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The New Feminine Rhetoric: Wollstonecraft, Austen, and the Forms of Romantic-Era Feminism

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THE NEW FEMININE RHETORIC:
WOLLSTONECRAFT, AUSTEN, AND THE FORMS OF ROMANTIC-ERA
FEMINISM

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English
Brigham Young University

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ABSTRACT

THE NEW FEMININE RHETORIC: WOLLSTONECRAFT, AUSTEN, AND THE FORMS OF ROMANTIC-ERA FEMINISM

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Countering traditional claims that the feminist movement all but vanished during the early nineteenth century, this thesis suggests feminism remained prominent in both the literature and rhetoric of the time. In tracing the development of the “New Rhetoric,” a rhetorical movement that aimed to accommodate new principles of the Enlightenment, I focus in part on the rhetorical battle between Edmund Burke, with his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, and Thomas Paine, with his *Rights of Man*. From there, I suggest that Mary Wollstonecraft, writing in the wake of the Burke-Paine debate and drawing upon the rhetorical philosophy of George Campbell, was able to establish a distinctive feminist rhetoric in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. This feminist rhetoric had traits that equipped it to continue developing into the nineteenth century, particularly in

the works of women novelists such as Jane Austen. My final chapter shows how Austen analyzes Wollstonecraft's rhetoric to better explain how feminist goals of increased understanding and moral agency might be attained.

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CHAPTER 1
FEMINIST RHETORIC:
THE MYTH OF SILENCE, MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT,
AND THE ROMANTIC CONTEXT

Over the past half century, it has become something of a point of doctrine among social historians that British feminism significantly changed at the turn of the nineteenth century before basically disappearing as a social movement between 1800 and 1820. For example, in his *Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* (1969), Raymond Strachey remarks that after Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), died in 1797,

the subject [of feminism] seemed to die away [with her]. English society closed up, as it were, against the theories which had wrought such havoc across the Channel, and there was a desperate effort to keep things exactly as they were, lest the British Constitution or the British Home should be demoralized and destroyed. (12-13)

More recent social historians make basically the same argument as Strachey did about the two first decades of the nineteenth century. However, these historians have begun to recognize some feminist activity between 1800 and 1820, conceding that traditional arguments about the social history of feminism focus predominantly on events and actions that had an overt political effect. For example, Jane Rendall, in her *Origins of Modern Feminism* (1985), argues that the Evangelical movement, which grew substantially under Hannah More's influence in the early nineteenth century, was a feminist movement. In fact, she argues that it was the *only* significant women's

movement of the first two decades of the nineteenth century in Britain. While this version of feminist history is consistent with Rendall's definition of feminism—a movement that organized women to actively and politically pursue “the *right* to define their own place in society” (Rendall 1, my emphasis)—it leaves the history of feminism skewed by omitting some important information. First, her argument about evangelicalism being the only feminist movement fails to include nonpolitical writers or any who had ideas about how to improve women's situation but who feared the consequences of publicly claiming the right to define their place in society. Second, her argument almost seems to misunderstand the fundamental goals of Romantic feminism by calling a movement that was encouraged by the patriarchy not only *a* feminist movement but *the* feminist movement of the period (74-77). By making evangelicalism *the* feminist movement of 1800 to 1820, Rendall privileges political events even as she calls their validity into question, introducing ambiguity, if not doubt, into her version of Romantic feminist history.

A more current social historian's view of early nineteenth-century feminism, Barbara Caine's *English Feminism 1780-1980* (1997), creates a place for more covert contributions to the feminist movement by recognizing the movement's complexity. Wishing to show the inadequacy of accepted ideas about feminist history (4), Caine argues that feminism is not simply an outgrowth of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, nor a movement that resurfaced only after opposition to it softened. Rather, feminism began as a complex response to “the new forms of discrimination which women faced at this time when they were explicitly denied rights being granted to men

under bourgeois law” (5). Caine suggests that realizing the complexity of the feminist movement also determines the need to explore the complexity of contributions to it.

One way feminists have begun to explore those contributions is by drawing on and using “literary, social, and political women who have not themselves been strongly committed to the cause of women’s emancipation” (Caine 3). Caine herself recognizes how important are “the ideas and activities of many who had apparently little concern with women’s oppression in setting up the ‘woman question’ and stimulating feminist debate” (4). By acknowledging the complexity of the woman question in the early nineteenth century, Caine has opened up a place for literary criticism to contribute to the development of modern feminism from the beginning and to present a more accurate view of that movement.

However, the next question we have to ask is *how* female writers influenced the development of feminism and how they were involved with a political movement without entering the political arena. Before attempting to answer this question, let me introduce one other important detail, both in terms of feminist history and how writers would contribute to this history.

