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DEPARTAMENT DE FILOGIA ANGLESA I DE GERMANÍSTICA

**Matrimonial Lives Ahead of their Time: Types of
Marriages in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* and the
Evidence and Consequences of the Narrator's
Ideological Preferences**

Treball de Fi de Grau/ BA dissertation

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Silvia', written over a horizontal line.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| 0. Introduction | 1 |
| 0.1. Context and objectives | 1 |
| 0.2. Literary review | 2 |
| 0.2.1 Vivien Jones | 3 |
| 0.2.2 Pierre Goubert, Lynda A. Hall and Diego Saglia | 4 |
| 0.2.3 Jan Fergus | 6 |
| 1. Differences between the Elliots and the Musgroves: how their ideology affects their happiness | 6 |
| 1.1. The Elliots..... | 6 |
| 1.2. The Musgroves..... | 10 |
| 2. The happiest marriages in <i>Persuasion</i> | 14 |
| 2.1. The Crofts..... | 14 |
| 2.2. The Harvilles..... | 16 |
| 2.3. Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth | 18 |
| 2.4. Naval characters..... | 21 |
| 3. Conclusions | 23 |
| 4. Further Research..... | 25 |
| Works Cited..... | 26 |
| Further Reading | 27 |

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Abstract

Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, in line with the author's other major works, revolves around the theme of money and marriage within Georgian society. The novel exhibits different types of marriages; some are more conventional, and others go beyond the social norms of the time. The aim of this project is to describe a selection of matrimonyes found in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, to discover how the narrator expresses the ideological preferences of the novel, and the positive or negative outcomes for the characters.

In the first chapter, I am going to analyse the Elliot and the Musgrove family, to make constant comparisons between their lifestyle, their ideals regarding marriage and money, and their family values. The Elliots, different from the Musgroves, are selfish, ambitious, and elitist. Because of the narrator's disagreement as to their ideals, they will not have a happy ending. In the second chapter, I am going to study in more detail the marriage of the Crofts, the Harvilles' and Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, as well as the naval characters. All of them have in common great values, social attitudes, and ideologies ahead of their time. The narrator expresses the same ideology as these couples by giving them the ability of choosing good friends, enabling them to overcome together the adversities they encounter and, finally, giving them a happy ending.

Keywords: *Persuasion*, Jane Austen, marriage, money, Georgian Society, family values.

0. Introduction

0.1. Context and objectives

Georgian society is undoubtedly present in the writings of Jane Austen. During the Georgian period, a great social change happened in which class division was intensified by the agricultural revolution, the beginning of industrialisation and the creation of a global trade network for traders, manufacturers, shippers and financiers. Even marriage was an economic agreement, considering that its purpose was the union of capital and properties. The customs and mindset of the era play an important role in the development of the novel and in the portrayal and decisions of the characters. The works of our novelist deal with topics such as the economy and how to access it, the importance of social position and the origin of good families, education, the position of women, and the everyday life and pastimes of well-to-do families. Nevertheless, all these themes have a unifying thread: marriage.

Marriage is a major issue in Jane Austen's works, and it has caused enormous controversy because of the contrasting interpretations of the author's revolutionary ideas. In my paper, I have focused on the different types of marriages in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1817), analysing them on the basis of the personality and attitude of the characters, and relating this to their fate in the story, in order to discover how the narrator conveys the novel's apparent preferences. Thus, the thesis I will defend consists of the relationship between the narrator's ideology and that of the characters themselves; that is to say, marriages in *Persuasion* reveal the author's inclinations.

In the first chapter, which is divided into two parts, I draw an extensive comparison between the Elliot family and the Musgroves, and their ideals regarding the marriage of their daughters. In my thesis, as well as in *Persuasion* itself, comparisons

between characters symbolising different ideologies appear constantly. On the one hand, Anne's family is directly related to the world of luxury and appearances, to marriage of convenience and personal gain. This elitist ideology will directly harm them as they are betrayed by their supposed friends. They are unable to appreciate their family and therefore unable to live happily. On the other hand, goodness, selfless and familial love are characteristic of the Musgroves, which will lead their daughters Louisa and Henrietta to marriages brimming with affection and bliss.

In the second chapter, which is separated in four parts, I deal with the marriage of the Crofts first, and then with that of the Harvilles. Next, I delve deep into Anne and Wentworth's relationship. Finally, I close the chapter with a section on the naval characters that brings together all the personalities discussed above. We discover then that the happiness of these marriages lies in feelings, education, humility, and good sense, not in prejudice, appearances, or abundance. In addition, the members of the navy are remarkable for their personal effort and their more egalitarian ideology about men and women within wedlock. All these virtues make the above-mentioned couples succeed in overcoming the possible adversities that may arise, thanks to the true bond of fondness and appreciation that unites them.

0.2. Literary review

Countless authors have studied Jane Austen and her works. Therefore, I am going to introduce the ones I have focused on when writing my thesis so as to determine the ways in which the critical community has approached both Austen as an author and, also, her novels.

