of Louisa during that crucial time is remarkable. Carson notes that "Anne's ability to listen and learn allows her to control the scene: the distance maintained between herself and the rest of the party grants her the necessary perspective at the crucial moment." Here, on a more significant scale, Anne's verbal influence is demonstrated. Readers are able to recognize the importance of Anne's voice in public conversation. Where previously Anne seemed most at ease in private discourse, Anne's voice is now resourcefully and boldly acting in a more public sphere.

## **Anne's Audience**

In these key scenes at Lyme, Anne finds needy and appreciative audiences. Her conversation with Benwick seems to be equally matched: they both discuss their likes and dislikes, and he quotes material from his favorite authors, while Anne listens. However, when Anne desires to say something, Captain Benwick listens in reciprocal fashion. The narrator markedly states "Captain Benwick listened attentively," and not only that, but "seemed grateful for the interest implied" (73). Captain Benwick makes his respect for Anne apparent; he not only listens to her, but writes "down the names of those she recommended, and promise[s] to procure and read them" in spite of the fact that his looks indicate that he has "little faith in the efficacy of any books on grief like his" (73). Even if he does not actually mean to find these works, at least he pays her the courtesy of listening to her suggestions and writing them down.

The conversation with Captain Benwick is thrown into sharp contrast with those that Anne has earlier with other characters, namely her sister Elizabeth. Anne's earliest recorded conversation with Elizabeth is a great disappointment, especially when Anne attempts to make her concerns known regarding Mrs. Clay. Not only does Elizabeth ignore Anne, but Elizabeth also refuses to entertain the possibility of Mrs. Clay's ulterior motive and openly criticizes Anne for suggesting it. Captain Benwick, by contrast, admires Anne's literary knowledge and appreciates her concern for him.

In much the same way, Captain Wentworth, Captain Benwick, and Charles obey Anne's direction when it concerns Louisa's welfare. They, like Captain Benwick, come to quickly realize Anne's worth as a rational thinker who desires to help the afflicted. The men respect Anne's judgment as if she were an equal. In truth, the men seem to be quite lost

without her. Once they realize their own confusion and Anne's quickness, they pay her due deference. This newfound respect for Anne gains further support when Captain Wentworth takes Henrietta and Anne back home to Uppercross and asks for her opinion on how to tell Louisa's parents: "I have been considering what we had best do. [Henrietta] must not appear at first. She could not stand it. I have been thinking whether you had not better remain in the carriage with her, while I go in and break it to Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove" (84). Captain Wentworth includes Anne in his plan. She is an equal member in this enterprise and he cannot successfully proceed without her help. Captain Wentworth ends his proposal by openly asking Anne, "Do you think this a good plan?" (84). While he already has a plan for how to continue, Captain Wentworth seeks affirmation and support from Anne. Stovel mentions, "Austen clearly thinks that conversation is different from talk or chat, and the distinction between asking and telling is a more particular instance of this difference in speech categories . . . . Perhaps a precise term for such real questions is that they are *consultative*: one person consults another or others to discover information, or opinion, or a preference" (emphasis in original "Asking Versus Telling" 26). By the end of this traumatic experience with Louisa, Anne is, once again, a person respected by Captain Wentworth and worthy of being listened to.

In this section, a great deal ensues to alter the conversation. Anne is befriended by Captain Benwick, who respects her and actively listens to her counsel, and Anne's voice and guidance become vital to saving Louisa's life. Although there are differing degrees and formations of pain exhibited by Captain Benwick and Louisa Musgrove, Anne helps them through her words and does the best with what she has at hand. As the novel progresses, readers notice that Anne's voice in conversation has reached such a pitch that it will never be

the same again: she *does* have a powerful voice when *she chooses* to articulate it. Bree mentions, “It has often been pointed out that the events at Lyme form the turning point in the renewal of the relationship between Anne and Wentworth and that from then onwards Anne begins to find her voice as Wentworth loses his” (159). I would adjust this claim to argue that Captain Wentworth’s influence in conversation perhaps becomes less apparent (as he is less and less in the company of Anne), but that he still remains articulate especially through his letter in the published ending of the novel. The readers are gratified when Anne uses her voice to engage in conversation with Captain Wentworth. Anne and Captain Wentworth’s discourse is all the more enjoyable for the readers because they now understand the respect that Captain Wentworth holds for Anne.

