

The Nineteenth-Century Novel
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Lecture - 10
Persuasion Vol.II, Chapters 13-18 (Continued 1)

Hello and welcome back. We are in week 3 and we are in volume II of Persuasion. So in this session, we will look at the consequences of Anne's visit to Lyme Regis.

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• Charles laughed again and said, "Now Mary, you know very well how it really was. It was all your doing." (turning to Anne.) He fancied that if he went with us, he should find you close by; he fancied everybody to be living in Uppercross; and when he discovered that Lady Russell lived three miles off, his heart failed him, and he had not courage to come."

fancies
↳ imaginative inclinations

potential romance between Anne & Capt. Benwick

There is talk about a potential romance between Captain Benwick and Anne Elliot, so in this excerpt that I have there on the slide, we can see that Charles is speculating about a kind of a possible romance between Benwick and Anne, and Mary is supposed to be the spoilsport. And Anne is a kind of a silent witness to these banter between the husband and the wife, Charles and Mary.

“Charles laughed again and said, 'Now Mary, you know very well how it really was. It was all your doing.' (Turning to Anne) 'He fancied that if he went with us, he should find you close by; he fancied everybody to be living in Uppercross; and when he discovered that Lady Russell lived three miles off, his heart failed him, and he had not courage to come.’” So this set of ideas by Charles Musgrove offers us a glimpse into Captain Benwick’s motivations.

And number one, Charles thinks that Benwick is interested in Anne Elliot and it could possibly be, even though we do not have more tangible evidence, you know, the subtle

evidence that we can gather is through his desire, Benwick's desire to visit Anne Elliot and apparently Benwick thought that Anne Elliot lived in Uppercross village, but when he realized that perhaps Mary has offered him this information that Anne does not live in Uppercross.

In fact, she is staying with Lady Russell. So when Mary apparently supplied this information, you know, Benwick gave up on this idea of visiting Anne Elliot. So we can see that Benwick is not a character who is really firm in his motivations, and who is also not firm in putting his desires into practice. And Charles' words here have a lot of importance in retrospect when you know, we see how all these courtship plots in fact finally come to fruition. We can see that perhaps something is not very very admirable in the character of Captain Benwick.

So these words "He had not courage to come" is telling about the character of Captain Benwick. and the word he "fancied" that if he went with us he fancied everybody. So he is a man who has a lot of fancies, and fancies in those times referred to imaginative inclinations, something that is not to do with fact, rather its opposite. So we do get a sense that there is a potential romance talked about between Anne and Captain Benwick.

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Mary's opinion on the potential romance

- "And I am sure," cried Mary, warmly, "it was a very little to his credit, if he did. Miss Harville only died last June. Such a heart is very little worth having; is it, Lady Russell? I am sure you will agree with me."

→ the Elliot pride
→ anxiety
→ cross class marriage
→ influence of Lady Russell?



"I am sure," cried Mary warmly. "It was very little to his credit, if he did. Miss Harville only died last June. Such a heart is very little worth having; is it, Lady Russell? I am sure you will agree with me." So following on this possibility of a romance between Captain Benwick and Anne, this excerpt which is actually a point of view of Mary tells us that Mary Elliot or Mary

Musgrove is not very keen on this romance coming to fruition in the marriage of Anne and Captain Benwick.

She does not want or like Captain Benwick to marry Anne Elliot because he is beneath Anne's status. He is also not very very wealthy. So there are two points against him. And Mary says that Miss Harville, the late fiancée of Captain Benwick only died last June. So if he does fall in love with Anne Elliot, it is not a very admirable thing, it is not something very very appropriate for him to do so and that would show that he has not been very loyal to his past beloved.


And she tries to get the approval of Lady Russell and she believes that Lady Russell will agree. So once again we get to see the Elliot pride, and we again get to see the anxiety of, about cross-class marriage on the part of Mary Musgrove. And we also get to see the potential influence of Lady Russell, and the question is is Lady Russell still very very influential in the life of Anne Elliot.