0.2.1 Vivien Jones

Vivien Jones' analysis of *Persuasion* concentrates on the confrontation of the concepts of *self* and *society*. Wentworth initially places Anne in the *society* group because of having been influenced to put an end to the marriage proposal years ago due to her weak temperament. However, although she has supposedly been persuaded by society, the intensity of her feelings for Wentworth has not changed. In addition, Anne was not convinced by social ideals to get an opulent and well-known husband. The only reason for doing so was her duty to follow the advice of her dear friend Lady Russell, who plays the role of mother, cares and desires the best for her.

Although Anne obeys reason, by remaining in love with Wentworth, she shows that she stands for personal feelings. The young woman has good judgment and attaches more importance to individual values than to social rank, a fact that sets her apart from her family. This demonstrates that, like Anne Elliot, the novel is positioned in favour of *self*, affection, and romantic love, as the protagonist finally breaks with the social expectations and family traditions and marries the Captain.

The tome allows the reader to make comparisons between the characters. For example, the description of the Harvilles contrasts that of Mr. Elliot, or the notion of family for the Musgroves is differentiated to that of the Elliots'. Additionally, as Jones rightly contends, these descriptions are pulled from Anne's point of view, which causes the reader to favour the protagonist's opinion. This is a consequence of the esteem in which she is held, and the vocabulary and sentiment employed. Another clear distinction between these two concepts personified with the characters would be the sources of happiness of Anne and her sister. While Elizabeth is satisfied with the company of her noble cousins, i.e., appearances and social status, Anne feels extreme happiness when knowing that the Captain is still in love with her.

I judge Jones has made an especially engrossing study of the work by dividing it into the concepts of *self* and *society*. In this way, the position of the novel and of the author herself becomes clear. Apart from Anne and Wentworth, whose love is just as strong after eight years of separation, the happiest marriages are those that focus on the *self* and prioritise *society* less. Such is the case of the Crofts or the Harvilles. Furthermore, the story suggests that the most fortunate characters are those who are part of the Navy, since even though they have an uncertain social position, they possess qualities such as “warm affection, “faith in individual achievement” and “constancy of principles” (Jones, 81). The naval characters are compared to the self-centred and avaricious Elliots, again balancing *self* and *society*.

0.2.2 Pierre Goubert, Lynda A. Hall and Diego Saglia

One of the many aspects Pierre Goubert discusses in his analysis is Jane Austen's position on the education of young women of the time, their subsequent marriage, and the defence of members of the Navy. For gentry girls, an adequate instruction consisted of learning languages, such as French or Italian, drawing, singing and dancing, and playing instruments, such as the piano. As Lynda A. Hall argues on this very issue, the sole purpose of this tuition was to attract the attention of several suitors, to select a good husband and to be prepared for the duties of a wife afterwards. This is a consequence of the deep-rooted vision that the only profession allowed for women was marriage. Returning to Goubert's study, regrettably, after matrimony, these young ladies did not put the skills they had learned back into practice. For Austen, women should cultivate their minds by reading, which would enable them to have their own opinions and good judgment. They would be able to gain from books all the knowledge that their womanhood does not allow them to learn from experience and exploration of the world.

This model of education was ingrained in society because of the concept of marriage. Marriage was one more way to increase the family's wealth, and practically the only method for young women to secure their future, as they could not subsist for themselves. Moralists agreed with this course of action for improving the economy of the household, but Jane Austen differed. She recognised the need for women to find a husband of means, but criticised marriage of convenience and greed. I align myself with this interpretation, as Austen marries her favourite heroines to men for whom they do have feelings. She condemns those people who, like Elizabeth and Mr. Elliot, squander all their capital, and all they seek in matrimony is financial gain. Nevertheless, she awards a happy ending to wedded couples formed on the basis of personal feelings and humility.

Diego Saglia seems to disagree with Goubert about Austen's supposed moral standards of humility. In her work, Austen apparently criticises this world of vanity, consumption, and waste. Yet, her correspondence reveals that she took part in London's consumerism, spending more than her own money on fashion, carriages, balls, theatres, and other social events. I consider it is complicated to carry out one ideology when an opposing one is so deeply rooted in society. From my perspective, over the years, Austen analysed such aspects of superficial community and formed her own views and ideals about it. However, even by having certain values in mind, due to social force and influence, they cannot always be put into practice. Perhaps for the novelist, writing about these injustices was her way of bringing to the world a more egalitarian vision of society, while being aware that the practice was a utopia that few fulfilled, and to raise awareness one word at a time.

Finally, Goubert addresses the issue of the members of the Navy, by arguing that the novelist was in favour of a new order in society. That change would be brought about by young workers who increased their wealth by themselves and not by the good fortune

of being born into a rich family. The author defends priests, farmers, merchants, and shepherds. In *Persuasion*, Austen supports naval characters, who, like her own family, prosper economically thanks to their efforts and dedication, by creating a fairer world.

0.2.3 Jan Fergus

Jan Fergus discusses Austen's idea of marriage without affection, based on an analysis of her correspondence. Fanny Knight, Jane Austen's niece, writes her a letter asking for her opinion on whether or not to accept marriage with a suitor, to which the novelist replies in favour of the man. Nonetheless, in a second letter, the author rectifies and advises Fanny not to accept him unless she really likes him, as there is nothing worse than marrying without affection. What is more, Jane Austen herself was asked in marriage by Bigg-Wither and accepted on the spot. However, the next day she rejected him. Austen was of the opinion that a matrimony without affection could not be a happy one, and that the man's fortune would not change her feelings towards him. I coincide with Fergus's conclusions from the analysis of Austen's letters, for even though she knew she was likely to remain unmarried and dependent on her brothers, she dismissed her suitor. This idea is reflected in the marriages of *Persuasion*: the luckiest are those who have affection for each other, and the least lucky are those who join for financial gain.