## Chapter Seven

### A Voice of One's Own

Upon return from Lyme Regis, Anne's voice and person seem to take on an entirely new presence. The events at Lyme have shown her family, new acquaintances, and Captain Wentworth a renewed appreciation for Anne's voice and place in their company. This same change extends to an alteration in Anne's personal appearance. The narrator mentions that Lady Russell believes that Anne is "much improved in plumpness and looks," and, on the same note, Sir Walter says a bit later that she is "less thin in her person, in her cheeks; [and finds] her skin, her complexion, greatly improved—clearer, fresher" (87, 102). Such praise, especially from a father who previously took little notice of her, is most noteworthy to readers. The Musgroves now cannot imagine how "should they do without her?" and even Sir Walter and Elizabeth "noticed [her presence] as an advantage" (86, 96). Not only is Anne's company generally appreciated, but she is noted and admired by Captain Benwick, who mentions Anne as a woman with "'Elegance, sweetness, beauty,' Oh! there was no end to Miss Elliot's charms" (92). Mrs. Croft treats Anne with a fond regard and the narrator records that Anne now has "the pleasure of fancying herself a favourite" (88). In addition to all of these comments from other characters about Anne's change of appearance, Mr. Elliot's countless praises of her are also flattering. This physical change comes about because Anne, for the first time in many years, feels her own self worth both in company and in conversation. Warhol claims, "In her ultimate reconciliation with the life of the body, Anne triumphs over the text's violence against her, setting a pattern for the feminist heroine who

no longer needs to fade or die or to provide a spectacle of sensibility. The text's sensations are the heroine's own; in the end, her gaze is represented entirely integrated with the life of her body" (38). Warhol focuses primarily on the transformation of Anne's body throughout the text and its relationship with her character and strength. In much the same way, at the end of the novel, readers hear Anne's fully developed, articulate voice in conversation.

To conclude this study, it seems appropriate to look at the final scene of reunion between Anne and Captain Wentworth. It is here that Anne truly expresses herself and gains her own voice in conversation. This effect is much bolder in Austen's revised version of the ending. Surveying the two manuscript drafts of the novel's conclusion, readers are able to see an important differentiation in not only how much Anne speaks, but what tone is set when she does so. Katie Gemmill notes, "Understandably, the moment of revelation between the two lovers is considerably different in the two versions, as each stems from a vastly different set of events. The initial scenes of each version share the same premise—reconciliation—but none of the same phrases" (117). I would add to Gemmill's distinction that the two endings set very different tones. In the earlier unpublished version, Anne's voice in conversation is limited, strained, and defensive; however, in the final, published text, the reunion between Captain Wentworth and Anne comes about solely through the heartfelt, passionate claims that Anne voices on behalf of women's constancy of affection. As this chapter will soon reveal, Austen's final preference for ending the novel gives greater prominence and distinction to the voice of the heroine, appropriately concluding a theme that has found increasing importance in the plot.

## Speakers

In the unpublished ending of the novel, it is Captain Wentworth who does the majority of the talking. Anne is drawn in to an unexpected meeting with Admiral Croft who invites her, in spite of her protestations, to travel back to his lodgings with him in order to pay a call on Mrs. Croft. During the course of her attendance, Anne does not meet with Mrs. Croft, but overhears a startling conversation between Admiral Croft and Captain Wentworth, who is unexpectedly in attendance. Gemmill asserts, “The far-fetched chain of events that have unfolded in a short time are both forced and unnatural . . . . The domino effect spreads from Austen’s plot into her characterization, generating negative effects along the way” (115). From what Anne hears, she is able to gather that the Crofts desire Captain Wentworth to tell her that Admiral and Mrs. Croft are willing to find a new place to live so that Anne and Mr. Elliot would be able to live at Kellynch-hall. Readers, with the knowledge of Anne and Captain Wentworth’s romantic past, are therefore apprehensive concerning Captain Wentworth’s demeanor while relaying such a message to Anne. Gemmill notes, although Austen uses FID in this scene, “in this passage [it] is merely an expedient, facilitating the rapid unfolding of trivial events in order to set the scene,” which is rather unlike its previous uses throughout the novel (115). Along with the rather rushed FID, Austen includes direct discourse between the hero and heroine that echoes the hurried nature of the FID.

