

The Nineteenth-Century Novel
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Lecture - 07
Austen's Persuasion, Chapter 7 - 12

Hello and welcome to the continuation of week 2's lecture. Today, will still look at chapters 7 to 12 and try to evaluate the courtships, the various courtships that are germinating in the economy of Uppercross village and Kellynch Hall.

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Anne on her past relationship

- With the exception, perhaps, of Admiral and Mrs Croft, who seemed particularly attached and happy, (Anne could allow no other exceptions even among the married couples), there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison, no countenances so beloved. (Ch-8)



Here we have Anne's assessment of what is an ideal relationship amongst the members of the two villages, at least among the social circle that she is familiar with. And she states that, "With the exception perhaps of Admiral and Mrs. Croft, who seemed particularly attached and happy, Anne could allow no other exceptions even among the married couples, there could have been no two hearts, so open, no taste, so similar, no feelings, so in unison, no countenances so beloved."

So here she is comparing her past relationship with some of the ideal relationships that are existing right now and she comes to the conclusion that except for Admiral and Mrs. Croft, nobody can come closer to the ideal nature of her past relationship, which she had unfortunately to break, to please some of her acquaintances and also for the benefit of her lover. So here we see

a list about what are the qualities of an ideal couple: openness of attitudes, sophisticated tastes which are similar, and feelings which are common.

And there is even an admiration for the countenance of the other, the face of the other, which becomes beloved because of their character. So this is what Anne thinks about her past and the present which has one happy couple who are particularly attached to one another.

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Here we have an illustration of three people, who are Captain Wentworth, Mrs. Musgrove and Anne Elliot there. And here you can see that these two are engaged in an intense conversation, especially it is Mrs. Musgrove who is occupying the attention of Captain Wentworth about her dead son whom he guided when he was a captain of the ship in which Richard Musgrove was a sailor.

And Anne is observing that conversation and she understands that despite the fact that Captain Wentworth probably did not like the boy; he is right now paying the due attention to a mother who is mourning for her son.

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Captain Wentworth

Richard Musgrove: "probably been at pains to get rid of him"

"doing it with so much sympathy and natural grace, as shewed the kindest consideration for all that was real and unabsurd in the parent's feelings."



So this is what the third-person narrator tells us about Richard Musgrove in relation to Captain Wentworth. And there is this understanding that probably Captain Wentworth had been at pains to get rid of him because he is such a difficult boy who had been sent away from land so that the family could be rid of him.

Despite that, despite understanding, you know, the nature of the son and the difficulties he faced with this sailor boy, Captain Wentworth listened, as that illustration, the previous illustration showed us, he listened with a keen ear and he did it with so much sympathy, sympathy for the mother Mrs. Musgrove and natural grace, as showed the kindest consideration for all that was real and unobserved in the parent's feelings.

So though there is a difficult past for Richard Musgrove, this narrative, this excerpt tells us that despite that context, a mother would naturally have certain ideal feelings towards her progeny, and that is what Mrs. Musgrove is kind of recollecting and enjoying that maternal feeling by talking to Captain Wentworth, who at one point guided the boy.


So again, there is a stress on the qualities that Captain Wentworth possesses - sympathy and natural grace, that kind of tolerated the feelings of the others despite, you know, the complications that entailed in that set of feelings. So we do get a kind of a set of attributes in regard to Captain Wentworth and that set includes his sympathy, his grace, his consideration, his

guidance towards those in need. So the narrator or Austen is sketching a character which is rather ideal, rather ideal and one that would be admired by the rest of the society. So a hero is being sketched, is being illustrated.

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Wentworth on women on board ships

- "no ship under my command shall ever convey a family of ladies anywhere, if I can help it."
- "rating the claims of women to every personal comfort high"
- "an evil in itself."
(Ch-8) *Nobility — Chivalry — women*



And another point we should keep in note is this, which is, a while captain Wentworth's qualities are sketched in an admirable way, in an admirable way, we realized that the men who belong to the nobility and the men who are associated with the gentry are not as ideal as Wentworth who belongs to the professional classes. So there is a contrast that is being set up between these upper classes and the middle class.

And we have a hero who is from this middling section, who is the anchor for the story around which everybody gathers, he is the one who comes to the rescue of those in need, be it Richard Musgrove, the heir, the boy who is a member of a gentry household. This is what Wentworth has to say about the function of women in relation to ships, and he claims that no woman should be comfortable on board a ship.

