



Comparative study on *The Viscount Who Loved Me* and *Sense and Sensibility*

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Abstract

The research explores the contrasting themes, character dynamics, and societal contexts in two beloved works of literature, *The Viscount Who Loved Me* by Julia Quinn and *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen. While both novels are rooted in the Regency era, they offer distinct perspectives on love, marriage, and societal expectations. *The Viscount Who Loved Me* delves into the passionate pursuit of love amidst the glittering ballrooms of London, emphasizing the importance of individual choice. In contrast, *Sense and Sensibility* navigates the complexities of familial obligations and societal norms, advocating for prudence and rationality in matters of the heart. Both the works reach a point of union where there comes an equilibrium of compassion and thus lead to unexpected twists. This abstract provides a glimpse into the forthcoming analysis, which will shed light on the nuanced depictions of love and relationships in these two timeless works of fiction.

Keywords: Compassion Equilibrium, Rationality, Character Dynamics, Regency Era and Societal expectations.

Introduction

Love and romance have been central themes in literature for centuries, and two timeless novels, *The Viscount Who Loved Me* by Julia Quinn and *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen, offer distinct perspectives on love, marriage, and societal expectations. This research concentrates into the contrasting worlds these novels create and the lessons it imparts about matters of the heart. This paper focuses on the equilibrium of compassion where mind and heart meet.

Sense and Sensibility is a novel written by Jane Austen and published in 1811. It is one of Austen's most well-known works and is considered a classic of English literature. The story revolves around the Dashwood sisters, Elinor and Marianne, and their experiences in love and society. Elinor represents sense with her practical and reserved nature, while Marianne embodies sensibility with her passionate and emotional disposition. Austen gives description to Elinor as, "Sometimes one is guided by what they say of themselves, and very frequently by what other people say of them, without giving oneself time to deliberate and judge" (Austen 66) through which the self-examination skill and maturity of Elinor is visible. The novel explores themes of love, social class, and the role of women in society, all set against the backdrop of early 19th-century England. Austen's keen wit and sharp social commentary are evident throughout the novel, making it a timeless and enduring piece of literature.

The Viscount Who Loved Me is a historical romance novel written by Julia Quinn. It is the second novel in the Bridgerton series. Set in Regency-era London, the novel tells the story of Anthony Bridgerton, the eldest Bridgerton sibling, and Kate Sheffield, a strong-willed young woman. Anthony, who is known for his rakish ways, decides to find a suitable wife. Kate's younger sister, Edwina, is a debutante in high demand, and Anthony plans to marry her. However, sparks fly between Anthony and Kate, leading to a series of humorous and passionate encounters. The novel explores themes of love, family, and societal expectations, while also providing readers with a delightful blend of humor and romance. It's a beloved installment in the Bridgerton series, which gained widespread popularity due to the Netflix adaptation.(web)

This research paper concentrates on the similarities and differences between the novels. The setting, period, characters and the point of compassion is highly similar and cohesive. As discussed by Suganya et al in their article, "Gender Performance on the Reinvigoration via Food" the patriarchal society expects women to be in the kitchen (Suganya et al, 887). But to contrast that, in both the novels the elder sister acts as the head of the family and the families have matriarchal set up. In contrast the sisters represent the characteristics of typical Victorian women. Thus, this paper focuses on the entanglement of many more similarities.

Glimpse of the novels

Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen is a novel that explores the lives and romantic pursuits of the Dashwood sisters, Elinor and Marianne, in early 19th-century England. Elinor Dashwood, the older sister, represents sense with her composed and rational nature. After their father's death, she, her mother, and her younger sister Marianne are forced to move to a more modest home due to their half-brother's inheritance of the family estate. Elinor develops feelings for Edward Ferrars, a seemingly kind and reserved man, but their love faces obstacles due to Edward's engagement to another woman. Marianne, on the other hand, embodies sensibility with her passionate and emotional personality. She falls head over heels for the dashing and charming John Willoughby, who reciprocates her feelings. However, their whirlwind romance takes a painful turn, leaving Marianne heartbroken. It is a tale of the contrasting approaches to life and love represented by the Dashwood sisters and offers a sharp critique of the social norms and expectations of the time. It's a classic novel that continues to be cherished for its insightful character portrayals and commentary on society.(web)

