

Family Portraits: The Settlement
and Domesticity in
Sense and Sensibility

Urara Chiba

In this paper, I intend to investigate relations between the family and the individual in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (SS) (1811). In her first published novel, Austen described two contrastive families : the Ferrarses and the Dashwoods. Both of them belong to society of the landed gentry. However, they are subsumed in quite different levels economically since family fortunes of the Ferrarses are much larger than those of the Dashwoods. The difference in property seems to bring about the difference in family identity between the Ferrarses and the Dashwoods. As I shall argue in later discussion, while the Ferrarses are a typical landed family, the Dashwoods can be identified as a modern family. The point I want to make in this comparison is that the historical change from the former to the latter which occurred in the families of gentry society cannot be considered as the change in the family structure . On the contrary, the Ferrars and Dashwood families are structurally characterized by the same solidness of a patriarch's centrality. Instead, what distinguishes the Dashwoods from the Ferrarses is the way of ordering the family relations. That is, the Ferrarses and the Dashwoods are supported by different tactics yet contain the same structure of patriarchy.

To begin with, I would like to show how strictly the landed Ferrars

family is ordered by lineage. I deal here with the legal device of “settlement” which was applied to the inheritance of landed property in England from the mid-eighteenth century on. Then, I would like to look at the Dashwood family whose members are consolidated by “domesticity” rather than lineage. After making this distinction, I will further observe what is “domesticity.” In this point, I would like to focus attention on the texts of Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth. They obviously centre round domesticity, and Austen is likely to have adapted a concept of domesticity from them for *SS*. Finally, I would like to argue about continuity of patriarchy within the modern family tied up by domesticity.

Wealth of the Ferrarses is indicated in that they possess a house in “Park-street” in London (131) as well as the “Norfolk estate” (266). On the other hand, the Dashwoods which consist of Mr. and Mrs. Dashwoods and their three daughters are not so well-off as the Ferrarses. Especially after death of Henry Dashwood, the mother and daughters are impoverished and forced to make a living by the Middletons’ support.

It seems reasonable to suppose from this setting that Elinor Dashwood’s marriage to Edward Ferrars is another female fantasy of a wish-fulfillment which is summarized in the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice* (*PP*) (1813): “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife” (*PP* 3). Of course, Austen twists ironically Mrs. Bennet’s obsessive concern for money. What is really conveyed here is Mrs. Bennet’s wish for her daughter’s marrying a wealthy upper-class man. When Elizabeth first visits Darcy’s estate, it is revealed to us that she also shares the same sort of wish unconsciously : “To be mistress of Pemberley might be something !” (*PP* 245). Given the gap of property and a social position, Elizabeth’s marriage to the aristocrat Darcy is almost an impossible dream in real social life. At least, in this point, *PP* could be read as a fantasy of romance as Mary Poovey points out (194-207).

But in fact, this is not the case with *SS* because what is wished and finally fulfilled in *PP* is not appealing to Elinor and Edward. Their romance should be accompanied by modest domestic comfort instead of wealth and status. Elinor has no idea that either “grandeur” or more than enough “wealth” should have “much to do with happiness” (91) while Edward is indifferent to being distinguished in public life : “Edward had no turn for great men or barouches. All his wishes centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life” (16). Mrs. Ferrars warns him that he would have to give his inheritance up to his brother Robert if he rejected her advice to marry Miss Morton with a large portion. Yet Edward prefers to achieve independence by taking orders and sacrifices the privilege of the eldest son to marry Elinor. Indeed, the estate is not restored to him even in the end : “Nor was anything promised either for the present or in future, beyond the ten thousand pounds [to Edward] . . .” (374). That is, Elinor and Edward come to a marriage not by Elinor’s moving upward but by Edward’s disengaging from the Ferrars family..

