

No, No, No, No, No! Netflix trailer for their new adaptation of Jane Austen's Persuasion. Just say NO!

It is awful. I could overlook the 'Bridgerton' style casting (which irritates me, for reasons I will come to) had the script been up to scratch. And as Jane Austen is one of the finest writers in the English language, in the hands of competent actors and actresses with a feel for the language, very little of her dialogue needs re-writing. Maybe editing of a long speech, or putting some of her description of events into a character's mouth so as to take the story forward.

We do not need Jane Austen's original prose, as this [fan said on twitter](#) (as was reported by [Harpers Bazaar](#))

"There could have never been two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison, no countenances so beloved. Now they were as strangers; nay, worse than strangers, for they could never become acquainted. It was a perpetual estrangement."



to be reproduced as "Now, we're worse than exes. We're friends."

As another fan pointed out, and I agree, "Persuasion is about love and loss and ageing and responsibility and devotion..."

Anne larking with Captain Wentworth while wearing a comedy moustache (left) is taking editing the book to make it into a screenplay to absurd lengths.

Back to Bridgerton, which I will admit to not watching because I don't have Netflix. But I have read the premise. There is a precedent for fantasy historical drama set in a recognisable period of history but with a few tweaks to make it an 'alternative universe' type of setting. One of my favourite children's series was The Wolves of Willoughby Chase by Joan Aiken. The books are set in a recognisable early 19th century England (same as Bridgerton and Persuasion) but the monarch is King James III (the Hanoveran dynasty didn't happen) and the Little Ice Age of the 14th-18th centuries has continued and become colder, attracting wolves to recolonise the British Isles.

In Bridgerton a belief that Queen Charlotte (Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz) , wife of King George III, was black is the foundation for a Regency court where half the noble families are either black, mixed race or Indian, and all are beautiful and sex mad.

There is also a vogue, which only works one way for 'colour blind' casting.

A white actor or actress may now only play a white character.. Indeed sometimes only a white character of their specific heritage. Meanwhile Anne Boleyn and her brother George can be played by a black actress and actor, [Jodie Turner-Smith](#) and Paapa Essiedu.

Further a gay character ought to be played by a gay actor.

Although no one complains that in *Call the Midwife* Miriam Margoyles, a Jewish actress, a lesbian and known for her smutty language plays Mother Mildred, a dignified and celibate Anglican nun. She acts.

So in this new film members of the early 19th century English gentry are played by actors and actresses who are Nigerian (Nikki Amuka-Bird as Lady Russell ~ “Daarlink, it’s time you moved on”) Armenian, American (to her credit Dakota Johnson as Anne seems to have got a decent voice coach) Jamaican and Malaysian.

I am willing to look past that (despite my appreciation of my own heritage, and my liking for accuracy and attention to detail) if the actors and actresses are good enough to make me believe they are who they are playing. There are lots of black people entering the acting profession and as my late mother said of any band she considered too large for the venue ‘they all want wages’.

But I fear that making a woman of “responsibility and devotion” into a slapstick stooge can not be easily overlooked.