Shortly after being asked to talk to her, Captain Wentworth confronts Anne with his charged proposal. Following an articulation of his own discomfort concerning this situation, Captain Wentworth gets to the point of his task: “It was very confidently said that Mr. Elliot—that everything was settled in the family for an Union between Mr. Elliot—and yourself . . . . And my commission from him [the Admiral] Madam, is to say, that if the

Family wish is such, his Lease of Kellynch shall be cancel'd, and he and my sister will provide themselves with another home . . . .” (181). After Captain Wentworth collects himself, and Anne can fathom responding, the narrator states “Anne spoke a word or two, but they were unintelligible” (182). Anne then is interrupted by Captain Wentworth in a haste that would imply his foreseeable pain at Anne’s response. Then Anne finally goes on to state, “No Sir—said Anne—There is no message,—You are misin— the Adml is misinformed.—I do justice to the kindness of his Intentions, but he is quite mistaken. There is no Truth in any such report” (182). Here, all that Anne does is tell Captain Wentworth that he has been misinformed about the intended connection between her and Mr. Elliot. Anne does not tell him that it is for *his* sake that she does not intend to marry Mr. Elliot; it is Captain Wentworth who infers as much. Captain Wentworth then turns the topic of conversation to the love that *he* has for Anne. After Captain Wentworth sees his hopes and dreams of a reunion with Anne initially dashed and then abruptly become a possibility once again, he cannot help but jump at his chance: “Anne, my own dear Anne!” (182). The narration follows with “all Suspense and Indecision were over.—They were re-united,” a resolution that Gemmill criticizes as “terse,” and I agree with her assessment (182; Gemmill 119). A few words are all that Anne says to Captain Wentworth in affirmation of his affection, and her response is very ambiguous.

The forced nature of Captain Wentworth’s speech is of utter importance to this scene. The narrator uses phrases such as: “speaking by Necessity,” “—He stopped—but merely to recover breath;—not seeming to expect an answer,” “He proceeded, with a forced alacrity,” and “breathing and speaking quick” (181). Such phrasing intimates to the readers and Anne the difficulty under which Captain Wentworth must suffer in relaying this message.

Throughout his rushed speech, Anne hangs on his every word. Anne's short response negating his suppositions takes his breath away: "He was a moment silent" (182). Anne's words take their effect and are immediately interpreted by Captain Wentworth. In this unpublished edition of the ending, Anne's response to Captain Wentworth is articulated with great difficulty. Anne speaks in starts and attempts to rephrase the information several times. Such a response makes her surprise, concern, and agitation at what Captain Wentworth reports understandable; however, it proves disappointing to the development of Anne's voice throughout the novel. Instead of her difficult articulation and poor communication, readers want a heroine who can speak competently and confidently.

The generally preferred published version of the reunion scene portrays this long-awaited event of the lover's reunion differently, especially in regards to Anne's voice. Bree asserts, "At the White Hart [Anne] is unexpectedly given the opportunity to articulate feelings she has never been able to share with anyone, and she takes courage, risks everything, and speaks" (162). In this account, Anne and Captain Harville are in company at the inn and enter into an intense discussion, or mild debate, on love. In the published version, Captain Wentworth overhears *her*, and, more importantly, *what* he overhears forces his own declaration of love to take form. In comparison to Anne's previous few words of response to Wentworth in the alternate ending, this version has Anne take part in a very lengthy and passionate conversation with Captain Harville that occurs over three pages of text. In this ending, Anne states her own opinions clearly and openly.

