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Sense, Sensibility, Sympathy, Social Class Upheaval in Jane Austen's Novels

A Thesis Presented

By

MEGAN M. LIBBY

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MAY 2020

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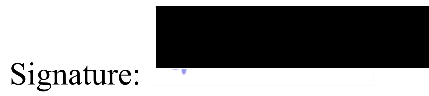
Signature:  May 11, 2020

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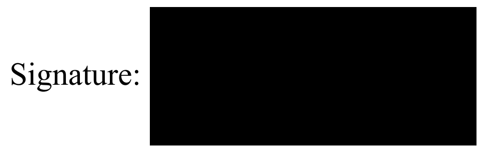
Signature:  May 8, 2020

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Sense, Sensibility, Sympathy, Social Class Upheaval in Jane Austen's Novels

A Thesis Presented by

MEGAN M. LIBBY

Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies Bridgewater State University

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

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MAY 2020

Sense, Sensibility, Sympathy, Social Class Upheaval in Jane Austen's Novels

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ABSTRACT

This thesis will explore Jane Austen's social commentary on class structure and boundaries as they evolved from her writing of *Sense and Sensibility* to *Persuasion.* By identifying and researching the philosophical concepts of sense, sensibility, and sympathy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I examine how Austen shifted her beliefs to reflect the changes in social class occurring in England during her lifetime. I will be conducting close readings of the two novels, along with various historical texts, diary entries, and letters from the time period in question in order to recognize how historical events influenced the social structure in Regency England and how those changes were received by the gentry. By looking at how Austen's characters react to, reflect on, and work around these boundaries, I recover a better understanding of Regency England society's feelings and response to these changes as well.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Will Libby.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my advisor, DR. HALINA ADAMS, for the encouragement and steady guidance that I so desperately needed in order to make this thesis everything it could be. In the middle of a nationwide quarantine and shift to online learning, I am eternally grateful for the support.

I wish to thank Bridgewater State University and the Graduate Department of English and Graduate Department of Secondary Education for the professors I have met and been able to learn from.

I would like to acknowledge the steady support of my husband who encouraged me to keep working and stay on task when this thesis seemed insurmountable.

And finally, I'd like to thank Miss Lina, Mr. John Hopkins, and Mrs. Christine Fay without whom I might not have followed through with this dream.

PREFACE

This thesis topic was chosen in part due to my work at Curry College when I studied New Historicism and Shakespeare while completing my major in English and minor in Politics & History. Exploring literature as a way to better interpret official records of history is a topic I would like to continue to explore throughout my career.

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INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen (1776-1817) was writing in a tumultuous time for the British Empire. While her focus, and that of England's, was originally situated on the class structure and land ownership of the upper classes, like the gentry, the years in which she wrote shifted quickly as the British Empire expanded. Suddenly, the landed gentry were dealing with a new middle class, overseas wars, and the anxiety of keeping titles and land in the family name. The anxieties of this class mobility and the changes in England were reflected in Austen's works. The everyday country life themes she wrote of, involving marriages, death, inheritance, and scandals, were inherently political and the attitude of readers and writers is directly reflective of the times they were living in. Therefore, by paying attention to the shifts of attitudes of characters in Austen's novels, and the situations they find themselves in, we can gain a better understanding of the class issues and the implications of real decisions in that time that may differ or show another side than the official historical account. In fact, it seems that by reading Austen closely, we can see that it was vital for women to keep other women in place, even as the allure of the middle class seemed to undermine the typical romance narrative of the period.

1. Jane Austen's Life

Austen was most concerned with the characteristics of people. We know this from her niece's account as well as from Austen's own letters. In Katie Gemmill's piece on "Jane Austen as Editor: Letters on Fiction and the Cancelled Chapters of *Persuasion*", we gain valuable insight into Austen's editing process. We learn what the goals of her novels are and what she looks most closely to critique. As Gemmill writes, Austen's letters "insist that characters adhere to social customs; she tells her niece to respect geographic

and topographical verisimilitude" (108). This is most likely due to her realization upon moving to Bath that, as Park Honan noted,
"poverty depends on place" (Honan 255). Austen knew that she was writing a realistic depiction of English life, and her insistence on stating the time and landscapes of her novels explains how seriously she took that. The place of her characters affected their actions as much as their natural traits might have. These changes intrigued Austen and led to many of her heroines needing to go on a voyage for change, as was similar to women in Austen's time and was a common theme in *bildungsroman* novels.

Austen looked to explore how characters could possibly change in her novels, as we see with Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*. Specifically, Gemmill points out that the unpublished chapter of *Persuasion* showed Anne "experiencing an unproductive sort of distress" (113) that Austen corrected into "a more controlled, thoughtful sort of distress" (113) which fit the Anne Elliot that Austen had created. This realism and Austen's adherence to characterization reveals an anxiety around human characteristics and her attempts to understand them. Park Honan wrote in "Jane Austen and Marriage" that during Austen's time in Bath in 1802, after she cancelled an engagement, she "dedicated herself to studying the most elusive and shifting of all facts, those of human character" (259). This dedication to understanding human nature, to understanding how they feel, is the sympathetic trait we see in her wiser characters, like Anne Elliot. Honan is focused on the broken engagement of Austen, explaining the importance of marriage and engagement in Austen's time while exploring the effects of calling off the engagement. Austen's own life experiences led her to reconsider how feeling—particularly sensibility and sympathy—functioned.

For example, Austen brought her experience with a cancelled engagement to bear on the plot in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Persuasion.* In order to better understand Edward Ferrars's insistence on maintaining his engagement to Lucy Steele in *Sense and Sensibility*, it is helpful to understand what engagement meant to the gentry. Honan writes "engagement was very formal in concerning whole families, and though not legally binding, it did involve family honor in the gentry class and could not easily be broken" (253). Knowing this, Austen wrote a character who was no longer in love, but he intended to keep his word. For Wentworth and Anne's engagement in *Persuasion*, they had to call it off because of the family name and honor, the opposite of what was desired for Ferrars. Either way, engagements were meaningful, and Austen had her own experience with broken engagements and falling in love with unsuitable men. Austen's reasoning for ending her engagement to Harris Wither, as written by Honan:

> The possessor of a large landed property (as he soon would be), and his sisters were already her friends, he would take her from the Bath she disliked and restore her to the country she loved, and so she had not betrayed herself. And yet there was something horridly false in this reasoning: it had bewitched her imagination and her heart, aided by all the horrible eligibilities and the proprieties of the match, and the pleasure it would give all her family and his. (257)

Austen was repulsed by her accepting of an engagement to a man she did not love, simply because it was prudent and acceptable. This appears to be when Austen began to see the value of sympathy, as well as the value of sentimentality—of knowing one's own feelings. Honan wrote that "she had

subjected marriage to the scrutiny of commonsense, but neglected to fully scrutinise herself" (258) and he goes on to discuss what Austen calls 'real sensibility', the ability to know oneself and the feelings of others (258). Austen at this moment in time, believes this level of understanding to be a type of sensibility, as the philosophers mentioned below will explore. However, what she comes to realize, especially when writing *Persuasion*, is that the "real sensibility" is sympathy.

2. Regency England (1811-1820)

Historical events clearly had an impact on Austen's novels. The composition of *Sense and Sensibility* can be traced back as early as 1795 when Austen read her family a story titled *Elinor and Marianne*, the main characters in *Sense and Sensibility*. That story went through revisions in 1797 and 1798, before being put aside for other novels to be revised and finished. Burgess wrote that Austen's main aim was to clarify the ordinary human life, especially those parts connected to social mobility and social conventions (175). Knowing this, we can then assume that everything Austen is writing about is meant to reflect actual conventions of the time, which can easily be proven through historical analysis—a trend embraced by major scholars of Austen including Devoney Looser, Mary Favret, and Peter Graham. These critics point to the ways in which Austen's works are impacted by the Napoleonic Wars, social issues such as shifting attitudes towards women, and political issues like the slave trade. They also show how opinions, decorum, and conventionality directly stemmed from and grew with the political changes in England. By not directly naming all of these political issues, Austen avoided dating her works to them, but she is quite deliberate with her stories and the

messages she wants to tell. Those messages stem from her attention to politics and the country around her as she navigates the upper class landed gentry as a single woman.

British class structures were in flux leading up to the Regency period. Social classes in England were becoming more defined by the time Austen was writing, terms such as "working class" and "middle class" being used more frequently (Hughes). Tim Hughes' "The Rise and Fall of the British Empire" discusses the "old hereditary aristocracy, reinforced by the new gentry who owed their success to commerce, industry, and the professions" (Hughes) as being the upper class, those with most of the wealth, which we see reflected in Austen's works. Those working in industrial jobs and those that did not own land were looked down on as the lower class and they lived in poverty. Austen does not write about this class, as she was not familiar with it, coming from the gentry herself. Therefore, it is understood that the lowest class characters in her novels, like the Hayters in *Persuasion*, were still considered middle class due to their ownership of their small farm and were able to be regarded as the gentry, regardless of wealth. One of the major beliefs in England was that of the superiority of land ownership. Hughes wrote that those "who did not utilise, and particularly, did not 'own' the land they wandered" (Hughes) were "uncivilized and uncultured brute" (Hughes). England gained a spot in history as a global empire through land accumulation. It stands to reason that having and keeping land would be valued in a society where land was taken through force and contributed to a country's wealth. An empire lends to the idea of a rigid hierarchy and severe divides between the wealthy and the poor. In England's case, the largest divide was between the landed gentry and the poor. It is possible that the loss of the American colonies in the late 18th century led to a common national anxiety to hold

onto land and property. I'd argue that the upper class, the landed gentry, were aristocrats directly affected by issues happening off the island during the rise and fall of the British Empire. Although many of the qualities of the gentry have to do with their lack of overseas interest, as they cling to their land in England and make their money on the land and not through working, it is clear that issues facing the Empire affected the laws and boundaries they clung to.

Austen was deeply interested in class and the ways in which marriage constrained or advanced women's economic mobility. Austen's focus on titles and the law primarily lies in the interest of land and inheritance as it connects to marriage and acquisition of titles. Maureen B Collins writes, in "The Law of Jane: Legal Issues in Austen's Life and Novels", "Marriage was a way to provide a legitimate heir—ensuring the survival of landed estates and family fortunes" (Collins). Martha Bailey's "The Marriage Law of Jane Austen's World" navigates this connection of marriage to income, noting "the relative poverty of women was the result of legal rules favoring men, in particular eldest sons" (Bailey). For instance, upon the death of her husband, when the male heir inherits the land, a wife is entitled to a jointure, per *Howard v Digby*, leaving her with only one third of the interest in her husband's land, if she had given up her dower rights (Bailey). Beyond the legal limits for women in economic mobility, J.A Downie clarifies the economic divides within Austen's novels. In "Who Says She's a Bourgeois Writer?", Downie explores finances as they relate to social status and class. Downie points out that the terms middle class, bourgeois, and the middle-income group are often confused (80) and as Downie cites Janet Daley of the *Daily Telegraph*, "in the US the term 'middle class' means 'middle income'- that is, ordinary people- whereas in Britain, it means

'bourgeois' with all the Marxist connotations" (80). This distinction is important for when, in *Persuasion*, Austen introduces us to a growing middle class that is differentiated from the gentry.

At the time of Jane Austen's life and her writing, primogeniture was being followed by the landed gentry to keep lands intact. In the case of a husband dying, the widow would receive jointures, but not if the marriage was based on an elopement. Women received marriage portions from their fathers and the jointures were based on that amount before the marriage took place. In order to provide for any additional male offspring, fathers would give a cash settlement. Often with primogeniture, and as the case was in many Austen novels and would be what she is familiar with, entails would be placed on a property so that a male heir could not bestow the property onto a female. This kept the title and property within the male family name. A clause would be added if there was no male heir, as Austen demonstrated in *Pride and Prejudice* with Mr. Collins. If a widow's jointure was not enough to live on, her family could offer her annuities to provide support, which is something Austen had personal experience with. These inheritance laws were rigid, created to keep titles and property in one family, saving it from being torn apart by multiple offspring, divorce, and females. This meant that the only way for families to gain land was to have their daughters marry into a family with property and produce male heirs, resulting in connections, money, and security for the entire family. Martha Bailey explains that primogeniture was in place "to keep family estates intact and free of heavy obligations to support other family members" (Bailey). We see this in all of Austen's novels and the implications, as well as her commentary and

suspected opinion on the matter, mirror the changes happening in England during this time.

Primogeniture ensured that land remained within a patriarchal lineage. To further control where land might go and who might inherit, England utilized a marriage law. With this marriage law, the current male landowners could have a say in who their children would marry, and therefore could control where their land would go when they died. Lord Hardwicke's Law, officially titled the Act for Better Preventing of Clandestine Marriages, is alluded to in Austen's novels several times when discussing elopements to Scotland. This law is a main factor in maintaining the patriarchy and keeping the landed gentry, specifically the women, within the same social class, and keep outsiders out. Vlasta Vranjes wrote in depth on Hardwicke's Law as it relates to Austen's writing in "Jane Austen, Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act, and the National Courtship Plot" by exploring how the Act could be interpreted as a way to bring back the spirit of entails and keep the wealthy landowners as the elite (200). Vranjes explores what would have been considered English versus "un-English" according to customs, laws, and perceived wealth and status. Vranjes focuses on *Persuasion* as the novel that best reflects the changing English ideals as land ownership became a dying aristocracy and wealth began to be measured in new, non-landed ways. By tracing historical movements within laws, wars, novel genres, and Austen, the reader has a clear picture of how marriage laws reflected the Englishness and prestige of landownership. Women were at the forefront of this Marriage Act, purposefully controlled by the law in such a way as to strongly guide her into marrying within her own class and circle, keeping the landowners in one class and the non- landowners in a lower and separate class. Vranjes wrote,

> Historians of the law cannot agree on why the parental-veto clause, which generated the most heated debates in Parliament, was included. Many suggest that it--and perhaps the whole law--was passed to strengthen the elite families' control over property transmission. Indeed, from the moment Lord Hardwicke introduced his bill, its opponents in the House of Commons began to view it as a measure that would "enable quality and rich families daily to accumulate riches by marrying only one another." Thus, making the regulation of marriage synonymous with the creation of class endogamy. (203)

Women were key in maintaining land boundaries and the wealth of the gentry. This created a society where class mobility was extremely difficult, if not virtually impossible. In fact, this law made it so the majority of people achieving upward class mobility were strictly within the gentry, as we see in Austen's novels with the likes of the Miss Dashwoods. Class movements were more about accumulating more wealth and land rather than truly leaving one social class to move into another, as the naval officers are able to do in *Persuasion*.