1. Differences between the Elliots and the Musgroves: how their ideology affects their happiness

1.1. The Elliots

Anne Elliot has to live together and come to terms with two members of her family, Sir Walter and Elizabeth Elliot, who are completely different from her and whose actions and

attitudes have always clouded the young woman's happiness. As Vivien Jones suggests, "The Elliots, clearly, are associated with an uncompromising and selfish concern with social status which almost destroy Anne's happiness." (Jones 81). Both characters are practically the same and live in a world of vanity and appearances, of luxuries and wastefulness that they cannot really afford. They are selfish people whose main objective is to increase their wealth and mingle with high society, even if that means compromising all their good values and not having quality friendships.

Father and daughter criticise and feel contempt for those who are economically inferior, as is the case of Mrs. Smith, to whom they dedicate the harsh commentary of "old and sick [...], everything that revolts other people, low company, paltry rooms, foul air, disgusting associations" (Austen 155). They treat people favourably or unfavourably according to their appearance or the social class to which they belong. The people most despised by the Elliots are the ones who will do the protagonist the best, since she does not pay attention to mere appearances. This applies to the aforementioned Mrs. Smith, or Frederick Wentworth himself.

These shallow personalities constantly push the good-natured and coherent Anne Elliot aside, overlooking and abandoning her, as "Anne was nobody with either father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was always to give way; she was only Anne." (Austen 5). She is not included in her family trips to London, and they withdraw all the affection they should feel for her as relatives to give it to Mrs. Clay. They also do not count on her for important matters such as the rent of their residence at Kellynch Hall, as they do not consider Anne to be of any use. These injustices are constantly denounced by Mrs. Russell, the only person in the household who really appreciates and defends Anne Elliot.

Elizabeth expects that in a year or two some baronet will ask for her hand, and Sir Walter believes that she will be the only daughter to marry advantageously. Such thoughts reveal the longings of these characters and their expectations and ideals regarding marriage. For them, the chosen husband must be of high social standing so that they can rise economically when the alliance is made. At no point do they discuss feelings or attraction, since they are only concerned with the appearances, rank and wealth of the partner. It is essential to find out the income of the prospective husband, in order to know whether they will be sufficiently well-off as a result. Furthermore, for the Elliots, lineage, the family name and titles are paramount, as they signify a greater social status.

All these matrimonial ideals lead Sir Walter to reject Wentworth's marriage proposal to Anne. The patriarch considers the union a humiliation because, at that time, the young man had no money and came from a little-known family. Nevertheless, eight years later and facing the second marriage attempt of the young couple, Sir Walter accepts the alliance and even "was very far from thinking it a bad match for her." (Austen 245). Elizabeth takes a "cold and unconcerned" (Austen 245) look at the matter, but does not object either. Father and daughter are aware of the social position the Captain now occupies, as well as the fortune he has earned, which is greater than what they possess themselves. Captain Wentworth "was no longer nobody" (Austen 245) but a well-known and wealthy man, which is why he is accepted as Anne's husband.

At the time, marriage of convenience was common and widely accepted. As Pierre Goubert states, "Les moralistes d'alors ne nourrissaient pour la plupart aucun mauvais sentiment contre l'enrichissement en tant que tel, indépendamment des moyens utilisés pour l'obtenir." (Goubert 280). Parents accepted the marriage of their offspring only if the future couple had enough money to increase the social and economic status of the family. The feelings and preferences of the children were left aside.

However, the narrator does not agree with the ideals that the Elliots shared with the society of the time in marital terms: the desire to move up the social ladder and get richer and richer. As a result, there are many aspects of the novel that demonstrate this. To begin with, Elizabeth and Sir Walter are unhappy individuals who, because of their vanity, do not know how to choose their friends well, and that will eventually lead them to have an empty life. Although they had not heard from their Dalrymple cousins for years, the Elliots insist on relating to them because they are part of the nobility, going so far as to write them a letter full of explanations and excuses for why they should maintain their ties. At such insistence, Anne feels ashamed and wishes her family would be prouder instead of flattering said cousins just because they are aristocrats. However, it does not take Sir Walter and Elizabeth long to realise that their relationship is one-sided as they are the only ones who strive to please their cousins without receiving anything in return. In other words, their friendship is fairly superficial and empty.

Father and daughter are very fond of Mrs. Clay, albeit in breach of their own ideals, as the woman is of a lower social class than the Elliots. They also feel overjoyed to have resumed their friendship with their cousin and future heir, Mr. Elliot, forgetting the contempt he expressed towards them years ago. In that period, he disappeared from their lives, destroying all hope of an alliance between him and Elizabeth. They are so preoccupied with keeping up appearances and criticising other characters that they are unable to see what kind of people their supposed friends are and what their true intentions are.