Austen emphasizes that their modest wishes are not a mere pretence by contrasting them with Lucy’s hypocrisy. In spite of her professed affection, Lucy leaves Edward and goes to Robert to marry him when she knows Edward’s disengagement from the Ferrarses. Her inconsistency, however, testifies to her consistent interest in property of the Ferrars family because she follows exactly a shift of the fee tail from Edward to Robert.

Here, we notice that Elinor and Edward are pursuing the happiness whose quality is alien to a system of the landed family. What they want does not mesh with what the Ferrars family could offer. Inevitably, the relationship between them and Mrs. Ferrars is at cross-purposes: Mrs. Ferrars’ lack of favor is rather desirable for Elinor and Edward, contrary to her arrogant intentions :

But though Mrs. Ferrars *did* come to see them [Elinor and Edward], and always treated them with the make-believe of decent affection, they were never insulted by her real favour and preference. *That* was due to the folly of Robert, and the cunning of his wife. . . . (375)

It seems that Edward's disengagement from the family is fully understood only by examining a conflict between him and the landed family.

First of all, far from being proud of it, Edward feels primogeniture imposed on him repressing. It is interesting to note that in *PP*, Darcy's pride is closely connected with his being the eldest son of the family and that he is also envied on this account :

"He [Darcy] likes to have his own way very well," replied Colonel Fitzwilliam. "But so we all do. It is only that he has better means of having it than many others, because he is rich, and many others are poor. I speak feelingly. A younger son, you know, must be inured to self-denial and dependence." (*PP* 183)

On the other hand, Edward is depicted not as an advantaged heir to a fortune but as a repressed one of a "fettered inclination" (102) in *SS*. Unlike Darcy, being the eldest son is an obstacle to "having his own way" for Edward : "We never could agree in our choice of a profession. I always preferred the church, as I still do. But that was not smart enough for my family" (102). He feels the family has been depriving him of independence and been spoiling him by imposing a role of the eldest son on him :

"It has been, and is, and probably will always be a heavy misfortune to me, that I have had no necessary business to engage me, no profession to give me employment, or afford me any thing like independence. But unfortunately my own nicety, and the nicety of my friends, have made me

what I am, an idle, helpless being." (102)

It is helpful to describe a legal device of "settlement" in order to understand the probability of Edward's melancholy in social realistic terms. In short, the settlement is the invention of trustees responsible for protecting the interest of the unborn son of the marriage. By means of this device, a landowner could settle an estate for life on his eldest son at marriage and prevent him from enlarging his interest. This enabled the landowner to ensure that the estate remained intact until the male issue of the marriage became twenty-one. As a tenant for life, the son was entitled to only the income of the estate and was incapable of disposing of the estate itself as he wished. He was incapable of selling the estate, mortgaging it, or even leasing it for a term of years. Edward's complaint quoted above covertly gets at this point. What he inherits is far from the freehold estate. In other words, being the eldest son is analogous to settling for a position of a trustee for the fee tail of the unborn son.

When the tenant in tail came of age, father and son made a new settlement in which the son was reduced to a life tenancy after his father, and the estate was entailed on his own son, yet unborn. That son would someday be expected to join in a similar settlement. That is, the settlement was an attempt to tighten up the legal arrangements, as Lawrence Stone put it, "so as to preserve the family patrimony, and to reduce the freedom of their [current owners'] successors to alienate it" (166). So long as the settlement lasted, an estate would descend from father to son perpetually and no generation would be an absolute owner.

Stone considers that the invention of settlement was one of the causes of a decline in patriarchy within the family. According to him, it reduced the arbitrary control of the father over distribution of property among his children (166-167).