Mary Wollstonecraft is referred to as the founding figure in modern Anglo-American feminism (Caine 6) for many reasons. Foremost, she was the first woman of the modern era to lobby for female rights directly in the political sphere. Likewise, she was the first woman to live an overtly revolutionary lifestyle. In fact, Wollstonecraft’s feminism was so politically activist and public, it was possible and even successful largely because of the penetrable political milieu created by the French Revolution. Her feminism thrived on the Revolution, as it allowed Wollstonecraft to be active in politics

and to support her political polemic with more abstract statements. She adopted Jacobin sentiments and habits, both of which were manifested through her choices of dress, speech, friends, and even lifestyle. She flouted traditional female codes of conduct, having at least two separate affairs—one with the Swiss painter Gilbert Imlay and the other with the English philosopher and journalist William Godwin—and an illegitimate child. Even after her death, the result of her second childbirth, Wollstonecraft was a public fixture as the quintessential post-Revolution feminist, remembered as a radical by many largely because of Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1797). In this biography, Godwin revealed to shocked readers Wollstonecraft's love affairs, her illegitimate child, and her suicide attempts. He even gave critics such as the Reverend Richard Polwhele an opportunity to gloat over Wollstonecraft's tragic (but, in his mind, deserved) death. Polwhele actually preached that all "Wollstonecraftians" deserved an equally horrible death and eternal damnation (Sulloway 5-7) because they dared to transgress natural laws and to assume traits that were unfeminine. These details combine to create the historical sense of Wollstonecraft's feminism.

Despite these traits that largely determine Wollstonecraft's flamboyant public persona, I believe there is another significant but surprising reason she can be called a founding modern feminist. She can also be seen as a moderate reformer, one that set the stage for the feminist movement to continue on into the nineteenth century against the British response to the Revolution. As controversial as her *Vindication* has been and as politically involved as it was, it stands as a plea for an improvement of women's lives within the established domestic sphere—a relatively conservative request.

It is the discrepancy between the way Wollstonecraft was and has been perceived and her actual message that makes me question how that message could have been misread or misinterpreted because of the revolutionary context. Encouraged by Caine's suggestion of the importance of "trying to show the close, if complex, connection between feminist ideas and the social, political, and intellectual context in which they develop" (4), I would actually like to distance those ideas somewhat from their context. This way, I hope to be able to examine more closely the connections between ideas and context. I also hope to determine more specifically how that context affected those feminist ideas and enabled them to continue to develop after Wollstonecraft. With this distancing, Wollstonecraft's ideas become clearer and the way the context influences them becomes clearer as well.

To distance ideas and context while acknowledging and examining the connections between them, I propose a rhetorical reading of texts. Because rhetorical theory, first of all, focuses on relationships between speaker, message (work), and audience and how those relationships affect each other, it lends itself to separating message from speaker from audience to compare seemingly different speakers' messages and seemingly similar speakers' messages—all to make new or break old connections based on rhetorical interpretations of messages.

In the case of this thesis, I will make connections between Wollstonecraft, the radical, and Austen, a prime example of the early nineteenth-century conservative feminist novelists. By separating their perceived (or real) personas from their messages and comparing only those messages, I hope to show how a philosophy of feminism first

materializes in Wollstonecraft before going on to develop further in Austen, thereby enhancing and fortifying feminism the social movement through rhetoric.

Rhetoric is able to strengthen feminism because it provides a context for the development of a relationship between feminist concrete reality, which is where the social movement happens, and feminist abstract thought—where ideas explaining and ultimately justifying feminism are developed. It does this by setting up a system in which the abstract realm works to inform the concrete realm. This system comes out of George Campbell's theory in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) in which he defines three types of rhetorical actors: the orator, the rhetorician, and the philosopher.

Each rhetorical actor has rhetorical knowledge, but each type of knowledge is different. Whereas the orator knows how to speak well, the rhetorician knows “the taxonomy of rhetorical kinds and devices as well as rules for deploying them to the best effect” (Weinsheimer 141). In the philosopher, all of this knowledge combines to provide insight into how to create effective rhetoric: not only does the philosopher know the rhetorical rules, but he or she can explain why they work. Campbell sees these three types of knowledge as continuous, despite the fact that they operate in different spheres, and as informing each other and essential to each other; he also sees the ultimate goal, even of the philosopher, as improving the orator's performance.

In terms of the feminist tradition, rhetorical theory characterizes Wollstonecraft as an orator as well as a rhetorician, while Austen can be seen as a rhetorician and a philosopher. In this arrangement, the novelist ultimately work to develop a philosophy that informs and helps the orator—the feminist who fights in the political arena for concrete improvements for women—so that she can more effectively argue for political

rights. That is not to say that Austen influenced Wollstonecraft, as that would be impossible. However, Austen did influence the feminist rhetoric that Wollstonecraft presented in her polemic by deepening the reasoning and explanation behind why her arguments were germane and valid. Although Austen did not directly enter the political sphere with her novels, her imaginary situations created a concrete reality in which to embody and discuss feminist arguments and the abstract ideas behind those arguments. Out of those discussions came ideas that integrated abstract and concrete, allowing the abstract to influence the concrete and the concrete to influence the abstract. It is in the context of the novel that the concrete and abstract collide, and rhetorical theory is able to use the products of this collision to inform philosophy and concrete actions and language.

