European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies
Vol.5, No.5, pp.25-34, May 2017
Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.eajournals.org)

SENSE VERSUS SENSIBILITY IN JANE AUSTEN'S SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Dr. B. Janaki

Assistant Professor, Kingdom University, Kingdom of Bahrain.

ABSTRACT: *Jane Austen (1775-1817) stresses that an individual has a right to self-respect and self-expression within the conventional social norms which is effectively explored in Sense and Sensibility (1811) a story about two Dashwood sisters, Elinor and Marianne. Marianne's way is subjective, intuitive, implying confidence in the natural goodness of human nature when untrammelled by convention. Her view is corrected by the more cautious orthodoxy of Elinor, who mistrusts her own desires, and requires even her reason to seek the support of objective evidence. At the end, we are forced to ask ourselves which mode Austen chooses. Does sense solve every problem, does sense deal adequately with life? Elinor, the apotheosis of sense, shows us that it does not: she is not saved from the miseries of despair, though outwardly she is able to bear them with greater composure than her sister; she does not make a marriage of convenience, but a marriage of love to a far from wealthy clergyman. Marianne, on the other hand, over-compensates for her early want of sense by making, perhaps a sensible marriage. So, it can be concluded that neither mode is adequate. But the mode of sense enables an individual to take a practical view of life as the critic, Ian Watt (1917-1999) has praised the apotheosis of sense, Elinor who "took a more realistic view of what the individual can concede without losing his integrity."*

KEYWORDS: Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility, integrity, convention, marriage

In her fiction, Jane Austen (1775-1817) stresses that an individual has a right to self-respect and self-expression within the conventional social norms. This aspect is effectively explored in her first published novel, Sense and Sensibility (1811) which is about two Dashwood sisters, Elinor and Marianne, each embodying a mode of existence which is desirable, but each of which contradicts the other. Marianne's way is subjective, intuitive, implying confidence in the natural goodness of human nature when untrammelled by convention. Her view is corrected by the more cautious orthodoxy of Elinor, who mistrusts her own desires, and requires even her reason to seek the support of objective evidence.

At the very beginning of the novel, the contrast between Elinor and Marianne is too insistent: they seem quite often to be the personifications of opposed qualities. Yet, it is an essential part of the design that one sister should learn the value and necessity of the quality she has lacked and despised, and that she and we should recognize in the other the strong sensibility she has appeared to lack. The description of the nature of the sisters clearly shows the contradiction as follows:

> Elinor…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. She had an excellent heart; - her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were very strong; but she knew how to govern them: it was a

SSN 2055 - 0138(Print), ISSN 2055 - 0146(Online)

> knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught.
>
> Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever; but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting: she was everything but prudent.[1]

The family of Dashwoods consists of a mother and three daughters. Mrs. Dashwood is a mature and light-hearted version of Marianne, since in her situation the faults due to ill-regulated feelings cannot have such serious results; her only real mistake is to fail to exercise her proper authority over Marianne. Mrs Dashwood's foibles are attractive and confined to a few topics: carelessness about money, embarrassing and unconventional expressions of kindness, and unrealistic plans for the future. Mr. Dashwood had not inherited his estate long enough to save much fortune for his three girls, and at his death, it devolved to his only son, Mr John Dashwood by a former marriage who is married to a woman of fortune. Mr. Dashwood, on his death bed, requests Mr John Dashwood to look after his Mrs Dashwood and her daughters.

Mr. John Dashwood promises to do all in his power to render Mrs Dashwood and her three daughters comfortable. When Mrs. John Dashwood persuades her husband saying that they are too poor to afford a gift to his father's wife and children, Mr. Dashwood suggests a small annuity. Mrs J Dashwood cleverly argues that Mr. Henry Dashwood has left 'all the china, plate, and linen'[2] to his widow which is considered to be more than proper and so Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters derive no advantage from the good intentions of this near relative. Forced to leave their home, Norland Park, the Dashwoods accept Sir John Middleton's offer of a house in Barton Park.

Elinor is in love with Edward Ferrars, the brother of Mrs. J Dashwood and the author's description of Edward Ferrars brings into light why Elinor has liked him:

> He was not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. He was too diffident to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open affectionate heart. His understanding was good, and his education had given it solid improvement. But he was neither fitted by abilities nor disposition to answer the wishes of his mother and sister, who longed to see him distinguished-as- they hardly knew what.[3]

Marianne finds the relationship between Elinor and Edward odd because neither shows much emotion. As for Elinor, she admits that she 'greatly esteems' and 'likes'[4] him: words which define the state of her understanding rather than her feelings, and, as such, seem to Marianne inappropriate as she expresses:

> 'Esteem him! Like him! Cold-hearted Elinor! Oh! Worse than cold-hearted! Ashamed of being otherwise. Use those words again and I will leave this room this moment.'