It is Anne's clear and determined voice that prompts Captain Wentworth to speak. Bree argues that when "Wentworth has heard and understood Anne's words, he responds with his own declaration" (164). Captain Wentworth is at the writing table on commission to

write out instructions to the frame maker about Captain Benwick's portrait. In response to overhearing Anne's conversation with Captain Harville, Captain Wentworth writes Anne a love letter that brings their complete reunion into being. Captain Wentworth begins his letter, "I must speak to you by such means as are within my reach . . . I can hardly write. I am every instant hearing something which *overpowers* me. You sink your voice, but I can distinguish the tones of that voice, when they would be lost on others.—Too good, too excellent creature!" (emphasis added 167-168). It is Anne's voice coupled with her articulation of feeling that evokes such an effect on Captain Wentworth. Here, Anne's voice in conversation reaches its ultimate power and strength. Where Anne's voice in Lyme is based on reaction, her response here is heartfelt and thought out. Anne is already acutely engaged in conversation, and as a result of her speech another, who would have remained silent, is forced to speak. Anne has, at the end of the novel, a complete transformation in conversation. The tone of Anne's speech alters as she inserts herself and her thoughts freely and boldly into conversation, as opposed to her earlier conversations at Kellynch-hall in which she only provides needed details. The type of language used also changes from unsure utterances to brave assertions as Anne intrepidly counters Captain Harville's declarations.

### **Listeners**

There are several listeners in the unpublished edition; however, the most important listener is Anne herself. Anne overhears the words exchanged between Captain Wentworth and Admiral Croft: "She could not doubt their being speaking of her. She heard her own name and *Kellynch* repeatedly—she was very much distressed" (emphasis in original 180). Captain Wentworth does the majority of the talking, whether out of agitation, passion, or both, and Anne listens attentively as she perhaps tries to formulate her own thoughts before

she responds. The narrator powerfully states Anne's reaction to Captain Wentworth's initial execution of Admiral Croft's wishes: "Anne listened, as if her Life depended on the issue of his Speech" (181). Anne listened, as she does so well; however, speaking is difficult and painful for her. Therefore, Anne's hesitancy, bafflement, and mild disturbance are coupled with Captain Wentworth's nervous, frustrated speech to disable her speech and make her instead an attentive listener.

In the published version, it is Captain Wentworth who is the active listener. This change of role also indicates Anne's development of voice that alters her part in conversation from listener to active, articulate participant. Now, Anne proves herself to be worthwhile to listen *to*. As Anne speaks with Captain Harville she is startled mid-speech by a disturbance from someone near her in the room. The narrator records, "It was nothing more than [Captain Wentworth's] pen had fallen down, but Anne was startled at finding him nearer than she had supposed, and half inclined to suspect that the pen had only fallen, because he had been occupied by them, striving to catch sounds, which yet she did not think he could have caught" (165). Shortly after, Captain Wentworth breaks the silence between Anne and himself in the letter: "I can listen no longer in silence . . . You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope" (167). He goes on to comment on what he has overheard: "Dare not say that man forgets sooner than woman, that his love has an earlier death" (167-168). Captain Wentworth's blatant attention to what Anne has to say is recorded in the letter, and he finishes it by articulating the power that Anne's voice does and will have over him: "A word, a look will be enough to decide whether I enter your father's house this evening, or never" (168). In the published edition, Anne is given more say. Now, Captain Wentworth articulates his own sentiments towards Anne, and it is up to her whether or not she truly receives and

reciprocates them, unlike earlier when Captain Wentworth takes advantage of Anne's simple, albeit ill-relayed, response to infer the meaning of her words in his own favor.

### **The Defense**

Generally overlooked in analysis of both the published and unpublished editions are the verbal defenses that Anne is forced to make; these moments pay tribute to Anne's developed voice and ability of expression.

Following Captain Wentworth's declaration, in the scene at the Crofts', Anne is forced to defend her past action of refusing Captain Wentworth. The tone of the chapter follows the rushed, anxious beginning it initially took. Quickly after the affirmation of their love, Captain Wentworth passionately articulates his own frustration with Anne and the situation he felt developing between Anne and Mr. Elliot:

To see you, cried he, in the midst of those who could not be my well-wishers, to see your Cousin close by you—conversing and smiling—and feel all the horrible Eligibilities and Proprieties of the Match! . . . How could I not look on you without agony? Was not the very sight of the *Friend* who sat behind you?—was not the recollection of what *had* been—the knowledge of her Influence—the indelible, immoveable Impression of what *Persuasion* had *once* done, was not it all against me?