Campbell's New Rhetorical theory is particularly relevant to making this connection between Wollstonecraft and Austen because of his philosophy on emotion that sees it as important but that believes it must be balanced with reason. Campbell's theory believes that "emotions are neither obstacles to an uncorrupted reasoning nor instances of irrationality that need to be brought under the control of reason. Rather, they form part of a complex liminal mode of human response that plays a crucial role in how we understand and act in the world" (Kastely 224). Whereas Wollstonecraft used rhetoric to argue for a blending of reason and emotion, Austen showed why that blending was necessary for women to be virtuous and happy. The New Rhetoric is a vehicle whereby this connection becomes clear.

At the same time, rhetorical theory focuses on language and the way that language simultaneously reflects relationships between author, audience, message, and context. By looking at all of these factors and focusing on language—which is the only medium by

which feminist writers were able to wield any power—we get perhaps the best sense of the connections between orator, rhetorician, and philosopher and how all of these influenced each other.

To see these connections, I use a relatively simple definition of rhetoric. In using rhetoric, I aim to examine the speaker, audience, message, and context of work to give an interpretation of how the author's use of language alters, comments on, or informs her basic message. By producing and then analyzing these readings of language, I want to construct a system of rhetoric that I believe reflects a writer's theory or philosophy on women, especially given the possible consequences they would suffer from entering political discourse. I will use rhetoric to refer to both Mary Wollstonecraft's polemical writings and those readings that come from an analysis of feminist writers' use of language.

Literary Rumblings

Although I have come to this project by way of the socio-political historical feminist movement, I base my argument within literature and literary criticism and believe that the argument informs both seminal critical questions and those that currently drive research. In reviewing the major waves in Romantic feminist literary critical history, I will highlight questions that I engage and current arguments I respond to, basing my rhetorical reading of these texts in current criticism. By reading these feminist, literary texts rhetorically, I hope to reveal some of the texts' roles in the development of British society and to hold up rhetoric as a vehicle by which art influences the political sphere and influences important changes in society without actually becoming a part of that society's overt political discourse.

Because Romantic feminist scholarship is currently concerned with examining specifically how women writers influenced the development of British society, these rhetorical readings both fit into current scholarship and attempt to either restate, address, or answer some of the questions that have come up in the thirty-year history of the scholarship. They also attempt to react against a subtle pattern that is growing in the research: a tendency to forget the effect of the controlled environment in which these women were writing. While current scholarship goes beyond pointing out how difficult it has been for women to enter the discussion (that was done decades ago), in some cases it almost seems to forget the situation in which women found themselves. This thesis is sensitive to women's sensitive political situation and reads texts with that in mind.

The scholarship on women's contributions to the Romantic movement can basically be divided into three distinct but overlapping waves or projects: The first wave began in the 1980s, the second in the 1990s, and the third around 2000. These waves do not have definite bookend dates, but they are distinct movements that move scholarship forward as they build upon and inform each other. With each wave, scholarship becomes more specific and more focused on exactly how women influenced modern British ideology, yet each wave seems to bring more complexity to the issue, which is reflected in a growing complexity of questions. As the scholarship becomes more focused and specific, the questions that a rhetorical reading of texts answer become clearer.

Romantic feminist criticism as we know it today was really established in the mid- to late 1980s as literary historians begin striving to convince Romantic scholars that there are significant flaws in the mode of criticism they were using. First, female writing had been ignored and denied any attention for decades and, second, there was a

patriarchal bent in the field that effectively worked to keep feminine thought and writing out of it. Elaine Showalter along with Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar were pioneers in working to introduce feminism into the field of Romantic criticism.

Showalter produced one of the first representative anthologies of feminist literature with *A Literature of their Own* (1977) to establish a female tradition that included but then went far beyond “the Austen peaks, the Bronte cliffs, the Eliot range, and the Woolf hills” (vii). Showalter made a strong argument for the existence and importance of unique feminine experience, describing a subculture that would have inevitably influenced society and literary culture. In making this argument, Showalter established the idea of a feminist tradition and how much was missing in studies of both society and literature because that tradition or subculture wasn’t receiving proper critical attention.

Gilbert and Gubar wrote an extensive argument in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) for how writing during the Romantic period was essentially masculine and fundamentally exclusive of women. In describing measures that men had taken to keep women from producing literature, began the process of integrating women’s writing into the disciplines and asking questions about the impression masculine exclusion had made on Romantic women’s writing. They articulated the first focused, critical question for Romantic feminist criticism with “What does it mean to be a woman writer in a culture whose fundamental definitions of literary authority are, as we have seen, both overtly and covertly patriarchal?” (45). Although researchers and critics have moved beyond this question to more specific questions of how feminine and feminist literature influences

society and British culture, it is important to remember that women were working in a patriarchal system and tradition, and that fact will never change. Forgetting to acknowledge that fact takes us away from accurate interpretation.