But this view seems unsatisfactory. It is true that the arbitrary control of the current father was reduced by the use of settlement but we can still trace it back to the previous generation. In fact, the old Gentleman's will in the beginning of the novel provides an example to ascertain this. The will confirms the inheritance of Norland Park applying the strict settlement :

The old Gentleman died ; his will was read, and like almost every other will, gave as much disappointment as pleasure. He was neither so unjust, nor so ungrateful, as to leave his estate from his nephew [Henry] ; — but he left it to him on such terms as destroyed half the value of the bequest. Mr. Dashwood [Henry] had wished it more for the sake of his wife and daughters than for himself or his son : —but to his son, and his son's son, a child of four years old, it was secured, in such a way, as to leave to himself no power of providing for those who were most dear to him, and who most needed a provision, by any charge on the estate, or by any sale of its valuable woods. (4)

Henry had in mind a liberal plan to alienate the estate to his wife and daughters who need it more than the eldest son. But under such a strict settlement, he was incapable of it as a tenant in life. Without the power to dispose of the estate and even to sell any of its woods, all he could do was “living economically” and saving “a considerable sum from the produce of an estate” (4). The old Gentleman left three girls no more than “a three thousand pounds a-piece” (4), and early death of Henry made it impossible to increase the amount.

It is clear from this example that the arbitrary control of the father does not decrease but now comes to belong to the father's father, in this case, the old Gentleman.² It is likely that the old Gentleman is also subject to his father's arbitrary control under a settlement. This retrogression has no end so long as the settlement is renewed from generation to generation. As the

land would have no absolute owner, so the family would have no absolute patriarch in a chain of settlements.

Thus, the settlement seems to have reduced the current father to a mere function working as a connection of the previous and coming generations. In arrangement of the settlement, patriarchal power is exercised by an anonymous father who is always hovering over the family and echoes voices of fathers in the past generations. Even the current father is under the anonymous control as well as the other family members. In this point, the settlement seems to have made patriarchy more elaborate than before by impersonalizing the absolute patriarch. Its power came to be assumed by the whole system of inheritance instead of the particular person. Foucault's view that "power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective" (94) here holds truth.

The literary absence of the father in the Ferrarses is suggestive of "intentional and nonsubjective" power of the patriarch. Certainly, Mrs. Ferrars dominates the family in his place but it never seems to me that she is a female authority figure as some critics say.³ Her indignation at Edward's disobeying is motivated by a materialistic interest in marriage. She opposes Edward's marriage to Elinor only for this purpose: "Miss Morton was the daughter of a nobleman with thirty thousand pounds, while Miss Dashwood was the daughter of the private gentleman, with no more than *three*" (373). What matters to her is nothing but the accumulation of landed wealth by Edward's marriage.⁴ In this point, there is no essential difference between Mrs. Ferrars and Mrs. Bennet in *PP*. They are both subordinating marriage to a matter of property at the expense of other motives for marriage. Driven by devotion to landed property, Mrs. Ferrars is also taking part in preserving the patrimony along with the settlement. In other words, she is an agent of the anonymous patriarch but never authority herself.

Edward's desire for disengagement from the family disorders the system of preservation of the patrimony. In this sense, we can see what David Kaufmann names an "*experience of modernity*" (400) in Edward. While admitting "*Sense and Sensibility* seems deeply, if not at times desperately, conservative (385)," Kaufmann discerns in the novel the discursive changes that occur with the advent of commercial capitalism and an effect produced by a shift in social power which accompanies that advent. The point he stresses is the "way that Austen registers the *experience of modernity*" rather than a "*structural* description and delineation of the modern" (400). He suggests that beginning in the early eighteenth century, "modernity" is experienced as a "qualitative break from the past" (400).

Edward's modern experience of disengagement succeeds with the help of accidents and friendship. First, discovering Edward's private engagement to Lucy, Mrs. Ferrars declares that if he persisted in "this low connection" (266) she would never "afford him the smallest assistance" (267), without knowing that independence is just what Edward wishes for. Fortunately he also becomes free from that engagement to Lucy by her sudden breach of it. Finally, he takes orders by accepting the offer of living in Delaford from Colonel Brandon. As Elinor's saying, "the unkindness of your own relations has made you astonished to find friendship any where" (289) suggests, Mrs. Ferrars' threat is thus overcome by friendship with Colonel Brandon and Elinor. The final stage of the break from the landed family is described in his unconscious behaviour:

He [Edward] rose from his seat and walked to the window, apparently from not knowing what to do ; took up a pair of scissors that lay there, and while spoiling both them and their sheath by cutting the latter to pieces as he spoke, said in an hurried voice,

"Perhaps you do not know — you may not have heard that my brother

is lately married to — to the youngest — to Miss Lucy Steele.” (360)

Here, it seems possible to interpret that cutting the sheath with a pair of scissors symbolizes Edward’s disengagement from the Ferrarses. But we cannot overlook his almost thorough passivity during the disengaging process. I shall have more to say about this later on.