[1] Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 4-5.
[2] Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 10.
[3] Sense and Sensibility 12.
[4] Sense and Sensibility 13.

SSN 2055 - 0138(Print), ISSN 2055 - 0146(Online)

> Elinor could not help laughing… 'I am by no means assured of his regard for me … In my heart I feel little-scarcely any doubt of his preference. But there are other points to be considered besides his inclination. He is very far from being independent… and I am very much mistaken if Edward is not himself aware that there would be many difficulties in his way, if he were to wish to marry a woman who had not either a great fortune or high rank.'[5]

In Marianne's language, Edward lacks fire and the spirit In addition to Edward's lack of physical grace, he does not act like a lover with Elinor. His passionless temperament is further illustrated in his attitude to literature and to matters of 'taste' generally. When set by Marianne to read Cowper, he was, as she complains to her mother, tame and spiritless:

> 'To hear those beautiful lines which have frequently almost driven me wild, pronounced with such impenetrable coldness, such dreadful indifference!-'
>
> 'He would certainly have done more justice to simple and elegant prose. I thought so at the time; but you *would* give him Cowper.'
>
> 'Nay, Mama, if he is not to be animated by Cowper!- but we must allow for difference of taste. Elinor has not my feelings, and therefore she may overlook it, and be happy with him. But it would have broken my heart had I loved him, to hear him read with so little sensibility!'[6]

Further, this lover of her sister is endowed with sense, goodness, and every qualification which renders a man amiable, except that he could not read Cowper and jump through the ceiling with the violence of his feelings. He thinks, that a person might fall in love more than *once* in his life, which Marianne holds an utter impossibility. Edward's objective approach to art resembles Elinor's way of evaluating him. She knows enough of his background to see beyond the defects of his manner to the enduring qualities of his mind and spirit, his 'sense' and 'goodness,' and both these words imply that Edward's virtues are those of a given code of value, namely the Christian code. Edward's character, Edward's aesthetic opinions, and Elinor's method of assessing Edward, all have this much in common – that they are based on prescribed standards, not on subjective impulse. Edward Ferrars is Elinor's own choice and he is Elinor's equal in right thinking, high principle, and properly regulated sensibility. Elinor often assures her dubious sister that he is an intelligent and upright young man, 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.' [7]

Dashwoods' shifting to Barton Park is a significant turning point in the novel as it is the place where Marianne meets her dream boy. Here, she sets the stage for her dramatic encounter with John Willoughby, who rescues her after she has sprained her ankle while walking on the downs. No hero enters a story more romantically than Willoughby. To sweep into his arms a lovely girl who has just turned her ankle, and carry her to the pretty cottage which is her home. He is 'uncommonly handsome' and his manner 'frank and graceful,'[8] so that not only Marianne but also Mrs. Dashwood and Elinor, are struck with admiration on his first appearance.

---

[5] Sense and Sensibility 17.
[6] Sense and Sensibility 14-15.
[7] Sense and Sensibility 16.
[8] Sense and Sensibility 36.

SSN 2055 - 0138(Print), ISSN 2055 - 0146(Online)

Willoughby's entrance, like that of the 'preserver'[9] of the heroine in a romantic novel, at once gives him a superficial glamour. Marianne does not study his sentiments or hear his opinion on subjects of literature and taste, but succumbs to an enchantment which reaches a penultimate climax in his gift of a horse named Queen Mab and which culminates in the imprudent visit to Allenham, the estate which Willoughby will one day inherit. When Elinor says it is improper to accept a gift of this kind from a man so lately known to her, Marianne answers with spirit that 'it is not time or opportunity that is to determine intimacy; - it is disposition alone.'[10]

Hearing of Willoughby's indefatigable dancing powers, Marianne cries, 'That is what I like; that is what a young man ought to be. Whatever be his pursuits, his eagerness in them should know no moderation, and leave him no sense of fatigue' – and his expressed passion for dancing on their first meeting is sufficient to earn him from Marianne 'such a look of approbation.'[11] Mr. Willoughby possesses manly beauty, superior gallantry and fascinating manners. In short, Marianne and Willoughby are strikingly alike. They are equally enthusiastic and equally romantic and his beauty encourages an intuitive response from Marianne and receives it.