So he states that, no ship under my command shall ever convey a family of ladies anywhere, if I can help it. And he has this claim to make he has this opinion because he thinks that women have every claim to high personal comfort. And this is what the Narrator says about Wentworth's opinion regarding the claims of women whom he thinks should be very, very comfortable and a

ship cannot offer that comfort, and therefore they cannot be on board a ship. So their presence will become an evil in itself because of this context. Not because he is extremely misogynistic, but because he is extremely chivalrous, and that is what Mrs. Croft picks up on when she reacts to the opinions and claims of her brother.

So here at this moment we understand that Captain Wentworth's character has affiliations to a characteristic that is usually associated with the nobility, and that is the character of chivalry, chivalry towards women, and here, interestingly enough, we see that this character Wentworth who is from the professional middle classes, from the middling ranks of society, sketched in such a way that he also assimilates the characteristics of the upper classes, and that is an interesting character sketch.

So while he embodies the essential features of the middle classes such as industry and generosity and the ability to race above on the merit of one's own personal industry and other qualities of shrewdness and sharpness, this man, this middle-class man also possess some of the admirable qualities of the nobility, which is the chivalrous attitude towards women. And that is what is evident here in terms of his opinions about women not being allowed to travel on board a ship.

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Mrs Croft

- "But, you yourself, brought Mrs Harville, her sister, her cousin, and three children, round from Portsmouth to Plymouth. Where was this superfine, extraordinary sort of gallantry of yours then?"
- "All merged in my friendship, Sophia. I would assist any brother officer's wife that I could, and I would bring anything of Harville from the world's end, if he wanted it."

Mrs. Croft intervenes and says that, but you yourself, you yourself Wentworth, brought Mrs. Harville, her sister, and her cousin, and three children, around from Portsmouth to Plymouth.

Where was this superfine, extraordinary sort of gallantry of yours then? So the sister questions Wentworth on the basis of his own past in which he helped a party of women, you know, travel on the seas in his ship and he brought them from Portsmouth to Plymouth.

So he; she asks you are kind of contradicting yourself and he responds by saying, all merged in my friendship, Sophia. I would assist any brother officer's wife that I could, and it would bring anything of Harville from the world's end, if he wanted it. Very interesting conversation, and I want to pick up on the word used by Mrs. Croft which is gallantry and that is related to this idea of chivalry that I talked about just now.

So he does exhibit qualities of gallantry, being really very nice basically, to women and children and those who are in need, so Wentworth has that side to his personality. And then he responds by saying that, I did this even though I might not like it because I wanted to help Captain Harville, and friendship is the cause for my making allowances which would sort of you know, which would sort of not be true to what I hold as a principle. So I do not want women on board a ship that I command but then I make allowances because I do it for friendship, my friendship towards my friend Captain Harville.

And he says that, I will bring anything, anything of Harville and that anything here includes his wife, his children, and others who are connected with him by ties of family. So everything becomes a property here in this discussion, and women also become a kind of a property for Wentworth to fetch and give it to Captain Harville because he wants it. So this leads us into a kind of understanding about the gender roles of that period.

And we would realize that 20th century, 21st century understandings of egalitarian notions about gender are not at play in the 19th century period. There is a set of attributes, there is a set of roles which are assigned to the female sex and there is a set, a different set that is allocated to men who occupy the public sphere as well, who play a leading role in the public sphere as well. So the gender roles are maintained, the status quo in terms of gender roles are largely maintained in *Persuasion*, in *Persuasion* the novel by Jane Austen.

So we need to understand that, we cannot try to forget the conservative gender roles that Persuasion embodied and expressed because it is, you know, Jane Austen and that we tried to, you know gloss over her what is considered to be regressive gender roles just because she is a much admired writer.