A few years after *Madwoman*, Jerome McGann published *The Romantic Ideology* (1983), which heralded the field's break from the tradition of criticism that, in his estimation, had been mesmerized by Romanticism's claims about itself and had perpetuated those claims rather than questioned them. He called for an overhaul of the way scholars did criticism in the field, suggesting new questions and new vantage points—especially those that looked at Romanticism from the outside. A different look at the field revealed not only that the period was unique and dynamic but also that it was extremely influential on the formation of modern British ideology. Because the period was so significant aesthetically and socially, it became vitally important that scholars thoroughly and exhaustively examined the period—and that exhaustive examination included not only acknowledging female Romantic voices but also beginning to justify those voices' inclusion in the scholarship (Wilson and Haefner). It is interesting to see that Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar were knocking on the proverbial door just as it was opening. As scholars began to examine women's contributions to the formation of British ideology, that formation being one of Romanticism's new projects, they began to analyze “[how] women's writing both articulate[d] and challenge[d] the dominant ideology from a decentered position within it” (Kaplan 3), and scholars have continued that project through the last thirty years. This thesis engages this question, as rhetorical readings of feminist writings examine exactly that—women challenging the dominant ideology from outside of it.

Thanks to this first group of scholars who justified including female work in Romantic scholarship, scholars of the later 1980s were able to look more closely at women writers' experiences. Ultimately, this group of scholars defined exactly how these women were held outside the dominant ideology. Mary Poovey wrote *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984) in which she discussed many of the challenges that faced women as well as women writers during the Romantic period. Detailing the social limits put on women during this time period, Poovey began to describe the measures feminist writers had to take to communicate their ideas, opening up a place for a rhetorical reading that would analyze the product of those measures.

Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski continued where Poovey's project started, coediting *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815* (1986), in which they also began looking into the nature of the patriarchal system that Gilbert and Gubar had presented. Schofield and Macheski wanted to know more specifically the system in which women existed and wrote. They also began questioning the role that female rhetoric played in the formation of the modern British ideology and, in turn, how that ideology influenced women. Asking whether women were "fettered by literary conventions, social mores, and economic limitations" or if they had been "free to invent a female rhetoric, to express selfhood, and to develop economic independence," these critics ask questions that still haven't been answered, that seem to have been put on the backburner for questions of the nature of life for women and the relationship between genders in the Romantic period (1). While the questions being explored and answered during this second wave of criticism certainly help inform my argument, the places it really fits don't reappear until the third wave of scholarship.

The second major wave of criticism in the 1990s departed from influence on ideology to study female literature and the nature of interaction between the genders. Anne Mellor actually looked at both of these movements, beginning this trend a few years before the decade actually began. She first presented *Romanticism and Feminism* (1988) as a mark of “the coming of age of a feminist criticism of the major texts of the English Romantic period” and used that as a point of departure for more specific and focused criticism (3). She followed *Romanticism and Feminism* with *Romanticism and Gender* (1993), in which she echoed and extended McGann’s argument, saying that Romantic scholarship was gender biased and that scholars needed to begin looking at Romantic literature in both masculine and feminine terms. She argued that the field’s understanding of British literary Romanticism would shift completely if it would give feminine and masculine thought and writing equal weight (1).

Mellor also pointed out essential differences between male and female ideology, evidenced in the feminine celebration of rationality (as opposed to the overflow of powerful feelings), women’s preference for gradual social change (rather than violent), and their notion of community as cooperative rather than possessive (3). Another prolific scholar of the 1990s addressed the issues of the second wave as he began to herald the third. Gary Kelly, in *Women, Writing, and Revolution* (1993), used his own critical reading of some Romantic feminist texts to introduce the idea of a cultural revolution during the Romantic period. With this revolution, he made the claim that women’s writing was a “major factor” in a “crucial stage” of this cultural revolution, giving feminist writers critical weight in the development of British ideology (v).

The most recent major wave of feminist criticism, which began around the turn of the twenty-first century and continues to the present, has been largely interested in *how* women's writing was a major factor developing British ideology. Having established Romantic-era feminism as an influential and substantial movement, the criticism focuses on how feminism influenced British society overall and played its crucial role in the definition of national identity and ideology.

Anne Mellor, for instance, in her book *Mothers of the Nation* (2000) looked at individual women and their personal contribution to the development of feminism in Britain and, by association, their role in determining British ideology. In the same vein, Harriet Guest in *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism 1750-1810* (2000) argued that although femininity may have played a relatively small role in some of the major events of cultural change, it was always an integral part of what gave those transactions current value (2). With her comments, Guest asserts the crucial nature of feminist input on cultural ideology: however small the feminine contribution to ideology may seem in comparison to the masculine contribution, each feminist writer's addition played an important role in the determination of that ideology. Leanne Maunu also follows the current trend in *Women Writing the Nation* (2007), in which she examines women's contributions to British literary history. Maunu focuses on interpreting those contributions "in the nationalist context in which these women wrote their texts," also looking at feminine contributions to British ideology as a whole (14).