Both Marianne and Willoughby become intimate very soon and talk with an enthusiasm and familiarity so unusual- and perhaps, conventionally, so suspect- for a formal first meeting that Elinor cannot refrain from teasing her sister as soon as Willoughby leaves. Marianne's retort towards Elinor is a powerful defence of sensibility "I have been too much at my ease, too happy, too frank. I have erred against every common-place notion of decorum; I have been open and sincere where I ought to have been reserved, spiritless, dull, and deceitful: - had I talked only of the weather and the roads, and had I spoken only once in ten minutes, this reproach would have been spared."[12]

Elinor feels that a courtship should proceed more gradually toward love and betrothal that Marianne and Willoughby are too shut off from the rest of the world in their discovery of each other, that when they have time for the rest of the world they are both much too frank and unconventional in their judgements of it. Marianne's enthusiasm and aesthetic discrimination, though attractive, emphasize that there is no serious basis for the acquaintance with Willoughby. Marianne attaches importance to small manifestations of feeling and ignores the important ones, most conspicuously, of course, in her relations with Willoughby.

Willoughby and Marianne gradually develops a deep love for each other but in their affair the first more disquieting fact is Willoughby's announcement that he is leaving for London and will not return for a year or more. The disquiet is multiplied by his obvious strain in notifying Elinor and her mother, and by Marianne's violent grief. The explanation can be that Mrs. Smith, the benefactress of Willoughby, has sent her heir away on business of hers in order to save him from getting married to a poor girl. When Elinor and Mrs. Dashwood suspect him, Marianne cries, "I love Willoughby, sincerely love him; and suspicion of his integrity cannot be more painful to your self than to me."[13] For some time, the disquiet remains, but it is tempered with hope and Marianne, after the first shock of his departure, does not seem despondent at all.

[9] Sense and Sensibility 39.
[10] Sense and Sensibility 50.
[11] Sense and Sensibility 38.
[12] Sense and Sensibility 40-41.
[13] Sense and Sensibility 70.

SSN 2055 - 0138(Print), ISSN 2055 - 0146(Online)

When Mrs. Jennings invites the sisters to her house in London, Elinor permits her first negative impulse to be overruled by Marianne's eagerness to accept clearly in order to see Willoughby again. No sooner have they arrived at Mrs. Jennings' than Elinor observes her sister rapidly writing and dispatching a letter, on the face of which she 'thought she could distinguish a large W.'[14] About a week later, when the sisters return from a morning drive, Willoughby's card is on the table seeing which Marianne cries '"he has been here while we were out."'[15] Then, finally, at a party to which Elinor accompanies the increasingly troubled Marianne, Willoughby appears. His cold courtesy and total failure of kindness are almost over powering. Marianne, on seeing him across the room, the author describes the situation thus:

> Started up, and pronouncing his name in a tone of affection, held out her hand to him. He approached, and addressing himself rather to Elinor than Marianne, as if wishing to avoid her eye, and determined not to observe her attitude, inquired in a hurried manner after Mrs. Dashwood, and asked how long they had been in town. Elinor was robbed of all presence of mind by such an address, and was unable to say a word. But the feelings of her sister were instantly expressed. Her face was crimsoned over, and she exclaimed in a voice of the greatest emotion, 'Good God! Willoughby, what is the meaning of this? Have you not received my letters? Will you not shake hands with me?[16]

The critic, Edmund Wilson(1895-1972) was the first to comment upon the meeting of Marianne and Willoughby in London. 'Isn't it rather,' Wilson asks 'the emotion of Elinor as she witnesses her sister's disaster than Marianne's emotion over Willoughby of which the poignancy is communicated to the reader?'[17]It is certainly the emotion of Elinor which intends to protect Marianne from the collapse. At home, when Elinor entreats her sister to make some effort against her grief,Marianne cries '"I cannot, I cannot…leave me, leave me, if I distress you; leave me, hate me,forget me!But do not torture me so."'[18]

Then, the two sisters travel to Cleveland and Marianne, having parted with Willoughby, 'was without any power, because she was without any desire of command over herself.'[19] She would, indeed:

> … have been ashamed to look her family in the face the next morning, had she not risen from her bed in more need of repose than when she lay down in it. But the feelings which made such composure a disgrace, left her in no danger of incurring it. She was awake the whole night, and she wept the greatest part of it. She got up with an headache, was unable to talk, and unwilling to take up any nourishment; giving pain every moment to her mother and sisters, and forbidding all attempt at consolation from either. Her sensibility was potent enough![20]

