

*Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminism*

Senior Paper

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For a Degree Bachelor of Arts with  
A Major in Literature at  
The University of North Carolina at Asheville  
Fall 2006

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Jane Austen is a legendary author who was first published in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a time when women were treated as unequal to men in almost every aspect imaginable. 20<sup>th</sup> century feminist critic Cy Frost, in her article, "Autocracy and the Matrix of Power: Issues of Propriety and Economics in the Work of Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen and Harriet Martineau," calls it;

A society that embraced and propagated the numerous ideologies of male dominance, British women writers of the early nineteenth century found themselves caught in a sociological and literary double bind. By force of circumstance these women, primarily middle-class, grappled with the constraints of a society that demanded female passivity and that viewed their writings as violations of its codes of propriety; simultaneously, they confronted self-imposed constraints generated by their participation in and conditioning by the patriarchal regime into which they were born (253).

Perhaps due to the circumstances, Austen chose to remain anonymous as her works were published, the first being *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), which was published with the notation, "By a Lady." Austen's novels received only moderate renown when they were published, and did not become widely popular until after her death. Besides obvious social criticism of the British gentry, Austen, like Wollstonecraft, also presents a critique of the roles that women were pressured to play in that society. Although we cannot claim that "feminism" was a conscious focus during the time period in which Austen was published, we certainly can find elements of feminist thought in Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen, in their respective ways.

Although Austen is not characterized as a "feminist" writer, a great deal of criticism surrounding Austen is from a feminist perspective. A lot of the feminist criticism connects Austen to Wollstonecraft, and her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Mary Wollstonecraft was a radical feminist who authored the famous *Vindication*, which argued for equality of the sexes and the main doctrines of the later women's movement, making her both famous and infamous in her own time. Wollstonecraft's inspiration to write *Vindication* was in response to Philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, and "his assertion that men and women differ intrinsically with respect to virtue: a moral disjuncture resulting, according to Rousseau, from man's natural possession and woman's natural deficiency of reason" (Frost, 257). Wollstonecraft argues that it was lack of educational opportunities that would contribute to a woman's lack of reason.

Since many critics associate Austen with feminism, especially in correlation with Wollstonecraft, it is important to understand the development of feminism in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to critic Margaret Kirkham, in her book, *Jane Austen: Feminism and Fiction*, there is no proper history of 18<sup>th</sup> century feminist thought: "the history of feminist ideas and relation to literature and politics before the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when women's suffrage became an active political issue, has yet to be written" (3). Although there is no "proper" history of women's rights and the term "feminism" did not even exist in Austen and Wollstonecraft's lifetime, *Vindication* sums up feminist ideas that had been brewing for over a century (Kirkham, 5). Once women's rights finally got some attention, terms started to circulate, such as "first-wave, second-

wave and third-wave" feminism. According to Dr. Lorena Russell, a literature professor at the University of North Carolina at Asheville;

Wollstonecraft would be considered 'first wave' feminism, the historical period of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century that coincides with the suffrage movement in the United States and Great Britain. 'Second wave' comes following the 1950's, and marks the (unsuccessful) attempt in the U.S. to pass the Equal Rights Amendment and the (successful) campaign for choice, as well as the widespread availability of contraceptives. We're living in the 'third wave' today, though some call our time 'post feminist'.

Kirkham provides an explanation as to why Austen may not have been included as a 'first wave feminist,' but makes the claim that evidence of feminism is definitely present in Austen's work: "The terms feminism and feminist are modern, not being recorded in any of their present-day meanings until the late nineteenth century, yet we apply them retrospectively to Mary Wollstonecraft and her writings, and it is becoming common for literary critics to notice feminist elements in the Austen novels" (3). Kirkham is also suggesting that there is a definite difference between Wollstonecraft and Austen, but it is not unrealistic to make connections between the two, especially concerning feminism.