Fitting into the Literary Project

Although there are significant differences between political historians and literary critics on Romantic-era feminism, these differences reveal how the groups can inform

each other. By illustrating the way political and literary theories can work together, these groups highlight, somewhat paradoxically, both the relatively covert nature of feminism during the first two decades of the nineteenth century and the thriving and diverse nature of that feminism. The next step in literary studies is to give a reading of feminist texts that will ground them in the reality of Romantic society and examine the way they influenced that reality through their art. With this thesis, I wish to answer Schofield and Macheski's question of whether women were "fettered by literary conventions, social mores, and economic limitations" or "free to invent a female rhetoric, to express selfhood, and to develop economic independence" (1). And I wish to answer yes, on both counts. Although women were fettered by their literary and social context, that limitation contributed to their inventing a female rhetoric.

This is where this thesis will pick up, arguing that, while women, their thought, and their rhetoric were limited, or "fettered," by their social context, they were able to embed a female rhetoric in literary works that contributed to feminist goals and aims and functioned effectively within its context. Despite the covert, private, and, in some ways, unpolitical nature of feminist historical events of the early nineteenth century, I argue that these same events—developments and advances in the philosophies, literature, and rhetoric of British women in this time period—helped feminism continue to develop and flourish even as a social movement, a movement that would be manifest later, but that began its development at this time. The feminist writers and thinkers of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, represented here by Jane Austen, continued the work Mary Wollstonecraft started, in that they worked toward developing a theory and a rationale for feminism. Perhaps they even do that work more effectively than

Wollstonecraft herself because of their sensitivity to their own social and rhetorical context—and certainly Austen evinces such sensitivity. Whereas Austen does not overtly espouse Wollstonecraftian and republican ideas, she engages with Wollstonecraft's feminist rhetoric in ways that deepens its meaning and influence, thereby acting as a philosopher for Wollstonecraft's rhetoric. In this way she contributes to the development of feminism.

Rhetorical Contexts

Austen's way of contributing to the development of feminism illustrates one of the main reasons the early nineteenth-century feminists were effective. They broke from Wollstonecraft's political, overt style of presentation but incorporated elements of Wollstonecraft's message in their own messages. Where Wollstonecraft was writing in a turbulent, changing, and more permissive context, feminist writers of the early decades of the nineteenth century were subject to a political and social backlash against liberal French and Jacobin principles. This arrangement forced them to devise a rhetoric that allowed them to speak in and maneuver through their specific context. Because this backlash made British societal and political atmospheres reactionary and repressive and extended that repression to the feminine sphere, women had to speak about feminism in a different way than their predecessor(s) had (Sulloway 3).

This different way of speaking was the feminine reaction to repressive patriarchal forces; rather than forcing women to stay put in their place, those forces pushed feminist writers to become adept at navigating the restrictions placed upon them. Many women, upset over the "harsh and irrational treatment" they received, felt they could and even should bring up injustices being imposed on women as a legitimate subject for debate.

However, they soon realized that in Britain's repressive atmosphere they would have to adopt rhetorically evasive measures to forward feminism in a way that would not be rejected. In fact, women brought complaints against their situation forward at their own peril—advocates of women's rights were considered insurrectionary—and were forced to “adopt policies of thematic and rhetorical caution” in order to be able to work the system while propounding their values and ideals (Sulloway 3-4).

Thesis Organization

With this thesis, I aim to establish the feminist rhetoric that was able to successfully navigate repression and add to the development of feminism. I also aim to show that this feminist rhetoric was part of a feminist tradition by making connections between the overt feminist rhetoric of Mary Wollstonecraft and the implicit, literary rhetoric of Jane Austen. Out of this tradition comes a feminist message, which becomes clear as the basic subject matter stays the same while the rhetorical packaging changes. I will then analyze the packaging of the message—the rhetoric—to support the argument that early nineteenth-century feminism contributed to the development of national ideology by promoting female understanding, redefining feminine virtue, and illustrating true female happiness.

In chapter 2 I examine what has come to be known as the New Rhetorical tradition. Beginning with John Locke, I trace the development of the New Rhetoric into the late eighteenth century and the debate between Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine. Focusing on the rhetorical debate between these two influential writers, I argue for two competing rhetorical theories, sensibility and rationality. Out of this debate comes a looser definition of rhetoric and an opportunity for rhetorical compromise.

Within this trend in rhetoric, Mary Wollstonecraft established her feminist rhetoric, which I discuss in Chapter 3. Placing herself against sensibility within the New Rhetorical debate, Wollstonecraft took advantage of a more liberal political climate to promote her message and the rhetoric that reinforces it. Couching her argument within this New Rhetoric, she fixes a basis for feminism in the early nineteenth century. In reading Wollstonecraft's polemic, I will highlight elements of her rhetoric that later writers would adopt. I will also examine how she advanced feminist rhetoric by interpreting Burke and Paine's branch of rhetoric with ideas from Campbell's branch. This rhetorical connection helps establish the connection between Wollstonecraft and Austen.

