

‘English’ Sensibility in *Sense and Sensibility*

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[要約]

本論文は、18 世紀から 19 世紀初期英国における感受性文化の中に、オースティンの『分別と多感』を位置づける試みである。まずオースティンの従姉イライザが、オースティンにとって「ヨーロッパ大陸」とともに「演劇」を表象する存在であったことを指摘し、次に『分別と多感』における二人のヒロインを分析して、エリナは自己の内面を外面に出さないのに対し、マリアンは大げさに身体を用いて感情を表現するため、後者は演劇、特に当代の悲劇女優サラ・シドنزの姿を想起させること、シドنزもマリアンとともに身体表現が特徴的だが、前者は身体表現を完全に自己制御しているのに対して、後者は自己の身体を制御できないまま表出していることに注目する。本論文では次に同時代の代表的な小説、フランスのスタール夫人の小説『コリンナ』に着目し、大陸女性コリンナと英国人ルシールの感情表現の差異に着目しながら、『コリンナ』のパロディー小説『イングランドのコリンナ』がその構図をさらに露骨な形で表していることを論じる。最後に再び演劇界に目を向け、当時の演劇が聴覚から視覚へより重点を置く潮流にあったのに対し、オースティンは台詞という言語的・聴覚的要素を重視し、小説『分別と多感』の中で、身体表現という視覚的要素だけに頼らず、制御された言語表現を通して読者だけに自己の内面を打ち明けることによって、「英国的」感受性をもったヒロインを提示していることを論じる。

1

In considering Jane Austen's (1775-1817) views on the theatre, the first thing that comes to mind would be the scene in *Mansfield Park* (1814), where the young characters in the novel plan an amateur theatrical presentation of the play, *Lovers' Vows*, at Mansfield Park during Sir Thomas Bertram's absence. Because the novel's main characters Fanny Price and Edmund Bertram are both hesitant about the plan, this scene might be interpreted as a reflection of Austen's disapproval of the play and the theater in general. Indeed, in the age of Austen, the theatre entailed various immoral images. An evangelist, Thomas Gisborne (1758-1846), for instance, insisted that acting is "injurious to the female sex" because it encourages vanity and destroys modesty in a young woman "by the unrestrained familiarity with the other sex, which inevitably results from being joined with them in the drama."¹ Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) also warns of the dangers of the theatre in his "Essay on the Drama."

In the present theatres of London, the best part of the house is openly and avowedly set off for [prostitutes'] reception; and no part of it which is open to the public at large is free from their intrusion, or at least from the open display of the disgusting improprieties to which their neighborhood gives rise... No man of delicacy would wish the female part of his family to be exposed to such scenes...²

These are a few examples how licentious the theatre was considered to be in Austen's time.

However, we should not overlook the fact that Austen did enjoy theatre-going and even amateur theatricals despite their negative reputation. Although the eighteenth-century English drama is said to have suffered negative effects due to the gradual diversification of audiences and the Licensing Act of 1713, the "theatre remained the central popular medium of the era," as Daniel O'Quinn asserts. O'Quinn continues, "it [the theatre] constituted the primary locus where representation and sociability came together on a nightly basis."³ In fact, in the field of tragedy, the eighteenth-century saw the two opposing streams coexist, namely Classical and Romantic. By the end of the century, such celebrated actors and actresses as Edmund Kean (1787-1833) and Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) left their marks on the history of drama. In the field of comedy, on the other hand, a new genre of sentimental comedy came to the foreground, while the two great dramatists of the eighteenth-century, Oliver Goldsmith (1728?-74) and Richard Sheridan (1751-1816) gave the trend a satirical turn and thus made the performance of comedy in England flourish more than ever.

Austen did not fail to seize this opportunity. We now know through the extensive research on Austen's relationship with the theatre conducted by Paula Byrne and Penny Gay that Austen enjoyed theatre-going in Bath and in London as well as writing three plays in her girlhood, "The Visit," "The Mystery," and "The First Act of Comedy."⁴ These practices may not have been sufficient for her, for Austen enthused over private theatricals well into her thirties. Staging a play did not mean to 'play house'

for her. On the contrary, the young Austen was quite serious, and only two years before writing *Mansfield Park*, she enjoyed private theatricals at the residence of an acquaintance and thus anticipated what she herself was to write. Byrne’s and Penny’s elaborate researches reveal Austen’s firm commitment to drama, and the fact that their books on Austen’s relationship with the theatre were published one after another in the same year indicates an increasing interest in the subject in this century.