Regardless of the drastic difference in opinions around marriage and inheritance within the upper middle class between *Sense and Sensibility* and *Persuasion*, Austen's characters are still only able to change their lives through marriage. However, the reasoning behind the marriage and the type of man that is considered to be the hero does change. Austen has described a patriarchal empire where women have the limited power of community as a reward for their compliance. Marriage is used as a tool to maintain status or gain upward mobility. Inheritance laws maintained the gentry's value. Laws and

events at the time maintained this society where women are pawns and use each other within the gentry class for each family's own selfish desires. As Austen moves through her own life, we see her beliefs shift from valuing sense to valuing sensibility as the basis for choosing a marriage partner and friends. This reflects the overall society's resistance to the patriarchy, as historical events show the push back on laws and the acceptance of certain people into the middle class without a landed gentry background. This resistance is something Austen reveals slowly over time, as it happens in real time around her.

3. Overview

In order to best trace the growth of Austen's ideas surrounding marriage, inheritance, and social status, it makes sense to start with her earliest completed work and end with her final completed work. Over the course of the decade in which she wrote the two novels, Austen went through many personal changes while England went through major political changes. England's shifting stance on these topics is reflected in Austen's own opinions, as she serves as a mouthpiece of sorts for those that historians long ignored--women. When comparing the two novels, the shift in opinion on sense and sensibility, along with the opinions on worthiness, becomes quite obvious, as the two novels stand in contrast with each other. Austen's other novels, although reflecting changes, happen as most social and political changes happen--more subtly over time. Therefore, to recognize the dramatic shift in only a few years' time, one has to explore the two novels that bookend her career.

The England Jane Austen was writing about in *Sense and Sensibility* is vastly different than the England a grown Austen is reflecting on in *Persuasion. Sense and Sensibility* focuses on anxieties of women and the powers which they must pursue in their

lives. This anxiety is best explained by Mary Wollstonecraft in *Vindications of the Rights of Women*. The anxiety of women is the focal point for my reading of Austen, as I explore the politics of social class, marriage, and emotion. Using the historical events that were changing the political, social, and lifestyle landscape for the landed gentry in nineteenth century England to guide me, I recover the significance of feeling and sympathy to women navigating the marriage market. Armed with the knowledge of events leading up to *Sense and Sensibility*'s publication, we can then narrow down our focus to events that may have shifted the discussion of marriage and inheritance between 1809 and 1816 when Austen began writing *Persuasion*. It seems that the message Austen had to share with *Persuasion* was important to her as she worked diligently on it when she became sick, putting other incomplete works to the side to finish *Persuasion* in 1817, just a year before she died.

This thesis will focus on these two novels and their historical backgrounds. In the introduction, I examine marriage and inheritance in England between 1795 and 1809, when *Sense and Sensibility* was being written and revised, and then again at marriage and inheritance in England between 1815 and 1816, when *Persuasion* was written. In chapter one, I focus on the events that occurred in England up until 1795 and then between 1795-1809 which would influence Austen's (and her readers') point-of-view and opinion on marriage and inheritance in *Sense and Sensibility*. Chapter two focuses on the political events between 1809 and 1815, the time period where Austen wrote constantly, and which would influence *Persuasion.*

CHAPTER ONE: ANTI-SENSIBILITY

1. Sensibility

In Jane Austen's first published novel, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)*,* Austen crafts a novel valuing sense over sensibility, guiding her readers to do the same. As the main heroines, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, struggle with their emotions concerning the heroes, Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon, and the deception of John Willoughby, the two sisters must learn to use reason over emotion. This cautioning against sensibility is a trend in the late 1700s, early 1800s with works hostile to, contemptuous of, or gleefully parodying sensibility coming from the pens of the likes of Mary Wollstonecraft and Henry Mackenzie. Other factors that led to this valuation of sense over sensibility include the rise of the novel, patriarchal laws such as Hardwicke's Law, and the booming middle class that needed to maintain their newfound status. Austen originally parodied the behaviors she observed within the gentry in her *Juvenilia* before shifting to a more realistic tone. She discusses propriety and the need to control sensibility in order to achieve certain successes within the gentry class. Austen knew how to conduct herself well in this society and she wrote in order to show her beloved country life and guide women to avoid her own mistakes or worse. In *Sense and Sensibility,* women allow their marriages to be dictated by the patriarchy and are rewarded for that effort through comforts and community within the gentry class.

Sensibility is a philosophical concept frequently examined and practiced in eighteenth-century England. Austen wrote several characters consumed by sensibility in her novels, as the sensibility of women was widely accepted and ridiculed as being indicative of the sex's weakness. The philosophy and value of sense over sensibility,

evident in the works of philosophers from the late 18th and early 19th century give us some idea of how Austen would be feeling about sense at the time of writing her first published novel. John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, removes the old ways of thinking of morals and religion as innate ideas. Locke stated

> Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: —How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the MATERIALS of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the MATERIALS of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring (II.i.2)

Locke implies that reason and sensitivity combine to create complete knowledge. To be more sensible, a person would be more sensitive to sensation and information, producing knowledge and understanding. However, hyper-awareness of sensation and deriving meaning from those sensations could present as something akin to hysteria. As this hyper-sensitivity was mostly seen in women, it was dismissed as being a primarily female characteristic, and therefore a weak one. John Locke's proposal of how humans obtain knowledge seems to mark the sensible as being necessary but becoming too reliant on the

emotion and neglecting reason would be harmful to society. Locke embraced sensibility as a vital part of knowledge, but the tendency for people to rely too heavily on their emotions was soon revealed by other writers.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) wrote *A Vindication for the Rights of Women* (1792) and declared that "if men eat of the tree of knowledge, women will come in for a taste; but from the imperfect cultivation which their understandings now receive, women only attain a knowledge of evil" (228). If society withheld a full education for women, women would only learn the evil of over-sensibility, and the lack of education would allow for no way to discern how to become virtuous. Wollstonecraft believed proper education "will slowly sharpen the senses, form the temper, regulate the passions" (228), which women were not receiving. By removing access to knowledge, men are not protecting women, but are in Wollstonecraft's opinion, contributing to rendering women more artificially weak and useless members of society (226). Wollstonecraft continues to discuss the "virtues that should clothe humanity" (241) and the "artificial graces" (241) that women are given instead as a way to discuss a "short-lived tyranny" (241) by the women. She is not referring to a woman's lifetime, but to that bloom in a young girl's life where sensibility tends to rule the mind and decisions.

Wollstonecraft writes of the widely accepted view of the time that in order to move up socially, one had to marry well. By marrying advantageously, women could then live their lives with the pleasures and allowances that the gentry class provided. In exchange for those matrimonial comforts, young women had to spend their girlhoods devoted to obtaining accomplishments in order to chase these advantageous men leaving no room for further education. This social mobility was primarily within the gentry class,

where anyone with land could be considered a gentleman, but social hierarchy and wealth disparity were so great that many families socialized with the intent to gain higher wealth and status. Wollstonecraft is arguing for better education of women, as "a romantic twist of the mind, which has been very properly termed *sentimental*" (183) is turning women into weak vice-seeking people. She writes

> Females, in fact, denied all political privileges, and not allowed, as married women, excepting in criminal cases, a civil existence, have their attention naturally drawn from the interest of the whole community to that of the minute parts, though the private duty of any member of society must be very imperfectly performed when not connected with the general good. The mighty business of female life is to please, and restrained from entering into more important concerns by political and civil oppression, sentiments become events, and reflection deepens what it should, and would have effaced, if the understanding had been allowed to take a wider range (183).

Wollstonecraft believed that women were reduced to lives of gossip, rather than of any worthwhile pursuits. These sentimental events that Wollstonecraft speaks of are explored in Austen's novels and in *Sense and Sensibility*, relying too heavily on the sentimental can lead to an early grave, as was almost the case for Marianne. Wollstonecraft is asking for women to be educated, so they may grow out of the sentimental stage sooner and become more useful members of society.

2. Money and Marriage

Austen's own biography reflects this anxiety about sensibility and sentimentality. Austen was warned of her own attachment to a man that would be considered a marriage of sensibility rather than sense. We see this reflected in her letter to her sister, Cassandra on 9 January 1798:

> You scold me so much in the nice long letter which I have this moment received from you, that I am almost afraid to tell you how my Irish friend and I behaved. Imagine to yourself everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together. I *can* expose myself however, only *once more*, because he leaves the country soon after next Friday, on which day we *are* to have a dance at Ashe after all. He is a very gentlemanlike, good-looking, pleasant young man, I assure you. But as to our having ever met, except at the three last balls, I cannot say much; for he is so excessively laughed at about me at Ashe, that he is ashamed of coming to Steventon, and ran away when we called on Mrs. Lefroy a few days ago. (Austen Steventon: 9 January)

Austen was warned by Cassandra to remember propriety in Jane's interactions with LeFroy, something we see with Elinor and Marianne throughout *Sense and Sensibility*. At the time, Lefroy heeded the warnings and left Austen behind. Readers of *Sense and Sensibility* might recognize what happens when Austen met once again with Lefroy's aunt, as Fanny and Elinor meeting in London and both studiously avoiding speaking of Edward mirrors the letter which Austen wrote to Cassandra on 17 November 1798:

> Mrs. Lefroy did come last Wednesday, and the Harwoods came likewise, but very considerately paid their visit before Mrs. Lefroy's arrival, with whom, in spite of interruptions both from my father and James, I was enough alone to hear all that

> was interesting, which you will easily credit when I tell you that of her nephew she said nothing at all, and of her friend very little. She did not once mention the name of the former to me, and I was too proud to make any inquiries; but on my father's afterwards asking where he was, I learnt that he was gone back to London in his way to Ireland, where he is called to the Bar and means to practise.

This separation was for the best, according to the society at the time, as a marriage would be financially imprudent. This constant connection of propriety, marriage, and money is what Austen consistently writes about and explores through her heroines. All of those factors tie in to every move a woman, and really any member of the gentry class, made--it determined friendships, behaviors, and marriages.

Austen wrote her first novel with this separation having been made and seems to have realized that propriety is more important than love. We see this clearly when Elinor and Marianne are discussing happiness:

> “What have wealth or grandeur to do with happiness?”
>
> “Grandeur has but little,” said Elinor, “but wealth has much to do with it.”
>
> “Elinor, for shame!” Said Marianne; “money can only give happiness where there is nothing else to give it. Beyond a competence, it can afford no real satisfaction, as far as mere self is concerned.”
>
> “Perhaps,” said Elinor, smiling, “we may come to the same point. *Your* competence and *my* wealth are very much alike, I dare say; and without them, as the world goes now, we shall both agree that every external comfort must be wanting. Your ideas are only more noble than mine.” (75)

Women in the landed gentry class with no fortune of their own need to marry well, and they must use sense and reasoning to do so. Once they obtain that advantageous marriage, they will have more control over their domestic lives--the money, their societal circle, and the household. That is their reward for patriarchal compliance. But even if Marianne's ideas here are more sentimental, Elinor knows that everything boils down to how much comfort money can buy.

Once a woman marries well, she gains some control over where her husband's money goes. In just the first few pages of *Sense and Sensibility,* John Dashwood is so easily controlled by his wife that it makes the debate that married women held the power when it came to social status and that young women could be a threat if allowed to work their wiles and marry when they are full of sensibility that much more valid. Fanny's exaggerations are used to control the emotions of her husband and guide him to a choice that allows him to reconcile sense and sensibility. He believes he is fulfilling his duty to his father while Fanny gets to maintain her level of comfort and create a more defined barrier between her family and the Dashwoods.

Before Mrs. and the Miss Dashwoods leave Norland, Austen writes about John that "so frequently talked of the increasing expenses of housekeeping, and of the perpetual demands upon his purse, which a man of any consequence in the world was beyond calculation exposed to, that he seemed rather to stand in need of more money himself than to have any design of giving money away" (22-23). Here we have what is expected among family and as a duty to a father versus what is expected by society. Fanny manipulates her husband to behave within proper bounds, but also hurt the Dashwoods as much as possible. The entire scene of Fanny talking John down to less and less money

and assistance to his sisters and mother-in-law is one of the clearest examples of a married woman gaining monetary control in this society. Fanny apparently

> did not at all approve of what her husband intended to do for his sisters. To take three thousand pounds from their fortune of their dear little boy, would be impoverishing him to the most dreadful degree. She begged him to think again on the subject. How could he answer it to himself to rob his child, and his only child too, of so large a sum? And what possible claim could the Miss Dashwoods, who were related to him only by half blood, which she considered as no relationship at all, have on his generosity to so large an amount?
>
> "Indeed, to say the truth I am convinced your father had no idea of your giving them any money at all. The assistance he thought of, I dare say, was only such as might be reasonably expected of you; for instance, such as looking out for a comfortable small house for them, helping them move their things, and sending them presents of fish and game, and so forth, whenever they are in season." (7-11)

John and Fanny technically do nothing improper as to bring them scorn by their class, but their choices do hurt the sisters and mother-in-law on a personal level. This is indicative of societal expectations due to marriage and inheritance. Once married, the man and woman are the family with decisions being made, by the woman, for the benefit of the new family's social status and continued accumulation and protection of wealth and land. Fanny's use of the term "half-blood" and the mention of her son with John is a way to manipulate those blood lines discussed in the primogeniture section. By reminding John that his heir has full blood claims to his money, Fanny is able to coerce John to dismiss the weaker attachment of half-blood female family. When a woman marries well, and

produces male heirs, she is able to exert power over a man and his money through guided manipulation such as this.

3. Sense and Marriage

Women hold plenty of power within their marriage, a reward for patriarchal compliance and proper marriage connections. As a result of using good sense to marry well, women get to create a community that reflects those values and is able to manipulate situations within the domestic household. At the same time, married women also formed powerful communities of influence that allowed them to control the flow of power and marriage in their social circles. When women meet each other and are introduced to new people, their aim is to welcome women into their circle, if they are worthy, as evidenced by manners and social status, and to welcome men into their circle through marriage to other women who they would want in their circle as well. Mrs. Jennings wants to take Elinor and Marianne to London and knows that she would make for a prudent chaperone as she has "had such good luck in getting my own children off my hands that she will think me a very fit person to have the charge" (125). As soon as Mrs. Jennings sees Marianne and Colonel Brandon meet, she declares that "It would be an excellent match, for *he* was rich, and *she* was handsome. Mrs. Jennings had been anxious to see Colonel Brandon well married, ever since her connection with Sir John first brought him to her knowledge; and she was always anxious to get a good husband for every pretty girl" (31). Her first thoughts upon meeting single women is how to marry them off. This is the way for a woman to build her community and raise her social status--by marrying off friends who reflect the gentry values.

