

# The outsider – muriels wedding and persuasion

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THE EXPERIENCE OF AN OUTSIDER CAN LEAD TO SELF DISCOVERY TO WHAT EXTENT IS THIS EVIDENT IN MURIEL'S WEDDING AND PERSUASION Through Jane Austen's Persuasion and P. J. Hogan's Muriel's Wedding, the experiences of the protagonists as outsiders within either family or society leads to the self "discovery. Austen's Persuasion explores the concept of being an outsider predominantly through the protagonist, Anne, who often implores a submissive attitude towards her unappreciative family. Her interactions with them throughout the novel are an integral part in displaying the recognition of self-worth by the character.

Experiencing, losing and reclaiming love allows her to develop a sense of maturity through which she is finally able to exercise independence, thus gaining a true understanding of her value and self-worth. Austen displays the journey to self-discovery by overcoming obstacles through vast use of reflection and contrast. Comparatively, within the film Muriel's Wedding, the protagonist is depicted as an outcast both within society and her immediate family. This distinction is made clear through the director's use of costuming and scene composition, differentiating her and recognising Muriel as an outsider. Being very much the product of her environment, the experiences and treatment of Muriel by her family aid significantly in the realisation of self-discovery.

Furthermore, the loss of her friendship with Rhonda is a catalyst to her self-discovery, allowing her to recognise her mistakes and accepting her true self. Undeniably, it is evident that both the characters of Anne and Muriel, through their experiences as an outsider realise their true value and regain a sense of self. Family plays an integral role in recognising Anne as an outsider

and provides a medium through which her understanding of self-worth develops.

Austen establishes Anne as an outsider from the very beginning of the novel, "Her word had no weight, her convenience would always give way" she was only Anne. The use of listing emphasises the neglect of Anne within the Elliot family and the hyphen differentiates her, reiterating her status as an outcast. Contrast between the Elliot sisters also highlights the polarity between the three. Elizabeth, an excellent reflection of her father's values and traits, was very like himself, dominated by vanity and an inflated sense of self-worth. Similarly, Mary compensates for a lack of attention through melodrama, having only gained artificial importance through marriage. Austen's juxtaposes the three sisters in order to highlight Anne's exemplary traits and features in comparison.

The contrast in tone when describing Anne's character compared to the sisters further emphasises her as being more valued by society, if not her immediate family. Descriptive language and sarcasm serves to differentiate Anne from her shallow family members as stated by the narrator, "with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character... placed her high with any people of real understanding." Unlike Muriel, Anne has already established and is comfortable with her sense of self but remains unappreciated by others due to her passive nature as displayed through the dialogue, "Nobody heard, or at least, nobody answered." Repetition of "nobody" shows how little value Anne has within the group at Uppercross. Environment is a significant factor leading to the development of self-worth within Anne as

she is more valued and acknowledged in Lyme and Bath in comparison to Uppercross. Upon gaining the attentions of both Benwick and Mr. Elliot, Anne becomes more recognised as communicated through Austen's use of descriptive language. She was looking remarkably well, having the bloom and freshness of youth restored. The improvement in Anne's appearance is implied to be due to an increase of attention, resulting in the emergence of a less passive attitude towards her family members.

It is ultimately her marriage to Wentworth, disapproved by her family that allows her to gain independence and recognise her true value. Similarly, family is the catalyst through which Muriel acknowledges the importance of self-acceptance. Recognised as an outcast of both the community and her own family, Muriel's goal in life is to be normal, a goal only achievable through marriage. Growing up in a chaotic household, she is greatly influenced by the actions of her family, particularly her father. Constantly being reminded of her failures by her family, You're the most useless of them all, she develops a low sense of self-worth, and hungrily pursues any gratification.

Similar to Elizabeth and Mr Elliot in Persuasion, Muriel is a reflection of Bill Heslop's deceptive nature. A notion portrayed through Muriel's dishonesty throughout the film, although it is her understanding that it is right as she states, I'll show them. I'll show them all prior to engaging in fraud as hopeful music is played. The contrast between her actions and the non-diegetic music being played indicates the immense influence her father's dishonest attitude has had on her.