When we think about the issue of Austen and the theatricals, we cannot overlook the influence of one of her cousins, Eliza de Feuillide, née Hancock. Eliza played the central role when Austen family members staged theatricals at the parsonage. Also, Eliza stood out in Austen’s family in that she was quite an international figure. A brief look at her life will help us understand her relevance to Austen’s life. Her mother Philadelphia, a sister of Austen’s father, went to India in her youth and was there married to Tysoe Saul Hancock, an official surgeon at Fort St. David, a military post of the Honourable East India Company.⁵ Their only child Eliza was born in Calcutta in 1761 and Warren Hastings, a renowned Governor General of India, became her godfather.⁶ Although Eliza seemed to be leading a promising life, their parents decided to live separately due to financial difficulties. While Hancock remained in India, Philadelphia brought Eliza back to England, unaware of the cost of a satisfactory life there. When they realized that fact, the mother and the daughter moved to continental Europe, eventually settling in Paris, France, where Eliza met her future husband, Jean-François Capot de Feuillide.⁷ They married in 1781, but the husband was guillotined in 1794 in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In a life full of vicissitudes, she visited the parsonage several times while the young Austen lived there. In the year 1786, when both Eliza and her mother went to the parsonage, Austen’s elder brother James went to France to pay a visit to the Comte de Feuillide. The families kept close association with each other and there is no doubt that Eliza brought a French ambience to the Austen family during Jane’s sensitive girlhood.

When Eliza stayed at the parsonage over the turn of the years 1786-87, she enjoyed private theatricals with Austen family members, playing a brilliant heroine herself. Austen’s brother James’s son later recalled that his father James and his uncle Henry were fascinated with flirtatious Eliza while practicing the play. Byrne and other scholars conjecture that this incident may have inspired Austen to create the flirtation between Henry Crawford and Maria Bertram in *Mansfield Park*. George Holbert Tucker further speculates that Austen’s parents worried about the influence of the theatricals because of the elopement of a family connection that resulted from acting in amateur production.⁸ As if endorsing their fears, their son Henry and Eliza later fell in love and got married. In these ways, not only did Eliza represent ‘France’ or ‘the continental Europe’ to Austen family but also she embodied what ‘the theatre’ evoked in people’s mind at the turn of the centuries.

While Eliza represented ‘France,’ ‘the continental Europe,’ and even ‘the theatre à la française,’ was

there any ‘English’ counterpart of what she represented? What was the theatre of ‘English’ style? In considering these questions, Paul Goring provides us with keys to identifying ‘English’ style of the time. Building on Linda Colley’s argument that the notion of Britishness was formed through various cultural practices and beliefs that “Britain’s diverse peoples could be said to have in common,”⁹ Goring analyses the ways in which the new ideals of physical eloquence were formed in the field of oratory in the eighteenth-century England, highlighting the importance of the role of the body as an expressive object, and thus points out that the human body or the somatic conduct contributed to the construction of the ‘English’ identity (92). According to Goring, the important figure in establishing ‘English’ bodily conduct is Thomas Sheridan (1719-88), Richard’s father, who proposed ‘English’ eloquence against that of other European nations in his *British Education* published in 1756.¹⁰ Austen’s ‘English’ sensibility and its expression through the body in her works, then, seem to be worth considering now that Austen’s relations to the theatre and the dramas, in which the somatic conduct is essential, are increasingly drawing attention in the criticism of Austen.