In part, these female communities are maintained by rules of polite society and we see these women weaponize those rules to maintain order. Throughout the novel, we see Mrs. Jennings enjoying gossip, but maintaining respectability with her declarations of shunning those who acted in an unpardonable way such as Willoughby. Even when women do not *like* each other, as is the case with the Dashwoods and Fanny and the Dashwoods and Middletons, the expectation is still there that they gather together and socialize; feelings are pushed aside for decorum. However, when there is a valid reason to shun someone, as Fanny finds in Lucy and Mrs. Jennings finds in Willoughby, women use their power to maintain the propriety and dignity of their household and social circle. When Willoughby is revealed to be a man of poor character, Mrs. Jennings discusses his wrongdoings with her family and friends, as does Elinor. Their relationship with others leads to a tightening of their circle through a feeling of shared indignity and solidarity. Immediately upon hearing of Willoughby's wrongs, "Sir John could not have thought it possible...He wished him at the devil with all his heart. He would not speak another word to him, meet him where he might, for all the world!" (176) and "Mrs. Palmer, in her way, was equally angry. She was determined to drop his acquaintance immediately, and she was very thankful that she had never been acquainted with him at all...she should tell every body she saw, how good-for-nothing he was" (176). The tightening of the circle was immediate, and Elinor made sure to protect Marianne in order to maintain that social circle, as that was more important than a broken heart. It's Elinor's responsibility to remind her mother and sister of propriety in order for the family to remain in good standing with others and not invoke anger or shunning.

Of course, not every female social circle uses their powers for good. Fanny Dashwood deploys decorum in order to mistreat her in-laws. The novel quickly reveals Fanny's manipulations of her husband and the cold-hearted pursuit of wealth and status, by having Fanny take over the home after Mrs. Dashwood's husband passes away and John Dashwood inherits Norland. Mrs. Dashwood looks to react in anger, but it is Elinor's dedication to good manners that prevents any rash behavior on her mother's part:

> Elinor, this eldest daughter whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence….her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them: it was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught. (6)

Mrs. Dashwood, and her deceased husband, were much more likeable and considered kind and affectionate people due to their more emotional states. However, when it comes to society and class, even though Mrs. John Dashwood is not well-liked, she would be considered higher class and therefore demand the respect of not up and leaving her home when she insulted the Dashwoods. When Mrs. and the Miss Dashwoods are "degraded to the condition of visitors" (7) in this scene, it can be argued that Fanny is forcing them into social correctness while Elinor goes along with it and maintains the expectations on all of the family. By removing emotion from these decisions, Fanny is maintaining the status quo and by "exerting herself and treating her sister-in-law with the proper attention" (6), Elinor is also maintaining that quo. Elinor's control over her own feelings

puts her in better positions with society. Austen demonstrates throughout the novel that Elinor is able to nurture her relationships with other women by controlling her emotional reactions and maintaining propriety. By demonstrating propriety only when urged by Elinor, Austen is showing her readers that not only are women vital to maintaining the expectations of their society, but also that those with the control over their own emotions will benefit by having more control over the outcomes and actions of other women as well. This is a society that values sense and proper behavior over the violent affliction of emotion, maintaining order within a patriarchal society that relies on keeping women in their place.

Through repeated events in this novel, it is clear that female companionship is key in maintaining decorum and reason; but if a companion is not reasonable enough, there is a danger of social stigma. When Mrs. Jennings offers to take the girls to London, Mrs. Dashwood has no qualms, and teases Elinor's overly reasonable manner: "And what," said Mrs. Dashwood, "is my dear, prudent Elinor going to suggest? What formidable obstacle is she now to bring forward? Do not let me hear a word about the expense of it." Elinor's reply is telling: "My objection is this: though I think very well of Mrs. Jennings's heart, she is not a woman whose society can afford us pleasure, or whose protection will give us consequence" (127). Elinor recognizes that kindness and emotions are not enough o protect young women in society. Elinor and Marianne would need a steady guide, able to not jump to marital conclusions and sharing in the gossip of those around them. Mrs. Jennings' kindness is not up for question, but even her own propriety and suitability create uncertainty for Elinor, who realizes the need for a reasonable mind when exploring a new place for the first time. On the other hand, Mrs. Dashwood

capitalizes on Mrs. Jennings' desire to marry her daughters and shrugs off any emotional or monetary concerns, as the potential rewards for this trip far outweigh the financial and social burden. Even as one's heart, or emotions, come into consideration in female communities, the ultimate barrier for entry is wealth, that is, social class. When John and Fanny Dashwood come to London, John immediately complains to Elinor about his lack of wealth as a way to assuage his guilt for not providing them more money, while he is at a shop buying things for his wife and discussing their renovations and trip to London. Later, we have Fanny throw a party for the Middletons, in order to gain their society, despite their supposed lack of income. Here we have money again being manipulated by a wife in order to gain opportunities in society, while keeping the wealth for social gains rather than kind handouts to family due to emotional connections.

We can see this emphasis on class above all else in female interactions throughout the novel. This society is suspicious of making acquaintances with anyone that might reduce their own social status, like Mrs. Jennings who was "the widow of a man who had got all his money in a low way" (187). Good sense is so inextricably linked with money and character that regardless of the money obtained, the way it is obtained is just as important. The gentry had a rigid code of how they made money, by living off of their land and the money their land brings in. Gentry members would not look favorably on those that do not earn an income in the way they think is dignified and correct. John Dashwood reiterates this point when he tells Elinor that

> "I shall have a charming account to carry to Fanny", said he, as he walked back with his sister. "Lady Middleton is really a most elegant woman! Such a woman as, I am sure, Fanny will be glad to know. And Mrs. Jennings too, an exceeding

> well-behaved woman, though not so elegant as her daughter. Your sister need not have any scruple, even of visiting *her*, which, to say the truth, has been a little the case, and very naturally; for we only knew that Mrs. Jennings was the widow of a man who had got all his money in a low way; and Fanny and Mrs. Ferrars were strongly prepossessed, that neither she nor her daughters were such kind of women as Fanny would like to associate with." (187)

John had to evaluate the worthiness for the Dashwoods to socialize with the Middletons and Mrs. Jennings based on their wealth and behavior. When this meeting between John Dashwood, Sir John, Lady Middleton, and Mrs. Jennings occurs, we see again that making new acquaintances, although perceived to be up to the husband to give "a charming account" (187) or not, was really up to the women. Sir John "was ready to like any body" (187) and we know he is also willing to shun Willoughby due to his wife's opinion (176). John Dashwood states that it was Fanny who would have objected to meeting the Middletons due to her preconceived low opinion of them. He just had to be the message carrier to the wife and Sir John only had to be the puppet for his wife by being present in the room to make the meeting appropriate.

Austen clearly is suspicious of the efficacy of these reason-based, classist female communities. The Miss Steeles, for instance, reveal the weakness of these communities. When Elinor first meets the Miss Steeles, she is unimpressed with the value they would bring to her social circle, stating: "This specimen of the Miss Steeles was enough. The vulgar freedom and folly of the eldest left her no recommendation; and as Elinor was not blinded by the beauty, or the shrewd look of the youngest, to her want of real elegance and artlessness, she left the house without any wish of knowing them better" (102). If it

were not for Lucy's pursuit of Elinor and her revelation of the secret engagement to Edward Ferrars, Elinor would have been happy to cut them from her personal society. But, the Steeles weasel their way in, as we see them do throughout the novel with several females, and even get invited to Fanny's dinner for the Middletons. At the time of invitation, Fanny just knows that she is willing to accept them despite their lack of gentility and elegance in order to win more favor with the Middletons, "as Lady Middleton's guests, they must be welcome" (190). Fanny seems overly concerned with reminding the Miss Dashwoods of their place beneath her in society, and she invites the Steeles to stay with her in part to slight the Dashwood sisters and keep them in their place, as they would have been expected by this society to have been invited to stay with their brother. When Fanny discovers Lucy's engagement to her brother, she tosses her from her home and John describes the aftermath: " 'Your sister,' he continued, 'has suffered dreadfully; Mrs. Ferrars too--in short it has been a scene of such complicated distress...and one cannot wonder at it, after being so deceived!--meeting with such ingratitude, where so much kindness has been shown, so much confidence had been placed!' " (217). Lucy's behavior at this time is condemned, even if everyone knows that social climbing is common and necessary in their society. In Lucy's case, her goals were too lofty for her birthright and this betrayal was too much for Fanny. Crossing class lines that drastically at this time would have been shocking to the community and unacceptable for both sides.

Sensibility is often seen as a female trait, but it's the females in this society that work the hardest within their social circle to maintain that society through reason. Men put these patriarchal laws into place and inheritance laws and economic divides were

effective in maintaining the overall social status of the gentry, but it is women that were vital is maintaining these divides and adhering to these social structures through their relationships with other women. By tempering their own natural emotional state, women embraced sense in order to create a comfortable life around themselves where they could have power in regulated amounts. By repressing sensibility, a woman would end up happier and richer, surrounded by friends. If a woman embraced sensibility, they wound up hurt or marginalized by their own society. It was far less dangerous to maintain each other through reason in order to achieve social and economic mobility.

4. Sense and Courtship

Austen's word choice in describing sensibility reveals her preference for sense. Using words such as "violence", "agony", "sorrow", and "wretchedness" (6) to describe Marianne and Mrs. Dashwood's emotions evokes pain. She does not mention the potential benefits of sensibility, just the pain of having such heightened emotions. We see the contrast between an emotional person, like Marianne, who is looking for good looks and sentimental qualities, and a reasonable person, like Elinor, who recognizes the traits in a man that are valued by society and provide steadiness. Marianne is quick to condemn Edward's looks and traits as being too rigid and not sentimental enough, stating "Edward is very amiable, and I love him tenderly. But yet--he is not the kind of young man--there is something wanting--his figure is not striking; it has none of that grace which I should expect in the man who could seriously attach my sister. His eyes want all that spirit, that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence" (15). Marianne is looking for fire and passion, whereas Elinor is looking for propriety and goodness. When Marianne discusses Edward with Elinor, Elinor recognizes his "sense and his goodness" (17),

declaring that she has "studied his sentiments and heard his opinion on subjects of literature and taste; and, upon the whole, I venture to pronounce that his mind is well-informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure" (17). Elinor believes Edward to be handsome, or "almost so" because of his balance between reason and sentimentality. He does not feel the to be improperly emotional, but rather is reserved and gentleman-like. For someone like Elinor, who strongly defends propriety and sense, this behavior attracts her more than sensibility.

If Elinor is more driven by reason than emotion (and eventually rewarded for it), then Marianne must be educated to value sense over sensibility in order to achieve a happy match and superior social class. When Marianne is first introduced to Colonel Brandon, Austen writes "His appearance, however, was not unpleasing, in spite of his being, in the opinion of Marianne and Margaret, an absolute old bachelor, for he was on the wrong side of five-and-thirty; but though his face was not handsome, his countenance was sensible, and his address particularly gentlemanlike" (29). Marianne might use sense and choose Colonel Brandon, but due to her indulgence of sensibility, she does not choose him and gets hurt by Willoughby. Marianne tells her mother exactly what she is looking for in a man: "The more I know of the world the more am I convinced that I shall never see a man whom I can really love. I require so much! He must have all Edward's virtues, and his person and manners must ornament his goodness with every possible charm" (15). She wants sensibility--passion, attraction, love, sentimental traits. By telling the reader this, and then showing us a man that checks all of those boxes for Marianne,

and making that man the villain, Austen is condemns this kind of behavior and these traits in a man.

Indeed, Elinor's opinion of Willoughby highlights his unsuitability as a member of polite, level-headed society. Elinor

> saw nothing to censure in him but a propensity, in which he strongly resembled and peculiarly delighted her sister, of saying too much what he thought on every occasion, without attention to persons or circumstances. In hastily forming and giving his opinion of other people, in sacrificing general politeness to the enjoyment of undivided attention where his heart was engaged, and in slighting too easily he forms of worldly propriety, he displayed a want of caution which Elinor could not approve. (41)

Elinor recognizes that the behaviors of both Willoughby and Marianne are inappropriate. Marianne can be excused for lacking sense, as she is a young woman in her bloom, but a suitable man should control himself. Behaviors and rules are upheld within the female communities discussed earlier. These women rely on reason to temper their naturally emotional states and would expect the same of the men around them. Willoughby is too emotional and does not allow himself to be ruled by sense, which would be unacceptable to these gentry women. He continues to break the social norms and exhibits far too much emotion for what would be considered acceptable in a courtship. The propriety and politeness that the gentry expected of their communities did not allow for a man's money and social position to bypass those expectations. Willoughby's unacceptable behaviors were noticed by Elinor and correctly admonished.

Willoughby's unsuitability—as Elinor sees it in terms of sense and upper-class female community values—could also potentially infect Marianne, threatening her reputation with too much indulgence in sensibility. We see Elinor's clairvoyance when she recommends propriety on their parts:

> Elinor could not be surprised at their attachment. She only wished that it were less openly shown; and once or twice did venture to suggest the propriety of some self-command to Marianne. But Marianne abhorred all concealment where no real disgrace could attend unreserve; and to aim at the restraint of sentiments which were not in themselves illaudable, appeared to her not merely and unnecessary effort, but a disgraceful subjection of reason to common-place and mistaken notions. (45)

Marianne will need to learn to temper her emotions to have a happy ending. The acts of sensibility that Marianne exhibits are where her faults lie and the dangers come in. Marianne's inability and resistance to tempering her own sensibility is similar to the sensibility that Austen tells the reader Mrs. Dashwood also possesses. As the reader sees the dilemmas Mrs. Dashwood faces when it comes to propriety, Austen also allows the reader to recognize the difference sensibility makes when it is overused in a young girl, at the height of her bloom, when she should be tempering herself in order to marry well. Marianne's hyper-sensibility puts her bloom and potential for new suitors in jeopardy.

5. Sensibility and Heartache

Austen's exploration of the sisters' respective heartache reveals the anxieties of the time as women had to learn to control their emotions in order to keep their reputations intact and their market value for marriage up. We see Elinor experience heartache and

repress it in order to continue as she should, and as a result, she is able to help Marianne, maintain relationships, and remain reputable for when she is finally able to settle down. With Marianne, we see how dramatics can lead to broken relationships, the derision of female communities, whispers and humiliation, and early death. The message is clear: reasonable sense is a more acceptable—socially, philosophically—mode of being than emotional sensibility.