A major problem that comes with trying to associate Wollstonecraft and Austen is the fact that there is no evidence that Austen even heard of Wollstonecraft, much less read her works. Austen was 16 when "Vindication" was published, and she was reading anything she could get her hands on and working on literature of her own, but we do not know that she ever came across Wollstonecraft's works. In addition to lack of any

evidence for direct influence, there are major differences between the two authors, particularly in their purpose and style. Wollstonecraft's "Vindication" was written as a polemic, to change minds, while Austen wrote fictional narratives, meant to entertain. Austen describes the novel in *Northanger Abbey*, as "only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language" (1019). Austen is being sarcastic when she describes the novel in this quote, but there is some truth in her words. Austen writes novels, so of course she thinks the novel is "only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed," but the way she describes the novel in a humorous manner is similar to the way she makes a statement against society, by being subversive. Wollstonecraft was very bold and to the point, while Austen was much more subversive and mocking. Critic Frost refers to Austen as "decorous," and Wollstonecraft as "radical" (256). On the surface Austen was adhering to the rules of the society, but Wollstonecraft was much more direct. Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* does not seem to be written solely to speak out against society, but that was exactly Wollstonecraft's purpose.

However, despite the lack of evidence that Austen was inspired by Wollstonecraft's ideas and literature, some critics still confidently feel there was a definite connection, such as 20<sup>th</sup> century critic Ashley Tauchert, who published the article, "Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen: 'Rape' and 'Love' as (Feminist) Social Realism and Romance:" Austen is "exquisitely ironic, following close on Wollstonecraft's literally blood-splattered heels" (145). Tauchert connects Austen to

Wollstonecraft, suggesting that although Wollstonecraft was more direct, they had different modes of writing about reason for women. Furthermore, critic Audrey Bilger, in her book, *Laughing Feminism*, makes the point that because Austen was subtle and used satire to mock the values and ideas of her society, she upholds feminist values because the characters she mocks "uphold a sexist point of view" (Bilger, 53). Bilger supports Austen's subversive feminist ideas with the point that Austen's jabs at the current social situation for women were only effective for those who already were on the same wavelength as far as making a case for women's rights. Critic Mary Poovey agrees, stating although there are obvious differences between the two authors, "Austen's aesthetic choices—her style and her subject matter—can be seen as "solutions" to some of the problems that Wollstonecraft could solve" (172). Furthermore, in continuation of the idea that because Austen's work followed Wollstonecraft's chronologically, "Austen [answered] questions of female reason and autonomy posed by Wollstonecraft's life and work" (Tauchert, 154). However, critic Bilger referred to Austen and Wollstonecraft as "Feminist Moralists," suggesting feminism is a sort of social criticism that is associated with laughter, subversive humor and mocking of society and societal values (37). Regardless of how much Austen may have been influenced or shared feminist ideas with Wollstonecraft, there is plenty of critical evidence suggesting Austen was making a social statement of her own through her work.

Jane Austen's first novel, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), provides a wonderful example of her social statements. The novel, which was the first one of Austen's that was published, represents the ideas and movements that occurred around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, such as the transition from Classicism to Romanticism. The title is a

metaphor reflecting the personality traits of the Dashwood sisters, Elinor representing 'Sense' and Marianne representing 'Sensibility.' Elinor not only symbolizes sense, but also Classicism, representing rationality, judgment and moderation, while Marianne symbolizes romance, imagination, idealism and excess. The novel explores the twists and turns as the Dashwood sisters, among other characters, attempt to find mates.

Looking at Austen from a feminist perspective, it appears to be ironic that the author placed a great deal of emphasis on love and marriage. On the surface, Austen appears to be conforming to the ideas and attitudes of her society, as some of the main characters in her novels are in search of marriage based on wealth. In a new printing of *Sense and Sensibility* that came out in 2003, editor Laura Engel confirms this, stating, "Austen wrote of her immediate experience: the microcosm of the country gentry and its class-conscious insularity" (SS, Introduction). However, Austen is actually best known as an author of realism. During the time period when Austen wrote, society placed huge limitations on women, everything from the way they dressed to who they "chose" to marry. Women were not given the same opportunities as men in almost every area of life, particularly education and occupation and Austen wrote about what she knew, which was a wealthy society, women of the gentry and how they lived.