Discontent with the landed family is such that Edward’s attachment to the Dashwood family is understandable. While he keeps wanting independence from the patrimony, they are already disconnected from it as we have seen in the old Gentleman’s will. Besides, Henry’s remarriage indirectly helps their peculiar independence. Because they are only half-blooded, John is easily persuaded by his wife Fanny to evict them from Norland Park. She justifies herself as: “It was very well known that no affection was ever supposed to exist between the children of any man by different marriages” (8). They cannot expect John’s regard for a provision for the same cause. Feeling little responsibility for his stepmother and half sisters, his promise “to do every thing in his power to make them comfortable” (5) is also easily broken by Fanny’s selfish claim that there is no reason why he is “to ruin himself, and their poor little Harry, by giving away all his money to his half sisters” (8). If the old Gentleman’s will cuts them from the patrimony, Henry’s remarriage severs them from paternal protection of the eldest son.

The reason why I regard the Dashwoods as a modern family is that they are thus conditioned to experience a break from the past in a different way from Edward and that the break gives rise to domestic life whose quality is distinguished from that of the other landed families in the novel.

A dwelling of the Dashwood family in Devonshire is an epitome of their domestic life. Small as it is, Barton cottage is a cosy private house separated from both Barton Park and Norland Park. The physical distance marks a spiritual one. The Middletons’ frivolity and John and Fanny

Dashwoods' selfishness are both unfamiliar to the dwellers of the cottage. Barton cottage is, as it were, a shelter within landed society.

Furthermore, "domestic comfort" Edward wishes for is manifest in the cottage life. That it is "merely a cottage" (23) adds to pleasure of the family all the more. Planning "to make it a very snug little cottage" (29) is Mrs. Dashwood's delight for the present. Frugality is their willing habit and Margaret's saying, "I wish that somebody would give us all a large fortune apiece!" is only an innocent joke followed by Mrs. Dashwood's answer, "I should be puzzled to spend a large fortune myself if my children were all to be rich without my help" (92). Thus, the mother and daughters receive little benefit of landed wealth and are still content with their own life.

That is, without family property, the Dashwoods are tied up by the emotional solidarity. Unlike the hierarchical relation between parent and child in the Ferrars family, the mother and daughters in the Dashwood family are connected by mutual affection. Mrs. Dashwood observes parent's subjection of child in the Ferrars family critically as follows:

His [Edward's] want of spirits, of openness and of consistency, were most usually attributed to his want of independence, and his better knowledge of Mrs. Ferrars's disposition and designs. . . . The old, well established grievance of duty against will, parent against child, was the cause of all. She [Mrs. Dashwood] would have been glad to know when these difficulties were to cease, this opposition was to yield, — when Mrs. Ferrars would be reformed, and her son be at liberty to be happy. (101-02)

In the reproach on Mrs. Ferrars' "want of liberality" (90) is reflected Mrs. Dashwood's idea of the family that a parent should acknowledge a child's liberty and that they should be connected by affectionate ties instead of

obligatory ones.

Mrs. Dashwood also makes a sharp contrast with Mrs. Ferrars in a romantic idea of marriage : “No sooner did she [Mrs. Dashwood] perceive any symptom of love in his [Edward’s] behaviour to Elinor, than she considered their serious attachment as certain, and looked forward to their marriage as rapidly approaching . . .” (17). As can be seen in this quotation, what matters most in marriage is love, and a materialistic interest is out of the question for her. Her motive for marriage is rooted in a concept of what Stone defines as the “companionate marriage” (217) and she puts the prospects of emotional satisfaction before the ambition for increased income.