The Viscount Who Loved Me by Julia Quinn is the second novel in the Bridgerton series and is a delightful historical romance set in Regency-era London. The story revolves around Anthony Bridgerton, the eldest Bridgerton sibling. Anthony, who is known for his rakish ways and a strong sense of responsibility towards his family, has decided it's time to find a suitable wife to provide an heir to the Viscountcy. His sights are set on Edwina Sheffield, a beautiful debutante in high demand in London society. However, Anthony's path to marriage becomes unexpectedly complicated when he meets Edwina's older half-sister, Kate Sheffield. Kate is intelligent, strong-willed, and fiercely protective of her sister. Sparks fly between Anthony and Kate, leading to a passionate and

tempestuous relationship. As Anthony pursues Edwina, he finds himself increasingly drawn to Kate, even though he believes she's entirely unsuitable as a wife. Kate, in turn, struggles with her growing feelings for the viscount, given her determination to protect her sister from potential heartbreak. The novel is filled with witty banter, humorous situations, and passionate encounters as Anthony and Kate navigate their feelings for each other while dealing with societal expectations, meddling relatives, and a mysterious duel. *The Viscount Who Loved Me* is a tale of love, family, and the complexities of romance in Regency-era England, and it's known for its charming characters and engaging storytelling. (web)

Both novels are firmly rooted in the Regency era (early 19th century England), a period marked by strict societal norms and expectations regarding marriage. Despite this shared historical backdrop, the two novels paint vastly different pictures of love and relationships.

Compassion Equilibrium

Certainly, the novel *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen isn't a straightforward examination of opposites. While Elinor embodies reason, she isn't devoid of passion, and Marianne, who represents sensibility, isn't always foolish and headstrong. The conversation between Elinor and Marianne highlights the expressive traits of Marianne as she says, "is this fair? is this just? are my ideas so scanty? But I see what you mean. I have been too much at my ease, too happy, too frank" (Austen 33). Austen's intention seems to be less about drawing definitive conclusions and more about initiating a dialogue. Austen, known for her satirical critique of the cult of sensibility, doesn't advocate for the complete rejection of sensibility. Instead, she argues for the necessity of striking a balance between reason and passion. Fanny Dashwood's emotional outburst near the novel's end illustrates the perils of suppressing one's feelings. Elinor and Marianne both find happiness in the end, but they achieve it through mutual growth. They learn from each other, discovering how to fully acknowledge and express their sentiments while maintaining their dignity and self-control. *Sense and Sensibility* is successful not because one triumphs over the other but because it portrays a conjunction of terms that coexist and collaborate throughout Austen's narrative.

Similarly in the novel *The Viscount Who Loved Me*, Kate represents Sense whereas her stepsister Edwina represents sensibility. But it is notable that both of them have mixed traits. Kate is not void of emotions and passion but she controls it due to societal constraints. In contradiction to this, Suganya et al, discussed that "Men and transgenders do have emotions, unlike the stereotypical thought that only women have freedom for emotional space" (Suganya et al, 880). Kate feels emotional when she receives flowers from Antony "no one had ever brought her flowers before, and she hadn't known until that very moment how badly she'd wanted someone to do so" (Quinn 62). Similarly, Edwina is a typical Victorian woman throughout the novel but expresses her maturity in the climax. Antony who appears to be a rake in the beginning confesses his love to Kate with all his submission. "Because with you gone there was nothing left for me to live for. I don't know how my mother did it" (Quinn 355). Thus, the balance of mind and emotion is established. Thus this point of balance between brain and heart is nothing but the Compassion Equilibrium.

Rationality

In *Sense and Sensibility*, the theme of rationality is explored through the characters of Elinor Dashwood and Marianne Dashwood, who represent contrasting approaches to life.

Elinor is characterized by her rationality and self-control. She often suppresses her emotions and makes decisions based on practicality and reason rather than sentiment. Her ability to maintain composure in difficult situations and make sensible choices serves as a contrast to the more emotionally-driven characters in the story.

Marianne, on the other hand, embodies sensibility and emotional fervor. She tends to follow her heart and emotions, often to the point of impracticality. Her romantic idealism and impulsive behavior lead her into precarious situations. The novel explores the consequences of both rationality and sensibility. Elinor's rationality helps her navigate the challenges of life more successfully, while Marianne's sensibility leads to heartache and disappointment. Ultimately, the novel suggests that a balance between the two is ideal, as it allows for both emotional expression and practical decision-making.

In the novel, *The Viscount Who Loved Me*, rationality plays a significant role in the development of the main characters, Anthony Bridgerton and Kate Sheffield. Anthony Bridgerton, the viscount of the title, is initially portrayed as a rakish and impulsive character. However, as the story progresses, he grapples with the responsibilities of his title and the importance of making rational decisions for his family's future. His internal conflict between his passionate desires and the need to be responsible reflects the theme of rationality. Kate Sheffield, the female lead, is known for her strong sense of duty and practicality. She is cautious and rational, particularly when it comes to her younger sister Edwina's well-being. Her rationality serves as a counterbalance to Anthony's impulsiveness, and their contrasting personalities lead to both conflict and romantic tension. Throughout the novel, Anthony's journey involves learning to be more rational in his decisions, especially concerning matters of the heart. Kate's rationality helps her protect her family and navigate the challenges presented by her attraction to Anthony. In *The Viscount Who Loved Me*, rationality is a central theme that influences the characters' actions and decisions, ultimately contributing to the development of their romantic relationship.