Chapter 4 continues to establish the connection between Wollstonecraft and Austen by first examining the connections between Campbell and Austen. In this chapter, I will turn to women's novels and their rhetoric, using *Persuasion* as my central example. Focusing on rhetorical elements similar to Campbell's and feminist elements similar to Wollstonecraft's, I will show how Austen, as an early nineteenth-century feminist novelist, furthered Wollstonecraft's feminism by analyzing how her project was effective.

In analyzing a novel of the early nineteenth century, I hope to show that women certainly influenced the development of British society. But, more importantly, I hope to show that they did so in ways that were possible given their situation. These female novelists preserved the British peace and order that contrasted with the French revolutionary fervor while still promoting feminist development. It is through comparing polemical and literary works, seemingly very different genres with diverse goals, that I

want to argue for continuity through rhetoric. In looking at these different types of works, I also want to draw similarities between the ultimate effects of each type of work.

CHAPTER 2

THE 'NEW RHETORIC'

AND DISCOURSES OF SENSIBILITY

We are not aiming by the Publication of the following Sheets, to make Orators in spite of Nature, but to improve the ingenious Youth of our Country, and to train them up by Degrees to imitate the great Masters of Antiquity; and in this we hope our Endeavours will not be wholly unsuccessful. (Newbery ix-x)

This excerpt from John Newbery's *Rhetoric Made Familiar and Easy to Young Ladies and Gentlemen* (1769) gives some sense of the state of rhetoric in late eighteenth-century Britain, and, more specifically, a sense of what contemporary rhetoricians were trying to move away from. A representative example of the ideas that elicited the "New Rhetoric," Newbery's *Rhetoric* devoted thirty-eight of its nearly three hundred pages to invention and disposition (i.e., idea creation and organization), with almost the entire disposition section made up of definitions for predetermined means of disposition. As a typical classical rhetoric, it was concerned with memorizing tropes, topics, and possible rhetorical contexts. It also aimed to develop skills for invention, disposition, elocution, and pronunciation, with particular emphasis on the latter two. Basically, it represents the widespread eighteenth-century belief that rhetoric's primary function was ornamental.

Coming from a well-known and established publisher of mass-market children's books, Newbery's *Rhetoric* was another iteration of the same traditional, stuffy, rigid instruction about rhetoric that had been available for the preceding hundred years and that was no longer serving its necessary purposes. Only upper-class men who would have the

chance to work in the government or clergy would use this rhetoric, so the rest of the population lacked models tailored to their distinctive needs. Because the Enlightenment was promoting reason, critical thinking, and the ability of the individual, the middle class was growing, and as there was increasingly widespread participation in the political sphere, people needed ways to help others understand their ideas and values. On top of all of these problems, while Newbery's *Rhetoric* promised to be a rhetoric for females, it simply rehearsed the principles of the old male-centered tradition. Women, who were generally denied access to the political realm, could not go into government or the clergy; thus, even if they did receive any sort of classical rhetorical education, they didn't have a chance to use it.

Rhetoric in the Mid-Eighteenth Century

Beginnings of the New Rhetoric

The "New Rhetoric" movement was a reaction against these well established ideas about rhetoric. Beginning with John Locke and his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), this movement comprised more than just definition of ornament. Locke himself was not a rhetorician by profession, but he was a founding figure in the development of the New Rhetoric; as an empiricist, Locke needed a rhetoric that would convey new information gained through experimentation and observation in a clear and concise way. The current eighteenth-century rhetoric, Ramistic rhetoric, was not only limited by the way it saw rhetoric as a superficial decoration for logic. Rather, the logic rhetoric was believed to enhance was a rigid system based strictly on syllogistic and deductive logic, making it essentially impossible to use it to present new information. Locke criticized Ramistic rhetoric because it failed to lend itself to the new ideas found

through empirical investigation, and it even obfuscated the ideas it did convey. In his *Essay*, Locke characterized classical rhetoric as the art of deception, even making it antithetical to the presentation of truth:

All the art of rhetoric . . . , all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheat: and therefore . . . , they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform and instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault. (146)

In other words, Locke saw Ramistic rhetoric as completely at odds with his project. He desired a rhetoric that could inform and instruct while conveying new knowledge and truth.

Rejecting Ramistic rhetoric, Locke began to develop and advocate a plain style of rhetoric that would “make known one man’s thoughts or ideas to another . . . ; with as much ease and quickness as possible; and . . . convey the knowledge of things” (142). Through his goals for rhetoric, it is clear that Locke did not necessarily have a definite sense of what rhetoric ought to be like; rather, he knew what it should not be and set up basic principles based on addressing those flaws he saw.

