Lost Love in *Persuasion*

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*Persuasion* is the last novel of Jane Austen, which was published in 1818 by her brother Henry after her death. The starting-point of this novel is quite different from the earlier works. The heroine Anne Elliot has already lost her love before the story begins. She was persuaded by Lady Russell to give up marrying Captain Wentworth when she was nineteen years old. The story starts with their reunion after eight years.

Anne is now twenty-seven, and she still loves Wentworth. As for Wentworth, he has not forgiven Anne, who has given him up to obliged others. He has blamed her weakness and timidity. When they meet again at Uppercross, Anne reads his mind.

Anne is a faultless heroine, with a real elegance, sweetness, the best imagination and a clear perception. It is her one error that she obeyed Lady Russell’s persuasion. She is an excellent listener. She listens patiently to Mary’s complaints about Mrs. Musgrove and Mrs. Musgrove’s criticism at Mary. Anne understands Benwick’s romantic response to the loss of his lover. The story is told through her ears, eyes and mind. Though she is the most admirable character of all Jane Austen’s heroines, Anne must suffer from loneliness throughout the story.

At Kellynch-hall Sir Walter Elliot and his eldest daughter Elizabeth ignore Anne. Anne’s word has no weight. The Musgroves do not understand her excellent manners. But Louisa’s fall at the Cobb of Lyme gives Anne the most important opportunity to show her virtue. Anne “finally wins the respect of the Musgroves and the Harvilles, and, most important, recaptures the love of Captain Wentworth.” (David Monaghan 145) Wentworth learns “to distinguish between the steadiness of principle and the obstinacy of self-will, between the darings of heedlessness and the resolution of a collected mind.” (244)

It is Mr. Elliot who makes Wentworth jealous. When she perceives his jealousy of Mr. Elliot, Anne is trying very hard to catch every chance to convey her love for Wentworth. She “must move from passive to active in order to regain a positive purpose in life.” (Mary Waldron 143) Anne speaks out fluently and expresses her true mind. Her word pierces his mind. Anne regains happiness through language. She breaks the linguistic barrier between them. This is the story of the heroine’s acquisition of language.