This essay aims to locate Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* in the culture of ‘sensibility’ with a consideration of the issue of nationality. Fully understanding its complexities and being able to objectifying it, Austen seems to seek for ‘English’ sensibility vis-à-vis that of European continent. In order to figure out what ‘English’ sensibility stood for in those days, both the novels and the theatre in Austen’s age will be considered in this essay. Having examined in this section what Eliza represents in terms of the theatre in the Austen family, this paper will discuss the theatricality in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) in the next section, where I will take notice of the influence of Sarah Siddons, the tragedienne who swept the audience of Austen’s times. In section 3, the ‘sensibilities’ in Austen’s contemporary novels will be explored. The novels to be considered are *Corinne, or Italy* (1807, hereafter *Corinne*) written by Madame de Staël (1766-1817) and a parody of it, *The Corinne of England, and a Heroine in the Shade; A Modern Romance* (1809, hereafter *The Corinne of England*). In the course of discussion, I shall sometimes use the term ‘continental Europe’ to refer to the things related to France, Italy or other European countries on the continent in order to avoid the complexities of naming the things of mingled origins as we shall see in the case of *Corinne*. While the author Madame de Staël was born in Paris and was considered to be French, her parents were both Swiss and she herself was married to a Swedish ambassador and spent much of her life outside France. The heroine of her novel *Corinne* is also of mixed origin. Corinne’s father is Scottish, while her mother is Italian and a large part of the story is set in Italy. The novel is an epitome of the European society, so to speak, with peoples from different European countries in it. If we assume a scheme in which cosmopolitanism is opposed to the nationalism then emerging, no other novel in that period would be described more cosmopolitan than *Corinne*, though the burgeoning nationalism in it is observable as well.

As this paper later shows in the example of *Corinne*, the boundaries between nationalities were far more complex than what people those days and these days might have supposed. The aim of this paper does not lie in making out ‘what English nationality is’ nor in drawing a binary line between ‘English’ characteristics and the others’. Rather, in order to calibrate ‘what people those days considered “Englishness” to be,’ I would like to start my discussion by analyzing the ‘sensibilities’ represented in *Sense and Sensibility* in the next section.

2

As mentioned previously, out of all the Austen’s novels, the theatrical scene in *Mansfield Park* comes to mind first and foremost when one considers Austen’s relationship with the theatre, but *Sense and Sensibility* can also be called a highly theatrical novel in a sense. It has often been thought of as one that inherited the tradition of sentimental novels, which attained great popularity in the middle of the eighteenth century. However, as Byrne and Gay have persuasively argued, Austen was deeply influenced by the theatre as well as preceding sentimental novels. In fact, a heroine who went astray as a result of reading too many sentimental novels was a sort of a stereotype in contemporary dramas, as represented in the figure of Lydia in *The Rivals* (1775) by Richard Sheridan. Also, a pair of contrastive heroines was quite typical in Austen’s age. The two heroines in *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) by Goldsmith, for instance, forms a contrast, and Lydia and Julia in Sheridan’s *The Rivals* can be said to correspond to Einor and Marianne respectively, as Byrne and Gay pointedly remark.¹¹ Citing Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), who “thought of his novel as a *drama*,” Gay further claims that Austen’s age can be regarded as a time when “the novel and the sentimental drama were feeding on each other.”¹² Then it is no wonder that Austen was influenced by both contemporary or preceding novels and dramas.

It is obviously Marianne who is characterised as a comedienne. She does not only tread in the footsteps of the heroines in the preceding sentimental novels but her behaviour also reminds us of the theatricals. One of the most conspicuous examples of her theatricality appears early in the novel, when her family needs to leave Norland for Barton Cottage.

Many were the tears shed by them in their last adieus to a place so much beloved. “Dear, dear Norland!” said Marianne, as she wandered alone before the house, on the last evening of their being there; “when shall I cease to regret you!—when to learn to feel a home elsewhere! —Oh! happy house, could you know what I suffer in now viewing you from this spot, from whence perhaps I may view you no more!—And you, ye well-known trees!—but you will continue the same.—No leaf will decay because we are removed, nor any branch become motionless although we can observe you no

longer!—No; you will continue the same; unconscious of the pleasure or the regret you occasion, and insensible of any change in those who walk under your shade!—But who will remain to enjoy you?”¹³

This quotation sounds like a soliloquy spoken by an actress from the stage. Marianne apostrophizes and personifies, bringing life into such inanimate objects as a house and trees and the readers, in turn, are supposed to take the role of the audience in the theatre.