So all these speculations are kind of swirling about, and Anne as you can see is a kind of a silent witness to all these possibilities and speculations surrounding her and her future life partner.

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Captain Wentworth and Louisa

- "He had not seen Louisa; and was extremely fearful of any ill consequence to her from an interview, that he did not press for it all; and, on the contrary seemed to have a plan of going away for a week or ten days, till her head was stronger."



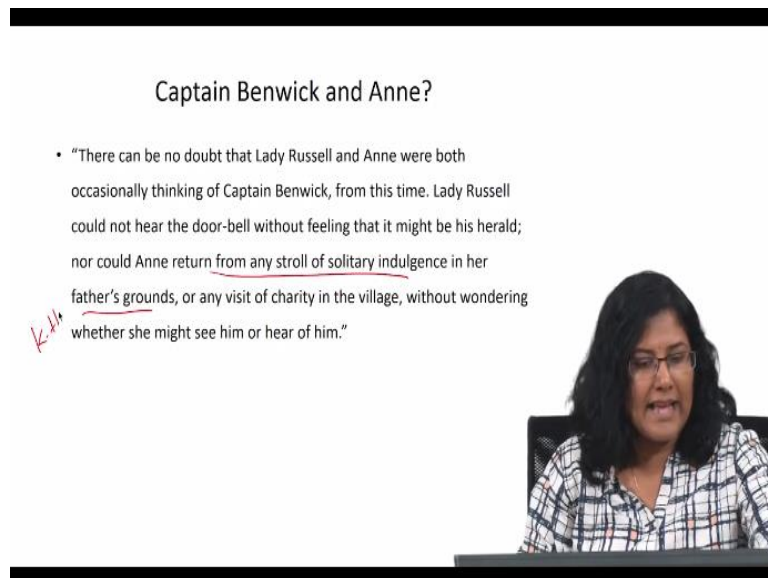
Now we have to come back to Captain Wentworth and, you know, his position in terms of Louisa Musgrove who has had a very severe fall, and that fall kind of is the turning point in the lives of many as we will see. So there are inquiries about what is Captain Wentworth

doing, and this is the response. “He had not seen Louisa; and was extremely fearful of any ill consequence to her from an interview, that he did not press for it at all; and on the contrary seemed to have a plan of going away for a week or ten days, till her head was stronger.”

So this is what Charles offers about Captain Wentworth's plans. It is very interesting and curious to realize that Wentworth is not seeking an interview with Louisa Musgrove. In fact, he is extremely fearful of meeting her, and the apparent reason is that such a meeting would worsen her situation, so he did not press for it at all. He is not curious, or he is not keen to meet his apparent lady love, and that is significant.

And on the contrary, instead of meeting her, he is not spending time at least in the same house, in fact he is seem to have a plan of leaving the place, altogether he is planning to go away for a week or 10 days till her head was strong, till she is able to think for herself, till she is able to manage her mind and body.

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The slide features a title "Captain Benwick and Anne?" at the top. Below it is a bullet point containing a quote from Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. The quote is: "There can be no doubt that Lady Russell and Anne were both occasionally thinking of Captain Benwick, from this time. Lady Russell could not hear the door-bell without feeling that it might be his herald; nor could Anne return from any stroll of solitary indulgence in her father's grounds, or any visit of charity in the village, without wondering whether she might see him or hear of him." The words "stroll of solitary indulgence" and "father's grounds, or any visit of charity" are underlined in red. To the left of the quote, there is a handwritten red mark that looks like "K.H.". In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a small video inset showing a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a plaid shirt, looking towards the camera.

Now again this question of whether Captain Benwick and Anne will become lovers and future partners in marriage. “There can be no doubt that Lady Russell and Anne were both occasionally thinking of Captain Benwick, from this time. Lady Russell could not hear the door-bell without feeling that it might be his herald; nor could Anne return from any stroll of solitary indulgences in her father's grounds, or any visit of charity in the village, without wondering whether she might see him or hear of him.”