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Mrs Croft

• "I hate to hear you talking so like a fine gentleman, and as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures. We none of us expect to be in smooth water all our days."

upper class *metaphor - naval* *difficult water - circumstances*

Mrs. Croft once again wants to kind of express what she thinks is her opinion about the role of women in, the role of women and in ships, when they are traveling with their men folk. And she says that, "I hate to hear you talking so like a fine gentleman, and as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures. We none of us expect to be in smooth water all our days." So while we see that women, even Anne ,express the existing, status quo, about the nature of jobs assigned to women such as nursing being a role for a mother, in terms of Mrs. Croft, we see a different kind of attitude being projected in terms of the function of women in society, and that is very refreshing. So while Persuasion does embody certain qualities about gender roles which are conservative, we have a few characters, especially Mrs. Croft, exhibiting a point of view about the function of women, which is closer to modern understandings of the role of women, women as being rational creatures who can, you know be happy in situations which are harsh, who can accommodate themselves to difficult situations.

So let us see what Mrs. Croft has to say in detail. She says that, do not talk like a fine gentlemen, and she says this to Captain Wentworth, and this again endorses the opinion that we have formed

life has been spent on board a ship. While we were together, you know there was nothing to be feared.”

So there are several things going on in this excerpt in terms of the capacity of women to be happy in a ship, and then the notion of happiness being dependent on where women are, and I will take this one by one. And she says that, nothing can exceed, no home, no home can exceed the accommodations provided by a man-of-war, a man-of-war being a fighting ship basically, a fighter ship.

And she says that, especially the really big ones, the ones that are expensive, the sophisticated ones are really very comfortable, and no home on land can beat that kind of accommodation that a ship offers to a woman. And she says that, of course a frigate will be less comfortable but even in a frigate, a smaller ship, a reasonable woman can be very comfortable and happy.

She uses the word “happy” and that is interesting because as we as we see, her happiness; Mrs. Crofts happiness is dependent on her companionship with her husband. She says, while we were together, while my husband and I were together there was nothing to be feared, I did not fear for anything because I was in his company and I had nothing to worry about; and she also says that when only when I am on land and when he is traveling I worry about all sorts of things. So while we are together there is nothing to be feared, and when there is nothing to be feared we are happy.

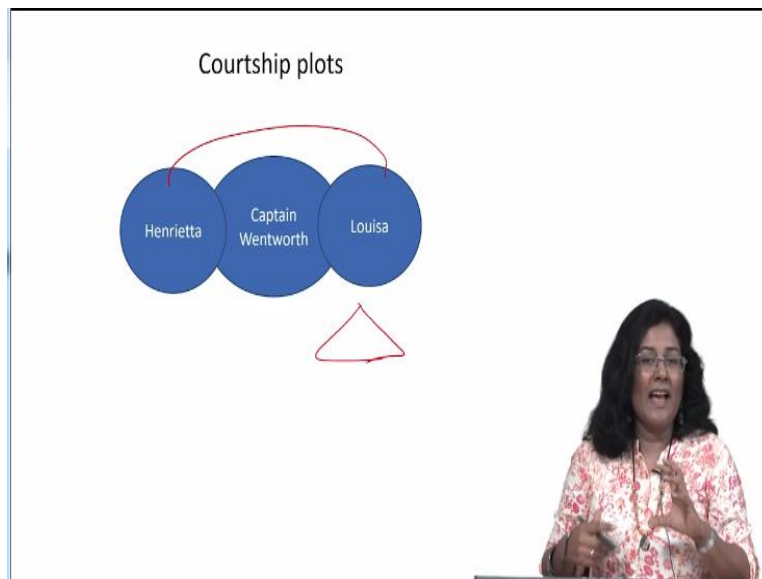
So the implication being, if the family is together, if the husband and the wife are together, regardless of the nature of the home, the outcome will be happiness. But then we should also realize that Mrs. Croft does not have children, so children is a factor that is taken out of their equation and that becomes easier for them to be together.

So here Mrs. Croft is referring to this notion of companionate relationships; when the couple the husband and the wife are kind of very, very in tune with one another in terms of their similarity of taste, similarity of sensibilities and similarity about what they want out of life. So this companionate relationships become important as the novel progresses in the 19th century, the

way it evolves in the various marriage plots; this companionateness becomes significant to a relationship.

And we see that in the works of Elizabeth Gaskell as well, for example the North and South where Margaret Hale, the heroine, is ultimately seen as equal to the quality of the man, that she becomes equal somehow to the man she marries eventually.

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So these are some of the courtship plots that are brewing in this fiction, Persuasion early on. We have as I mentioned before Henrietta and Louisa, two Musgrove girls, who are somehow equally interested in Captain Wentworth, and that is interesting to see. So there is a kind of a triangular relationship that is brewing early on.