If we regard Mrs. Dashwood’s attitude toward marriage merely as a romantic fancy, we miss the point that her husband is likely to have practiced a companionate marriage himself in getting married to her. As we have seen, he was not necessarily forced to remarry since he had an heir to the patrimony by the first wife. What is more, Mrs. Dashwood is said to have “no fortune” (4). Therefore it seems possible to suppose that he got remarried just because he loved her. When Mrs. Dashwood says to Marianne, ““why should you be less fortunate than your mother ? In one circumstance only, my Marianne, may your destiny be different from her’s!”” (18), she suggests that affectionate relation between Henry and herself. Regardless of the present poverty, she is not sorry for her marriage except that she outlived him. This also serves as evidence of the modern quality of this family.

All these observations make it clear that the family relations of the Dashwoods are strengthened by emotional elements. They are cherished not for any material purpose such as preservation of the patrimony but for their own sake by altruistic sympathy exchanged among the family. I would like to use the word “domesticity” to refer to these self-contained and

sympathetic relations of the Dashwood family.

It has been established that a sense of domesticity was initially acquired by the middle classes (Shorter 267) and that an trend towards freedom for children and equal partnership between spouses progressively affected the domestic lives of upper-classes as well (Stone 149, Trumbach 3). These scholars agree that the family relations based on domesticity which emerged in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries overtook the relations within the traditional family in which authority of the patriarch had restricted the individual.

But we should not think that there had never been such a sentiment as domesticity before the late seventeenth century. Perhaps it would be better to say that affection in domestic lives which had sometimes existed but not been paid any special attention came to be recognized as a sentiment of particular significance whose quality should be distinguished from other unspecified sentiments. That is, we should not understand that “domesticity” refers to the actual feeling itself which was first born as the result of the rise of the modern family. Rather, it is a signifier of a concept of a certain mentality which was represented as such.

If it is the representation rather than the actual phenomenon that had appeared as “domesticity” since the late seventeenth century, we should examine domesticity of the Dashwood family within the system of that representation. Hannah More is a good example in this point. Her poem “Sensibility” published in 1782 deals with domesticity as its theme and shows us how it is typically represented.

In the poem, “sensibility” is a synonym of “sympathy.” It is “the sympathy divine, / Which makes, O man, the woes of others thine” (219-20). More praises such altruistic sympathy and finds it in motherly affection given to a newborn baby generously : “Sweet Sensibility! Thou secret pow’r / Who shed’st thy gifts upon the natal hour, / Like fairy favours”

(231- 33). Furthermore, altruism of sympathy is contrasted with selfishness of “feeling” and the latter is bitterly censured as the corruption of morals:

While Feeling boasts her ever tearful eye,
Fair Truth, firm Faith, and manly Justice fly !
Justice, prime good ! from whose prolific law
All worth, all virtue, their strong essence draw; (223-26)

Thus, candid expression of one’s own feeling is seen as a sign of self-indulgence transgressing bans of justice. “Candour” is “spurious” (230) while “sympathy” is “divine.” However, the standard of this antithesis is obscured. Finally, More claims that the source of sympathy is at home :

On these small cares of daughter, wife, or friend,
The almost sacred joys of *Home* depend :
There, Sensibility, thou best may’st reign,
Home is thy true legitimate domain. (317-20)

Here, we can see that spatially combined with home, sympathy is formulated as domesticity.

It is clear from this poem that More endows sympathy with moral superiority. But at the same time, we should not miss that it is achieved only by depreciating the candid feeling. Considering carefully about the dichotomy between sympathy and feeling, we find More’s depiction of sympathy contains ambivalence: it is a spontaneous sentiment like motherly affection but it also requires self-control of expressive feeling. This repressive side of sympathy seems to be similar to “justice” or “prime good” from whose law, “all worth, all virtue, their strong essence draw.” In other words, sympathy seems to work as strict censorship over feeling. We shall

return to this problem later.