For instance, Mr. Elliot despises his family and associates with them out of pure self-interest, in order to secure his inheritance. As for Mrs. Clay, her plan is to marry Sir Walter and thus rise in social class. When the couple conformed by both leave Bath and move in together, Sir Walter and Elizabeth suffer the betrayal of two loved ones and the

further same disillusionment of a profitable marriage. The father resents from his financial situation but is unable to live more humbly due to his vanity and his misconception of honour and dignity. Elizabeth and him prefer to stay in debt rather than accept the reality of the situation and look for logical solutions. They need to keep splurging money in order to keep up appearances. In addition to their economic difficulties, Elizabeth suffers from being the only sister left unmarried. For Pierre Goubert, the viewpoint that Jane Austen bestows to the narrator seems to be clear:

Il n'y a dans Persuasion nulle commisération pour les malheurs de Sir Walter. [...] Si elle n'a nulle indulgence pour ceux qui dépensent étourdiment, notre romancière n'en a pas moins d'antipathie pour ceux qui ne cherchent qu'à accumuler les richesses et les biens. (Goubert 279)

C'est surtout en critiquant les ambitions et la cupidité des richesses que Jane Austen montre son hostilité au mariage d'argent. (Goubert 337)

Apart from a sad ending for Sir Walter and Elizabeth, the narrator shows his disagreement with them by satirising such characters. After some time without seeing Anne, her father is only concerned about her physique and even recommends "Merely Gowland lotion" (Austen 144) to her. He is obsessed with beauty and youth, and in another absurd chapter, he criticises Bath for being full of ugly people:

The worst of Bath was, the number of its plain women. [...] the number of the plain was out of all proportion. [...] one handsome face would be followed by thirty, or five and thirty frights [...] But still, there certainly were a dreadful multitude of ugly women in Bath; and as for the men! They were infinitely worse. (Austen 139)

The chapter in which Captain Croft mentions the myriad of mirrors Sir Walter had in his chamber also seems to be satire. The reader perceives these attitudes as ridiculous and absurd, so the reaction they cause is laughter and mockery.

1.2. The Musgroves

Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove live happily in the Great House at Uppercross with their daughters Louisa and Henrietta. Charles Musgrove, their son, married Mary Elliot years

ago. In the Musgroves, we discover the importance of the family circle and its well-being. They are good-hearted people whose main characteristic is mutual care and affection among all their closest members. Socially, they are well-positioned by virtue of their marriage, but they do not attach more value to money than to their happiness. They are also not vain or prejudiced towards individuals in a lower economic position than their own. They are generous beings who seek quality friendships, paying attention to the essence of people, not their goods, rank or physique. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Musgrove's sister descended to a lower social class than the Musgroves by marrying Mr. Hyter. Such a dissimilarity was not at any time an impediment to their relationship.

The sisters have always held each other in high esteem and been of service to one another whenever necessary. In addition, “the two families had always been on excellent terms, there being no pride on one side, and no envy on the other, and only such a consciousness of superiority in the Miss Musgroves, as made them pleased to improve their cousins.” (Austen 73). The Musgroves use their social position to help the Hyters to be better, not to criticise their poor education or financial scarcity. They are aware of their economic superiority, even though they never use their capital as an excuse to feel socially superior or assume themselves better than their cousins.

The Musgroves are a close-knit family who always support and accompany each other. They take any opportunity to bond even more and demonstrate their true mutual affection. For example, when Louisa and Henrietta have to purchase their wedding dresses, the whole family moves to Bath in order to enjoy time together and assist with the preparations for the ceremony.

Accustomed to humiliation, disdain and neglect by her father and sister, Anne experiences a healthy envy of the sibling relationship between the Miss Musgroves and Charles, as well as of how blessed they are to have “such excellent parents as Mr. and

Mrs. Musgrove” (Austen 215). Fortunately, the family appreciates good company and soon includes Anne in their closest circle. They recognise Anne’s worth from the first moment, counting on her as a reliable and dear friend. Although Sir Walter and Elizabeth Elliot ignore and despise Anne, practically all the other characters get to know her and recognise the value of her sensitive temperament and mature personality. In fact, the Musgroves prefer her over any other member of the Elliots: “We do so wish that Charles had married Anne instead. [...] We should all have liked her a great deal better” (Austen 87). Thanks to the loving affection of the Musgroves, Anne feels happy, loved, valued, safe, useful and even a member of their family, who desire to be with her at all times.

In this way, the Musgroves attach no significance to lineage or social status, but to their family and their most sincere friendships. They are not concerned about appearances. This is made evident in Charles Musgrove's opinion of Mr. Elliot, Sir Walter's heir:

Don’t talk to me about heirs and representatives. I am not one of those who neglect the reigning power to bow to the rising sun. If I would not go for the sake of your father, I should think it scandalous to go for the sake of his heir. What is Mr. Elliot to me? (Austen 220)

All the Elliots, with the exception of Anne, regard Mr. Elliot highly as he is the inheritor and he could take part in a potential marriage that would benefit the family. In short, they appreciate him by virtue of his capital. Nonetheless, Charles Musgrove is not willing to miss the opportunity to attend the theatre with his significant others to socialise with people he considers vapid. The Musgroves will do everything possible to spend time together, to be united. However, the Elliots suffer at the thought that Mary and Charles will share a meal with them, for they would discover that they now live modestly and with a scant number of servants. It is vanity that increasingly alienates them even from their own family.