It is a very realistic passage in this novel. We know that Anne is interested in Captain Wentworth, even though she also knows that there is no chance that she can get back with him, that is one thing, and we know that, you know, Anne is aware of the fact that Louisa Musgrove has had a fall and that Captain Wentworth is, you know, spending time in the vicinity, and everybody expects them to marry once she is better.

So that expectation is something that Anne is aware of. So Anne kind of senses that he is going to marry Louisa Musgrove. So does everybody, that is one thing. And then another thing is that after having met Benwick at Lyme Regis, there seems to be a kind of positive sensation towards this young man who has also had a personal loss. So she is kind of expecting him to come visit her.

Anne is expecting it. So is Lady Russell. And this statement which says that Anne could not return from any stroll, whenever she is coming home after her walk, after her solitary walk in her father's grounds at Kellynch Hall or after coming back from some kind of charitable activity in the village, she expects to meet this "knight in shining armor" you know come across her in her solitary walk and meet her and talk to her.

So this is the realistic expectation, I believe, of a woman who has had, you know, disappointments in love and the hope for something better to happen, the hope for something positive and a new kind of romance to come into her life is expected and anticipated. And even Lady Russell, even though Captain Benwick is not Anne's equal in status or wealth, is expecting him to come back and woo Anne Elliot.

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Mr Elliot

Anne → Capt Wentworth

- "she felt that she would rather see Mr Elliot again than not, which was more than she could say for many other persons in Bath."

Capt Wentworth

Anne - Captain Benwick

Mr Elliot

Mrs Clay

Courtship trajectory

Now this is Anne, and we have her opinions of Mr. Elliot. And Anne felt that she would rather see Mr. Elliot again than not, which was more than she could say for many other persons in Bath. So it is again, a very realistic anticipation. We realized that Captain Benwick has not come to visit Anne, so that is one suitor crossed off, and then we have Mr. Elliot. If you remember, we met Mr. Elliot at Lyme Regis, and he is that polite stranger who is visibly affected by the beauty and the bloom that Anne kind of undergoes at Lyme Regis. So, you know, let me complete this list of suitors, we have Captain Wentworth. So we have Captain Wentworth who is almost out of reach of Anne because he is still tied up with Louisa Musgrove. Anne has kind of potentially no hopes there, and then Captain Benwick is also out of the running because he is expected but he never comes to visit her. Even Lady Russell expects him to visit, Anne hopes to bump into him during her walks, that does not happen. And so who is left out? It is Mr. Elliot. And Anne feels that she would rather see Mr. Elliot again than not. So it would be exciting, it would be interesting to see him as not, and she would rather visit Mr. Elliot than other persons in Bath. And the other persons might refer to people like Mrs. Clay and perhaps even, you know, sisters like Elizabeth Elliot.

So we can see that hopes for another courtship trajectory of Anne Elliot is constructed here at this moment. While we do have this larger narrative of Anne in relation to Captain Wentworth, that does not mean that there are hopes for, you know, connections with other people in the unlikely event of Anne not marrying Captain Wentworth. We as readers know that.

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Camden Place, Bath

• CH-4

Now we have in Camden Place a set of people who are going to complicate the plot trajectory for the second half of the novel. And one of the important people in this regard is Mrs. Clay, and everybody is paying an attention on Mrs. Clay. Lady Russell is unhappy with the fact that Mrs. Clay is spending a lot of time with Elizabeth Elliot, and Anne is unhappy with the fact that Mrs. Clay has a possible, you know, desires for Sir Walter Elliot.

And Mr. Elliot is also aware of such a possibility; what if Mrs. Clay becomes the next Lady Elliot. So Anne and Mr. Elliot and Lady Russell are worried about it with varying levels of awareness about Mrs. Clay's machinations.