Marianne is a victim of falsity; and her suffering is essentially self-willed. Her frustration arises from what Foucault(1926-1984) calls 'the absolute exteriority of other people.'[21]

[14] Sense and Sensibility 139.
[15] Sense and Sensibility 146.
[16] Sense and Sensibility 152.
[17] "A Long Talk About Jane Austen," Classics and Commercials: A Literary Chronicle of the Forties (New York, 1950) 203.
[18] Sense and Sensibility 160.
[19] Sense and Sensibility 71.
[20] Sense and Sensibility 71.
[21] Qtd in Tony Tanner, introduction, Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969) 15.

SSN 2055 - 0138(Print), ISSN 2055 - 0146(Online)

Another critic comments "Marianne is sick, sick with the intensity of her great passions and fantasies. What is the nature of the society in which this sickness breaks out, at least as Jane Austen depicts it? It is a world completely dominated by forms, for which another word may be screens, which may in turn be lies…society is indeed maintained by necessary lies." [22]

Marianne is now on the road to recovery from her fever, as well as from her attachment to Willoughby. Suddenly, there is heard driving up to the house a carriage, which Elinor expects is bringing her mother but Willoughby appears. Elinor's first response is 'horror' at his audacious intrusion; but before she can leave the room, Willoughby appeals to something even more powerful than Elinor's 'honour': her curiosity. Elinor is momentarily captivated by Willoughby's 'serious energy' and 'warmth,' and she listens 'in spite of herself' to the story he unfolds – the chronicle of his passions, both honourable and base. He says that his first intention was only to trifle with Marianne and after he has begun to feel the real affection for her, he abandons her for an heiress because his potential benefactress, outraged by one of his amorous adventures, decides to disinherit him.

At the end of his dramatic recital, Willoughby asks Elinor for pity, and, even though she feels it is her 'duty' to check his outburst, she cannot repress her 'compassionate emotion.' It is this emotion that governs her judgement of Willoughby:

> Elinor made no answer. Her thoughts were silently fixed on the irreparable injury which too early an independence and its consequent habits of idleness, dissipation, and luxury, had made in the mind, the character, the happiness, of a man who, to every advantage of person and talents, united a disposition naturally open and honest, and a feeling, affectionate temper. The world has made him extravagant and vain – Extravagance and vanity had made him cold-hearted and selfish.[23]

Willoughby requests Elinor not to reveal the truth to Marianne but Elinor decides to communicate everything to Marianne. Reassured by Marianne's proper attitude as she is revived and is prepared to respond to the sense, Elinor hazards her narration:

> She [Elinor] managed the recital, as she hoped, with address; prepared her anxious listener with caution; related simply and honestly the chief points on which Willoughby grounded his apology; did justice to his repentance, and softened only his protestations of present regard. Marianne said not a word. – She trembled, her eyes were fixed on the ground, and her lips became whiter than even sickness had left them. A thousand inquiries sprang up from her heart, but she dared not urge one. She caught every syllable with panting eagerness; her hand, unknowingly to herself, closely pressed her sister, and tears covered her cheeks.
>
> Elinor, dreading her being tired, led her towards home; and till they reached the door of the cottage, easily conjecturing what her curiosity must be though no question was suffered to speak it, talked of nothing but Willoughby, and their

[22] Qtd in Tony Tanner, introduction, Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969) 15.

[23] Sense and Sensibility 290.

SSN 2055 - 0138(Print), ISSN 2055 - 0146(Online)

> conversations together; and was carefully minute in every particular of speech and look, where minuteness could be safely indulged.[24]

Coming to a gradual awareness of Willoughby's false sensibility, his prudent core of self, Marianne compares her conduct to 'what it ought to have been.' Marianne determines that, though Willoughby can never be forgotten, his remembrance 'shall be regulated, it shall be checked by religion, by reason, by constant employment.'[25] Her illness in Cleveland is an emotional suffering, and the death to which it might easily have led would have been suicide and we should not discount the solemnity of Marianne's retrospections on her recovery. Recognizing that, 'Had I died – it would have been self-destruction,' she wonders that she has been allowed to live, 'to have time for atonement to my God.'[26]