Another clear example of the respect and devotion the Musgroves have for their kin and the little relevance they give to social rank is the episode in which the Miss Musgroves notify Anne that they consider Mary's insistence on sitting in their mother's place to be unsuitable. They recognise and acknowledge Mary's social position, but loyalty to their mother, Mrs. Musgrove, goes in first place.

For the Musgroves, matrimony is a principal concern, in the same way as it was for most families at the time. Marriage for convenience, that is, a union that benefits both parties financially, was common. Finding a wealthy husband was essential for women, as it was practically the only way for them to prosper and have a good future. It was virtually impossible for a woman to flourish on her own, without an alliance with a well-to-do man. Hence, as Pierre Goubert states, "les conditions économiques de l'époque imposaient à toutes les jeunes filles de la *gentry* la recherche d'un mari. Il n'y avait pas pour elles d'autre espoir de bien-être matériel que celui-là" (Goubert 351). The Musgroves yearn for their daughters' happiness. For this reason, they are aware that, in order to have good prospects and avoid hardships, it is necessary to find them an adequate husband. Having said that, the progenitors are not obsessed with money. As Jan Fergus writes on the basis of a letter from Jane Austen to her niece Fanny: "In her own case, Austen preferred comparative poverty and dependency to marriage without affection." (Fergus 110). Therefore, the Musgroves have no objection to the marriage proposals that Charles Hyter and Captain Benwick offer their daughters, since the ladies are the ones who have chosen them as spouses.

With regard to the alliance with Charles Hyter, the Musgroves were of the opinion that "It would not be a great match for her; but if Henrietta liked him..." (Austen 73). Furthermore, Captain Wentworth also gives his significant opinion on the marriage between Louisa and Benwick, and the nature of the Musgroves: "They have no difficulties

to contend with at home, no opposition, no caprice, no delays. The Musgroves are behaving like themselves, most honourably and kindly, only anxious with true parental hearts to promote their daughter's comfort." (Austen 180). One more time, these generous descriptions of the Musgroves contrast with the greed of the Elliots.

Thusly, "Jane Austen accepte que l'on cherche à accroître ses biens, mais seulement pour accéder à une oisiveté paisible qui libère de l'argent. Quand elle vise au-delà de ce qu'il faut pour vivre, la cupidité n'a pas l'appui de notre auteur." (Goubert 282). The narrator shows sympathy for the Musgroves on account of the fact that they prioritise their daughters' happiness over the family assets, while the Elliots are rejected because of their acquisitiveness.

2. The happiest marriages in *Persuasion*

2.1. The Crofts

The Crofts' marriage is significant in the novel, as it is the happiest one. What is more, it becomes the prototype for Anne, whose love for Wentworth could only be compared to that of Admiral and Mrs. Croft. "With the exception, perhaps, of Admiral and Mrs. Croft, who seemed particularly attached and happy, (Anne could allow no other exception even among the married couples) there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison, no countenances so beloved." (Austen 62). This comparison is tremendously relevant, considering the strong bond of love that exists between the young protagonists.

The Crofts are an unusual couple that does not embrace the social rules imposed by the time or the expected stereotypes according to their gender. Possibly these differences make them such a happy marriage, as their relationship is based entirely on

them, on their necessities and desires. In this way, the matrimony omits social commitments in order to focus on themselves and their home. Their marriage is strengthened by gender equality as well as of intellect.

At that time, a naval wife traditionally stayed at home to wait for her husband to return from his long voyages in the view of the fact that the author mentions that women "live at home, quiet, confined." (Austen 229). Nevertheless, Mrs. Croft actively participates in life by embarking with her husband into the high seas and accompanying him on his travels and wherever he may venture, due to "their country habit of being almost always together" (Austen 166). Aside from this, Mrs. Croft is recognised as an independent individual and not only as "Admiral Croft's wife". As Wood argues, "Mrs. Croft models a marriage in which women are equal companions with their husbands" (4). She is the one who inquires the most about Kellynch Hall's rent, the one who addresses Admiral Croft's colleagues with great fluency thanks to her experience, and the one who takes the reins to correct her spouse in the carriage. This wifely support is noted by Monaghan: "The Crofts manage to stay upright, in their married life as much as in their carriage, because, rather than blindly obeying her husband, Mrs Croft corrects his faults and supports his endeavours." (108).

Mrs. Croft is "an intelligent and experienced woman", determined and of great courage who "has not conformed to society's expectations of how women ought to behave" (Jones 84). When Wentworth opines that women should not embark, Mrs. Croft swiftly comes to the defence of her own sex and berates her brother for suggesting "as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures" (Austen 69). This direct and meaningful speech is listened to attentively by Anne. The woman is held in high esteem by the heroine, being the sister of her beloved and becoming her role model. Furthermore,

Mrs. Croft's weight in the novel is notable, as it is thanks to her that Wentworth and Anne meet again.