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Lady Russell on Mr Elliot

- "He was steady, observant, moderate, candid; never run away with by spirits or by selfishness, which fancied itself strong feeling; and yet, with a sensibility to what was amiable and lovely, and a value for all the felicities of domestic life, which characters of fancied enthusiasm and violent agitation seldom really possess."
- Ch-4

Now this is what Lady Russell has to say about Mr. Elliot. "He was steady, observant, moderate, candid; never run away with by spirits or by selfishness, which fancied itself strong

feeling; and yet, with a sensibility to do what was amiable and lovely, and a value for all the felicities of domestic life, which characters of fancied enthusiasm and violent agitation seldom really possesses.”

So Lady Russell is full of, you know, admiration for Mr. Elliot, and that is to be expected because we know that Lady Russell has high opinions for the aristocracy. And Mr. Elliot who was in the bad books of Sir Walter Elliot and his family, is now in the good books of the same family. So now, she can wax eloquent on the fact that he is very very stable, he is very considerate, he is moderate, he is not, you know, swinging between extremes of emotion, he is also frank.

He has openly come up with his opinions regarding his past behavior, he has explained himself and he is not very passionate, he is not run away with by spirits and he is not selfish according to Lady Russell, and we do not know what is her basis for this comment of lack of selfishness. And then she says there is a sensibility to him which was amiable, which was lovely to look at, which is very endearing.


And she thinks that such a character is perfect for domestic life, and she believes that people who are very passionate are not suitable for domesticity. And here we can see that she is having a dig at Captain Wentworth who is supposed to be very very passionate and full of emotions. And she is indirectly comparing Mr. Elliot with Captain Wentworth, and that is what is happening, and obviously she prefers the heir to this Kellynch Hall.

And what is another very interesting point here is that this observation on the part of Lady Russell, that passion is not conducive to domestic happiness, this extremes of emotion are not going to construct a stable domestic, you know, discourse within a home. And that is her belief. And we can see that, you know, ultimately her beliefs are sort of, you know, pulled down when Anne goes ahead and marries Captain Wentworth ultimately.

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Anne on Mr Elliot

- They did not always think alike. His value for rank and connexion she perceived was greater than hers. It was not merely complaisance, it must be a liking to the cause, which made him enter warmly into her father and sister's sollicitudes on a subject unworthy to excite them.
- Ch-4



Mr Elliot
Sir Walter
Lady Russell

Here we have Anne's views on Mr. Elliot. We can see that there is a kind of a trajectory for Anne in terms of Mr. Elliot. She first meets Mr. Elliot at Lyme Regis, and she is happily aware that this stranger is struck by her beauty, and that is a positive thing, and then later she realizes that this man is actually her relative and the man who is going to own Kellynch Hall at the death of her father.

And once she has met him, she realizes that, you know, even though he is attractive, amiable and agreeable, they do not always think alike. So she is excited to meet him when she has not met him, she is excited to meet him in Bath, but she, you know, is not very sure about him, and that sense of not being very certain about Mr. Elliot is expressed in this excerpt. It says "They did not always think alike," they being Anne and Mr. Elliot. "His value for rank and connexion she perceived was greater than hers. It was not merely complaisance, it must be a liking to the cause, which made him enter warmly into her father and her sister's sollicitudes on a subject unworthy to excite them." So it is very clear what is the point of contention between Anne and Mr. Elliot. It is very simple; Mr. Elliot is full of praise for the aristocracy, whereas Anne does not have similar feelings for the same subject.

And Anne is also aware that he is not simply agreeing with her father and sister, it is not mere polite agreement. It is his own involvement that comes through in his, you know, ardent responses about the privileges, about the superiorities of the aristocratic class. So we can see where Anne and Mr. Elliot differ. So this kind of awareness puts Mr. Elliot alongside Sir Walter and Lady Russell. So somehow, this attitude puts Mr. Elliot in this class bracket.

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Anne on the idea of good company

- "My idea of good company, Mr Elliot, is the company of clever well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation; that is what I call good company."
- Ch-4



So Anne tells him quite clearly what is her idea of good company and she says that, "My idea of good company, Mr. Elliot, is the company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation; that is what I call good company." So she is very blunt here, and she just puts her cards on the table for Mr. Elliot. So Mr. Elliot is very charming, he is very gentleman like, he is going to be, you know, the owner of Kellynch Hall, he is going to be very wealthy.