Elinor goes through waves of disappointment and heartbreak as a result of her feelings for Edward. She has to deal with Fanny's condemnation of a marriage between her and Edward. Then, she has to be parted from Edward when they leave Norland. Once Edward finally visits them in their new home, he is cold and distant. Then, Lucy reveals she is engaged to Edward. Elinor then has to watch Edward's engagement to Lucy come to light and then fizzle. Finally, Elinor gets her happy ending. Through all of that, Elinor maintains her dignity and propriety. When Edward comes to visit, cold and distant, Elinor resolves to put her feelings aside:

> Elinor took no notice of this; and directing her attention to their visiter, endeavoured to support something like discourse with him, by talking of their present residence, its conveniences, &c. extorting from him occasional questions and remarks. His coldness and reserve mortified her severely; she was vexed and half angry; but resolving to regulate her behavior to him by the past rather than the present, she avoided every appearance of resentment or displeasure, and treated him as she thought he ought to be treated from the family connection. (74)

At this point, Elinor is pushing her feelings aside, doing what is right and expected of her society by maintaining a familial connection with Edward despite her emotional distress.

She is “vexed and half angry” and yet no one around them can tell. Elinor, unlike Marianne, knows she cannot condemn Edward amongst her friends and family, as he has done no wrong and she has more to lose. Elinor then has to deal with the loss of Edward while avoiding repeating the behaviors like Marianne exhibited. By adhering to the expectations of her community, Elinor is once again able to maintain relationships with those that have hurt her in order to maintain the greater social boundaries she lives within.

Later, we discover that Edward is engaged to Lucy Steele, who confides in Elinor. Elinor controls herself in this moment once again, although Austen reveals the internal struggles:

> What felt Elinor at that moment? Astonishment, that would have been as painful as it was strong, had not an immediate disbelief of the assertion attended it. She turned towards Lucy in silent amazement, unable to divine the reason or object of such a declaration; and though her complexion varied, she stood firm in incredulity, and felt in no danger of a hysterical fit, or a swoon. (106)

and when the truth sets in, “Elinor’s security sunk; but her self-command did not sink with it” (108). And when the truth sets in, Elinor responds to Lucy “with a composure of voice, under which was concealed an emotion and distress beyond anything she had ever felt before. She was mortified, shocked, and confounded” (111). Elinor refuses to give in to the emotions and embarrass herself over something that was not official. She accepts the truth, maintains composure, and is there for Lucy’s needs, despite her disappointment. She understands that Edward never promised her anything and there was no actual wrongdoing on his side, and thanks to her emotional control, there was no impropriety on

her side either. This is what keeps Elinor going- knowing that her reputation is intact and must remain intact. By submitting to the expectations of those around her, Elinor's composure allows her to occupy space within the female community that she has built around her. Lucy and Elinor are not class equals, and yet, by being engaged to Edward, Lucy could move to a higher social status than Elinor upon marriage. Proper etiquette in this situation would require Elinor to be reasonable with Lucy rather than emotional. Elinor already pushed her feelings aside for Edward to maintain familial connections and now she must suppress her emotions in order to satisfy the expectations placed on her by society.

As the reader witnesses Elinor's quiet coping, Marianne and the other women close to Elinor are oblivious to it, signifying how well Elinor does at maintaining her decorum and adhering to social expectations. When Marianne vents about how Ferrars loves Elinor and she has nothing to be sad about, Elinor remains silent and close to her chest with her emotions. When she takes the wine from Mrs. Jennings that was meant for Marianne, she speculates that "its healing powers, on a disappointed heart, might be as reasonably tried on herself as her sister" (162). This could be because she is disappointed on behalf of her sister and aches for her sister in the way one would feel empathy for a loved one. However, Austen is reminding us that Elinor is also suffering, but she is doing it silently and without a team of women ready to dispatch scorn for a man and set her up with a ready-to-marry, eligible bachelor. When Marianne discovers Elinor's knowledge of Edward and Lucy's engagement, she wonders at her composure:

"Four months! So calm! So cheerful! How have you been supported?"

> "By feeling that I was doing my duty. My promise to Lucy obliged me to be secret. I owed it to her, therefore, to avoid giving any hint of the truth; and I owed it to my family and friends, not to create in them a solicitude about me, which it could not be in my power to satisfy". (214-215)

Elinor was able to fool all of the women around her, especially Marianne, who believed her to be her closest confidante. Elinor did not do this to spite anyone, but rather to uphold the standards and expectations of their social community. Lucy came into their social circle in such a way that might have dismissed her from Elinor's attention if she had not revealed her connection with Edward. By inserting herself into the community through her connection to Mrs. Jennings, the Middletons, and Edward, Lucy was able to obtain Fanny's attention. As already noted, Fanny's place in Elinor's society demanded a show of respect. By Fanny bringing Lucy to her home, Lucy obtained the protection of that higher class which Elinor could not move against. These class dynamics within the already demanding expectations of the female community demanded silence from Elinor.

In the scene in which Marianne is heartbroken over Willoughby and Elinor is hurting for her, Elinor still encourages her younger sister to be strong for other women, like their mother, and for dignity's sake. When reading the letters from Marianne to Elinor, Marianne's desperation and confidence in Willoughby's love for her is undoubtable. Reading it is uncomfortable as it is clearly an intimate letter. But, Elinor immediately upon reading it, even hating Willoughby and having believed in an engagement and his love for her sister, still recognizes the "impropriety of their having been written at all" (153) and ends up "silently grieving over the imprudence" (153) of her sister, rather than for the pain of her sister. In that moment, we recognize Austen's

warning that women must protect each other and keep each other in check, lest they risk ruining their reputation and chances of a comfortable life. After Marianne has her heart broken, there is great discussion about the manipulation of her emotions. This manipulation of emotions led to behaviors that were inappropriate for the reality of her situation. Marianne wants to return home to avoid the "questions and remarks" (156) and pity of the women around her, suggesting that it is not the men she is worried about as men do not bother themselves with the presumed trivial issues that women gossip about.

Education for women, as noted by Wollstonecraft, was used to obtain accomplishments in order to marry advantageously. As Marianne begins to recognize the dangers of her sensibility, Elinor continues to attempt to coach Marianne in the reasonable ways of their society. Elinor tells Marianne that the triumph should not be long for those who hurt her sister because of the good intentions and kind heart Marianne possesses. However, in stating these things to Marianne, she is nudging her sister into "a reasonable and laudable pride which resists such malevolence" (154). Again, Elinor is telling Marianne to perform, to put on the face and overcome this, as is proper and expected. Elinor needs her sister to move on from this and recover because Marianne's chances for a prudent and well-suited marriage could be at risk. And, once Marianne recovers from the physical illness, we see that Elinor's prudent education seems to have worked:

> Do not, my dear Elinor, let your kindness defend what I know your judgment must censure. My illness has made me think. It has given me leisure and calmness for serious recollection. Long before I was enough recovered to talk, I was perfectly able to reflect. I considered the past: I saw in my own behaviour, since

> the beginning of our acquaintance with him last autumn, nothing but a series of imprudence towards myself, and want of kindness to others. I saw that my own feelings had prepared my sufferings; and that my want of fortitude under them had almost led me to the grave. My illness, I well knew, had been entirely brought on by myself by such negligence of my own health, as I had felt, even at the time, to be wrong. (283-84)

Marianne was literally on the brink of death due to her sensibility. When she finally comes to realize what her dramatics have led to, she is ready to throw herself into her studies to become more accomplished as to gain a proper match, using sense rather than sensibility. Marianne recognizes what her true responsibilities are in their society and her place in this circle of women and the landed gentry. She takes note of Elinor's prudence and vows to do better in order to recover her reputation and dignity, and maintain and gain new female companionship, in order to be of better use to society.

6. Sense Before Sensibility

Austen surely wants the reader to value sense over sensibility, as the marriages and happiness that come out of all this conflict depend on using sense to get there. It is only after the uncontrolled emotion is given up and a return to reason occurs that we see advantageous marriages and happy endings—which significantly reinforce class distinctions and satisfy female communities that thrive on those distinctions. Colonel Brandon patiently waited for two years for Marianne to come to her senses and stop being so emotional. As a reward for their sense, they both got to settle down happily and securely without the overwhelming heartache and drama that Willoughby brought with him. We see the greater advantageous marriage is Marianne's to Colonel Brandon, the

person that had to leave her sensibility behind. It's not that a woman cannot be sensible for some time in her life, but the largest reward goes to the woman that overcomes that sensibility, wins the man, and gets the fortune. Even when expressing the good fortune that Marianne gains, Austen uses negative language to describe sensibility, as she did at the beginning of the novel, when she writes that Marianne did not "fall a sacrifice to an irresistible passion" (311). Her calmness and "sober judgment" (311) allowed Marianne to "submit to new attachments" (311), not fall. And in her creating happiness for Colonel Brandon, she was able to find happiness. With good sense, Marianne was able to create a life of happiness and love. Colonel Brandon is the kindest and most reasonable man. He does not allow his emotions to get in the way of his good nature and behavior. As a result, the man with the most sense is rewarded the greatest, with a sensible woman who does "not love by halves" (312) and has gained reason and judgment.

We see this fulfillment of all that a young woman can be if she puts off sensibility and embraces sense. Austen writes

> Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate. She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favorite maxims. She was born to overcome an affection formed so late in life as at seventeen, and with no sentiment superior to strong esteem and lively friendship, voluntarily to give her hand to another!-- and *that* other, a man who had suffered no less than herself under the event of a former attachment, whom, two years before, she had considered too old to be married, -- and who still sought the constitutional safeguard of a flannel waistcoat! But so it was. Instead of falling a sacrifice to an irresistible passion, as once she had fondly flattered herself with

> expecting, instead of remaining even for ever with her mother, and finding only pleasures in retirement and study, as afterwards in her more calm and sober judgment she had determined on,-- she found herself at nineteen submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new home, a wife, the mistress of a family, and the patroness of a village. (311)

Austen has reeducated Marianne through the sufferings and tempering of her emotions. Marianne felt too deeply and was hurt by it. However, through education and the females around her, she learned to open herself up to feel again, submitting to this new way of life and this new way of loving. By learning to value and use sense, Marianne is trained to become the ideal upper-class gentry woman. She builds her own female community around her, as a patroness of a village, and is rewarded with the duties of a wife, which I established was a controlled kind of power for women at this time. Austen, like Wollstonecraft, recognizes that happiness must be built in reality, and not from whatever the sentimental poets try to convince a reader is important. Now that Marianne is able to use good sense to guide her decisions, she has successfully moved upward in the gentry class and maintained her dignity in order to reap some of the benefits allowed for women upon marriage.

As for Elinor and Edward, the reader is told upon first being introduced to Edward that "all his wishes centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of a private life" (14). So, although a reader may see that his and Elinor's financial reward as far less than the other characters' in the novel, we actually come to realize that their reward for good sense is exactly what they both wanted most--comfort and quiet. A baronet or man of higher wealth and land ownership may not be able to escape the requirements that his

wealth places upon him and a poorer man would be struggling to make ends meet. Edward and Elinor get the comfort and quiet they wanted, while reaping the benefits of proximity and familial connections that the landed gentry provides. Elinor and Edward ended up with exactly what they wanted in each other and benefited financially in a way that best suited them and their desires. We see this happy ending: "With an income quite sufficient to their wants thus secured to them, they had nothing to wait for after Edward was in possession of the living but the readiness of the house, to which Colonel Brandon, with an eager desire for the accommodation of Elinor, was making considerable improvements" (307-308). For Elinor, her propriety in the face of heartbreak, as she continued to nurture her relationships with Mrs. Jennings, the Middletons, and Colonel Brandon, proved fruitful for her happiness. She is able to live well and marry someone that makes her happy and exudes the virtues she and the gentry hold dear. Elinor had always displayed sense and propriety, benefiting those around her as well as herself. With Elinor, Austen displays what female community and connections can lead to and the positivity of this female control over a small part of their lives within the patriarchy.

7. Anti- Sensibility Conclusion

By seeing how the values of the landed gentry and the themes of money, marriage, and sense tie together, Austen's argument that sensibility is something women must grow out of in order to achieve a happier ending is clearly evident and supported. Austen is aware of her audience, other members of the gentry class, including young women who would be around the age of her heroines. Austen chooses to use her role as an author in a way as to train young female readers to think about the importance of reason and relying less on their emotions. Building on ideas about women and sensibility

first introduced by Mary Wollstonecraft, Austen chooses to use the novels as a way to educate women without explicitly arguing with anyone. Austen wrote a novel that was contrasting the overly sentimental novels that may lead young women astray, even having one of her heroines a reader of over sentimental poetry to display the dangers of relying too heavily on those emotions. Austen took Wollstonecraft's opinions and decided to display the outcomes that Wollstonecraft discusses, but does so in a way as to allow her readers to come to their own realizations. She does this in every novel, recognizing the importance of realistic situations that will guide a reader to their own decisions by letting them discover the issues with their society along with her heroines. By the time Austen writes *Persuasion*, she is ready to use her role once again to guide women in the opposite direction as she does in *Sense and Sensibility*. With new knowledge and new experiences, Austen takes this idea of hyper sensibility and begins to teach women to temper it, rather than dismiss it altogether.

CHAPTER TWO: SYMPATHY AND SENSIBILITY

In Jane Austen's final completed novel, *Persuasion* (1818), personality and heart matter more in the end than duty and reason. The heroine, Anne Elliot, begins the story having lost her "bloom" --that beauty and youth that men were always discussing in *Sense and Sensibility,* early on, when she rejected her first love, Frederick Wentworth. That bloom is associated with youth and sensibility, as we saw in Austen's previous novels; the idea that Anne could reclaim it in her late twenties would have seemed impossible to contemporary readers. And yet, as Anne begins to embrace her emotions and surround herself with people she could sympathize with, she begins to blossom again. We see this idea of sense over sensibility at the start of the novel:

> She was persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing--indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it. But it was not a merely selfish caution, under which she acted, in putting an end to it. Had she not imagined herself consulting his good, even more than her own, she could hardly have given him up.--The belief of being prudent, and self-denying principally for *his* advantage, was her chief consolation, under the misery of a parting--a final parting; and every consolation was required, for she had to encounter all the additional pain of opinions, on his side, totally unconvinced and unbending, and of his feeling himself ill-used by so forced a relinquishment.--He had left the country in consequence. A few months had seen the beginning and the end of their acquaintance; but, not with a few months ended Anne's share of suffering from it. Her attachment and regrets had, for a long time, clouded every enjoyment

> of youth; and an early loss of bloom and spirits had been their lasting effect (26-27).

Austen uses the language of sympathy to describe Anne's decision to reject Frederick, thus marrying reason and emotion. To sympathize is to reason with emotion. In the end, both main characters must master the skill of sympathy, tempering their sensibility, in order to create a balanced decision in which they achieve their happily ever after. Anne can only reclaim her happiness and her "bloom" by embracing sensibility, but she must do so with the safeguard of sympathy—a skill that she learns from the new middle-class communities she embraces throughout the novel. By the end of the novel, characters comment on Anne's improved beauty, and the part of her that changed is this newfound community that can sympathize with her and evoke sympathy within her, manifesting as improvement to her looks as she exudes happiness, a feeling of sensibility in which Anne had been rejecting.