Rhetoricians throughout the mid-eighteenth century built off Locke’s ideas, developing the New Rhetoric but never gelling into an organized movement. Instead, it remained more of a “tendency” to reject Ramistic and neoclassical rhetorical tools and fit whatever remained to “the philosophical, political, and social realities of the eighteenth century” (Carey 25). One example of an important New Rhetorician during this formative

time is Adam Smith. Smith furthered Locke's criticism of neoclassical rhetoric, criticizing in his *Lectures* "figures [of speech] and the divisions and subdivisions of them . . . [as] generally a very silly set of books and not at all instructive" (26). Smith also extended this New Rhetorical tendency with a series of lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres that he gave at the University of Edinburgh. These lectures have been called "a defining moment in the development of the 'new rhetoric'" (Carey 21) and establish Smith as important to the development of the New Rhetoric. In his lectures, Smith called for emphasis to shift from long lists of categories to matters of scope, proof, and style based on the needs of the rhetors, given the specific context.

The Sensibility Branch of the New Rhetoric

One major characteristic of the Enlightenment that would affect these New Rhetoricians was the major focus on observation and experience rather than abstract reasoning. A manifestation of this focus was the "science of man" philosophical movement. This was one of the major movements of the Scottish Enlightenment, which itself dealt with the problems of moral relativism that were beginning to threaten the social order as commercialization increased (O'Neill 23). The rhetoric of sensibility came out of the Scottish Enlightenment belief that human emotions were the best way to understand human nature. The new rhetorical theory provided parameters within which the rhetoric of sensibility could thrive by departing from strict classical rules and constructions; at the same time, the rhetoric of sensibility grew out of the new rhetoric, assuming its own separate identity but still being defined as a new rhetoric.

The Scottish Enlightenment's theory of manners and moral sentiment heavily influenced the rhetoric of sensibility by making it the vehicle through which a writer

conveyed and touched others' emotions. The Scottish Enlightenment moral theory was based on an innate moral sense that was not based on reason or the will (O'Neill 23-24). David Hume, in establishing a "science of man," declared that reason was unable to evaluate questions of morality and that it was only through affect that we could understand human nature and its motivations. In fact, in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), Hume says that "morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions" and that "reason of itself is utterly impotent in [the] particular [morals]" (5). Thus, Hume believed that persuasion, especially persuasion to morality, happened through a sharing of emotions and "an intercourse of hearts." This communication among people could only be achieved through a rhetoric of feeling (Carey 28). Hume, then, provided an impetus for more pathos in rhetoric, paving the way for the rhetoric of sensibility to establish its foothold.

Adam Smith's philosophy on human morality was influenced by Hume's and actually contributed to the development of sentimentality and sentimental rhetoric as it contributed to the development of the new rhetoric. Smith believed that sympathy was founded on the human ability to change places with each other through an act of imagination; thus, sympathy was a type of feeling *with* another that produced a feeling *for* him or her—a feeling that Smith called "sentiment" (O'Neill 27). The source of social morality was "universally shared passions activated by external sensations" (Dwyer qtd. in O'Neill 28). With this system there was not room for reason; in fact, Smith said in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* that "reason cannot render any particular object either agreeable or disagreeable to the mind for its own sake. . . . Nothing can be agreeable or

disagreeable for its own sake, which is not rendered such by immediate sensual feeling” (398).

Before I go any further, let me define the traits that specifically characterize the rhetoric of sensibility. Brycchan Carey provides some rhetorical characteristics of sentimental rhetoric in the chapter “The Rhetoric of Sensibility” in *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility*. He gives three types of common sentimental arguments. First, those that appear to belong to logos rather than pathos, but that are not necessarily logical arguments because they are derived from deductive rather than inductive reasoning. Second, those that sometimes entirely replace reason with emotion and substitute evidence with intuition. And third, those that depend on ideas of common feeling and mutual sympathy (38). One sentimental rhetorical tool is rejection of false sensibility, as well as the writer establishing him- or herself as the sentimental hero, or a sincere man or woman of feeling. Another tool Carey describes is “emotional subversion of the intellect,” which causes an appeal to the emotions to somehow change the effect of a logical argument. Lastly, he includes style and arrangement as sentimental rhetorical tools (38-44).

In the bigger picture of the history of rhetoric, the rhetoric of sensibility was one branch of the larger project of the New Rhetoric. While the greater project of the New Rhetoric continued to develop independently of the rhetoric of sensibility, the rhetoric of sensibility came out of the New Rhetoric early in its development and dominated the rhetoric discussion for much of the eighteenth century.

In the sections that follow, I argue that the rhetoric of sensibility, represented in Edmund Burke’s work, lost focus of its initial goals; as it began to focus on a small, elite

audience, it moved away from its new rhetorical base and even went at odds with the new rhetorical movement. In Thomas Paine, we see another interpretation of the New Rhetoric, one that defines itself against sentimentalism. Examining the clash between these two philosophically related branches of the New Rhetoric elucidates the space that Wollstonecraft found to establish her rhetoric. In looking at these competing rhetorical schools, we see how the conflict revises to create a New Rhetoric that fulfills its goals effectively.