Another characteristic of Marianne’s use of language is exaggeration. The sheer number of the question and the exclamation marks clearly attests to it, as shown in the above and the following quotations, in which Marianne realizes her would-be fiancé Willoughby’s change of mind.

... Marianne, seated at the foot of the bed, with her head leaning against one of its posts, again took up Willoughby’s letter, and after shuddering over every sentence, exclaimed—

“It is too much! Oh! Willoughby, Willoughby, could this be yours! Cruel, cruel—nothing can acquit you. Elinor, nothing can. Whatever he might have heard against me—ought he not to have suspended his belief? Ought he not to have told me of it, to have given me the power of clearing myself? ‘The lock of hair, (repeating it from the letter,) which you so obligingly bestowed on me’—That is unpardonable. Willoughby, where was your heart, when you wrote those words? Oh! barbarously insolent!—Elinor, can he be justified?”¹⁴

The fragmental language of Marianne together with her frequent use of question and that of exclamation testifies to her vehemence in feeling or her capacity for ‘sensibility.’

Marianne’s capacity for ‘sensibility’ is corroborated by the narrator of the novel as well. While she was tantalized by Willoughby’s mysterious callousness, the narrator describes her as follows; “Her eyes were red and swollen; and it seemed as if her tears were even then restrained with difficulty. She avoided the looks of them all, could neither eat nor speak, and after some time, on her mother’s silently pressing her hand with tender compassion, her small degree of fortitude was quite overcome, she burst into tears and left the room.”¹⁵ This description reads as if it were taken by a camera, shifting from a close-up on her face to a medium shot of her interaction with her mother and finally a long shot of her exit from the scene. In another scene, where she sees Willoughby again at a party in London after a long interval and finds him intimately talking with a lady she does not know, the narrator describes her thus; “Marianne, now looking dreadfully white, and unable to stand, sunk into her chair, and Elinor, expecting every moment to see her faint, tried to screen her from the observation of others, while reviving her with lavender water.”¹⁶ Here, as we read through the description of her face and body, we feel as if we observed the figure of Marianne quite visually. In other words, the narration of the novel functions as stage direction, with the readers as the

spectators, and Marianne, of course, as the tragedienne, or a comedienne in a satirical sense, on the stage. It is as though the sign of an actress was inscribed on her body.

The tragedienne in Austen’s era was undoubtedly Sarah Siddons. Marianne’s acting style, which is characterized by somatic vehemence, is reminiscent of the iconic Siddons, as Gay pointedly observes.¹⁷ Their resemblance may not be a coincidence, because Austen shared a high estimation of Siddons with her contemporaries. In a letter to her sister Cassandra on 25 April 1811, Austen expressed her mortification, having not been able to see Siddons in one of her most celebrated roles.¹⁸ Siddons started her career in the field of comedy, but it was in tragedy that she distinguished herself and it was her command over her body that made her attain prominence.¹⁹ Commenting on her role as Lady Macbeth, William Hazlitt (1778-1830) observes;

...her eyes were open, but the sense was shut. She was like a person bewildered, and unconscious of what she did. She moved her lips involuntarily; all her gestures were involuntary and mechanical.²⁰

Hazlitt here focuses his attention on Siddon’s body. It was not only him but her audience in general who paid much regard to her somatic movement. Indeed, as Terry F. Robinson maintains, “Siddon’s superiority as a tragedian can be attributed, in large part, to her ability to project sound and to convey *a physical iconography of emotion* both intimate and yet perceptible by spectators in enormous theatre spaces” (my italics).²¹ It was not without reason that Siddons took advantage of her tall stature in acting, being fully aware of the importance of the effects created by body movement.

The slight but nevertheless important difference between Marianne’s and Siddon’s acting styles is the latter’s perfect command over her body. Whereas Marianne’s passion frequently enslaves her body, Siddons is always in control of her body whenever she seems to succumb to her feelings. Here is a comment by Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) on Mrs. Siddons’s farewell performance.