(emphasis in original 184)

Captain Wentworth's fear of insufficiency in light of Mr. Elliot's apparent attachment and Lady Russell's influence culminate in a rant against the world followed by a direct slight to Anne.

Anne defends herself against Captain Wentworth's accusations: "You should have distinguished—replied Anne—you should not have suspected me *now*;—The case so

different, and my age so different!” (184). Here she returns his attack saying that if Captain Wentworth knew her at all he would know that she is not under the same sort of constraints that she had been seven years ago. Anne then goes on to defend her decision to break off her attachment to Captain Wentworth seven years ago by rationalizing her decision to him who only could believe in his own suffering: “—If I *was* wrong, in yielding to Persuasion once, remember that it was to Persuasion exerted on the side of Safety, not of Risk. When I yielded, I thought it was to *Duty*.—But no *Duty* could be called in aide here” (184). Captain Wentworth then decidedly expounds on the acknowledgement of his own wronged spirit as he recounts to her: “I could only think of you as one who *had* yielded, who *had* given me up, who *had* been influenced by any one other than by *me . . .*” (emphasis in original 184). Anne’s simple response seems to put everything he says in its proper place: “I should have thought . . . that my Manner to yourself, might have spared you much, or all of this” (185).

There may be many reasons why this scene described is not used in the published version. In truth, Anne’s voice is exemplified in this particular scene and is indeed very powerful; however, for a reunion of lovers, the tone is all wrong. There is only perhaps a page and a half of delightful sentiment before Captain Wentworth feels the need to let loose all of the pent up hurt and frustration he has felt over the past years. Anne’s defense of her actions comes with a tone of almost sadness: sadness that he feels so imposed upon on her behalf, sadness that Captain Wentworth does not truly know her better and sadness at his own folly. The text makes Captain Wentworth sound like a victim, if not to the readers, who know better, then definitely to himself. Frantz states, “Lacking both the letter and his admission of his own pride at the end of the chapter, both unique to the published version, these first direct words question the validity of Wentworth’s education about Anne’s feelings

and his own resentment, rather than confirming it” (177). I appreciate Austen’s display of Captain Wentworth’s frailty, as, in truth, it is called into question many times throughout the novel; however, *this* is not a hero with whom readers want to leave Anne. Captain Wentworth seems a man too consumed with his own misery and jealousy. By attempting to wound Mr. Elliot’s image, he instead wounds Anne through his inability to truly understand or have faith in her.

The defense in the published version is far more articulate and heartwarming. Here, Anne stands up for her present choice to purposefully not act on, or make known, her steadfast feelings towards Captain Wentworth. As Harris notes, “Anne proves that in spite of all the prejudicial stories women are constant. Against all custom she defines men; against all tradition she ties the tongue of a man. But it is a measure of her difficulty that even in this scene she speaks not personally but allusively, drawing on the words of powerful ‘authorities’—Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Richardson—in order to speak her mind” (16-17). Henedy also draws attention to the revised ending asserting, “Anne’s words in particular and the scene in general have been much admired, and deservedly so” (36). He goes on to argue, “What has perhaps not yet been fully appreciated, however, is the beautiful preparation for the scene . . . by Anne’s speaking to Wentworth at the concert . . . [and] by all the listening that Anne has done during the novel and especially by her overhearing of Wentworth’s conversation with Louisa at Winthrop” (36). With such build up, readers are completely prepared for Anne’s bold responses to Captain Harville’s claims. In addition to the substantial grounding the readers have received for this conversation, Austen also remains socially and characteristically sound. Giordano asserts that, in conversation, “Propriety dictates that as a woman she cannot speak her feelings to Wentworth, and Anne

herself would be extremely uncomfortable with any direct exposure of her feelings. But because her words are directed to Harville and not to Wentworth, she permits herself to say things only Wentworth would understand, if he were listening” (118). Harris builds on this concept and states, “In this dialogue between Anne and Captain Harville, Captain Wentworth hears a declaration of love such as no woman of her time could ever have spoken directly. She both speaks and does not speak, and cannot therefore be labeled as unfeminine” (“Asking Versus Telling” 17). Thus, Anne is able to truly articulate her sentiments concerning Captain Wentworth in a safe and socially savvy way, if only for her own satisfaction in being able to voice her opinions and express herself freely.