Austen was the daughter of a clergyman, and when he passed away, it destroyed financial security for the family. Mrs. Austen, Cassandra and Jane were left an annual income of only 460 Pounds and no permanent residence, forcing the family to stay with friends and relatives until they finally received a cottage as their permanent residence as a generous gift from a friend of the family. Critic Poovey in her book, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary*

*Shelley, and Jane Austen*, states that Austen did not get out much, as she was not widely traveled, and she was relatively poor (172). Although the novel is a work of fiction, a lot of the plot appears to parallel certain events that occurred in Austen's life, such as the financial situation the Dashwood sisters were left in due to entail. In an article by Susan Fraiman, "Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture and Imperialism," she quotes critic Edward Said as he makes the claim that Austen was almost an exile in her own country because she had few property rights, she was single and dependent on her brother's estate, and published her works anonymously (809).

Although Austen wrote about the life she knew, it is important to keep in mind that the particular class of people Austen talked about and wrote about were called "genteel." Critic Edward Copeland calls Austen, "a member of the pseudo-gentry, that is to say, the upper professional ranks of her rural society" (133). In the 1800's, women's choices were very limited. In the life of a "genteel" woman, having to work for anything would humiliate the family and they would lose their class status and social standing. To provide an income, women of the gentry could either get married or become a governess, and the latter was not nearly as desirable as marrying into wealth and having everything taken care of. Money, Critic Edward Copeland argues, is important, "for its power to acquire the material goods that can support the all-important signs of her rank's claims to genteel station" (Cambridge Companion, 132). However, there were some exceptions, such as women who came from a wealthy family. Women had two major roles in their lives, to be a daughter and a wife. Concerning the class of people Austen focuses on, these women were brought up in their parents' homes and expected around age 17 or 18 to find a wealthy husband and make the transition from their parents' homes to their



husbands' homes. Men and women had certain roles that were placed on them by society they were expected to fill, such as Austen exemplifies in *Sense and Sensibility*, "Sir John was a sportsman, Lady Middleton a mother. He hunted and shot, and she humoured her children; and these were their only resources" (31). Furthermore, Austen continues, making reference to a woman's place in society, "Lady Middleton piqued herself upon the elegance of her table, and of all her domestic arrangements; and from this kind of vanity was her greatest enjoyment in any of their parties" (31). Due to the lack of opportunities available for women to make a living on their own, they were very dependent on men, thus contributing to poor marriages: marrying for wealth and grandeur, not love, as exemplified as a major theme in *Sense and Sensibility*: "The heartbeat of romance lies in a good income" (Copeland, 133). Critic Frost acknowledges that marriage served as the only proper occupation for women, which was a virtual life sentence to an "inescapable economic legal subjugation" (255). Perhaps as a result of the patriarchal society, Austen examined the financial pressures of women to marry.

Although some could see Austen as naive and in agreement with the ideas and attitudes of her society, if one reads between the lines, as a lot of feminist critics do, one can detect Austen's irony, which is the other explanation of Austen's emphasis on love and marriage; a result of the author's satire of reality. Perhaps Austen is being ironic and although subtle, she described situations in such a way that mock the limitations that are placed on women by society. Even though Wollstonecraft was a feminist, she disproves a common misconception that all feminists are opposed to marriage, as she states, "Make women rational creatures, and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives; that is, if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and fathers" (*Vindication*, 49).

However, critic Fraiman views Austen's theme of marriage as negative: "The Austen marriage offers an unfashionable alternative narrative route to rational female autonomy" (812). Fraiman feels as though the motives behind the typical Austen marriage, (marrying for money, as opposed to love), does not allow women to gain any personal independence.