Returning now to *SS*, the similar antithetical structure is applied to represent domesticity of the Dashwood family. Walton A. Litz rightly regards *SS* as a transitive work in which Austen could not overcome a crude antithetical structure derived from the late eighteenth century moralistic fiction (70-71). As the title of the novel suggests, the theme of domesticity is developed within this firm antithetical structure. Austen's "sense" and "sensibility" correspond to More's "sympathy" and "feeling" respectively, and these opposed qualities of mind are personified through the Dashwood sisters who have quite different temperaments. In this sense, Elinor and Marianne are described, in Litz' terms, as "'types,' not individuals" (78), and are unlike Edward whose inner conflict is dramatized in social realistic terms as we have seen. Their dispositions are explained rather rigidly as follows :

She [Elinor] had an excellent heart ; — her disposition was affectionate, and 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.

Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever ; but eager in every thing ; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting : she was everything but prudent. (6)

Elinor's ability to "govern" strong feelings is inseparable from that of sympathy. The reason why she keeps concealing Edward's private engagement from her family is that she does not want to worry them about her own suffering. In other words, she governs her feelings since she can sympathize with their expected anxiety when she confides the fact. That is,

self-control is a willing duty for those who are capable of sympathy :

“Four month !” — cried Marianne again. — “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.” (262)

On the other hand, Marianne expresses her own feelings eloquently and allows herself to act as she feels. She thinks there is no need for self-control because her own feeling is a source of justice. When Elinor warns her of the impropriety of her visit to Allenham with Willoughby, she protests that having felt pleasant is the strongest proof of the propriety of her behaviour. She insists, ““if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at that time, for we always know when we are acting wrong . . .”” (68).

Marianne’s expressive candor is never evaluated positively in the novel. Rather it is regarded as immaturity which needs correcting. We can see why she is to blame in terms of domesticity. As Elinor points out, Marianne, blinded to her family’s concern, sacrifices domesticity to her own feelings : ““Exert yourself, dear Marianne,’ she [Elinor] cried, ‘if you would not kill yourself and all who love you. Think of your mother ; think of her misery while *you* suffer ; for her sake you must exert yourself.”” (185). From this viewpoint, we might say that Marianne’s illness is a kind of punishment for neglecting her family. Indeed, when she recovers from illness, she is at the same time awakened to the importance of domesticity :

“My feelings shall be governed and my temper improved. They shall no

longer worry others, not torture myself. I shall now live solely for my family. You [Elinor], my mother, and Margaret, must henceforth be all the world to me ; you will share my affections entirely between you. From you, from my home, I shall never again have the smallest incitement to move. . . ." (347)

We are now able to see that domesticity is endowed with supreme authority in *SS*. From a political viewpoint, the Dashwood family tied up with domesticity is opposed to patriarchy of the Ferrars family and represents liberty and equality. From a moralistic viewpoint, domesticity is a source of altruistic sympathy which should be respected more than any other sentiment.

However, in spite of its supremacy given by the text, domesticity in *SS* indicates the same contradiction as More's "Sensibility." If we pay attention to Marianne, we notice that another side of domesticity is concealed under the affectionate relations among the equal individuals : domesticity also works as power to discipline the individual so as to make the family members homogeneous. It is true that in the landed family, Edward is repressed under the duty of the inheritance and satisfies his wish for independence by breaking from it and entering into a modern family. But in the modern family of the Dashwoods, Marianne's feeling is still under repression. As we have seen, Marianne learns to give her "selfish" feeling up to "altruistic" sympathy. But we cannot be assured easily whether her candor is really so corrupting, or whether it is so incompatible with sympathy. In both More and Austen, domesticity is authorized by relatively depreciating candid feeling. To put it another way, the latter needs depreciating so as to consolidate authority of the former.