This chapter will situate Anne's transformation and happy ending within larger socio-historical changes. Austen wrote *Persuasion* at a time when war and uncertainty were changing the social landscape. In Anne Elliot, Austen created a heroine who follows her heart rather than one who stands back and remains proper and reasonable. Unlike in her first novel, Austen is interested in examining how sense without sensibility can be just as harmful as sensibility without sense. She is enabled, in part, by the shifting social dynamics in England at this time. Life in England is no longer solely about tracing one's name and inheritance in a book. New economic opportunities, laws, and ideas led to a change in perspectives on class and marriage. As men returned from war and women became more involved in the literary marketplace, ideas about feeling, community, and

connections changed. In this final completed novel, Austen creates a romance built around middle-class values. These values contradict the former antagonistic relationship between sense and sensibility, instead offering a path for communal sensibility, tempered with the eighteenth-century concept of sympathy. *Persuasion*, then, is a novel not just about redeeming sensibility, but rather it is about the significance of sympathy in the burgeoning middle-class value system that has come to replace the exhausted gentry.

1. Shifting Philosophy

David Hume wrote about sympathy in 1739 in the book *Treatise of Human Nature*. At this time, sentiments were defined as exaggerated emotions, such as sadness and tenderness. In her appendix to Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling,* Maureen Harkin provides a brief summary of David Hume's point in *A Treatise of Human Natur*e regarding how sentiments were "communicated from one subject to another" (141). In other words, sympathy is how humans relate to one another: "All human creatures are related to us by resemblance. Their persons, therefore, their interests, their passions, their pains and pleasures must strike upon us in a lively manner and produce an emotion" (qtd. in Harkin 144). Humans need other humans because "the minds of men are mirrors to one another" (qtd. in Harkin 143). Hume makes love and emotion seem selfish, something that a person feels due to the pleasure it creates in the person feeling the sympathy or emotion.

Hume argued against the philosophical concept of innate ideas. He believed that knowledge stemmed from experience. This explains why he believed that emotions towards others were tied to what they evoked in the one feeling the emotions: "Thus the pleasure, which a rich man receives from his possessions, being thrown upon the

beholder, causes a pleasure and esteem; which sentiments again, being perceiv'd and sypathiz'd with, encrease the pleasure of the possessor" (qtd. in Harkin 143). Human nature and behavior are tied to passion, to sensibility, not to reason. Hume goes on to discuss compassion, explaining "*Pity* is a concern for, and *malice* a joy in the misery of others" (qtd. in Harkin 144), even when the feeling fellow has no connection to the one experiencing misery. Therefore, he believes that sympathy is responsible for these emotions, as humans relate to one another through recognition of another human. He writes "Their persons, therefore, their interests, their passions, their pains and pleasures must strike upon us in a lively manner and produce an emotion similar to the original one" (qtd. in Harkin 144). As Hume writes it, sympathy is about the sensibility that it can stir up in a human and has little to do with sense.

Adam Smith takes these ideas and refines them, arguing that sympathy and sensibility are separate traits and can exist in conjunction with sense in a person to create the epitome of middle-class values. Smith wrote at a time of great uncertainty in regard to the literacy, wealth, and upward mobility of the growing middle class. He wrote *The Wealth of Nations* in March of 1776, at a time when the middle class was rising in literacy and wealth, however, it was still quite possible that this middle-class boom would only be temporary. Smith believed that as long as the middle class continued to strive to fulfill their needs, their wealth would grow.

Smith then went on to write about sympathy in 1790 in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments.* Smith defines sense, sensibility, and sympathy, differing between the three and discussing how they intertwine while also identifying some of the weaknesses in relying too heavily on only one of these traits and neglecting the others. He argues that

sympathy is "what we ourselves should feel in the like situation" as "our sense will never inform us of what he suffers" (I.i.1). As Locke explained in Book I Chapter I of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, senses are how people perceive and take in information from the world around us and is tied to sensibility and knowledge (Locke 15). To be sensible is to have sense, as in reason. Those sensible characters discussed in Austen are using reason and judgement rather than emotion, or sensibility, to guide their decisions. Sensibility is how sensitive a person can be to emotion. They are full of sentimentality and emotion, as Austen's characters reflect in their hyper-, over-emotional states. Finally, we have the piece that balances the two- sympathy. Sympathy, or fellow-feeling, is something innate to human nature, that allows a person to experience a similar emotion to that of a person going through a situation, be it joyful or sorrowful. Smith explains this exchange of sensations as the following, "For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion" (I.i.1).

Smith thought it important to note that sympathy is not just for feeling sadness for another's sorrow, but for connecting and understanding all great emotions. He wrote

> The word sympathy, in its most proper and primitive signification, denotes our fellow-feeling with the sufferings, not that with the enjoyments of others. A late ingenious and subtile philosopher thought it necessary to prove, by arguments, that we had a real sympathy with joy, and that congratulation was a principle of human nature. Nobody, I believe, ever thought it necessary to prove that compassion was such. (I.iii.1)

To achieve sympathy, one must combine their sense (reason) and their sensibility (emotion) through imagination. Smith explains that sympathy does not need personal connections or background information to form, just imagination: "In every passion of which the mind of man is susceptible, the emotions of the by-stander always correspond to what, by bringing the case home to himself, he imagines should be the sentiments of the sufferer" (I.i.1). Smith also explains that not all passions evoke sympathy, as "nature, it seems, teaches us to be more averse to enter into this passion, and, till informed of its cause, to be disposed rather to take part against it" (I.i.1). He is referring to the passions of anger, or other emotions that may come across as improper, that need further explanation and understanding. This is where sense comes in, for human nature still reasons with their emotions before exuding those emotions. Humans are more likely to sympathize with someone feeling sorrow, or being attacked, than they are to sympathize with the attacker. He also explains that general sadness evokes "curiosity to inquire into his situation, along with some disposition to sympathize with him, than any actual sympathy that is very sensible" (I.i.1). He believes that a complainer, who does not give reasoning behind his sorrow, is less likely to evoke sympathy of mutual sadness over general pity and curiosity. In fact, sympathy is not linked to seeing the passion, or emotion, but instead is linked to the understanding and imagining of the situation by the feeling-fellow of what they might feel in that situation.

In chapter II, Smith expands his ideas of sympathy as they relate to compassion and love, when he writes that the emotions of sympathy "are always felt so instantaneously, and often upon such frivolous occasions, that it seems evident that neither of them can be derived from any such self-interested consideration" (I.i.2). Smith

is arguing against Hume's idea of sympathy as selfish, rather than a simple trait with no positive or negative charge. Sense, sensibility, and sympathy all can be displayed in excess, leading to selfishness or impropriety, or ridicule. However, they are neutral traits and can be used in positive conjunction with each other. He explains that friends that do not rejoice with each other in times of joy are impolite, but those who do not sympathize with sorrow are inhumane (I.i.2). Positive sympathy is not as polarizing as the sympathy of sorrow. This idea plays out in both of the Austen novels I discuss in different ways, as we see characters with too much of one trait and not enough of another, until we finally get a character that is able to embrace her sense and sensibility, with the addition of sympathy.

2. Shifting Socio-Economic Groups

Persuasion was written after the war with Napoleon was over and combatants returned from war. Austen's brothers were in the navy and she would have had a close and intimate understanding of it. As Brian Southam says in his piece "Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers: Francis and Charles in Life and Art", Austen wrote about life in the country, the gentry life she saw around her, while also being comfortable with writing about the navy, as she had the utmost respect and good will towards sailors (34). Southam sheds some light on life for navy men and how they would obtain titles and riches. Francis Austen, for instance, was disappointed to miss the victory at Trafalgar due to his loss of potential Baronetcy and money (37). To further understand naval officers' priorities, Southam discusses Charles Austen's desire to return to sea no matter the cost. These priorities and desires and disappointments would have been intimately known to

Jane Austen, allowing her to take from this life experience to expand characters in her novels.

The time period in which *Persuasion* is set, 1814, was a short time of peace in which sailors returned with great wealth, thereby introducing new money to the economy. Those who made their money in wars had been around since Austen's first novel, but it's their more permanent return that leads to a shift in attitude towards them by those that might have looked down on the new money before. Prior to this novel, armed service members in Austen's novels were sought after as suitable pairs for her heroines, but they had also been part of the landed gentry. In *Persuasion*, we have men that have no name to recommend them and characters that must navigate this more permanent role that those men now play in their upper-class society.

Southam touches upon what I later call the sympathy of the middle class, particularly among the Navy, when he discusses the "brotherhood of the Navy, to whose service they gave their lives. In this brotherhood, their ties were not ties of blood, but, in Nelson's words, ties of friendship, profession, and the field of battle" (Southam 41). The navy offered "a breath of fresh air, new and invigorating energies; whereas, by contrast, there are signs that the country gentry, the traditional ruling class, is heading for bankruptcy, both moral and financial" (43). It is this change in society that Austen comments on, and her digging into the characteristics of the new society, in which she discovers that sympathy and acceptance of the new middle class and its values, is where true happiness will live. This is in stark contrast to her first novel.

3. Critiquing the Old World

As established in chapter one, money and marriage are so intertwined in the gentry community that untangling them would be nearly impossible. That association shifted, but did not disappear, by the time Austen wrote *Persuasion*. Characters are still expected to act in such a way and socialize with others regardless of personal feelings on the matter. What we see here though is some push back, a resistance from female characters, to those expectations, as well as freer speech of their thoughts and opinions on these traditions. By the time Austen writes *Persuasion*, she is showing her middle-class readers that “some emotions cannot be controlled” (Horowitz 142) and that understanding themselves is what redeems her heroines. The education of the heroines as it relates to their emotions, by tempering them with sympathy and opening their eyes to the feelings of others, guide them in their arcs.

We can see Austen critiquing the value of rank and position most forcibly in her depiction of Anne’s father, Sir Walter. Sir Walter is a vain man with far too much pride for what he is actually worth. As Horowitz notes in her piece on the education of women, “[Sir Walter] keeps so many mirrors in his bedroom, that its new tenant, Admiral Croft, is embarrassed” (140). Horowitz connects vanity with how much someone valued social class, as Sir Walter is also obsessed with the *Baronetage* (140). These two vices of character, vices of the old English values that Austen’s heroine is moving away from, are combined in Sir Walter’s distaste for naval officers--men that could rise in society based on merits and might look a bit rough due to their exposure to the elements. Merits based on honor and actions do not hold any value for Sir Walter who is only concerned with family name and how one’s complexion might reflect their career choices.

Persuasion opens with a depiction of Sir Walter Elliot's vanity about his title and we see his preference for old names and land over money and new names:

> Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch-hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage, there he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by contemplating the limited remnants of the earliest patents; there any unwelcome sensations, arising from domestic affairs, changed naturally into pity and contempt, as he turned over the almost endless creations of the last century and there, if every other leaf were powerless, he could read his own history with an interest which never failed -- this was the page at which the favourite volume always opened. (3)

Here we have a man that feels contempt for "the almost endless creations" of titles in England. We see this several times with Sir Walter, this importance of a name being traceable to one family line, one being when Wentworth is first discussed: "Wentworth? Oh! ay, -Mr. Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. You misled me by the term *gentleman*. I thought you were speaking of some man of property: Mr. Wentworth was nobody, I remember; quite unconnected; nothing to do with the Strafford family. One wonders how the names of many of our nobility become so common" (23). And again, when discussing sailors in general:

> "Yes; it is in two points offensive to me; I have two strong grounds of objection to it. First, as being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never

> dreamt of; and secondly, as it cuts up a man's youth and vigour most horribly; a sailor grows old sooner than any other man." (19)

This way of thinking would have been commonplace among the gentry, but it is Austen's contempt for those who think like Sir Walter that reveals the shifting thought patterns around old money versus new. Sir Walter's pride is a vice in this novel, as Austen continuously uses words such as vanity and pride to describe him.

Captain Wentworth went from being unworthy in the minds of Sir Walter and Lady Russell, to being acceptable for Anne in the end, only due to his new money and title. Originally, Wentworth's lack of riches and social status far outweighed the happiness in which Anne felt around him. Marriage, money, and title acquisition are what a girl like Anne was expected to obtain, and Wentworth could provide none of those things. When Wentworth receives the title of Captain and obtains thousands of pounds, the Elliots begin to very slowly acknowledge his right to be in their company. This acknowledgement comes as Anne is speaking with Wentworth at a concert:

> While they were speaking, a whispering between her father and Elizabeth caught her ear. She could not distinguish, but she must guess the subject; and on Captain Wentworth's making a distant bow, she comprehended that her father had judged so well as to give him that simple acknowledgement of acquaintance, and she was just in time by a side glance to see a slight curtsey from Elizabeth herself. This, though late and reluctant and ungracious, was yet better than nothing. (171)

This is the beginning of the Elliots attempting to change their attitudes towards new money in order to continue to socialize in the society they had become accustomed to. However, Wentworth's lack of land and the inability to trace his name through the

gentry, was still a point of contempt for Sir Walter even when Captain Wentworth and Anne marry (234). This lack of true growth and acceptance in Sir Walter leaves the reader with Austen's opinion on the inability to embrace this new combination of sympathy, sensibility, and sense. She describes Sir Walter as foolish and proud, a man that could not even give his daughter the money she deserved in a dowry, because he had been so worried about keeping up pretenses that he believed his title and name gave him every right to.

As the novel progresses, we can see how Sir Walter's ideals are literally bankrupt. Sir Walter struggles to see the value in actual money, instead believing his title should be enough to live off of. Without his wife there to rein in his spending, Sir Walter ends up living beyond his means. He is so anxious to maintain title and dignity that he is digs himself deeper into debt, rejecting any undignified means of relief, as Austen writes "He had condescended to mortgage as far as he had the power, but he would never condescend to sell. No; he would never disgrace his name so far. The Kellynch estate should be transmitted whole and entire, as he had received it" (Austen 10). Here we have Austen exploring a new idea that land and title are not synonymous with money, nor are those holdings indicative of good character.

To further explore Sir Walter's misled vanity and pride, June Sturrock's "Dandies, Beauties, and the Issue of Good Looks in *Persuasion*" discusses the word "bloom" as Amy King put it, as a "post-Linnaean sexualization of botany" (qtd. in Sturrock 41) where a women's bloom is "both literal and metaphorical, for pollination" (Sturrock 41). The looks of a young lady would entice a man and they would procreate upon marriage. Of course, we know from Hardwicke's Law that the bloom of a woman

occurs when she is young, at her birthing prime. When *Persuasion* was written, Bath was a place for dandies to go, as it had been for many of Austen's novels. As comfortable as Sir Walter would be in the traditional dandy Bath, Anne, a woman who had lost her bloom early, and men from the navy who, according to Sir Walter, are aged by the sea, would shift the traditional goings-on of that upper society.