The performance of *Constance* was unexceptionable; and here her lofty indignation came into play with all its nobleness in the scene with the Cardinal; her performance of this part also, the violence of which is such a provocation to the noise of inferior actresses, set a fine example of majestic excess, and was even clamorous without losing its dignity. But it was in *Queen Katharine* that this dignity was seen in all its perfection; *never was lofty grief so equally kept up, never a good conscience so nobly prepared, never a dying hour so royal and so considerate to the last* (my italics).²²

Even at the height of emotional display, Siddons never fails to regulate the movement of her body. The consequence is, because her command over her body was so thorough, it amounted to ‘naturalness’ from the point of view of spectators and they endorsed her ‘authentic feelings’ emanated from inside herself.

Although Siddons and Marianne have in common the extensive use of their bodies, another difference between them should not be overlooked; the difference of the genres, with the former tragedienne, and the latter comedienne. Austen never presents Marianne as tragedienne, no matter how vehement Marianne exaggerates her plight by constantly using passionate language and gestures all the while. Rather, by opposing Marianne against Elinor, Austen highlights the comical effects of the visibility of the former. Her inner feelings are always 'visible' through her direct speeches and her bodily movements described by the narrator, and thus the readers as well as the other characters in the novel are always aware of what she feels. On the other hand, Elinor's inner self is never revealed until later in the novel. No other characters acknowledge Elinor's feelings than herself throughout most of the novel.

3

The two contrastive heroines, one displaying her feelings and the other restraining herself, were not unique in the dramas of Austen's age, as I have mentioned earlier. A question arises; why does the latter, Elinor in the case of *Sense and Sensibility*, try to conceal what she feels? Susan Greenfield explains, building on the economic and the social status of women at that time, as follows. Women did not have the right to property in Austen's time, even if the property was her own body. The only 'property' that was really her own was her inner self, and the only way to protect it was to stay reticent and reserved.²³ While Greenfield's explanation has a point, this section examines the two novels that slightly preceded Austen's and, by identifying a similar pattern of the contrastive heroines in them, I would like to consider the significance of the concealment of the emotion for women in England at that time.

As mentioned previously, the pertinent novel that provides us with a model of two contrastive heroines is *Corinne* by Madame de Staël. Although the author De Staël and Austen died in the same year, their lives form a stark contrast. While the latter liked to remain in obscurity, the former was no doubt a Pan-European celebrity, though she had to endure adversity while writing the novel, having been exiled from her mother country, France, by Napoleon in the aftermath of French Revolution. The novel itself gained enormous popularity throughout Europe. Its translation reached England in the same year as its publication in France and was reprinted fourteen times in England between 1807 and 1818. It is obvious that *Corinne* deserves further analysis than this paper offers, but, following the contemporary criticism, this paper focuses its attention on the nationalities and the 'sensibilities' of the heroines. The story can be summarized as follows; Oswald, or Lord Nelvil, comes to Rome from Scotland after his father's death and meets Corinne, a talented poetic improviser and the eponymous heroine of the novel. Oswald arrives in Rome just at the time the Roman people are about to crown Corinne for her poetic genius at the Capitol, a Roman shrine celebrating Jupiter. Oswald was soon attracted to Corinne, while hesitating between exotic Corinne and his bride-to-be Lucile.

The contrastive heroines in *Corinne* are obviously Corinne and Lucile. Corinne first appears in the novel dressed as a Cumaean sibyl, as in the painting by the Italian Baroque painter Domenichino (1581-1641); “An Indian turban was wound round her head, and intertwined with her beautiful black hair.... Her arms were dazzlingly beautiful; her tall, slightly plump figure, in the style of a Greek statue, gave a keen impression of youth and happiness; her eyes had something of an inspired look.”²⁴ By contrast, Lucile’s ‘Englishness’ is depicted by such expressions as “fair complexion” and “blond hair.”²⁵ Corinne’s dark hair and exotic attire must have made her seem foreign and unconventional for English readers when the novel was introduced to the English public. Corinne’s exoticism or ‘Otherness’ that surrounds her is not limited to her appearance. During Oswald’s sojourn in Italy, Corinne takes Oswald to a number of sightseeing spots, displaying her knowledge of Italian arts, music, literature, architecture, history etc. Indeed, this novel could serve as a guidebook of Italy in a time when the tourism industry was burgeoning, with Corinne as a perfect tour guide and herself a tourist attraction at the same time.²⁶