But Anne does not buckle in to all these, you know, accessories so to speak, the class accessory and other, you know, the gentlemanly qualities of Mr. Elliot. She does not buckle under that weight of a character of Mr. Elliot. She simply says that, look, my idea is just, I think people are great if they have a great deal of conversation, that is what I call good company.

And here we are reminded of Anne's preference with the company of the Harvilles, preference for the company of Captain Benwick who reads a lot of poetry. Anne does like him initially, you know, at least they can talk about literature, so that is what she thinks is interesting in contrast to people like Sir Walter, Elizabeth Elliot, and others of the ilk who think that, you know, great company is people belonging to a particular class, the upper class here, the nobility. So she is clearly different to Mr. Elliot in this subject.

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Merits of Place

- "In London, perhaps, in your present quiet style of living, it might be as you say; but in Bath; Sir Walter Elliot and his family will always be worth knowing: always acceptable as acquaintance."
- Ch-4

Place: "matter of indifference" ??



But, you know, Mr. Elliot does put up a resistance to that concept, and you know, he says that "In London, perhaps, in your present quiet style of living, it might be as you say; but in Bath, Sir Walter and his family will always be worth knowing, always acceptable in acquaintance." The context for this conversation is the talk about Dalrymples and their, you know, not very respectful attitude towards Sir Walter Elliot and his family.

They are very polite but Anne knows that they are not hugely respected by the Dalrymples who are part of the aristocracy, and Mr. Elliot tells Anne that in Bath, Sir Walter Elliot has a big house in Camden Place. Therefore, he is, in fact, acceptable as an acquaintance to anybody from the superior classes. In London, it might not be the case, but in Bath that is definitely the case because place is important.

And whereas Anne does not place a lot of onus on spatiality, for her it is a matter of indifference, but for people like the Dalrymples and people who put a lot of faith in the, you know, in the value and the superiority of the aristocracy do put a lot of importance to the kind of houses one lives in or rents.

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Place and Rank in Society

- Ch-4
- "Well," said Anne, "I certainly am proud, too proud to enjoy a welcome which depends so entirely upon place."

The slide features three blue boxes. The first is an oval containing the text 'Place, Status'. The second is an oval containing the text 'Respect of an individual'. The third is a rounded rectangle containing the text 'Gentry and Nobility and the Professional Classes'. A woman is visible on the right side of the slide, appearing to be presenting.

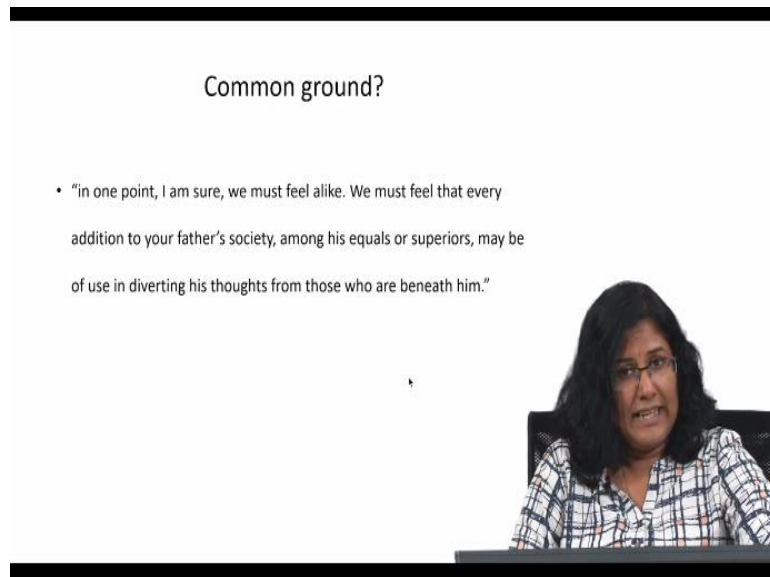
But Anne is again very dismissive, and that is a very interesting characteristic of Anne. So far we have seen Anne as one who is very useful to her company, you know, Anne is very utilitarian in the sense that people enjoy the benefits of Anne's efforts, either Anne as a nurse, or Anne as a comforter, or Anne as somebody who can guide people. But here, Anne shows a different characteristic of her personality, which is, you know, very self-reliant in the kind of opinion she forms, and she is also very forthright, there is no compromise. And she says that my father, and people like my father, the Dalrymples, might put a lot of emphasis, value on the kind of space one owns or moves in, but I am not proud of that at all, I am not proud of the fact that I have a big house, but I am proud of something else, and she says that I am certainly proud, too proud to enjoy a welcome which depends so entirely upon place.