So Captain Wentworth seems to fascinate both the girls and that is not creating quite a lot of complications because Louisa and Henrietta are “extremely sisterly” within quotations that is what Anne thinks, Anne thinks, if they have not been very close to one another there will be trouble. And we will learn more about these two girls here.

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Henrietta and Louisa

- “nothing but the continued appearance of the most perfect good-will between themselves could have made it credible that they were not decided rivals”

envious ——— *Mary* — *Anne Elliot*
Elizabeth



“Nothing but the continued appearance of the most perfect goodwill between themselves could have made it credible that they were not decided rivals.” So they had the perfect goodwill between the two of them, and because of that it is believable that they are not coming to blows about their attraction to Captain Wentworth. So in this context I want us to think about Anne's relationship with her sisters, Mary and Elizabeth.

Though there is a sort of a goodwill between Mary and Anne because Mary is dependent on Anne in terms of running her household, Elizabeth is a very cold towards Anne Elliot. And Anne seems to be slightly envious of the relationship between Henrietta and Louisa, and that is why she kind of admires this family because they are very strong in the bond that they have between one another.

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Wentworth at Kellynch Hall

- "Captain Wentworth was come to Kellynch as to a home, to stay as long as he liked, being as thoroughly the object of the Admiral's fraternal kindness as of his wife's."

Property → Baronetcy
↳ Capt Wentworth

Irony
↳ Narrative Irony



Captain Wentworth was come to Kellynch as to a home, to stay as long as he liked, being as thoroughly the object of the Admiral's fraternal kindness as of his wife's. This is a significant statement in persuasion. The reason being the men or the family at Kellynch Hall did not want Captain Wentworth to be a part of the family 8 years ago, they broke that engagement because of that hatred of the class to which Captain Wentworth belongs.

And ironically, 8 years down the line, Kellynch hall is let to a tenant Admiral Croft and his brother-in-law is made welcome in that family home of theirs, and Wentworth is now occupying Kellynch Hall, the place to which he was barred several years ago. So there is a lot of irony there; so there is narrative irony here. And we can also see that the property which is associated with the baronetcy, Kellynch Hall belongs to the Elliots, the baronets.

And it is now switching hands; and for the time being at least Captain Wentworth, a professional middle class captain is occupying that, that space that domestic space that estate, which is not his by birthright. So there is a kind of a social climbing that Captain Wentworth does, because of his industry and personal merit, and he occupies that higher station in life to which he was, to which he it was not allowed to become or enter early on.

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The Hayters

- "the young Hayters would, from their parents' inferior, retired, and unpolished way of living, and their own defective education, have been hardly in any class at all, but for their connexion with Uppercross, this eldest son of course excepted, who had chosen to be a scholar and a gentleman, and who was very superior in cultivation and manners to all the rest."



We are introduced to another set of characters the Hayters, and the Hayters are relations to the Mrs. Musgrove. And the young Hayters would from their parents inferior, retired and unpolished way of living, and their own defective education, have been hardly in any class at all, but for the connection with Uppercross this eldest son of course excepted who had chosen to be a scholar and a gentleman, and who was very superior in cultivation and manners to all the rest.

The Hayters are relations as I said of the Musgroves. They are the children of Mrs. Musgrove's sister. And young Hayters are better than the parents who are inferior, retired and unpolished. And this statement kind of parallels the statement that was early on made about Mrs. and Mr. Musgrove. They seem to be less refined, you know, slightly inferior to their own children who are more polished and more modern because of their education.

So we can see a parallel between the older parents and the younger children. Still, even in terms of the children, only one of them, the eldest son is the best. He is a man who is a gentleman unlike his siblings who are not that educated. So the eldest son is a scholar, and he has chosen to be a member of the clergy class, and therefore his very superior in cultivation and manners to the rest of the Hayter children. And they have a very good relationship with the Uppercross, with the Uppercross great hall great house family.

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Charles Hayter's courtship

- "It would not be a great match for her; but if Henrietta liked him,"---and Henrietta did seem to like him.
- Henrietta fully thought so herself, before Captain Wentworth came; but from that time Cousin Charles had been very much forgotten. (Ch-9)

The diagram illustrates the relationships between characters. A central circle labeled "Capt Wentworth, centre, magnet" is connected to three other circles: "Anne Elliot" on the left, "Henrietta" on the right, and "Louisa" below it. A red line also connects the top of the "Capt Wentworth" circle to the text above it.