There were a lot of things that limited women during Austen's time period, such as lack of educational opportunities. education was one of Wollstonecraft's main arguments in her book, *Vindication*. Wollstonecraft felt that in order for women to actually get something from education, the attitudes and ideals of society must change;

In every age there has been a stream of popular opinion that has carried all before it, and given a family character, as it were, to the century. It may then fairly be inferred, that, till society be differently constituted, much cannot be expected from education (*Vindication*, 68).

Although Austen does not directly speak out against the ideas of society as Wollstonecraft does, she makes examples of characters in her works to get her point across. Austen, the daughter of a clergyman, was schooled in Southampton and Reading for a short period, but most of her education took place at home. Austen and her sister, Cassandra, studied French, Italian, history, music and eighteenth-century fiction. Austen was known as "an avid reader from earliest childhood," and began writing at the age of twelve. In *Sense and Sensibility*, a lot of Austen's negative characters are looked down upon by her positive characters not only because of their lack of education, but also because of their lack of "sense." The Dashwood sisters, especially Elinor, with her "good

sense," are considered positive characters in *Sense and Sensibility*. Critic Rachel Brownstein in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, agrees: "Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, the novel's earnest and self-conscious heroines, register the failings of their neighbors with more pain than pleasure, scornful Marianne usually averting her eyes while Elinor struggles civilly to keep her countenance" (43). Although Austen does not blatantly distinguish the "smart" characters from the "stupid" characters, nor does she make comments on characters' education, there is a major distinction between these types of characters and Marianne and Elinor pick up on it. Furthermore, it is evident that the Dashwood sisters were educated in some way. Elinor and Marianne constantly comment on other characters in the novel, and their lack of interest in reading, music or drawing. Marianne comments on Edward Ferrars, Elinor's love interest, saying, "I could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings: the same books, the same music must charm us both" (18). Furthermore, Marianne comments after hearing Edward read to her and Elinor, "To hear those beautiful lines which have frequently almost driven me wild, pronounced with such impenetrable calmness, such dreadful indifference! He would certainly have done more justice to simple and elegant prose. I thought so at the time; but you would give him Cowper" (SS, 18). Austen was making a reference to William Cowper, a Gothic poet who flourished in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Her mention of Cowper poked fun at Romanticism and also sensibility. Furthermore, this comment reflects the fact that Marianne Dashwood is intelligent, but also passionate, which can also be called sensibility.

Elinor and Marianne continue the debate over whether or not Edward is a 'suitable' match for Elinor, as Marianne continues to comment on Edward's taste and interests;

"What a pity it is, Elinor, said Marianne, that Edward should have no taste for drawing" (SS, 19). However, Elinor begs to differ, as she defends Edward, saying, "I have seen a great deal of him, have studied his sentiments and heard his opinion on subjects of literature and taste; and, upon the whole, I venture to pronounce that his mind is well-informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure" (SS, 20). Not only is Elinor defending her love interest, but this is also an example of Austen making a clear distinction between the Dashwood sisters and other, less educated and sensible characters in the novel, which, in turn, is a jab at society, as Critic Copeland states Austen wrote from the perspective of a "woman in that society, severely handicapped by law and custom from possessing significant power over money" (133).

In addition to the Dashwood sisters, Austen also uses Mrs. Dashwood as a way of making reference to great literature, not only to imply the Dashwood women were well-read, but also that Austen herself was well-read: "Mrs. Dashwood, accidentally taking up a volume of Shakespeare, exclaimed, - "We have never finished Hamlet, Marianne; our dear Willoughby went away before we could get through it" (SS, 77). Austen makes the distinction clear yet again, categorizing Edward in the less educated category, when he says, "You must not enquire too far, Marianne: Remember I have no knowledge of the picturesque, and I shall offend you by my ignorance and want of taste if we come to particulars. I shall call hills steep, which ought to be bold; surfaces strange and uncouth, which ought to be irregular and rugged; and distant objects out of sight, which ought only to be indistinct through the soft medium of a hazy atmosphere" (SS, 87).