Sturrock discusses the idea that Anne is reflecting her strong emotions through her looks, and when Anne and Wentworth marry, Anne recovers her beauty. However, rather than tie this bloom to sensibility, Sturrock ties it to Anne's sympathy. She writes "Anne's responsiveness is not merely solipsistic: she responds to the feelings and needs of other people as well as to her own" (Sturrock 47). She elaborates on her point: "Anne's fluctuating beauty relates to her responsiveness to the changes and processes of the society that surrounds her" (47). Again, I assert that Anne embodies the middle class and its values, possessing sympathy and kindness, while also reflecting the physical looks of the working middle class. As Sir Walter is surrounded by mirrors in order to see his looks reflected, we have Anne reflecting the looks, anxieties, and emotions of society.

Sir Walter's loss of control in his life, of his money and his home, did not stop him from believing himself superior to those around him without a title. When in Bath, he keeps up pretenses and when a distant cousin comes to town, he jumps on the opportunity to socialize as a way to maintain social clout. Sir Walter and Elizabeth are determined to meet and socialize with the viscountess. This title of viscountess identifies Lady Dalrymple as a member of the nobility, above the mere gentry. Anne recognizes the parasitical nature of latching on to those in high society just to increase the importance of one's name. She makes her feelings known: "I have more pride than any of you; but I

confess it does vex me, that we should be so solicitous to have the relationship acknowledged, which we may be very sure is a matter of perfect indifference to them" (141). Anne is well aware that the viscountess does not care one way or the other to be acquainted with the Elliots. It is not out of warm family bonds that they connect, but out of that pride in family lineage. Anne is beginning to see that relationships should be built on something more resembling sensibility—feelings, love, enjoyment—rather than the reasonable—money, social clout, and obligation. The viscountess accepting them into her society maintains this patriarchal structure that Sir Walter and two of his daughters so value.

Even as Sir Walter's power over Anne and his general power within society wanes, we see how Austen revises the role of female communities supporting the ideology of patriarchy. In this case, those women that still prop up the patriarchy are resisted by our heroine until she manages to break free of their influence in order to succeed. Anne Elliot most relies on Lady Russell's advice, while also being surrounded by her sister Mary and friend Mrs. Smith later in the novel. As she sees their behavior, compared to that of the young Miss Musgroves and Mrs. Croft, it becomes clear that Anne feels more affinity for those who possess more sympathy and exude less rigid social expectations. For those women that uphold patriarchal lines, the gentry name and values, we see a lack of laughter and a lack of genuine relationships with those around them. Though the female community is meant to be the close friends who guide a young lady, by revealing a lack of genuine connection, Austen is indicating a flaw in the traditional, old English, version of female community.

The way Anne's sister, Mary Musgrove (née Elliot), treats the Hayters compared to her in-laws, the Musgroves, displays class prejudice. With Mary, we see a continuance of her father's beliefs and values:

> Upon my word it would, replied Mary. Dear me! If he should rise to any very great honours! If he should ever be made a Baronet! 'Lady Wentworth' sounds very well. That would be a noble thing, indeed, for Henrietta! She would take place of me then, and Henrietta would not dislike that. Sir Frederick and Lady Wentworth! It would be but a new creation, however, and I never think much of your new creations. (72)

Mary was adamantly against Henrietta marrying the eldest Hayter. She believed, along with Elizabeth and Sir Walter, that women should aspire to marry well and aspire to climb the social ladder, rather than marry beneath them. Marrying the Hayter boy would mean Henrietta only receives a small piece of land when her father-in-law dies. Marrying Captain Wentworth would mean riches and title. Mary, a reflection of old English ideals and beliefs on marriage, is unable to sympathize with Henrietta's feelings towards Hayter.

Just as with Sir Walter, we see characters criticizing Mary and her classism. When Anne is visiting Uppercross, the Musgrove sisters recognize Anne as a kindred spirit, acknowledging that social rank is not the determining factor in worthiness of company.

> And one day, when Anne was walking with only the Miss Musgroves, one of them, after talking of rank, people of rank, and jealousy of rank, said "I have no scruple of observing to *you*, how nonsensical some persons are about their place,

> because, all the world knows how easy and indifferent you are about it: but I wish any body could give Mary a hint that it would be a great deal better if she were not so very tenacious; especially, if she would not be always putting herself forward to take place of mamma. Nobody doubts her right to have precedence of mamma, but it would be more becoming in her not to be always insisting on it." (44)

Mary's excessive pride, instilled in her by Sir Walter, is unbecoming and quite annoying to the Musgroves. Mary would most likely find more comfort in her home with her in-laws if she was able to put aside the pride of rank and embrace sensibility through sympathy. By relating to others, Anne is able to let her guard down and enjoy people, and she is often spoken of by others to be far superior in company as a result. No one in this novel outside of the Elliots prefers the company of Sir Walter, Elizabeth, or Mary over Anne.

The primary female figure who impacts Anne's life is Lady Russell. Lady Russell epitomizes the old English way of having women marry well, as we saw in the female communities of *Sense and Sensibility*. She is introduced as a reasonable woman with great love for Anne, brought into the family based on her relationship with Anne's mother.

> [Mrs. Elliot] had, however, one very intimate friend, a sensible, deserving woman, who had been brought, by strong attachment to herself, to settle close by her, in the village of Kellynch; and on her kindness and advice, Lady Elliot mainly relied for the best help and maintenance of the good principles and instruction which she had been anxiously giving her daughters. (4-5)

Lady Russell is the embodiment of the old female community that Anne must break free from. She is not a bad person, and Austen does not make her a villain. In fact, she loves Anne as a daughter and must also grow and change with Anne in order to learn to be happy with this new way of thinking when Anne marries Wentworth.

Part of the problem is that Lady Russell deeply values title and rank. Austen describes Lady Russell at the beginning as such:

> [Lady Russell] was a benevolent, charitable, good woman, and capable of strong attachments; most correct in her conduct, strict in her notions of decorum, and with manners that were held a standard of good-breeding. She had a cultivated mind, and was, generally speaking, rational and consistent- but she had prejudices on the side of ancestry; she had a value for rank and consequence, which blinded her a little to the faults of those who possessed them. Herself, the widow of only a knight, she gave the dignity of a baronet all its due. (11)

Lady Russell is the prudent woman that maintains the female community and patriarchal ways of marrying within the gentry and marrying advantageously. She values all of the things the landed gentry did and believes in this system. This ideology informs her feelings about Anne and Wentworth's first proposal:

> Lady Russell, thought with more tempered and pardonable pride, received [their match] as a most unfortunate one. Anne Elliot, with all her claims of birth, beauty, and mind, to throw herself away at nineteen; involve herself at nineteen in an engagement with a young man, who had nothing but himself to recommend him, and no hopes of attaining affluence, but in the chances of a most uncertain

> profession, and no connections to secure even his farther rise in that profession; would be, indeed, a throwing away, which she grieved to think of! (25)

In Lady Russell's mind, Anne's happiness depended on the correctness of her actions, rather than on the emotional attachment she had formed with Wentworth. Despite having seen the unhappiness of Anne's mother's marriage firsthand, Lady Russell still views a match with a man not of "birth" to be a dangerous and stupid move. Her language here—"throw[ing] herself away"—suggests the value of Anne as a commodity in the marriage market.

Austen chronicles how Anne pulls away from this sort of thinking as the novel progresses. When Lady Russell and Anne reunite to discuss Bath and bring Anne there, we see a shift in Anne's obligations. She is no longer consumed with doing what is right by her family, but instead is beginning to think on her emotional attachments instead:

> When they came to converse, she was soon sensible of some mental change. The subjects which her heart had been full on leaving Kellynch, and which she had felt slighted, and been compelled to smother among the Musgroves, were now become but of secondary interest. She had lately lost sight even of her father and sister in Bath. Their concerns had been sunk under those of Uppercross, and when Lady Russell reverted to their former hopes and fears, and spoke her satisfaction in the house in Camden-place which had been taken, and her regret that Mrs. Clay should still be with them, Anne would have been ashamed to have it known, how much more she was thinking of Lyme, and Louisa Musgrove, and all her acquaintances there; how much more interesting to her was the home and the friendship of the Harvilles and Captain Benwick, than her own father's house in

> Camden-place, or her own sister's intimacy with Mrs. Clay. She was actually forced to exert herself, to meet Lady Russell with any thing like the appearance of equal solicitude, on topics which had by nature the first claim on her. (116)

Lady Russell and Sir Walter believe that Anne should be concerned with her family and their concerns, rather than thinking of those that are, by rank, beneath her in society. Anne no longer feels sympathy for the old English ways of Lady Russell and her family as she has opened herself to sympathetic relationships with the Musgroves. Anne's rejection of Lady Russell's advice is a rejection the larger values of Sir Walter, and a siding with sympathy over sense.

Interestingly, it is Lady Russell's attempts to persuade Anne to wed Mr. Elliot—a "sensible" choice—that push Anne further and further away from her friend. Lady Russell believes Mr. Elliot to be a reasonable choice for her beloved Anne. She does not question his motives for returning to the family he had snubbed years before, for she believes it to be the most natural thing for a person to value title and family lineage over all else. She attempts to persuade Anne's thinking to favor Mr. Elliott, claiming herself not to be a matchmaker, although we know she has used her relationship with Anne to guide matches in the past with the refusal of Wentworth.

> "I am no match-maker, as you well know," said Lady Russell, "being much too well aware of the uncertainty of all human events and calculations. I only mean that if Mr. Elliot should some time hence pay his addresses to you, and if you should be disposed to accept him, I think there would be every possibility of your being happy together. A most suitable connection every body must consider." (150)

Anne is not interested in the suitability of a connection, as she had rejected Charles Musgrove years before. We know Lady Russell is aware of Anne's lingering feelings for Wentworth, as we see the anxiety she feels when she realizes how much time Wentworth was spending at Uppercross. Lady Russell continues to attempt to push reason on Anne, while Anne further distances herself from that way of thinking.

Mr. Elliot embodies the old way of thinking about rank and class. Austen uses Mr. Elliot as the third side in her love triangle, common in her novels, but in this case, Austen gives very little indication that Anne should marry him. By Lady Russell and Sir Walter endorsing Mr. Elliot, it is quite clear that Anne would be falling back into the old English ways and would go against where Austen is taking this new story--to the path of embracing sensibility.

> [Anne and Mr. Elliot] did not always think alike. His value for rank and connexion she perceived to be 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 solicitudes on a subject which she thought unworthy to excite them. The Bath paper one morning announced the arrival of the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple and her daughter, the Honourable Miss Carteret; and all the comfort of No.--, Camden-place, was swept away for many days; for the Dalrymples (in Anne's opinion, most unfortunately) were cousins of the Elliots; and the agony was, how to introduce themselves properly. (139)

Here we have Mr. Elliot tied in with this embarrassing desire to cling to the relation of Lady Dalrymple and the old English way of thinking.

It isn't until Mrs. Smith reveals Mr. Elliot's full character that we learn that Anne should rely on her feelings and intuition, those traits of sensibility. It is revealed that Mr. Elliot married for financial gain, as he already would inherit a title and land from Sir Walter. Mr. Elliot chose to snub name for money, a reasonable thing to do, as he was not at risk of losing the title of his inheritance. However, money isn't making Mr. Elliot happy so now he has returned to the Elliots, as Mrs. Smith tells it:

> "Now you are to understand that time had worked a very material change in Mr. Elliot's opinions as to the value of a baronetcy. Upon all points of blood and connexion, he is a completely altered man. Having long had as much money as he could spend, nothing to wish for on the side of avarice or indulgence, he has been gradually learning to pin his happiness upon the consequence he is heir to." (194)

Austen is showing the reader two paths to happiness. One is Anne's, a woman who was broken hearted when she did the reasonable thing and is learning to embrace sensibility and sympathy, resulting in a second bloom and great happiness. The other path is Mr. Elliot's, who sought money for happiness, and not finding money to satisfy him, he is seeking title and upward social mobility. This also does not result in happiness, as Austen shows that happiness is not found through these old English ways of marrying advantageously, but instead is found by marrying for love and surrounding yourself with sympathetic people.

Anne's decision to not be persuaded by "reason" and classism into marrying Mr. Elliot is rewarded by the plot. When Mr. Elliot's schemes are revealed by Mrs. Smith, Anne is forced to acknowledge to herself that she almost went back to her old ways of allowing someone with stark values to her own influence her decisions "Anne could just

acknowledge within herself such a possibility of having been induced to marry him, as made her shudder at the idea of misery which must have followed. It was just possible that she might have been persuaded by Lady Russell!" (198) This realization is a turning point for Anne and Lady Russell, as Anne realizes that she must follow her heart, her gut--those traits of sensibility, and truly turn her back on the old values of her family. Yet, Anne does still respect her mother's friend, and when Anne and Wentworth do end up marrying, she is most concerned with how Lady Russell will react:

> The only one among them, whose opposition of feeling could excite any serious anxiety, was Lady Russell. Anne knew that Lady Russell must be suffering some pain in understanding and relinquishing Mr. Eliot and be making some struggles to become truly acquainted with and do justice to Captain Wentworth. This however was what Lady Russell had now to do. She must learn to feel that she had been mistaken with regard to both; that she had been unfairly influenced by appearances in each; that because Captain Wentworth's manners had not suited her own ideas, she had been too quick in suspecting them to indicate a character of dangerous impetuosity; and that because Mr. Eliot's manners had precisely pleased her in their propriety and correctness, their general politeness and suavity, she had been too quick in receiving them as the certain result of the most correct opinions and well-regulated mind. There was nothing less for Lady Russell to do, than to admit that she had been completely wrong, and to take up a new set of opinions and of hopes. (235)

Anne wants to show Lady Russell the new ways, the happy sensibility, and hopes Lady Russell's sympathy through her love for Anne will lead to acceptance of Anne's

marriage. Austen is explicit in her meaning with Lady Russell in regard to Anne's marriage. Lady Russell must learn new ways, embrace sensibility, and accept that lineage and titles do not a good person make. By embracing sympathy, understanding the emotions of another and rejoicing with them, this shift in Austen's writing is reflective of the shift happening in England at the time.