As in the unpublished version Anne defends her past action to refuse Captain Wentworth; in this scene she upholds her honorable silence in love or rather her inaction. Her bold words, readers can see, do not negate Captain Harville’s, but instead add to them. Tension arises, not from frustration of anger, but from the conversationalists’ desire to make their perspectives felt as well as understood. Captain Harville desires Anne to understand his perspective as a devoted husband and father who must be absent from those he loves because of his work, and Anne desires him to understand the female plight of domestic solitude and its effect on the mind in women’s constancy. Anne intrepidly articulates,

Yes. 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. You are forced on exertion. You have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort or other, to take you back into the world immediately, and continual occupation and change soon weaken impressions. (164)

The terms and phrases that Anne uses like “certainly” and “I will not allow” (165) show that she has come a great way from her initial responses in conversation, which include faltering statements of “I think,” “I believe,” and “I suppose” in Chapter 3 (15,17, and 18).

In her defense of women’s ability to love, Anne does not falter as she allows her friend Captain Harville some leeway and still remains firm: “Your feelings may be the strongest . . . but the same spirit of analogy will authorize me to assert that ours are the most tender” (165). She goes on to express her own opinions more fervently and to the point: “All the privilege I claim for my own sex . . . is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone” (166). Anne is able to articulate her argument so well throughout this conversation because she is passionate about the subject, more so here than ever before in the text. Anne’s words flow eloquently from her. The words are filled with feeling and power that others perhaps doubted that she possessed; however, she does possess these feelings and therefore defends her own patient inaction accordingly. Shaw states,

Anne’s conversation with Captain Harville demonstrates that feeling can be uttered in words that reach beyond, yet do not flout social conventions. Their debate about constancy is both a brilliant plot device, which allows Anne to communicate obliquely to the eavesdropping Wentworth, and a triumphant vindication of opinion grounded in emotion. Anne shows that she can translate personal feeling into rational speech with sincerity and wit. (300-301)

Here, we have the articulate heroine readers have been waiting for throughout the course of the novel. Here, Anne’s eloquent thoughts and fluency translate into language that prompts the action of others. Here, Anne’s voice becomes her own and is truly expressed in conversation.

Anne's only faltering occurs when, "She could not immediately have uttered another sentence; her heart was too full, her breath too much oppressed" (166). Likewise, Captain Wentworth sometimes stumbles into passion that makes him speak unguardedly and, at times, to pain others. However, Captain Wentworth, with his brutal honesty and open character, is more preferable to Anne than Mr. Elliot, who desires to be universally pleasing without any regard for truth. Bree states, "As time passes [Anne] comes to feel, with ever more conviction, that the openness and sincerity that mark Wentworth's speech, even when accompanied by signs of imperfect control of his emotions, offer a more reliable gauge of character than does a universally smooth conversational surface" (156). In her faltering, Anne's passion forces her, yet again, into silent contemplation in order to gather her thoughts and composure before entering once more into the conversation.

Throughout the course of the novel, Anne Elliot undoubtedly develops as a character and heroine. Beyond her physical appearance that alters as the novel progresses, readers are able to hear the transformation in Anne's voice and presence in her conversations with others. Bander notes, "Of all Austen's heroines, Fanny Price and Anne Elliot come closest to the ideal silent woman of the courtesy-books, but *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* illustrate how profoundly these two heroines observe and judge their worlds from within their protective silence, and how telling their speech may become when they break that silence" (55). Anne Elliot, although generally thought a silent character, has a great deal to say and by the end of the novel has the courage to say it. Through her experiences with family and friends after leaving her home at Kellynch-hall, Anne is able to not only find her place in her family and society, but also to find comfort in her own voice.

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## **Vita**

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