In addition to limited opportunities for women to become financially independent, a major force that contributed to women marrying for wealth was the inheritance laws. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in England, the majority of wealthy families had their money tied up in land ownership. In order to preserve wealth, status and power, strict laws were set regarding land ownership and inheritance, such as the "right of primogeniture" and "entail." The Right of Primogeniture stated the land in each generation was left to the eldest son. Women could not inherit land because if they did not marry, passed away, or chose to marry, the estate could be passed to someone outside the family. Entail involved restrictions placed on what could be done to an estate, to prevent the land from being sold to someone outside the family, or split up. If a family had only daughters, then the law of entail ensured the estate could be passed down to an uncle, or another male relative in the family, such as what occurs in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, as the Bennetts only have daughters, so the estate will be passed down to Mr. Collins, a relative of the family who is the only male because the Bennetts had five daughters and no sons.

The Right of Primogeniture is exemplified in the beginning of *Sense and Sensibility* as the Dashwoods own a large estate, Norland Park, which has been in the family for generations. In the Dashwood family, there was one son and three daughters, and even though the son, John Dashwood, had inherited a great deal of wealth from his mother, and his marriage to Fanny Dashwood added to his wealth, the three daughters, Margaret, Marianne and Elinor, were from a different mother and therefore did not have the luxury of a great inheritance. As a result of inheritance laws, the estate and fortune was left to John Dashwood, and the estate can only be passed down to a son, even though he has married into wealth, and the daughters are poor; "To him, therefore, the succession

to the Norland estate was not so really important as to his sisters; for their fortune depending of what might arise to them from their fathers inheriting that property, could be but small" (SS, 5). (Mr. John Dashwood wanted to give his sisters 1,000 pounds a piece, but his wife, Fanny Dashwood, thought that too much. John Dashwood wanted to help his sisters out, but his wife, Fanny Dashwood did not agree.) Fanny Dashwood is another character that Austen did not think highly of: "Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself, more narrow-minded and selfish" (SS, 7). So she convinced her husband to leave them only 500 pounds a piece (which they did not even end up getting), leaving the girls poor and contributing to their need to marry into wealth. This starts the quest of Marianne and Elinor to search for a husband who could provide wealth.

However, Mrs. Dashwood, who was not wealthy herself, appears to represent Austen's view of society and her thoughts against the inequality of the inheritance laws, as Elinor meets Edward Ferrars, a man whose wealth was at the sole dependence of his mother, who needed to marry into wealth himself. Mrs. Dashwood comments on Edward, contradicting the view of society, stating that she approved the relationship because Edward loved Elinor, had a good personality and Elinor felt the same, "it was contrary to every doctrine of hers that difference of fortune should keep any couple asunder who were attracted by resemblance of disposition..." (SS, 16). Elinor finds it hard to believe that Edward would marry her because she is aware of the way society works, "I am very much mistaken if Edward is not himself aware that there would be many difficulties in his way, if he were to wish to marry a woman who had not either a great fortune or high rank" (SS, 21). This does not necessarily mean that Elinor believes or agrees with the fact women married for money, not love, but she acknowledges this as

a fact of life. Furthermore, Mrs. Ferrars threatened her son, Edward, that if the match between him and Lucy Steele, a "negative" character who has tried unsuccessfully to manipulate Elinor, occurs, because she is not wealthy, she will leave him nothing and he will not gain any inheritance. Mrs. Ferrars wants him to marry Miss Morton, who has 30,000 pounds, "A very desirable connection on both sides, and I have not a doubt of its taking place in time. A thousand a year is a great deal for a mother to give away" (SS, 198). She has added an incentive, without caring anything about Miss Morton's disposition, her son's happiness or their relationship. She said she would never see him again if he married into low society. As a result, Lucy Steele ends up marrying his brother, Robert Ferrars, and he in turn inherits the estate and the esteem and approval of his mother. Mrs. Jennings, a nosy widow, comments on the relationship, affirming the decision; "Nobody in their senses could expect Mr. Ferrars to give up a woman like Miss Morton with thirty thousand pounds to her fortune, for Lucy Steele, that had nothing at all..."(SS, 241). In addition to Mrs. Ferrars, Mrs. Jennings represents the attitudes and ideas of society, which contrasts with Austen's opinions.