Many aspects of the narrator's sympathy for the Crofts are shown during the novel. To begin with, Anne's appreciation of these characters is remarkable and constant. Admiral Croft's humour, "his goodness of heart and simplicity of character were irresistible" (Austen 124) to Anne. The narrator characterises the couple as being judicious in the choice of their friends, and they are not swayed by appearances or money. For that reason, they "considered their intercourse with the Elliots as a mere matter of form, and not in the least likely to afford them any pleasure" (Austen 166). The Admiral appreciates the personal rather than the physical, which is demonstrated in the episode of the mirrors, where we can clearly observe the differences between him and Sir Walter. In fact, the Crofts are granted the privilege of inhabiting the house at Kellynch Hall, while the Elliots are denied on the grounds that they do not merit it. Even Anne feels that the Crofts are more deserving of living in her house than her own family.

The narrator concurs with the Crofts, who have not married to increase their wealth, but for the love they profess to each other, and have struggled together from the beginning to overcome the economic adversities they may have encountered. They are a happy, active, intelligent couple, with gender ideas ahead of their time and many quality friendships.

2.2. The Harvilles

The Harville marriage stands out for their humility, enormous generosity and hospitality. This couple resides in a small house in Lyme and they do not need abundant material goods to be fulfilled, as they have each other. Despite their humble finances, the Harvilles gladly give everything they have to their friends. The most significant example is the

great favour and assistance the Harvilles offer the Musgroves after Louisa's accident. Mrs. Harville does not even consider moving Louisa out of her house. She quickly places the injured lady in a room and opens modest abode to anyone who wants to stay for as long as the young woman recovers from her fall. In addition, Mrs. Harville provides Louisa with all the necessary care and attention, as she is “a very experienced nurse” (Austen 112). Apart from sharing a great heart and appreciation for their companionships, the Harvilles are also equal in intellect, as are the Crofts. It was rare for women to study a profession, yet Mrs. Harville is an accomplished nurse.

The Harvilles' true friendship and high regard for Wentworth denotes their appreciation of all the party equally and treat them as friends of their own.

Nothing could be more pleasant than the desire of considering the whole party as friends of their own (...) or more kindly hospitable than their entreaties for their all promising to dine with them. The dinner, already ordered at the inn, was at last, though unwillingly, accepted as an excuse; but they seemed almost hurt that Captain Wentworth should have brought any such party to Lyme, without considering it as a thing of course that they should dine with them. (Austen 96-97).

This chapter contrasts sharply with Elizabeth Elliot's dilemma as to whether or not she should invite her own family to her house for a meal, as they would discover how few servants they have and their "humble" way of life. In the end, vanity prevails and she does not invite them. However, the Harvilles always open their home and their hearts to anyone in need. Captain Harville is described as “a perfect gentleman, unaffected, warm, and obliging” (Austen 96). This personality fits flawlessly with the new ideals of the time:

Le culte de la sensibilité, les idées à la mode sur l'égalité parmi les hommes, la critique généralisée des habitudes de luxe, la façon dont on aimait à prôner une vie simple et vertueuse dans une campagne préservée des corruptions et des tentations de l'argent et des mauvaises mœurs, tout cela contribuait aussi à favoriser l'adoption par les auteurs d'un thème romanesque qui impliquait la réprobation du mode de vie des grands et l'approbation de la pureté des humbles. (Goubert 294)

Again, this passage foregrounds their prominence as they endear themselves to the narrator and the protagonist. Young Anne thinks melancholically: “These would have been all my friends” (Austen 97), feeling so comfortable and welcomed by the Lyme

party. This manifests that the narrator is really in favour of the Harvilles lifestyle, since Anne is a character with good judgment when it comes to choosing her friends. The heroine immediately notices “the picture of repose and domestic happiness it presented” and she feels a great “gratification” (Austen 97).

Captain Harville holds one of the most noteworthy conversations in the novel with Anne, in which they discuss the nature of feelings between men and women and their role in history. It is a crucial scene since that conversation happens near Wentworth, inciting him to listen to everything. Later, he will get emboldened to write a letter to Anne declaring his love for her as a result of it. Apart from its importance in the novel, in this speech ahead of the time, “in leaving the reader without a resolution, Austen makes the scene a matter for debate outside the novel as well” (Burgess 235). In this way, the reader is invited to question the established gender norms and the position that men and women occupy in life.

Once again, we are faced with a very happy matrimony, who selects their friends wisely and are guided by their hearts and not by money. The couple shares those values, which are highly regarded by the narrator, the protagonists and the reader. Above all, emphasis is placed on their humility and the happiness of the household: “Anne thought she left great happiness behind her when they quit the house” (Austen 97).

2.3. Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth

The marriage of the main characters, Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, is the happiest in the novel, although this happiness is only possible after more than eight years of suffering. Anne and Wentworth's love is sincere and, above all, constant. At no time during their long separation do they stop loving and thinking of each other. The couple

do not find in third parties the virtues that for them only exist in one another. The young man, though heartbroken, uses Anne's qualities to describe the ideal woman as “a strong mind, with sweetness of manner” (Austen 61). Their relationship is based on the pure and selfless love they feel. Also, it is grounded on their feelings and not on appearances. Another factor that solidifies their bond is the constant struggle they must silently deal with to achieve the marriage they both long for.