Mary Wollstonecraft penetrates this point in *The Wrongs of Woman; or Maria* (*WW*) (1798). Denouncing strongly the moralists like More, its

heroine defends candid feeling:

“When novelists or moralists praise as a virtue, a woman’s coldness of constitution, and want of passion ; and make her yield to the ardour of her lover out of sheer compassion, or to promote a frigid plan of future comfort, I am disgusted. . . . They may possess tenderness ; but they want that fire of the imagination, which produces *active* sensibility, and *positive* virtue.” (*WW* 153)

The words such as “passion,” “fire” and “ardour” are important here because they suggest the heroine’s repressed sexuality. About these passages, Jane Spencer observes truly, “the novel boldly vindicates its heroine’s recognition of her sexuality” (134).

In fact, Marianne’s feeling also seems to be deeply rooted in her sexuality. But we cannot find the proof of it because the novel keeps silent about that matter. Although Marianne finally accepts a marriage to Colonel Brandon, we do know how she can persuade herself to enter into the marriage. At first, she feels contempt for that marriage since he is much older than herself. She even sees such a marriage as “only a commercial exchange” (38). Therefore, this abrupt decision needs explanation. The novel summarizes Marianne’s marriage to Colonel Brandon as follows :

Precious as was the company of her daughter to her, she [Mrs. Dashwood] desired nothing so much as to give up its constant enjoyment to her valued friend ; and to see Marianne settled at the mansion-house was equally the wish of Edward and Elinor. They each felt his [Brandon’s] sorrows, and their own obligations, and Marianne, by general consent, was to be the reward of all. (378)

Here, the friends and family are certainly rewarded with Marianne’s

marriage. But it is impossible to know whether it is a reward for Marianne herself. Angela Leighton describes these passages as a “polite lie” (139) and even suggests that Marianne is rather “victim to their ‘general consent’” (140).

It might be useful to compare *SS* with Maria Edgeworth’s “Letters of Julia and Caroline” (“Letters”) (1795) to make up for a lack of description of Marianne’s psychology. Interestingly, Litz points out that “Letters” provides “the most illuminating counterpart” (74) of *SS*. As Litz admits, Edgeworth formulates the distinction between sense and sensibility in uncompromising terms. In the exchange of letters, Julia speaks for sensibility while Caroline is the epitome of sense. In these letters, Caroline incessantly warns Julia of her imprudent action. But Julia recurrently neglects it. She marries to a fashionable aristocrat against Caroline’s advice to choose a domestic man. Soon their marriage is broken as is expected by Caroline. Then she elopes with another man to the Continent defying again Caroline’s opposition. Consequently, she returns to England in misery and is ruined to death leaving a daughter to Caroline. Thus, in “Letters,” we can see directly that Julia’s sensibility is closely connected with her sexuality. Furthermore, as her elopement proves, her sexuality cannot but transgress the boundary of the family.

If Julia’s ruinous passion speaks for Marianne’s untold psychology to some extent, it might be possible to suppose that Marianne implicitly desires to choose sexual affection for Willoughby instead of domestic life with Colonel Brandon. That is, the desire which cannot be contained within domesticity is hidden in Marianne’s silence .

In this sense, Marianne’s repressed feeling is essentially different from Edward’s wish for independence. As his consistent passivity in the disengaging process implies, his wish for independence has some affinity with requirements of the modern family. To put it exactly, he is only absorbed

in the modern family, rather than achieves independence. On the other hand, Marianne's repressed desire cannot but threaten the system of the family itself.

In "Letters," Caroline censors Julia's sexuality strictly and demands for self-control :

"Dear, Julia, whilst it is yet in your power secure to yourself a happier fate; retire to the bosom of your family; prepare for yourself a new society; perform the duties, and you shall soon enjoy the pleasures of domestic life." (477)

It is revealed in this quotation that sense, sympathy, domesticity, or anything which Caroline represents assumes tyrannical power of patriarchy.