I do not want to be welcomed by the fact that I am in possession of a good place. And that place has a dual meaning; that place could refer to one's status in society, that could refer to one's possession of a big house. So I am too proud to enjoy the welcome that I get because of my position and ownership. I want to be welcomed for other grounds, for other, on the basis of other things.

So Anne dismisses place and status here and she believes in the value that is placed on individual merits. Individual merits could be, you know, hard work, you know, an ethical way of life, being compassionate, being very interesting and other stuff. So when she kind of dismisses place and status as being less important in her eyes, she is also dismissing the value of the gentry and the nobility here.

And what is being praised indirectly and subtly and strategically is the nature of the professional classes, which does not have landed property, which does not have the kind of status that the aristocracy and the gentry have enjoyed for generations. So she is favoring a different kind of order in society when she makes this comment. It is a very very apparently simple statement, but there is a lot of ideological subtext to this comment.

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The slide features a title "Common ground?" at the top center. Below the title is a bullet point containing a quote: "in one point, I am sure, we must feel alike. We must feel that every addition to your father's society, among his equals or superiors, may be of use in diverting his thoughts from those who are beneath him." In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a small video inset showing a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a plaid shirt, speaking.

Mr. Elliot is trying to find common ground, and even though he senses that Anne is resisting him in trying to agree with and she is resisting, she does not want to endorse Mr. Elliot's viewpoints and Mr. Elliot realizes that. So he is trying to work out a common ground between Anne and himself. So he says that in one point, I am sure we must feel alike, we must feel that every addition to your father's society, among his equals of superiors, may be of use in diverting his thoughts from those who are beneath him.

So what he is trying to say is we got to distract your father, your father is well diverted if he is interested in visiting the Dalrymples, his cousins from the aristocracy, and if he is diverted, if he is distracted, he would not worry too much about Mrs. Clay. And he says that you and I know that Mrs. Clay has designs on your father, and she wants to become the next Lady Elliot, and if your father is occupied with the Dalrymple's he would not think about Mrs. Clay.

So he says that this is the common ground that I have with you, and Anne Elliot of course has to agree here because she also does not like to see Mrs. Clay occupy her mother's place at Kellynch Hall.

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The slide is titled "Mrs Smith" and contains the following text:

- Ch-5
- "widow and poor....a cripple"
- "a disposition to converse and be cheerful beyond her expectation. Neither the dissipation of the past—nor the restrictions of the present, neither sickness nor sorrow seemed to have closed her heart or ruined her spirits."

In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a video inset showing a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a plaid shirt, speaking.

Now we are introduced to a new character called Mrs. Smith, and we will realize that Mrs. Smith and Anne Elliot are acquainted. So who is Mrs. Smith, now at this point in the narrative? She is a widow, she is poor, she is a cripple, she is in Bath, she is from Westgate buildings, and she is all alone. And Anne knows her because Mrs. Smith was once in the same school as Anne Elliot.

And Mrs. Smith did offer some kind of service to her when Anne was, you know, depressed because of the death of her mother. So this is long ago, but Anne gets to know about Mrs. Smith's stay through a conversation with her governess. Thank you for watching. I will

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