The sensibility of Marianne is without bounds. She is rendered miserable, and in her peculiar temperament, this misery is extravagantly cherished. In the portrayal of Marianne's and Willoughby's attachment, the merit of the novel is principally displayed; and it furnishes the most excellent lesson to young ladies to curb that violent sensibility which too often leads to misery, and always to inconvenience and ridicule. To young men who make a point of playing with a young woman's affections, it will be no less useful, as it shows in strong colours the folly and criminality of sporting with the feelings of those, whom their conduct tends to wound and render miserable. Such is the conduct of Willoughby after securing the affections of Marianne; being, as far as he is capable, in love with her, and giving herself and her family every reason to think his attachment honourable and unshaken, he finds it inconvenient, to marry a girl who has only beauty, sense and accomplishments, and a heart, glowing with the most ardent affection, for her portion. He leaves her with an idea that he will soon return, but afterwards marries a woman for money, that he may continue to enjoy those luxuries which he cannot find it in his heart to relinquish.

Like Marianne, Elinor also has her own difficulties in love to encounter and her own sensibilities to subdue, as Edward happens to be fettered by a rash and ill-assorted engagement. Edward's continued silence and of Lucy Steele's confidential revelation to Elinor of her and Edward's secret engagement four years earlier disturb her. When Elinor discovers of this engagement 'she wept for him, more than for herself,'[27] yet when she joins Mrs. Jennings and Marianne at dinner, no one would have supposed that 'Elinor was mourning in secret over obstacles which must divide her for ever from the object of her love.'[28] Though this heart break is hard for her to endure, she feels sure that he loves her but is a prisoner in possessive hands.

When Elinor has to tell Marianne that she has for four months known about the engagement of Edward and Lucy, Marianne perceives for the first time the full extent of her sister's heroism:

> Marianne was quite subdued.
>
> 'Oh! Elinor,' she cried, 'you have made me hate myself for ever. How barbarous have I been to you! You, who have been my only comfort, who have borne with me in all my misery, who have seemed to be only suffering for me! Is this my

[24] Sense and Sensibility 305.
[25] Sense and Sensibility 305.
[26] Sense and Sensibility 303.
[27] Sense and Sensibility 120.
[28] Sense and Sensibility 121.

SSN 2055 - 0138(Print), ISSN 2055 - 0146(Online)

> gratitude!...Because your merit cries out upon myself, I have been trying to do it away.[29]

In conveying the heavy impact of Lucy's disclosure about her prospective ties with Edward on the mind of Elinor, the novelist has tried to underscore the applicability of well established cultural canon that both 'sense' and 'sensibility' have their dual role in interpersonal relationship. Gilbert and Gubar stress the opposition between Marianne's shrill 'indulgence in sensibility' and 'Elinor's stoical self-restraint.'[30] This aspect of the two girls' characters has also been endorsed, "In a very superficial way the behaviour of the two sisters is strongly contrasted; but in a profounder sense both sisters are stirred by their respective suitors. Marianne has yet to learn sense, but already the sensibility of Elinor has been awakened. The elder sister may still be able to give counsels of sense; but she has already tasted the values of sensibility."[31]

Edward, looking back on the foolish infatuation which caused him to engage himself to Lucy, recognizes that his error sprang from his ignorance of the world, his lack of an active profession. Yet, having made the betrothal, Edward has proved himself willing to take responsibility for his actions. He remains inactive; he cannot court Elinor, and he cannot jilt Lucy, and even his resistance to his mother consists in not marrying Miss Morton, and in not giving up Lucy. On hearing the news of Edward's engagement with Lucy, Mrs. Ferrars disinherits Edwards which results in the elopement of Lucy with the man of fortune, Robert Ferrars, Edward's younger brother. Lucy Steele is suave and civil from the conventional point of view, but the way, she negotiates her freedom, one finds that she is wily and single-mindedly devoted to her self-interest. The critics observe that people such as Lucy Steele are 'agents of repression, manipulators of conventions, and survivors'[32] as Lucy is more malicious and active in securing every advantage of fortune, as:

> The whole of Lucy's behaviour in the affair, and the prosperity which crowned it, therefore, may be held forth as a most encouraging instance of what an earnest, an unceasing attention to self-interest, however its progress may be apparently obstructed, will do in securing every advantage of fortune, with no other sacrifice than that of time and conscience.[33]

Finally on hearing the news of Edward's freedom from the duty of his engagement to Lucy, the novelist narrates the situation thus, "Elinor could sit no longer. She almost ran out of the room, and as soon as the door was closed, burst into tears of joy, which at first she thought would never cease. Edward, who had till then looked any where, rather than at her, saw her hurry away, and perhaps saw – or even heard, her emotion…"[34] Edward having taken a walk to gain courage to do what he has come for, his proposal and Elinor's acceptance are dispatched in two sentences, and he is one of the happiest of men, "not only in the rapturous profession of the lover, but in the reality of reason and truth." [35]

[29] Sense and Sensibility 230.
[30] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New haven and London, 1979) 156.