From this analysis, we come to a conclusion that the modern family is not a different system from patriarchy. Rather, patriarchy is reinforced by cultivating a sense of domesticity. If the settlement impersonalized patriarchal power, the modern family disguised it with benevolent domesticity. Thus, in a change from the landed family to the modern family, the patriarch becomes more and more invisible. The absence of fathers in both the Ferrars and Dashwood families seems to be its symptom. However, it does not mean the end of patriarchy. Against those views that the emergence of domesticity invited a decline in patriarchy within the family, those texts including *SS* which took part in representing domesticity made it work to refine the system of patriarchy.

Notes

- ¹ See Habakkuk for a full account of settlement. See also Spring, who is of great help for understanding Habakkuk. Spring pinpoints a decline of settle-

ment in 1882, when The Settled Land Act granted to anyone who held land under a settlement the power to sell the land, the sales money while remaining subject to the settlement (210).

² Exactly, the old Gentleman is not Henry's father but uncle. Since he was a "single man" (3), Henry became the "legal inheritor of the Norland estate" (3).

³ For example, Claudia L. Johnson sees Mrs. Ferrars as a parody of male authority. Johnson considers Austen disguises resistance to it by obscuring the object of resistance (88) ; Gilbert and Guber badly distort the story in their biased reading of Mrs. Ferrars as a disguised voice of female resistance : "The despised Mrs. Ferrars of *Sense and Sensibility*, for example, exacts the punishment which Elinor Dashwood could not but wish on a man who has been selfishly deceiving her for the entire novel" (172).

⁴ According to Habakkuk, there was a strong convention that the wife's portion should be used to purchase land because the rate of return on the purchase of land is higher than the return on mortgages in the early seventeenth and eighteenth century (22).

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Synopsis

Family Portraits :

The Settlement and Domesticity in *Sense and Sensibility*

By Urara Chiba

In this paper, I intend to investigate the family relations in *Sense and Sensibility* (SS) (1811). In her first published novel, Austen described two contrastive families : the Ferrarses and the Dashwoods. Although they belong to the same class of landed gentry, their difference in property brings about the difference in family identity. While the wealthy Ferrarses are a typical landed family, the poor Dashwoods are identified as the modern family. In this comparison, I would like to demonstrate that the modern family is distinguished from the landed family not by its structure but by tactics to order the family relations. In other words, there is the striking continuity of patriarchy in a historical change from the landed family to the modern family.

First, I focus on Edward Ferrars and show how strictly the landed family represses the eldest son. Austen depicts Edward as the eldest son who is discontent with his duty to patrimony. He wishes for independence from the family property and modest domestic comfort. His discontent and wishes are understandable if we look at the legal device of "settlement" which had been arranged for the inheritance of the landed property. In the settlement, the power of the eldest son to manage the landed property is extremely diminished. Besides, motives for marriage are subordinated to the increase of landed wealth.

On the other hand, the Dashwood family hold no landed property because the father is dead and the estate is settled on the eldest son who is only half-blooded. However, the break from the patrimony makes them a modern family. They are not connected by landed wealth but by the emotional solidarity. Their relations are mutually affectionate and sympathetic. I call such emotional ties of the modern family "domesticity."

Of course, there might have been such a sentiment as domesticity in the

pre-modern family as well. But what matters is that domesticity had come to be recognized as a sentiment of some significance whose quality should be distinguished from other unspecified sentiments in Austen's times. That is, the referent of "domesticity" is not an actual feeling emerged along with the rise of the modern family but a concept of a certain mentality represented as such.

Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth provide good examples in this point. They show how the representation of domesticity is typically formulated. Especially, More contrasts sympathy with feeling and gives moral superiority to the former. Sympathy is altruistic while feeling is selfish. More claims that a source of sympathy is at home. Thus domesticity assumes moral authority in her text. Austen's antithetical structure of sense and sensibility applies this formulation of domesticity. These texts, including Austen, make domesticity work to refine the system of patriarchy. But as Edgeworth suggests, this refinement includes repression of female sexuality as the other side of the same coin.