Austen cleverly lets the reader know how she feels about Mrs. Jennings by Mrs. Jennings' comments, such as her remarks on the possible relationship between Colonel Brandon and Marianne Dashwood; "it would be an excellent match, for he was *rich* and she was *handsome*" (SS, 35). Elinor does not reveal her opinion about Mrs. Jennings to her face, but her thoughts and feelings are evident to the reader, as well as Marianne's. In addition to Mrs. Jennings' comments, this is another technique Austen uses to cleverly get her point across and make a statement against society, but at the same time being subtle which adds to the impact. Lady Middleton and Mrs. Palmer are other characters in

*Sense and Sensibility* that Austen satirizes to make a statement against society. Often these particular characters will make silly comments, or laugh for no apparent reason, as critic Brownstein suggests in her chapter of the *Cambridge Companion*, "Those who laugh the most are unaware that they themselves make sport for their neighbors" (42). For example, in *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne corrects Sir John Middleton, Lady Middleton's husband, for using a cliché, and although he does not understand her, he laughs like he does. Furthermore, "Mrs. Jennings' silly second daughter, Mrs. Palmer, laughs all the time at nothing, hardest of all when her dour, sour, unpleasant husband ignores her: "Mr. Palmer does not hear me," said she, laughing; "he never does sometimes. It is so ridiculous!" (SS, 96). In addition, the following quotation exemplifies Austen's opinion of these particular characters, as she makes an example of them in her novel:

Mrs. Jennings, Lady Middleton's mother, was a good-humoured, merry, fat, elderly woman, who talked a great deal, seemed very happy, and rather vulgar. She was full of jokes and laughter, and before dinner was over had said many witty things on the subject of lovers and husbands; hoped they had not left their hearts behind them in Sussex, and pretended to see them blush whether they did or not. Marianne was vexed at it for her sister's sake, and turned her eyes towards Elinor to see how she bore these attacks, with an earnestness which gave Elinor far more pain than could arise from such common-place raillery as Mrs. Jennings's (SS, 33).

Furthermore, Austen describes Mr. Palmer; "he was the husband of a very silly woman,-- but she knew that this kind of blunder was too common for any sensible man to be



lastingly hurt by it. It was rather a wish of distinction, she believed, which produced his contemptuous treatment of every body, and his general abuse of every thing before him" (101).

Another example of characters Austen satirizes are the Miss Steele's. As Lady Middleton and Sir John Middleton meet the Miss Steele's, they both find them appealing, but Elinor is skeptical of their good nature: "Elinor well knew that the sweetest girls in the world were to be met with in every part of England, under every possible variation of form, face, temper, and understanding " (SS, 106). Yet another example concerns a scene where Mrs. Steele's children are running around, acting out, and the Dashwood sisters seem to be the only ones who realize the children are out of control, the others passing off their behavior as being "playful," when in reality, the child was "violently pinching" someone's fingers (SS, 108). However, one of the most powerful quotes from *Sense and Sensibility* is an observation the narrator makes about Elinor's impression of Lucy Steele:

Lucy was naturally clever; but her remarks were often just and amusing; and as a companion for half an hour Elinor frequently found her agreeable; but her power had received no aid from education; she was ignorant and illiterate; and her deficiency of all mental improvement, her want of information in the most common particulars, could not be concealed from Miss Dashwood, in spite of her constant endeavor to appear to advantage. Elinor saw, and pitied her for, the neglect of abilities which education might have rendered so respectable (SS, 119).