[31] Andrew H. Wright, Jane Austen's Novels A Study in Structure (London: Chatto and Winus, 1955) 118.
[32] The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination 172.
[33] Sense and Sensibility 331.
[34] Sense and Sensibility 316.
[35] Sense and Sensibility 317.

SSN 2055 - 0138(Print), ISSN 2055 - 0146(Online)

Elinor has excelled in the handling of the painful task of endeavouring to alleviate her sister's grief, which preys upon her health so much, that she is soon reduced to the brink of the grave. The patience and tenderness of Elinor during the long illness of her sister, and the knowledge of her bearing up in so exemplary a manner against the disappointments and mortifications which she has had to endure, sink deep into the mind of Marianne. Marianne's confinement produces reflection, and her good sense at length prevails over her sensibility. After a time, Marianne marries Colonel Brandon, her hovering, diffident, admirer who according to Willoughby is 'just the kind of man, whom everybody speaks well of, and nobody cares about; whom all are delighted to see, and nobody remembers to talk to.'[36]

Colonel Brandon is the most amiable man, who had long loved her, and about whom, in the height of her delirium of sensibility, she could not bear even to think on for the very wise reason, that he was 'five' and 'thirty,' and consequently in Marianne's ideas of love, had 'out-lived' every 'sensation' of 'that kind.'[37] In her notions, a man, at the advanced age of 'five and thirty,'[38] 'has nothing to do with matrimony.'[39] Marianne sees fallacy of all this nonsense, and becomes a good wife to this old gentleman of thirty-five, even though he declares it was necessary for him to wear a flannel waistcoat to prevent a rheumatic affection in one of his shoulders. At the very end of the book, the author explains:

> 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 favourite 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! – 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![40]

Finally, Marianne most ruthlessly claims the victory of Sense and undermines that victory with a host of things unsaid. In the following passage the future of Marianne becomes assured:

> … to see Marianne settled at the Mansion-house was equally the wish of Edward and Elinor. They each felt his [Colonel Brandon's] sorrows and their own obligations, and Marianne, by general consent, was to be the reward of all.
>
> With such confederacy against her … what could she do?
>
> Colonel Brandon was now as happy as all those who best loved him believed he deserved to be; in Marianne he was consoled for every past affliction … and that Marianne found her own happiness in forming his was equally the persuasion and delight of each observing friend.[41]

Here, it is worth referring to an observation of a knowledgeable critic, "in failing to recognize the interiority of society, its place in the individual's identity and needs, she (Marianne)

[36] Sense and Sensibility 43.
[37] Sense and Sensibility 30.
[38] Sense and Sensibility 29.
[39] Sense and Sensibility 32.
[40] Sense and Sensibility 333.
[41] Sense and Sensibility 333-34.

SSN 2055 - 0138(Print), ISSN 2055 - 0146(Online)

mistakes Willoughby's character and almost gives up her life…After her recovery, she is finally aware that her own identity occupies a place in the identity of those who love her…" [42]

At the end, we are forced to ask ourselves which mode Austen chooses. Does sense solve every problem, does sense deal adequately with life? Elinor, the apotheosis of sense, shows us that it does not: she is not saved from the miseries of despair, though outwardly she is able to bear them with greater composure than her sister; she does not make a marriage of convenience, but a marriage of love to a far from wealthy clergyman. Marianne, on the other hand, over-compensates for her early want of sense by making, perhaps a sensible marriage. So, it can be concluded that neither mode is adequate. But the mode of sense enables an individual to take a practical view of life as the critic, Ian Watt (1917-1999) has praised the apotheosis of sense, Elinor who "took a more realistic view of what the individual can concede without losing his integrity."[43]

[42] Julia Prewitt Brown, Jane Austen's Novels (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) 58-59.
[43] Qtd in "Secrecy and Sickness in Sense and Sensibility," Jane Austen: Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield Park ed. B.C. Southam (Hong Kong, 1976) 145.

SSN 2055 - 0138(Print), ISSN 2055 - 0146(Online)