Character Dynamics

In the novel *Sense and Sensibility*, the dynamics between the characters are complex and central to the story's development. Here are some key character dynamics:

1. Elinor and Marianne Dashwood: The novel revolves around the contrasting personalities of the Dashwood sisters. Elinor represents sense, embodying practicality, self-control, and rationality. Marianne represents sensibility, characterized by emotional depth, romantic idealism, and impulsiveness. Their relationship is one of love and support, but their differences also lead to conflict and tension.
2. Elinor Dashwood and Edward Ferrars: Elinor's relationship with Edward is marked by their shared rationality and deep emotional connection. However, external obstacles, such as Edward's engagement to another woman, test their love and commitment to each other.
3. Marianne Dashwood and John Willoughby: Marianne's passionate and impulsive nature draws her into a whirlwind romance with Willoughby. Their relationship highlights the dangers of unchecked sensibility and leads to heartbreak when Willoughby betrays her.
4. Colonel Brandon and Marianne Dashwood: Colonel Brandon's quiet and reserved demeanor contrasts with Marianne's fiery personality. His unrequited love for Marianne serves as a foil to the impulsive Willoughby and highlights the theme of maturity and true love.
5. Mrs. Jennings and Sir John Middleton: These characters provide comic relief in the novel. Mrs. Jennings is a kind-hearted, meddling matchmaker, while Sir John is jovial and good-natured. They create a warm and supportive environment for the Dashwood sisters.
6. Lucy Steele and Fanny Dashwood: These characters represent selfishness and deceit. Lucy's secret engagement to Edward Ferrars and Fanny's conniving ways create conflict and tension within the Dashwood family.

In Julia Quinn's novel *The Viscount Who Loved Me*, character dynamics play a crucial role in shaping the story and its romantic development. Here are some key character dynamics:

1. Anthony Bridgerton and Kate Sheffield: The central dynamic is between the viscount, Anthony, and Kate Sheffield. Anthony is known for his rakish behavior, but he's also burdened by the responsibility of his title and the need to secure an heir. Kate is portrayed as practical, strong-willed, and protective of her younger sister, Edwina. Their initial interactions are marked by conflict and witty banter, setting the stage for their romantic tension.
2. Edwina Sheffield: Edwina, Kate's younger sister, is a source of contention between Anthony and Kate. Anthony is determined to marry Edwina to secure his family line, while Kate is equally determined to protect her sister from an unsuitable match.
3. The Bridgerton Siblings: Anthony is part of the Bridgerton family, and his interactions with his siblings, who are featured in the other books of the series, provide insight into his character and family dynamics. The Bridgerton are a close-knit and supportive family, and Anthony's role as the eldest sibling comes into play.
4. Lady Whistledown: The mysterious gossip columnist, Lady Whistledown, adds an element of intrigue to the story by revealing secrets and scandals. Her writings affect the characters' actions and decisions.
5. Society and Expectations: The dynamics of Regency-era London society, with its rules, expectations, and matchmaking, influence the characters' choices and behaviors. Social conventions and reputations are important factors in their interactions.
6. Past Trauma: Both Anthony and Kate have experienced personal traumas in their pasts, which influence their attitudes and behaviors throughout the story. Their pasts are revealed gradually, adding depth to their characters.

Overall, the character dynamics in *The Viscount Who Loved Me* contribute to the story's humor, tension, and romance. The push-and-pull between Anthony and Kate, as well as their individual growth, make for an engaging exploration of love, family, and societal expectations in the Regency era.

Conclusion

Sense and Sensibility and *The Viscount Who Loved Me* belong to different time periods and literary traditions, they share common themes related to love, family, societal expectations, and the interplay between reason and emotion. Readers who appreciate character-driven romances and the exploration of these themes may find both novels enjoyable, despite their differences in style and tone. Through contrasting characters and their dynamic relationships, they offer readers engaging explorations of how individuals navigate the complexities of romance and personal growth within the constraints of their respective societies. While each novel maintains its unique charm, those who appreciate character-driven narratives and the examination of these universal themes may find both *Sense and Sensibility* and *The Viscount Who Loved Me* to be rewarding literary experiences.

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