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Jane Austen Canon Project

Critical Introduction:

For this assignment, I decided to base my fan fiction off of Jane Austen’s *Persuasion. Persuasion* ended up being one of my favorite Austen novels we read this semester, and since I already had written my critical analysis paper on *Emma,* I thought using *Persuasion* for my fan fiction would be a good compromise to still get to write on it. One of the things about *Persuasion* I found the most interesting is how almost the entire novel is based off of events that happen before the novel, meaning that we, as readers, don’t get to witness these events firsthand. Because of this, I wanted to form my fan fiction to explain some of the events that happen prior to the novel, sort of like a short prequel to *Persuasion,* staying within Austen’s canon.

This is the first piece of fan fiction I have ever written and one of the first pieces of creative writing I have done since high school. I was very nervous when I began writing, as I was worried about my writing not being good enough or seeming disrespectful to Jane Austen. However, once I got a little further into writing it, I realized that it didn’t matter if my fan fiction was “good” or not, especially compared to Jane Austen’s writing, because making a piece “good” is not what writing fan fiction is all about. For me, writing my fan fiction was about allowing myself the freedom to explore Austen’s canon and develop my creative writing skills through constructing a prequel to *Persuasion.*

**Chapter 1**

Anne Elliot sat quietly, reading by the window. Her older sister, Elizabeth, sat near their father, discussing the Baronetage and the significance their family’s estate, Kellynch. Anne’s younger sister, Mary, sat at the piano. Anne wondered to herself when her life outside of Kellynch would begin.

Since the death of her mother, Lady Elliot, Anne had felt a void in her life in which no one would ever be capable of filling. Her sisters and father did not seem to be able to relate to her immense feelings of longing to hear her mother’s voice and feel the warmth of her presence again, making Anne’s suffering all the more difficult. She did not share the same bond with her father that she had with her mother.

Anne’s father, Sir Walter, looked up for a moment to see Anne gazing out the window. He remarked that she would be unlikely to ever find a respectable husband, like Elizabeth was likely to, if she could not even bear to pay attention to the words right in front of her. Anne knew her father was wrong, but refrained from correcting him. What Sir Walter and her sisters were unaware of was that Anne was already engaged to a man. A strong, intelligent, young naval officer.

This man, known as Captain Frederick Wentworth, was undoubtedly the man with the highest character and moral value that Anne had ever had the pleasure of knowing. They met through an acquaintance shared by both of them, a Miss Hamilton, who introduced them at a ball held at the school she and Anne attended together. Anne was extremely thankful for Miss Hamilton’s kindness in bringing Captain Wentworth into her life, as he was the closest companion she had known since the death of her mother.

**Chapter 2**

“Shhhh! Do not let them hear you!” Anne whispered under her breath to Captain Wentworth.

“Just one more moment with you, please. I have missed you so dearly. We need to announce our engagement soon, before someone finds out without our desire.”

Anne was well aware of the fact that keeping their engagement a secret was highly inappropriate and could not possibly have a beneficial outcome for either of them. She wanted so dearly to make it known that they were engaged, but the consequences may be too large for her to handle. She knew her father would not approve of her marrying someone of lower birth and wealth than she, and that he would not be content with her marrying before Mr. Elliot, Sir Walter’s rightful heir, agreed to marry Elizabeth. It was all too much to bear the thought of.

“We will tell them soon enough. I cannot fathom my father and sister’s reactions to hearing that I am engaged to a man in the Navy with no superior birth or circumstance. But I do admit that being able to be public in our intentions would allow me much ease,” Anne replied softly.

“Yes, my dear. Sir Walter will be indefinitely hard to please, but we cannot let his harsh sentiments prevent us from leading the lives we desire. I love you and nothing could ever halt my spirits.”

“I know you are right. I love you as well and cannot bear the thought of not being with you as a consequence to my own reservations,” Anne whispered as they embraced.

They emerged from the room in which they had exchanged their private conversation, unaware that Lady Russell was outside the cracked window and had heard the entire discussion.

**Chapter 3**

Lady Russell sat quietly in the drawing room, waiting on Anne. She was preparing herself for the tense conversation that was sure to begin once she confronted Anne about what she overheard the day before. The door finally opened; Anne emerged from the entryway.