4. Embracing the New World

Essentially, *Persuasion* is a novel about emotional education and Anne's learning to embrace sensibility and sympathy goes hand-in-hand with a new class consciousness. Barbara Horwitz notes the many instances in Austen's novels where the author reflects on or rejects nineteenth century education ideals. According to Locke, "the basic goals of education must be virtue, wisdom, breeding and learning, in that order" (qtd. in Horowitz 136). As Horowitz argues, Austen saw virtues as doing one's duty, something that the heroines in Austen's novels always do once they know what those duties are. The old ways of thinking believed that women should be educated as to how to get a husband and how to keep a husband, through learned accomplishments, housekeeping, and child-rearing. These views contrast with Austen's opinions, especially as they are revealed in *Persuasion*. Austen sees men and women as inherently equal (144) and believes good marriages stem from that equality of education. Austen expands Locke's ideas of accomplishing virtue through the use of "reason to master passion and appetite" (qtd. in Horowitz 136); we see this in *Persuasion* as characters grow to embrace middle class ideals.

Anne represents a society as whole, rather than the more nuanced moral dilemmas of an individual. In particular, Anne represents the embodiment of middle-class values,

including the ability to achieve and maintain class mobility. As we saw in Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, the middle class had newly achieved their own rank, yet felt the uncertainty about how long that would last, leading to further anxieties about maintaining social order. As David Wheeler points out, the more complex themes that Austen deals with in her later novels include "the possibility of an individual moving up--or down--in rank and the possibility of an entire group or category of individuals gaining--or losing--status within society" (Wheeler 229). In *Persuasion*, we see this larger anxiety, the more general implications of class mobility. Anne is already the daughter of a baron and therefore could marry well, as she has the family name which the gentry held so dear. Her options for marriage, had she continued to look, were advantageous in many ways--like with Charles Musgrove. Therefore, it's fair to assume that in this novel, Austen is less concerned with the individual class mobility of the hero or heroine. Instead, she is looking at the fluctuations that the middle class is seeing, while new titles are given, education is used to acquire class mobility, and landowners with old English ideals are able to be mocked for their old ways.

As Wheeler discusses, in *Persuasion*, the navy offers are the dominant male characters in the novel and become superior to Sir Walter in many ways--through renting of his property, marrying of his daughter, and having a surplus of money (229). All of those things, combined with sympathy which they all possess, makes them the favorable group in this novel--the new middle class. This new middle class does not rely on land for income or status, as noted in *Persuasion*, Wentworth does not own land and yet has 25,000 pounds. With this shift, this new middle class relies on professions, rather than rental income, to make a living. Wheeler discusses this newfound unlanded future in

relation to Marxism, as Mr. Elliot mentions the "unfeudal tone of the present day" and explains that the feudalist stage is followed by capitalism, the change Austen is noting in her novel (230).

Austen's novel reflects contemporary anxieties about this class mobility. As Wheeler points out, the characters that seem to indicate the most anxiety for Austen are those with "murkier" class positions: Mr. Shepherd, Mrs. Clay, Mrs. Smith, and Nurse Rooke (230). As Austen must navigate the uncertainty that those characters represent in her own life, she shows how non-gentry members navigate the gentry and middle class. Mrs. Smith "adapts to a new, capitalistic order of individualism and profit" (Wheeler 234) but is eventually brought back into the gentry in order to allow Anne an easier decision about keeping her company. Through these characters, especially Mrs. Smith who has been harmed by her fall from this class, we see Austen's harshest critique of the gentry in *Persuasion*. Sir Walter has lost respectability on many fronts, kind and benevolent men are rising in ranks, and Anne Elliot leaves the gentry to be part of the working middle class in her marriage to Wentworth.

This new middle class valued kindness and propriety, while also valuing hard work and relationships, through sympathy. In order to reveal the values of the middle class and social mobility, Austen gives us characters from many ranks with varied levels of sympathy. For example, the untitled but kindly Musgroves:

> The Musgroves, like their houses, were in a state of alteration, perhaps of improvement. The father and mother were in the old English style, and the young people in the new. Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove were a very good sort of people; friendly and hospitable, not much educated, and not at all elegant. Their children

> had more modern minds and manners. There was a numerous family; but the only two grown up, excepting Charles, were Henrietta and Louisa, young ladies of nineteen and twenty, who had brought from a school at Exeter all the usual stock of accomplishments, and were now, like thousands of other ladies, living to be fashionable, happy, and merry. (39)

Austen establishes the clash of the 'old English' and 'new English' ways, and then frankly sides with the new English ways to be an improvement. The Musgroves represent the changing, more accepting gentry and middle-class. When Austen says the Musgroves and their home are in a state of change and improvement, she is alluding to the overall positive changes occurring in society. Kindness and hospitality, combined with the accomplishments and education achieved at school, creates a sympathetic new class of people who can move up within the class due to their merits. The more modern minds that Austen alludes to include a capacity for welcoming and embracing the new money of the returning sailors. Austen continues to explore the moral superiority of the Musgroves with their acceptance of education as a means to move up in society, as they embrace the eldest Hayter son as a match for their daughter.

In England, education was becoming more readily available, as we see in the cases of the Musgrove girls; but it was also a tool for class mobility. The Musgroves are well-established gentry members with a hope to see their daughters happy, rather than advantageously set up. Mrs. Musgrove has a sister, the eldest son of whom marries one of the Musgroves, Henrietta:

> Mrs. Musgrove and Mrs. Hayter were sisters. They had each had money, but their marriages had made a material difference in their degree of consequence. Mr.

> Hayter had some property of his own, but it was insignificant compared with Mr. Musgrove's; and while the Musgroves were in the first class of society in the country, 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. (71)

Austen reminds her reader that although any landowner would be considered a member of the gentry, the levels of wealthy varied greatly. Education and manners allow a man to move up in society, just as education and accomplishments allow a lady to move up.

For those who value rank overall, however, education is a suspect thing. In contrast to Anne's thoughts on good company and education as a means of social mobility, Mr. Elliot discusses his distaste for education as a way to obtain higher social status compared to those with more noble titles: "Good company requires only birth, education and manners, and with regard to education is not very nice. Birth and good manners are essential; but a little learning is by no means a dangerous thing in good company, on the contrary, it will do very well" (141). Mr. Elliot does not necessarily believe education to be an indicator any longer of rank and social status, as it can be obtained by those that were not born into status. Similarly, this distrust for the new is seen throughout *Persuasion* as we learn many of the new ways to achieve upward social mobility: military duty, marriage, education, and good company. At this time, a person could now choose to leave behind a lower class in order to be a gentleman through education. Before this, class structure was more rigid, something that was important to

the older gentry generation, the supporters of Hardwicke's Law and other patriarchal structures that kept their land together and outsiders out.

In addition to valuing education as a mode of social mobility, the Musgroves also see marriage as a matter of love, rather than property exchange, thus reflecting a more middle-class view of conjugal bliss. When the two Musgrove daughters become engaged to wed, the men and women are less concerned with the advantages that the marriages may afford their daughters and are simply content with the happy, suitable matches. As Austen writes, "The Musgroves are behaving like themselves, most honourably and kindly, only anxious with true parental hearts to promote their daughter's comfort. All this is much, very much in favour of their happiness" (172). Their kindness is equal to their honorability in Austen's words.

Charles Musgrove expands on these thoughts, as Austen continues to build on the value of fellow-feeling over the acquisition of money and titles:

> My father would be as well pleased if the gentlemen were richer, but he has no other fault to find. Money, you know, coming down with money--two daughters at once--it cannot be a very agreeable operation, and it streightens him as to many things. However, I do not mean to say they have not a right to it. It is very fit they should have daughters' shares; and I am sure he has always been a very kind, liberal father to me. (205-06)

Austen is acknowledging that money can make things easier, but she also shows that it is not the primary motivating factor any longer. A father that loves his daughters will find a way to give them their dowry and be happy for their happiness. This is of course quite unlike what Anne receives from Sir Walter when she finds happiness with Wentworth.

5. Sympathetic Sensibility

As she turns from her family's old ways of thinking, Anne will be embracing new money, less propriety and obligation, and warmth and kindness in relationships. Through her emotional education with the Musgroves, Anne is more closely aligned with the middle class and its embrace of sympathy as a way to temper sensibility and sense. Consider, for example, how Anne reacts to Sir Walter and Elizabeth entering the Musgroves' rooms in Bath: "Anne felt an instant oppression, and, wherever she looked, saw symptoms of the same. The comfort, the freedom, the gaiety of the room was over, hushed into cold composure, determined silence, or insipid talk, to meet the heartless elegance of her father and sister" (213). Austen could not be clearer that propriety feels cold and sensibility feels joyous. This "heartless elegance" is what Smith is discussing when it comes to sympathy--those that do not possess sympathy for joy are impolite, but not improper. Sir Walter and Elizabeth lack fellow-feeling for those around them, keeping themselves shut off from the joy of sympathy that Smith discusses. Anne's ability to recognize this allows her to seek new communities.

Anne's embrace of sensibility and sympathy is most apparent in how she feels about Lady Dalrymple and Mrs. Smith. Anne's thoughts on Lady Dalrymple puncture any illusions about the inherent worth of the upper-class and instead focus on her merely as a (flawed) woman:

> Had Lady Dalrymple and her daughter even been very agreeable, she would still have been ashamed of the agitation they created, but they were nothing. There was no superiority of manner, accomplishment, or understanding. Lady Dalrymple had acquired the name of 'a charming woman', because she had a

> smile and civil answer for every body. Miss Carteret, with still less to say, was so plain and so awkward, that she would never have been tolerated in Camden-place but for her birth. (140)

Anne recognizes manners, accomplishments, and understanding as the pillars for good character, ashamed by the superiority in which this woman and her daughter are viewed due to a noble title. This is displayed in her refusal to visit Lady Dalrymple on a day which would mean she has to break an engagement with Mrs. Smith, instead choosing to honor her word and spend time with someone whose character and company she views as superior, regardless of what society would think.

For Anne, title and rank are far less important than personal relationships built on sympathy and sensibility. Mrs. Smith, Anne's old school friend, deserves her loyalty, despite her lack of rank. Sir Walter's snitty response to Anne's loyalty only further proves Austen's critique of classism:

> "Westgate-buildings!" Said he; and "who is Miss Anne Elliot to be visiting in Westgate-buildings? --A Mrs. Smith A widow Mrs. Smith, -- and who was her husband? One of the five thousand Mr. Smiths whose names are to be with me every where. And what is her attraction? That she is old and sickly. --Upon my word, Miss Anne Elliot, you have the most extraordinary taste! Everything that revolts other people, low company, paltry rooms, foul air, disgusting associations are inviting to you." (148)

Sir Walter is disgusted by Anne's opinions of good company, believing himself and his daughters to be above such lowly parts of society. This contrast in ideas that Austen creates clearly indicates that Anne is the kind and good person in this situation,

reinforcing this idea that the old ways of thinking of worthiness of company are outdated and will not do any longer. Anne's opinion on good company, as explained to Mr. Elliot, is exactly what Austen wants her readers to begin thinking on: "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" (141). Anne is ready to be around those that satisfy her emotions, rather than prove to be advantageous in society's ranks.

Regardless of Mrs. Smith's place in society, a poor and sickly woman living in significant poverty for the gentry, Anne enjoys visiting with her. Anne's feelings for Mrs. Smith are based on character, something Mrs. Smith had shown to have in their school days:

> Miss Hamilton, now Mrs. Smith, had shewn her kindness in one of those periods of her life when it had been most valuable. Anne had gone unhappy to school, grieving for the loss of a mother whom she had dearly loved, feeling her separation from home, and suffering as a girl of fourteen, of strong sensibility and not high spirits, must suffer at such a time; and Miss Hamilton, three years older than herself, but still from the want of near relations and a settled home, remaining another year at school, had been useful and good to her in a way which had considerably lessened her misery, and could never be remembered with indifference. (143)

Anne is not one to forget the actions and warmth of others. She does not choose her friendships for any reason other than genuine attachment and sympathy. When looked at in contrast to why characters in *Sense and Sensibility* chose their friendships, as Fanny Dashwood looking to get close to the Middletons indicates, Anne is once again rejecting

former traditions in favor of those that reward her with the pleasure of mutual sympathy. Adam Smith asserts that sympathy eases pain and heightens joy (I.i.2) which is what Anne experienced with Mrs. Smith as an adolescent and is able to experience once again in their adulthood. As Anne learns to embrace and reciprocate sympathy with others, she moves further from the values of her father.

Austen's respect for members of the lower classes is not just limited to Anne's friends, however. The woman who comes and cares for Mrs. Smith, Nurse Rooke, is part of the working class. Austen highlights how Rooke is constantly observing the upper-class and using her knowledge to help herself and others. She is

> "a shrewd, intelligent, sensible woman. Hers is a line for seeing human nature; and she has a fund of good sense and observation which, as a companion, make her infinitely superior to thousands of those who having only received 'the best education in the world', know nothing worth attending to. Call it gossip if you will; but when nurse Rooke has half an hour's leisure to bestow on me, she is sure to have something to relate that is entertaining and profitable, something that makes one know one's species better." (146)

We see again the value of human nature, sensibility, over the proper education and ranks of high society. This is the new female community Austen introduces, just as important for guidance and decisions, but much more reliant on what brings happiness rather than what can bring money and titles.

Even as Anne finds a new female community that crosses class lines, she also encounters men who, unlike her father, practice sensibility and sympathy. Her fondness for the navy is indicative of Austen's, and England's, and mirrors the changes in the class

structure. When Anne meets the Harvilles in Lyme, she regrets again her decision to do the reasonable thing and reject Wentworth because she sees the other aspects of life with him that she rejected:

> There was so much attachment to Captain Wentworth in all this, and such a bewitching charm in a degree of hospitality so uncommon, so unlike the usual style of give-and-take invitations, and dinners of formality and display, that Anne felt her spirits not likely to be benefited by an increasing acquaintance among his brother-officers. These would have been all my friends, was her thought; and she had to struggle against a great tendency to lowness. (93-94)

Anne could have had open friendships with people that were not doing anything out of a sense of obligation and respect for titles and rank. In fact, she sees the 'bewitching charm' of not relying on the give-and-take of high society. In Anne's mind, this sense of sympathy found amongst the navy men and their wives is anti-classist, improper for their newfound ranks and titles, at least that's how her father's old English ways would see it. High society is all about what others can do for each other to move advantageously within circles. Adam Smith explained the spontaneity and immediacy of sympathy as proof that it is not a selfish reaction and therefore cannot be based in reason (I.i.2). As I have already shown, in Regency high society, life choices were based on reason and self-interest. To be introduced to a societal circle that based their lives and relationships on spontaneous "correspondence of the sentiments of others" (Smith I.i.2), Anne gets a glimpse of what life can be like without all of the rigid expectations and ulterior motives that the society she was raised in offered.