In addition to loving sincerely and passionately, the couple stands out for their honour and their great values. They are correct, polite and coherent people. Wentworth proves this when, after courting Louisa, he is willing to marry her even though he loves another woman, so as not to soil the former's honour. Furthermore, the Captain's kindness and sense of friendship becomes evident when Benwick's fiancée dies and Wentworth supports him at all times. It is also the Captain who helps Mrs. Smith recover her property. Thanks to his efforts and sympathy, Wentworth earns the respect of all the characters, including those who, like Sir. Elliot, Elizabeth and Mrs. Russell, despised him years ago.

At first, Wentworth complains about women who have a feeble temperament, referring to Anne, as they can be easily persuaded. However, after the episode of Louisa's fall, he realises that sometimes the best option is being a more flexible person and allowing oneself to be advised and convinced. If Louisa had listened to Wentworth and had not jumped off the Cobb, the accident would not have happened. Anne therefore considers it prudent to have followed Lady Russell's suggestions, even if she does not think they were good advice. In addition, thanks to the passing of the years, Anne becomes more mature, and she sees what she wants in life more clearly. Little by little she cares more about herself and her merriment. In this new occasion, hardly anyone will be able to stand between her and her happiness. Indeed, at the last meeting of the novel, Anne really enjoys herself and feels overjoyed, as she focuses on having a good time and

chatting with the people she cares about and who have made her feel loved for months. She is not worried about her father or her sister, but about spending quality time with her friends and the man she loves, without prejudice.

As with the characters discussed above, the author shows her sympathy for Anne and Wentworth by providing them with good judgement in their choice of friends. “While Sir. Walter and Elizabeth were assiduously pushing their good fortune in Laura-Place, Anne was renewing an acquaintance of a very different description” (Austen 150). Anne regains this quality friendship with Mrs. Smith, regardless of the widow's social position. The protagonist is not able to understand the attraction her father and sister feel for the Dalrymple cousins. This is because, for Anne Elliot, good company is “the company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation” (Austen 148). It is thus demonstrated that Anne “shows a flexibility of judgment which puts personal qualities before rank” (Jones 80).

In addition to knowing how to choose good friends, they are instinctively suspicious of wicked people, such as Mr. Elliot, whom Anne never trusted. Wentworth also looks down on Mary because of her elitist comments about Charles Hyter. That is their criterion for creating amical bonds, and not the social rank they belong to. For that reason, they are both happy to be part of Lyme's group of friends. Also, this whole new social circle trusts Anne's judgements. Such is the case of the two most unfortunate chapters of the novel, the accident of little Charles and that of Louisa, moments in which all the characters wait to follow Anne's indications, as they have full confidence in her.

After so much suffering due to their separation, the author offers the protagonists a second chance. They, now mature and aware of their happiness, do not miss the opportunity and marry. The future remains uncertain because of a possible war, but this uncertainty does not prevent present bliss. Furthermore, Anne does not move into a big

house with her husband. However, this is positive, as it positions the couple outside the norms imposed by society and shows that their aspirations are not for a big house full of luxuries, but for a home full of love and happiness. As Fergus states, “Anne has, in short, no established position within gentry society, a society too corrupt to contain her” (166).

2.4. Naval characters

All these characters - Admiral Croft, Captain Harville, Captain Benwick and Captain Frederick Wentworth - belong to the naval world. They all have positive personal characteristics and are virtuous men with satisfactory marriages. As Gillian Russell mentions, “*Persuasion* commends the naval profession as a more inclusive social model in which women might find a place as “friends” rather than as primarily wives, daughters, or mothers” (Russell 267). According to this statement, matrimony with navy officers are happier, as they invite gender equality and allow for intellectual and experience egalitarianism. Women no longer have to wait at home but are able to participate in public life and accompany their husbands. “The naval characters are identified with warm personal affection and as ‘perfect gentlemen’.” (Jones 80). Moreover, their virtues include honourability, justice, frankness, and the fraternity that unites them (Goubert 322), as they are “warm-hearted, generous, open men and women, whose fortunes come on their own exertions” (Fergus 165).

The enrichment of these men through self-effort is highly valued in Austen's work, as she shows her support for reform in the social and economic order of the time. They earned a lot of money by capturing enemy ships in wartime, but it was indeed hazardous and menacing work in which they had to spend long periods away from home (McMaster 121). According to Fergus, “This world excludes the cold-hearted Elliots and Dalrymples, who inherit, dissipate or marry this money” (165). The Elliots are self-absorbed people

whose only concern is capital and appearances. Nevertheless, naval characters, due to the fact that they do not have a defined social position yet, do not give such weight to rank but to personal effort, sacrifice and the good values of their circle. This will lead them to happiness.

In addition, “Family feeling is much stronger amongst naval people” (Monaghan 119). The Harvilles, who place a boundless importance on family and friends, are a perfect example of this. As mentioned above, even if they have few financial resources, they give their all for their loved ones and appreciate people with good hearts. However, the Elliots prioritise money and appearances over family togetherness. This causes their close circle to become smaller and smaller and of lesser quality.