“Good afternoon, Lady Russell, you look lovely,” Anne began.

“Anne, please have a seat. I need to discuss something with you that has been plaguing my thoughts since I discovered it yesterday,” Lady Russell responded.

Anne looked worried. “What is it? Is everything alright? Is it regarding my father and his finances?”

“I am afraid not,” she replied. “I am brought to you today on the matter of Captain Wentworth. I am aware of your friendship and kindness toward him, Anne, however you must know that yesterday I discovered the truth about your relationship with him. I know that you are much more than friends, and I must tell you that your secret engagement is extremely inappropriate, especially for a woman of your birth and a man of his. You must end the engagement immediately.”

“Lady Russell, I do not know the contents of your accusation. Captain Wentworth and I are not engaged. We are merely acquaintances,” Anne replied with a look of pain on her face.

“I am not ignorant to the things that take place right in front of me, Anne. I heard your conversation with him yesterday. Now, I strongly advise you to end the engagement promptly. You know as well as I do that Sir Walter will never approve your engagement with a man of such low standing. That is the last I want to hear of this nonsense.”

Anne stood up, silent tears running down her cheeks, and walked out of the room. She knew Lady Russell was right. She knew she must end her engagement with Captain Wentworth.

**Chapter 4**

Anne had written to him. She said she need to see him as soon as he could manage, and he responded promptly saying he would be by her side in two days, possibly less. Then began the waiting.

Anne could think of nothing else during those two days. She tried to distract herself with reading, writing, walking, eating, anything that came to mind. Nothing worked, however, as she stayed in her constant state of anxiety about Captain Wentworth. She feared that he would be angry, or he would not understand. Most of all, however, she feared that he would never speak to her again.

The door suddenly opened, and in came Captain Wentworth. He was dirty from the journey, tired from the lack of sleep, and had a worrisome look on his face, alarmed that something was not right with Anne.

“I am sorry it took me so long; I came as quickly as I could,” he said to her as he attempted to catch his breath.

“Captain Wentworth, please, sit down,” Anne responded softly. She could hardly keep her tears back as she avoided his stare.

“Anne, what is it? Is everything alright? Are you hurt? Or ill? Is it Sir Walter?” Wentworth sat down next to her.

“It is not my father. I am not hurt or ill. There is something I must tell you. I cannot tell you how sorry I am and how much I wish our situation were different. However, it is not. We cannot continue our engagement. It has been made apparent to me that we are not of the same birth, and my father would never approve me to marry a man of your consequence. I am sorry, Captain Wentworth.”

At first, a look of confusion spread over his face. He did not understand Anne’s revelation. He stood up, paced the width of the room, and finally sat back down next to her, as his look of confusion turned to anger.

He started, “Is this why you summoned me here? To tell me that we cannot be together because of a facet of my person in which you were already aware of? Where has this sudden concern for your father’s approval come from, Anne? Who put the notion into your mind that I am not an acceptable man for you?”

“No one. It is me. I am sorry Captain Wentworth. I cannot tell you how much I regret ending our engagement, but I cannot bring this shame upon my family,” she responded, still avoiding his eyes.

“I do not believe you, Anne. I do not believe that our difference in status would make you end our engagement. Who influenced you if not your father?” Wentworth said.

“It was no one, please, Captain Wentworth,” Anne whispered as tears began to fall down her cheeks.

“Lady Russell, was it not? I knew she would be hard to convince of our admiration for one another, but I never imagined she would persuade you into something so severe as to suggest that you do not wish to be with me any longer. And even then, I never would have imagined that she would be successful.”

Captain Wentworth stood up, took one last look at Anne, and walked out of the room, leaving Kellynch. Anne stayed seated on the couch, tears pouring over her cheeks. When she lost her mother, she did not think any feeling could ever be as horrid. However, the loss of Captain Wentworth amounted to the same, tragic defeat. She feared that she would never see him again in her life. And she knew, deep in her heart, that she likely never would.

Works Cited

Austen, Jane. *Persuasion: Authoritative Texts, Background and Contexts, Criticism.* Edited by

Patricia Meyer Spacks, 2nd ed., W.W. Norton & Co., 2013.