6. Sensibility, Sympathy, and the Sexes

In this novel, we have a heroine that desires sensibility and that passion. Anne's desire for genuine feeling is one of the many signs that warns her about the unsuitability of a marriage to Mr. Elliot:

> Mr. Elliot was rational, discreet, polished, --but he was not open. There was never any burst of feeling, any warmth of indignation or delight, at the evil or good of others. This, to Anne, was a decided imperfection. Her early impressions were incurable. She prized the frank, the open-hearted, the eager character beyond all others. Warmth and enthusiasm did captivate her still. She felt that she could so much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a careless or a hasty thing; than of those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped. (151-52)

Anne needs more than the control and dignity which high society brings. She wants emotion and passion, like what she has with Wentworth. Adam Smith wrote that people are "still more anxious to communicate to our friends our disagreeable than our agreeable passions" (I.i.2). Anne has suffered in silent dignity since she had her heart broken eight years before the start of the novel. As she gets close to others and experiences mutual sympathy, she would begin to feel the relief of a mirrored and shared emotion. Anne is unable to return to the thinking of men like Mr. Elliot and her father, who would remain ignorant to her feelings and dismissive of sympathy over reason. That hastiness mentioned of the people that Anne prefers harks back again to Smith's description of sympathy as spontaneous. But rather than being improper and selfish, as pure emotion (sensibility) could be, sympathy's slip-ups allow for mutual, shared joy.

This acceptance of these men by society opens up room for society to accept sensibility and use it to distinguish good men from selfish men, regardless of rank and worth. Anne eagerly speaks with Benwick on the subjects of sensibility, and she speaks his praises when he becomes engaged, in order to ease the sensible mind of Charles. Benwick is described as such:

> He shewed himself so intimately acquainted with all the tenderest songs of the one poet, and all the impassioned descriptions of hopeless agony of the other; he repeated, with such tremulous feeling, the various lines which imaged a broken heart, or a mind destroyed by wretchedness, and looked so entirely as if he meant to be understood, that she ventured to hope he did not always read only poetry; and to say, that she thought it was the misfortune of poetry, to be seldom safely enjoyed by those who enjoyed it completely; and that the strong feelings which alone could estimate it truly, were the very feelings which ought to taste it but sparingly. (96)

Anne acknowledges this over sensibility in Benwick by noting that those who read and agonize over poetry tend to be overly emotional and could benefit from sense and control. This emotion exuded by those that read poetry leads to a false sympathy, as the reader is sympathizing with texts, projecting and reflecting only their own emotions as they read. Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility* also reads mostly poetry, feeding on that emotion and pain, leading her to death's door. However, in *Sense and Sensibility,* Marianne had to learn to control that emotion, whereas Benwick in *Persuasion* must learn to redirect his sympathy and emotions for characters and texts into sympathy and emotion for the people around him in order to win the affections of Louisa and be worthy of the

match. We continue to see the value of sensibility in men with Harville's story of Wentworth sailing to Benwick to deliver the news of his fiancée's death. Wentworth is praiseworthy because of his feelings:

> "I was at Plymouth, dreading to hear of him; he sent in letters, but the Grappler was under orders for Portsmouth. There the news must follow him, but who was to tell it? Not I. I would as soon have been run up to the yard-arm. Nobody could do it, but that good fellow, (pointing to Captain Wentworth.) The Laconia had come into Plymouth the week before; no danger of her being sent to sea again. He stood his chance for the rest--wrote up for leave of absence, but without waiting the return, travelled night and day till he got to Portsmouth, rowed off to the Grappler that instant, and never left the poor fellow for a week; that's what he did, and nobody else could have saved poor James. You may think, Miss Elliot, whether he is dear to us!" (103-04)

In this novel, we see men embracing their emotions for each other. Harville, holding Wentworth dear to him, shows attachment between men so openly in a way that we do not often see with Austen. We see Wentworth's worries and concern for his friends, staying by Benwick, going to him in the first place. In addition to the emotional capabilities of men, we are seeing the sympathetic capacity of this middle class again. Harville was in pain and was afraid to share in that pain with Benwick who would be equally as crushed by the death of his fiancée. So, Wentworth, sympathetic to them both, is able to go to Benwick and alleviate that pain by being with him and sharing in those moments. Earlier in the novel, Wentworth discusses his taking wives to their husbands regardless of his own adverse feelings about women on ships. It's his ability to put aside

his own feelings and do what will bring joy to those he cares about that indicates he will be able to learn and adjust to this new society along with Anne.

Wentworth's desire to help Benwick signals his emotional intelligence and sympathy, but he must learn to apply those aspects of his character to his situation with Anne. In Wentworth's heartache, he attempts to move on, out of pride and necessity. When he recounts these actions to Anne, he reveals the pain behind his choices and the missed opportunity that his pride kept him back from:

> In his attempts to attach himself to Louisa Musgrove (the attempts of angry pride), he protested that he had for ever felt it to be impossible; that he had not cared, could not care for Louisa; though, till that day, till the leisure for reflection which followed it, he had not understood the perfect excellence of the mind with which Louisa's could so ill bear a comparison; or the perfect, unrivalled hold it possessed over his own. There, he had learnt 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. There, he had seen every thing to exalt in his estimation the woman he had lost, and there begun to deplore the pride, the folly, the madness of resentment, which had kept him from trying to regain her when thrown in his way. (228)

In the throes of his emotions, he acted improperly, leading a woman on while attempting to emotionally hurt another. When Louisa acts so recklessly, Wentworth begins to see the dangers of his own emotional recklessness. It is then that he is able to begin to regulate his emotions and temper them with sympathy. By sympathizing with Anne, and sharing

in their shared past and mutual pain, Wentworth becomes worthy of representing this new sympathetic class along with Anne.

Wentworth is awakened to the need for sympathy by his own community. Wentworth then discusses the presumed attachment that others felt between him and Louisa. He alludes to the damage that obligation can bring when one only wishes to follow their heart:

> "That neither Harville nor his wife entertained a doubt of our mutual attachment. I was startled and shocked. To a degree, I could contradict this instantly; but, when I began to reflect that others might have felt the same--her own family, nay, perhaps herself, I was no longer at my own disposal. I was hers in honour if she wished it. I had been unguarded. I had not thought seriously on this subject before. I had not considered that my excessive intimacy must have its danger of ill consequence in many ways; and that I had no right to be trying whether I could attach myself to either of the girls, at the risk of raising even an unpleasant report, were there no other ill effects. I had been grossly wrong and must abide the consequences. (228-29)

Wentworth, like Anne, is respectable. Embracing sensibility does not mean shunning all obligations. Austen makes this point clear. There is more at play than a simple rejection of reason for emotion. Wentworth has learned to temper his sensibility, that emotional resentment towards Anne and open pursuit of a woman he did not care for, with sympathy for his brother-in-law and others. He had to learn how his actions affected those around them and temper those actions accordingly.

The importance of sympathetic men underwrites the anti-classist ideology of Wentworth's navy friends. Anne has a conversation with Harville as they discuss women's sensibility and men's. Anne believes women feel more deeply than men: "We certainly do not forget you, so soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit. We cannot help ourselves. We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us" (219). Harville disagrees,

> "I will not allow it to be more man's nature than woman's to be inconstant and forget those they do love or have loved. I believe the reverse. I believe in a true analogy between our bodily frames and our mental; and that as our bodies are the strongest, so are our feelings; capable of bearing most rough usage, and riding out the heaviest weather." (220)

Harville believes men to be the more emotional sex, capable of stronger emotions and sympathy. The strength of body, he believes, is reflective of strength of heart. Anne defends the idea that sensibility is a woman's characteristic; although men were embracing sensibility before Austen, as seen in the works of Henry Mackenzie and Laurence Sterne, by the time Austen was originally writing, sensibility was viewed as something dangerous in excess and feminine in characteristic.

Anne's answer to Harville's biological explanation of sympathy and sensibility is to point to community and social mobility. She frames the difference in feeling between the genders in terms of man's ability to seek out gain:

> "Man is more robust than woman, but he is not longer-lived; which exactly explains my view of the nature of their attachments. Nay, it would be too hard upon you, if it were otherwise. You have difficulties, and privations, and dangers

> enough to struggle with. You are always labouring and toiling, exposed to every risk and hardship. Your home, country, friends, all quitted. Neither time, nor health, nor life, to be called your own. It would be too hard indeed...if woman's feelings were to be added to all this." (220)

Anne is convinced that women suffer more than men and are more sympathetic. Due to their circumstances, staying home and ruminating in their thoughts, women must hear and reflect on the emotions of all those around them. Their ability to sit and ruminate on feelings with others and stay in thought make women the more sympathetic sex. Men are unable to sit around and think, as they would be missing out on the many social activities and expectations put on them by society. Social mobility, especially at this time, required men to think with reason and act with assertiveness. Everything in Anne's life up to this point had told her that men should be concerned with gaining in society. Sitting around worrying about the feelings of others, especially a woman that would not elevate their place in society, would have seemed contradictory to everything Anne was raised to believe was proper.

Harville's response to Anne seems to suggest that, while men feel more deeply, those feelings are not necessarily born of sympathetic communion. Indeed, it seems as though those who wish to gain class mobility must be reminded of sympathy. Harville goes on to describe his emotions, believing they prove that men feel more strongly than women are capable:

> "If I could but make you comprehend what a man suffers when he takes a last look at his wife and children, and watches the boat that he has sent them off in, as long as it is in sight, and then turns away and says. 'God knows whether we ever

> meet again!' And then, if I could convey to you the glow of his soul when he does see them again; when, coming back after a twelvemonth's absence perhaps, and obliged to put into another port, he calculates how soon it be possible to get them there, pretending to deceive himself, and saying, 'They cannot be here till such a day', but all the while hoping for them twelve hours sooner, and seeing them arrive at last, as if Heaven had given them wings, by many hours sooner still! If I could explain to you all this, and all that a man can bear and do, and glories to do for the sake of these treasures of his existence!" (221)

Harville is indulging his sensibility here and neglecting to think of others and their emotions. He lacks sympathy for what his wife and children may be feeling, instead focusing on his own emotions. He ruminates on his own pain, similar to what we see Benwick do before he meets Louisa. His return to this society in a more permanent capacity will most likely aid in his education of sympathy.

7. Conclusion to Sympathy, Sense, and Sensibility

With *Persuasion*, we see a wiser Austen, accepting the possibility of second blooms, virtues of sensibility, and a rising middle class that might be morally superior to the gentry class. Austen takes her role as author here seriously once again, ensuring that she finished this novel and made her point clear, even editing the end to reflect her points about the middle class and sympathy as having positive contributions to society. She is guiding her readers in a journey towards acceptance of emotions and crossing class lines, whereas she spent *Sense and Sensibility* guiding women to repress their emotions in order to maintain the class structure.

By embracing the nineteenth century concept of sympathy as a way to temper sensibility, Austen suggests readers may experience a more fulfilled life. This shift in understanding and attitude from *Sense and Sensibility* to *Persuasion* allows readers and historians to understand the thought process and actions of those within the gentry and middle class during this time of flux for England. By using Austen as a way to better understand the female community and the ways in which it manipulated and enforced patriarchal norms, and then recognizing the shifts that occurred within those communities, we can see that females and their capacity for sensibility and sympathy acted as a support system for the new middle class. Without the support and acceptance of those within the lower members of the gentry and the ability to spread sympathy, the middle class may have faced much harsher reception in England and found it hard to achieve social mobility. As mentioned, Adam Smith was writing his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* during this rise of the middle class and he was uncertain of its sustainability, but he believed it was possible for sympathy to maintain the growth of that new class. Austen's embrace of these new ideas around class structure, and her sympathetic representation of the subjectivities of her characters, helped to create sympathy in her readers not only for her characters but for real people experiencing these social changes.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Jane Austen uses her role as a female writer to guide the young, middle- and upper-class women of nineteenth century England. By drawing inspiration from the political and social events happening around her, Austen creates a realistic depiction of society recognizable to her readers. Through the relation between her heroines and her readers, Austen is able to show rather than tell her readers what the benefits and risks of certain emotions would be. From the time of her first published novel to the time of her final completed novel, Austen and England must grapple with significant political and social changes to their lives which result in a new middle class and a shift of priorities in formerly valued traits.

Sensibility was a concept introduced in the eighteenth century, embraced at first for being a critical part of knowledge, but later seen for its faults which could lead to social faux pas, improper matches, and loose decorum. Sensibility could also lead to women and men harming each other's reputations and misguiding those with money into marrying beneath them, threatening the social system created and maintained by the patriarchal gentry. Austen took this belief and crafted a situation where the heroine that relies too heavily on her emotions experiences the most dangerous pain, while the heroine that maintains her reason is able to continue to successfully navigate the world around her.

Austen also explores the connections between money, power, and female community within her discussion of sensibility and sense, building an argument that female community is vital in censoring sensibility in young, marriageable women, in order to maintain a powerful gentry class where money remains within a patriarchal

family lineage. Her exploration of the female community as vital to the maintenance of patriarchal values is indicative of her choice to use her writing in order to guide more women in their actions through her novels. This female community eventually shifts, but never loses its importance, as Austen reveals the vital nature of the role women play in maintaining the patriarchy. By guiding women to choose their female companions through more sympathetic means, she sets her readers up for more pleasure in their lives, while also maintaining the boundaries that these female guides provide young women.

By the time Austen wrote *Persuasion*, she had personally undergone emotional growth and we can see a revision of her earlier ideas about sensibility, tempered with something similar to David Hume's and Adam Smith's theories of sympathy. Sympathy tempered sensibility, allowing characters to be both emotional and reasonable. Incorporating the ability to sympathize allowed Austen to explore how her society should handle the new middle class and how to embrace the new money that a more permanent stay of soldiers was introducing to the economy. By recognizing the outdated ideas of the gentry, valuing land and titles and reason over emotional connection, Austen was able to create a heroine that could step out of that world and be the better for it. Austen was showing her readers, guiding them, to embrace the changes in order to feel love and happiness without the severe negative outcomes of leaning too far into sensibility.

With this thesis, I am offering a new perspective on Jane Austen and the value of female communities and gendered emotions in her time. Austen's work offers a clear timeline that a scholar may follow in order to trace the shifting ideas surrounding class, society, and value during the tumultuous time between the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.

I have explored female communities as a powerful force, subordinate to the patriarchy in many ways, but able to achieve some power of their own. By examining these female relationships in Austen's novels, one would be able to recognize the ideals of polite society, proper behaviors, and a close-knit sisterhood of gentry women. As many narratives cast women as unreasonable and illogical, Austen counters that narrative by demonstrating how women obtained the knowledge to become reasonable and logical members of their society, using these traits to navigate a patriarchal society. Beyond learning logic and reason, Austen then demonstrated how the value of female emotion and sympathy could be a powerful tool for building cross-class solidarity. By embracing sympathy herself, Austen was able to help her readers accept new socioeconomic dynamics and change the definition of proper behaviors for men and women in Regency high society.

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