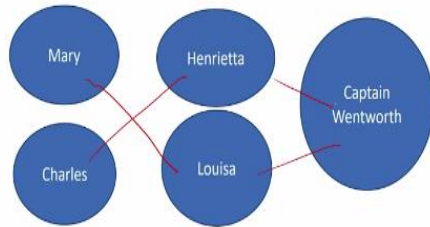
Charles Hayter, this gentleman, clergyman is significant in Persuasion because he is courting Henrietta. And the parents know about this courtship, and they believe that though it is not a great match for her, but if Henrietta liked him - and Henrietta did seem to like him. In terms of Henrietta, she fully thought so herself, she thought that she was very happy in her relationship with Charles Hayter before Captain Wentworth came, but from that time cousin Charles had been very much forgotten.

So we see a complication arise in the courtship plot between Henrietta and Charles Hayter because of the presence of Captain Wentworth. Once Captain Wentworth is in the scene, he is the most attractive figure among them all. So the girls despite their previous loyalties, infidelities and relationship they seem to gravitate towards him. So he is the center or the magnet in the two villages be it Uppercross or a Kellynch, and we have Henrietta and we have Louisa who is also massively interested in Captain Wentworth.

And we have Anne Elliot, the woman with whom Captain Wentworth was in love 8 years ago. So Captain Wentworth puts a spanner in the works in terms of Henrietta's relationship with Charles Hayter, and he is not very happy.

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Complicated Courtship Plots



So this is the list of complicated courtship plots. So what do the others think in terms of the courtship plots of Henrietta and Louisa? Mary thinks that Louisa should marry Captain Wentworth and Charles who already knows about Henrietta's feelings and her past thinks that Henrietta should marry Captain Wentworth. So we see that there is a lot of complexity in terms of this plotting.

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Henrietta's courtship

Mary Musgrove - Mary Elliot - Nobility

- "I do not think any young woman has a right to make a choice that may be disagreeable and inconvenient to the principal part of her family, and be giving bad connections to those who have not been used to them.

And, pray, who is Charles Hayter? Nothing but a country curate. A most improper match for Miss Musgrove of Uppercross." (Ch-9)



This is what Mary Musgrove has to say about Henrietta's courtship. "I do not think any young woman has a right to make a choice that may be disagreeable and inconvenient to the principal part of her family, and be giving bad connections to those who have not been used to them. And

pray who is Charles Hayter? Nothing but a country curate. A most improper match for Miss. Musgrove of Uppercross.”

So this is Mary Musgrove's opinion, and she does not want Charles Hayter to marry Henrietta, because she thinks that Miss Musgrove of Uppercross cottage should not, cannot marry such an inferior man, she deserves someone better, and this man Charles Hayter is nothing but a country curate, and it is not a proper match for Miss. Musgrove Uppercross.

And the other interesting opinion that she has is that, if she marries, if Henrietta marries Charles Musgrove, that will be disagreeable and inconvenient to the principal part of her family and she here is referring to herself, Mary Musgrove, who has been, who had been Mary Elliot in the past with connections to the nobility.

So she thinks that such an alliance would hurt her position in society, the alliance of Henrietta with Charles Hayter would hurt her standing, her social rank. And she says that, Henrietta cannot be giving bad connections to those who have not been used to them; and again that is Mary Musgrove because she claims that I am not used to bad connections, which is what Charles Hayter and their family are essentially.

This is the immediate context for this excerpt, but then you can also extrapolate this set of ideas that Mary Musgrove has to the past relationship of Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth. She could apply the same ideas to that particular past relation where Captain Wentworth can be seen as an inferior connection, a man from an inferior position in society. And Anne Elliot cannot, you know give bad connections to her family by marrying this man.

So even though Mary Musgrove was not quite aware of what went on in terms of Anne Eliot's relationship with Wentworth because she must have been very little and I think she was away at school when all those things happened, these words of Mary very, you know, appropriately very significantly comment on that past relationship and these ideas are not her own ideas, these ideas could very well be the ideas of Sir Walter and her and his eldest daughter, Elizabeth Elliot.

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