One of the most outstanding differences between Corinne and Lucile is whether they exhibit or conceal their emotion. As is expected from her vocation, Corinne eloquently tells her own feelings by writing them in poems or in letters, by expressing them in conversation, or by reciting her improvisation in public or in privacy. Count d’Erfeuil, a French exile, remarks; “She [Corinne] has, to be sure, a look a thousand times more expressive, and arguments far more lively, than would be needed in your country [Scotland], and even in mine [France], to make us doubt a woman’s austerity.”²⁷ The narrator corroborates, saying that “her [Corinne’s] character inclined her not to conceal her feelings.”²⁸ Lucile, on the other hand, is an embodiment of English or Scottish reserve and her timidity prevents her from displaying what she feels, and so Oswald has to make great efforts to get a glimpse of her feelings.

Lucile had not allowed herself to say a single word which would have made Lord Nelvil think she preferred him, but sometimes he could suspect it by a slight, sudden change in the colour of her complexion, by too quick a lowering of her eyes, by quicker breathing. In fact he studied the girl’s heart with a curious affectionate interest, but her complete reserve always left him in doubt and uncertainty about the nature of her feelings.²⁹

Even after Oswald confirms Lucile’s feelings towards him, Lucile’s tendency does not change. And even after Lucile realizes Oswald’s affection towards Corinne, Lucile never betrays jealousy by herself. It is the narrator who tells us readers how Lucile feels;

But he[Oswald] was not aware of Lucile’s sensitive nature; she took the utmost care to hide it. It was out of pride that in this situation she concealed what was distressing her; even if she were in a perfectly

happy situation, she would still have reproached herself for showing that she felt deep affection, even for her husband. It seemed to her that modesty was hurt by the expression of all passionate feeling. But as she was capable of having such feelings, her upbringing, by imposing on her the law of restraint, had made her sad and silent. She had been thoroughly convinced that she must not reveal her feelings but she took no pleasure in saying anything else.³⁰

Thus we can observe a scheme here, in which the difference of whether a woman betrays her emotion or not overlaps with the difference in nationalities. In *Corinne*, Corinne has the features of continental Europe throughout the novel, as in “She[Corinne] noticed the ridiculous with a Frenchwoman’s shrewdness and portrayed it with an Italian’s imagination,”³¹ while Lucile’s reserve and timidity function as the indexes of her ‘Englishness.’ Considering that the French word ‘nationalité’ first appeared in *Corinne*,³² it is no wonder that this text is always conscious of national traits. In fact, the author De Staël, as one of the pioneering cosmopolitan women of her age, tried to identify national characteristics and to find an ideal political system by sifting through various national attributes that might be appropriate for such a system. Her masterpiece, *De L’Allemagne* (1810/13), is considered the final achievement of her pursuit of the ideal national entity. Kudo argues that she would have written a thesis about the politics in England afterwards if she had lived longer.³³

The scheme of nationalities De Staël employed in *Corinne* can be observed even more explicitly in the parodies of *Corinne*. While *Corinne* gained popularity in England, its reception was not without criticism, most of which was targeted at the characterization of Corinne. *Annual Review* in 1807, for instance, claiming that this novel was tolerated only because it was set in Italy on the Continent, continued as follows;

... Nothing can be more improbable than the conduct of Corinna[sic], or more unnatural than her character, if, as is commonly the case, with vulgar and ordinary readers, our own country is to be considered as the epitome of general character, and as the standard of the propriety for general conduct.³⁴

The Corinne of England is one of the parodies of *Corinne*. It was published anonymously, but the author is almost identified with E. M. Foster, a prolific, conservative author, though there still remains a controversy as to the attribution.³⁵ While the main part of *Corinne* is set in Rome, the story of *The Corinne of England* is set in a small village near Coventry, England, and the heroine Corinne corresponds to Clarissa, while the angelic Lucile is replicated as Mary in the latter story. Clarissa, who is seemingly talented, turns out to be the embodiment of vanity and ends up losing her life at the conclusion of the novel, whereas Mary, who is always modest and obedient, marries with the one she loves all the time in her heart. The plot of the latter novel not only parodies the former but it also exhibits a truculent sarcasm concerning Clarissa or

Corinne or those who has such characteristics as they do.