The slightly sombre hopeful music becomes a symbol of her deceptive actions, being played prior or during an event in which she lies or commits a dishonest act. Ultimately it is the death of her mother which acts as a catalyst causing Muriel to recognise the error of her ways, coming to a realisation about the importance of honesty and self-acceptance. 'I thought I was different, A new person. I'm just the same as him,' the comparison between Muriel and Bill Heslop is communicated through the use of listing and pronouns such as 'I' and 'him'. Thus making the connection clear to the audience that it was indeed his influence as a father that led to her desire to be accepted by society prior to accepting herself. Undeniably, it was the recognition of the influence of family that led to her self-discovery and acknowledgment of the importance of self-acceptance. The experience, loss and regain of love within the novel Persuasion allows the protagonist to develop a sense of maturity and leads to the discovery of her true value.

Anne's initial rejection of Wentworth was due to dedication to a sense of duty to her father and Lady Russell as shown through the dialogue, 'In marrying a man indifferent to me, all risk would have been incurred, all duty violated.' Repetition of 'all' in conjunction with the use of emotive language communicates the importance of her actions in rejecting Wentworth in saving herself from possible peril. However, as a consequence of such a decision as 'the years had destroyed her youth and bloom,' leaving her alone and unhappy. Descriptive language and imagery are utilised to convey the impact of losing love on Anne as seen through the phrase, 'destroyed.' Unable to face Wentworth following their reunion, Anne forces

herself to become the outsider by secluding herself from formal occasions and events, ??? they had no conversation together, no intercourse but what the commonest civility required,??? Repetition and listing allows the audience to view the degree of her self-imposed isolation. ??? Her spirits wanted solitude and silence,??? her desire to be alone is communicated through the phrases ??? silence??™ and ??? solitude??™ and further exemplified through her lack of dialogue during the middle of the novel.

It is in her isolation that she discovers Wentworth??™s love for her, ??? he could not forgive her ??“ but he could not be unfeeling.??? The juxtaposition of the phrases communicates the existence of love by Wentworth for Anne. Furthermore, her actions during the fall of Louisa Musgrove also place her as an outsider as her composed nature contrasts with the chaotic behaviour of Charles and Mary. Thus drawing the attention of Wentworth, who recognises her new found maturity and questions Louisa??™s childish stubborn nature. Their rekindled love provides Anne with a renewed sense of happiness as she finally discovers her true self-worth in the affections of Wentworth, ??? Anne was tenderness itself, she had the full worth of it in Captain Wentworth??™s affections.

??? The use of emotive language conveys a sense of comfort and closure, as Anne has finally received fulfilment, no longer an outsider as she has the full value of Wentworth??™s love. Correspondingly, the loss of a love of a different kind leads to the discovery of self within Muriel's Wedding, as Muriel realises the importance of Rhonda??™s friendship. Rhonda and Muriel??™s

reunion presents a vital moment for Muriel as she is no longer an outsider as shown through the dialogue, "I'm not alone, I'm with Muriel."

The director's use of scene composition communicates a sense of unity as the two are placed in the same shot, side by side. This is further exemplified by the ABBA scene in which alternating shots are used to convey the strength of their friendship in comparison to Nicole and Tanya's. "You're not nothing Muriel, you're amazing," Rhonda's motivation removes Muriel's insecurities about being accepted by society.

However, upon the deterioration of Rhonda's health, Muriel begins to sink back into her former life of self-pity and fantasy indicated through the use of sombre classical music while the camera pans on her wedding portfolio. The lack of strength in her friendship with Rhonda fuels her previously deceptive nature intensifying it to the point where she loses her friendship in order to enter a fraudulent marriage. Once again, Muriel has become the outsider, however this time in marriage, "who marries someone they don't know." It is only when she is reunited with Rhonda at the close of the film in which she is finally comfortable with herself, this is shown through the use of close up shots highlighting her facial expressions while ABBA is played.

ABBA's "Dancing Queen" has become a recurring motif within the film as a frame of reference by which all accomplishment is measured by Muriel as she states, "My life is as good as Dancing Queen." The use of simile highlights the importance of such a comparison in measuring her success. Therefore, the director's use of this particular piece of music at the close

of the film acknowledges Muriel's success in discovering and accepting herself.

Undeniably, the experience of an outsider whether it is in families, relationships or society influences a self-discovery as seen in Jane Austen's Persuasion and Muriel's Wedding. Family plays an important role in the lead up to self-discovery as it is either the medium through which the process is viewed or the catalyst for self-discovery. Similarly the loss of love, either romantic or plutonic leads to the development of a sense of maturity leading to a self-discovery. All these notions are present within the aforementioned texts and are influenced due to the experiences of an outsider.