The narrator makes the observation that Lucy Steele's ignorance and poor behavior is a result of lack of education. The Dashwood sisters were able to observe this because they were educated, thus giving them the ability to use their reason to see through Lucy Steele. This notion that the ability to reason is dependent upon education resembles Wollstonecraft's argument in *Vindication*. Finally, Elinor makes another comment regarding Lucy's lack of education as she discusses how Edward Ferrars could possibly be interested in Lucy: "...if rationality spent, give such improvement to the understanding—must have opened his eyes to her defects of education, while the same period of time, spent on her side in inferior society and more frivolous pursuits, had perhaps robbed her of that simplicity which might once have given an interesting character to her beauty" (SS, 124).

In addition to resembling Wollstonecraft in relating reason to education, Austen also rebels against the patriarchal society of inheritance laws that oppress women, by making characters choose love over money, as in the end of the novel. Willoughby, a wealthy man whom Marianne "pines" over throughout the novel, finally decides to come back and admit he loves Marianne, but cannot marry her because he is already married to Miss Grey. Marianne decides to marry Colonel Brandon, who has been nice to the Dashwoods all along. Edward Ferrars, after finally being released from his engagement with Lucy Steele, who was in it for money, comes back for Elinor, his true love, going against not only his mother's wishes, but those of society. Edward risked losing his inheritance for love, and Elinor and Edward live "happily ever after." However, although there is a clear distinction between the Dashwood sisters and other characters in the novel, such as Lucy Steele, the Dashwood sisters, especially Marianne, still make

comments concerning wealth, almost to the point that Marianne appears to be naive. As stated earlier, Copeland makes the claim, "the heartbeat of romance lies in a good income," (133), and this attitude proves to be true, even with the Dashwood sisters, as Marianne and Elinor, "name their hearts' desires: 'About eighteen hundred or two thousand a-year; not more than *thaf* ... *Two* thousand a-year!' cries Elinor, shocked: '*One* is my wealth!' (SS, 91). However, although Elinor makes fun of Marianne and calls her out about her ridiculous claims, Elinor, in turn, has set her price for marriage, suggesting she only needs a mere "one thousand a-year." During the time in which Austen wrote, an income of seven hundred to one thousand pounds a year "marks the most prosperous pseudo-gentry families" and the "most significant consumer marker becomes the ownership of a carriage" (Copeland 136). Even though the Dashwood sisters make claims of hefty prices and bare minimums for proper marriage, Poovey, in a compilation of critical essays, states, "Almost every action in the novel suggests that, more often than not, individual will triumphs over principle and individual desire proves more compelling than moral law. Even the narrator, the apparent voice of these absolute values, reveals that moral principles are qualified in practice" (78). Marianne's and Elinor's seemingly materialistic attitudes can be seen as reflecting the way they were brought up and the fact they are members of the "pseudo-gentry." Prior to Marianne and Elinor making their claims of a respectable yearly income, Marianne exclaims, "What have wealth or grandeur to do with happiness?" (SS, 82). This statement exemplifies the fact that she is naive and her attitudes about money are a result of the society she lives in, but the fact she does not make the connection of wealth to happiness, can be seen as humorous to the reader, as it seems Austen is almost making Marianne sound ridiculous

for even asking that question. Elinor, with her sense, corrects Marianne, suggesting, "wealth has much to do with it" (SS, 82).

Although there is no primary evidence that Austen was directly influenced by Wollstonecraft, because of the content and subject matter Austen writes about, such as education, money, and reason, and the techniques she uses, such as manipulating the stories and making examples out of characters, she makes a subtle, yet important statement about society. Not only is there enough critical evidence to make the claim of feminism being evident in Austen's works, especially *Sense and Sensibility*, there are also enough examples that become apparent to an educated reader of the twenty-first century, which also supports the fact there was no term for the ideas and attitudes Wollstonecraft and Austen had and wrote about, but they now can be considered feminist.

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