‘Sensibility’ is a key to understanding the two heroines, though whether one has it or not, or how much of it one possesses, is not much of a question. Rather, the question both in *Corinne* and in *The Corinne of England* is, simply put, whether one displays it or not. Just like Lucile in *Corinne*, Mary is always conscientious about concealing her emotions. She embodies “natural modesty” and “reservedness of disposition”³⁶ and it is the narrator who reveals her ample sensibility. By contrast, Clarissa is raised to display everything she has, not only her talents but also her personal opinions and feelings.

...the superiority of Miss Moreton’s talents, like those of her father, were calculated only for display; there was nothing solid or substantial in her abilities or acquirements, no depth of argument in her declamatory harangues, in which she had practiced, from the early age of fifteen, to the attentive auditors round her father’s table.³⁷

Clarissa’s penchant for displaying is consistently represented as a vice in the novel along with her inclination to communicate with foreigners or people whose background is uncertain. Clarissa sympathizes with a French self-styled noble, Monsieur D’Aubert, when she hears his history of exile in the aftermath of the Revolution. She even harbours him in her residence by just hearing his story. Moreover, when she is informed of the sickness of a soldier, who she regards as her friend, she visits the garrison alone, which is totally an unacceptable behavior in her society.

In fact, all the eccentricities and the vices are represented as the attributes of continental Europe in *The Corinne of England*. Monsieur D’Aubert, for instance, pretends to display his feelings, but, in truth, “under the mask of pensive sentimentality, he[D’Aubert] would sap every principle which can make us[the English] happy here, and take from us every bright prospect of an hereafter.”³⁸ No other character in the novel could be more dubious and dangerous than Monsieur D’Aubert for two reasons. First, his surface does not reflect his interior, and second, he has an influence over the people around him and they may be “sapped” of English virtues and eventually be contaminated with the continental vices. In England those days, such false sympathy, as was displayed by D’Aubert, was considered to be infectious or contagious. Such philosophers as the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) and Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746)³⁹ deliberated over the communication of feelings from a person to another some decades ago, and Hannah More (1745-1833), an influential religious writer, a philanthropist and a contemporary of De Staël and Austen, regarded French sentimental novels as media to transmit subversive continental ideas to England.⁴⁰ Putting *Corinne* and *The Corinne of England* in the context of the increasingly conservative English society after French Revolution, we can see that the reticence of Lucile in *Corinne* and that of Mary in *The Corinne of England* signify the ‘Englishness’ of each heroine that distinguishes them from their continental counterparts.

In other words, their reticence or the thick barrier that protects their inner self also demarcates their ideal English femininity, and this configuration further reminds us of another contrastive heroines in *Sense and Sensibility*.

4

Before concluding this paper with the discussion of *Sense and Sensibility*, let us look again at the theatre in Austen's age, bearing in mind that the distinction between 'English' and 'continental' sensibilities affords a parallel to that between concealing and displaying one's emotion.

The theatre in Austen's age experienced a dramatic change. Both patent theatres in London, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, underwent extensive reconstructions between 1790 and 1813 and the sizes of each theatre were greatly enlarged. The result was a change not only in the capacities of the theatres but also in the staging and the production of dramas. As the theatres became larger, the distance between the stage and the audience also increased. As a natural consequence, it became increasingly difficult in such a theatre to stage a play in which the story depends upon the speeches of the actors/actresses.⁴¹ In fact, Hunt remarked that "such large theatres are not fit for a delicate and just representation of the drama ... they inevitably lead to the substitution of shew for sense."⁴² It is also worth noting that this enlargement of the theatres coincided with the rise and the proliferation of melodramas. A drama, which did not have as much recourse as before to the exchanges of speeches among actors on the stage, advanced its plot with music and spectacular show.⁴³ To cite Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821), "The stage delights the eye far oftener than the ear."⁴⁴

Austen did not seem to approve of this new mode of theatre. Because Austen showed discontent at the theatre in her letter to Frances Austen on 25 September 1813, saying "I wanted better acting.—There was no Actor worthy naming.—I believe the theatres are thought at a low ebb at present,"⁴⁵ Gay speculates that Austen preferred the previous mode of theatre, in which more value was placed on the speeches of actors and actresses.⁴⁶ Those who appreciate the speeches and the conversations between and among the characters in Austen's novels are likely to agree with this speculation.