Russell stresses that “By 1814 a quarter of a million men were serving in the regular army, while the navy grew tenfold between 1789 and 1812” (261). This great increase in the army numbers rendered it an influential and valued organisation in the country. The profession of naval officer was a great opportunity for those people who were not going to inherit a great patrimony, but aspired to climb up the social ladder through their endeavours and bravery. “It also endowed the officer with an additional element of mystery and allure” (Russell 263), such as the case of Captain Wentworth or Benwick. In addition to supporting this new method of rising through the ranks, the author appreciates and praises the naval soldiers so much because two of her brothers were part of this new world, which permitted them to improve their situation via their efforts.

Apart from all these displays of sympathy for the Navy, the novel “ends with Anne Elliot's marriage to a naval officer, breaking entirely with family tradition and social expectations” (Jones 70). Thus, the narrator's supportive stance on the new social order of the navy characters over and above the Elliots' traditional one appears to be rather clear.

3. Conclusions

In my TFG, I have carefully analysed various characters to carry out my thesis statement and elucidate what different types of marriages exist in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1817), and how the narrator states the novel's predilections. Choosing *Persuasion* was an excellent decision, as the author draws constant comparisons between the different characters and ideologies. This allowed me to notice the dissimilarities between some of the book's married couples more distinctly. In addition, the point of view, usually Anne Elliot's, and the positive or negative vocabulary used in the comparisons has made it straightforward to analyse the preferences of the novel. Furthermore, there is a clear division between most and the least lucky marriages, a thread that I have followed mainly in the first chapter, but which could also be done in the second if one decides to go deeper into this paper. Not only that, but each group shares notable personal characteristics – both individually and as couples – as well as social attitudes and ideologies related to marriage, money, prestige, family, and friendships.

In analysing the Elliot and the Musgrove family, I have become aware of all the differences that separate them and how this affects their own joy and that of their inner circle. On the one hand, Sir Elliot and Elizabeth are people whose only aspirations are merely financial. They are solely interested in their family if its members are of high social class and award them prestige or benefits. They have no feeling of care for their loved ones and striving for their happiness, but only for themselves. They are shallow and greedy, craving a marriage of convenience regardless of emotions, giving significance exclusively to social rank. All these characteristics of the Elliots almost put an end to Anne's happiness, as she does not feel loved or appreciated by her own family, she is constantly criticised, and is persuaded to break off her marriage to Wentworth. All of this is penalised by the author, who will not proffer these characters a happy ending, nor will

she lament their misfortunes. The Musgroves, on the other hand, are just the opposite. They are pleasant and family-oriented people, who sincerely and unselfishly wish for the happiness of their loved ones. For their daughters, they want a good match as they are aware that it is their only option for a prosperous future, while letting them freely choose the fiancé for which they have feelings. Their good nature and their sincere union are what makes Anne happy to feel included and loved by them. The author honours the Musgroves by marrying their daughters to suitable men who improve their lives and by selecting a quality circle of friends for them. In fact, most of said friends belong to the naval world, a world which Austen is very supportive of, and whose members possess very positive values.

In the second part of my paper, I have analysed the unconventional but happier marriage of the Crofts, the humble matrimony of the Harvilles, and the sincere and enduring love of Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth. During the production of this second part, I have realised that all of them are part of the naval characters. They also share good personalities, values of friendship, sentiment, self-effort, interest in knowledge, and so on. They are people with more modest ideals as they do not come from a wealthy family but have had to earn a living of their own work and sacrifice. For this reason, they value money but do not squander it. In any case, they attach greater importance to quality friendships and individual and family welfare. The author, who shares these same convictions, shows her sympathy for these marriages by allowing them to overcome the difficulties they encounter along the way and offering them a happy ending.

To conclude, from the analysis of *Persuasion* and the secondary sources, I believe that my initial thesis statement has been validated. I found the clear division between happy and unhappy marriages in the work very enriching. I consider these innovative

values to be very curious and a demonstration of bravery from the author. I contemplate the good people winning out and having a happy ending as a satisfying conclusion. I am in the opinion that Jane Austen, in writing this novel, fought and won a battle in favour of a more socially just world and a gender equality that was virtually inconceivable in her time.

4. Further Research

Throughout the study I have undertaken on Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1817), I have encountered different ideas that I have not been able to develop because of the limited space available to me. The themes I am going to mention are directly related to my subject matter and are relevant to a deeper analysis of this paper.

In the second chapter of my thesis, I talk about three couples: the Crofts, the Harvilles, and Anne and Wentworth. All of them are happy marriages as they share certain virtues and characteristics, apart from the fact that they are all members of the Navy. My proposal for future study is to analyse the less fortunate matrimonies in the novel. These would include Mary and Charles Musgrove, and Mr. Elliot and his late wife. First, it would be necessary to examine the personality, attitude, and ideology of these characters, as well as their concept of marriage. Subsequently, we would make a comparison with those blissful marriages already studied in my thesis, and thus be able, finally, to draw conclusions that could be related to the author's inclinations.

In addition, there is extensive research about what life was like for the male members of the Navy. However, it would be very interesting to investigate what life was like for the wives who embarked with them. I propose to search for documents of real witnesses and find out how their life changed when they went from living on land to the

high seas. That way, light can be shed on what they did aboard, what their experience was like being surrounded by water and men for long periods of time, how they felt and, as the author states through the character of Mrs Croft, whether they were happier than those women with conventional marriages and lives.

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