Let us consider *Sense and Sensibility* once again. As I discussed her character in Section 2, Marianne, a child of the age of the culture of 'sensibility,' displays her interior not only to the other characters but also to the readers through exaggerated gestures and body movements and she is presented as a comedienne in spite of, or rather, because of her display of her feelings. Elinor, on the other hand, while making every effort to conceal her emotion from those around her, does reveal what she thinks and feels to the readers through the narrator or by herself through free indirect speeches. However, Austen did not conclude the novel by opposing the two heroines. Marianne, awakened from the worship of 'sensibility' by the painful experience

with Willoughby, learns to control herself in expressing her emotion by the ending of the novel.

Austen sought for the means to show/tell the feelings of the characters through language with utmost care. Expressing feelings by means of thoroughly controlled art of language is what Austen aimed for and what Elinor practiced in *Sense and Sensibility*. It also functioned as the proof of ‘Englishness’ or ‘English ideal womanhood,’ as shown in the cases of Lucile in *Corinne* and Mary in *The Corinne of England*. In an age when the intimate relationship between the stage and the audience was disappearing, Austen realized in another genre, the novel, what she was no longer able to see on stage. Marianne’s learning process to regulate her ‘sensibility’ in *Sense and Sensibility* can be read as Austen’s endeavour to demonstrate the ideal workings of ‘English’ sensibility.

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Notes

- 1 Gisborne, p.401.
- 2 Scott, p.392.
- 3 O'Quinn, p.378.
- 4 Byrne, p.19.
- 5 Le Faye, p.12.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p.51.
- 8 Tucker, p.152 and p.154.
- 9 Goring, p.92.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp.91-113.
- 11 Byrne,p.108 and Gay, pp.29-30.
- 12 Gay, p.41.
- 13 Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, p.32.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p.216.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p.95.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p.202.
- 17 Gay, p. 35.
- 18 Austen, *Letters*, 25 April 1811.
- 19 Robinson, p.7.
- 20 Hazlitt, p.145
- 21 Robinson, p.7.
- 22 Hunt, p.72.
- 23 Greenfield, pp.94-95.
- 24 De Staël, p.23.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p.328.
- 26 Isbell, p.xiii.
- 27 De Staël, p.47.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p.73.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p.331.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p.376.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p.39.
- 32 Isbell, p.xii.
- 33 Kudo, ch.3.
- 34 *Annual Review*, 6 (1807), p.673 quoted in Bordoni, p.viii.
- 35 Bordoni, p.vii.
- 36 Foster, p.19.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p.13.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p.47.
- 39 Schmitter, "9.4 Sympathy."
- 40 Smith, p.63.
- 41 Gay, p.13.
- 42 Hunt, p.50.
- 43 Gay, p.15.
- 44 Inchbald, p.4.
- 45 Austen, *Letters*, 25 September 1813.
- 46 Gay, p.22.

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Summary

This paper aims to locate Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (*S&S*) in the culture of 'sensibility' with a consideration of the issue of nationality through analyzing Austen's contemporary dramas and novels. In order to further understand the relationship of Austen with the theatre and the dramas of Austen's age, the influence of her cousin Eliza de Feuille is first discussed. The similarities and differences between Sarah Siddons and Marianne are then considered. After pointing out that the distinction of the two heroines in *S&S*, Elinor and Marianne, lies in whether one displays her emotion or not, the paper then argues that the same pattern is reiterated in Austen's contemporary novels, namely *Corinne* and *The Corinna of England*. Controlling oneself in expressing one's feelings functioned as a proof of 'Englishness' or the ideal 'English womanhood' in these novels. This also reflects Austen's attitude toward the change in the theatre in her age, where melodramas or spectacular shows became increasingly popular. Austen preferred the previous mode of the stage, which put more value on the speeches of the actors/actresses. Austen sought for a means to show/tell the feelings of the characters through the controlled art of language in the novel, as Elinor does in *Sense and Sensibility*.