Rhetoric in the Late Eighteenth Century

The Rights of Man Debate

The rights of man debate was integral to the eighteenth-century discussion about rhetoric because as it argued over how the British should react to the French Revolution, it also argued over the role rhetoric would play in the post-Revolution British political sphere. As Burke and Paine debated the rights of man and how to incorporate those into their society without a war, they debated which rhetorical system—basically the rhetoric of sensibility or a rational-legal rhetoric—would characterize, represent, and communicate for that society. In terms of the rhetoric debate, the rights of man debate ultimately clarified the real nature and psychology of the late-eighteenth-century audience. It showed that the rhetoric of sensibility no longer spoke to this audience and that a New Rhetoric that better reflected understanding of the audience was necessary.

The impetus for the debate over the rights of man was Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Burke's work sparked responses from, among others, Mary Wollstonecraft in *Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790) and Thomas Paine in *The Rights of Man* (1791). Both of these rebuttals centered on the rights

innate to human beings and on the need to change the traditional system, which had arbitrarily withheld the benefits of those innate rights for generations. As a result of this conflict, the concept of “us,” in opposition to the alien “them,” emerged during this time (Colley 6). Burke and Paine debated to establish their concept of “us” by arguing for rhetoric that accurately represented their concept of “us.”

At that time, Burke and Paine’s debate was unprecedented, which made it even more influential than it already was. Not only was the debate over how to best enable that audience to communicate, but this crucial debate was staged before a large and diverse audience. And not only an audience that was watching, but an audience that was involved. With Paine characterized as “the first modern political writer to express himself in the language of ordinary men and so speak directly to millions” (Collins 47), it is not surprising that James MacKintosh called the debate between Burke and Paine “a controversy which may be regarded as the trial of the French Revolution before the enlightened and independent tribunal of the English public” (qtd. in Goodwin 100).

In this debate, the integrated nature of politics and language became apparent, making language even more important. As Burke and Paine debated the nature of the political realm, they debated the nature of the rhetoric that would characterize it. The debate would decide what popular rhetoric would be like and how a popular audience would influence politics. The debate was also basically about whether the New Rhetoric would be established as sentimental or not, whether there would be room for another branch of rhetoric or if the rhetoric of sensibility would completely dominate. While the new rhetoric and the rhetoric of sensibility had never necessarily been at odds, they faced off amidst the political discussion.

Burke's Reflections

In the beginning of his *Reflections*, Burke uses his appeals to emotion to define the boundaries between those that belong in Britain and those that do not. Burke uses emotional appeals to define “us,” or moral, loyal Britons. For example, building off the idea of the common moral sentiment, the basis of the rhetoric of sensibility, Burke uses a mystified tone to model how the “us” sharing in the common moral sentiment should feel about the Revolution: “All circumstances taken together, the French Revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world. . . . Everything seems out of nature in this strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies” (9).

Using this astonishment as a predictor of other feelings that should result in his audience from seeing the Revolution, Burke lists the emotions that a sight of the Revolution should evoke, emotionally subverting the intellect in the process. He says, “In viewing this monstrous tragicomic scene, the most opposite passions necessarily succeed, and sometimes mix with each other in the mind; alternate contempt and indignation; alternate laughter and tears; alternate scorn and horror” (9). Rather than thinking about what the Revolution means or represents, Burke discusses the feelings it evokes, using emotions to subvert the intellect. Also, arguing that the Revolution *necessarily* bring up these combinations of feelings and giving a seemingly exhaustive list of what those emotions are, he excludes any who do not share them on seeing the Revolution from “Britons.”

Reading Burke’s incredulous tone, we know that his emotional appeals that follow reflect his opposition to the Revolution. We also know that the emotions the

Revolution produces oppose the emotions Burke believes Britons should feel. Burke goes so far as to identify the Revolution as something bad by explaining how it creates emotions that are not acceptable to the common moral sentiment. Because the Revolution produces conflicting emotions that confuse the senses and that break up the continuity of “good” emotions, the Revolution is at odds with the goals of common moral sentiment. Any who do not feel these conflicting emotions do not feel the common moral sentiment, which makes those “them” as opposed to “us.”

Having established his concept of Britons as a group with certain emotions, reactions, and sentiments, Burke goes even further to define “us” versus “them.” Burke creates a “them” that feels sentiments antithetical to his: “Into *them* [the Revolution] inspired no other sentiments than those of exultation and rapture” (9, my emphasis). And those that could feel exultation or rapture at such an event were not capable of contempt, indignation, laughter, tears (unless they were of joy), scorn or horror: thus, they did not subscribe to the common moral sentiment and were not part of the “us” and the way “we” understand things through “our” feelings. Once Burke established “them,” this way, as emotionally cut off from him and “us,” he presented the rational reasons “they” could support the revolution.

Burke says, “*They* saw nothing in what has been done in France, but a firm and temperate exertion of freedom; so consistent, on the whole, with morals and with piety as to render it a fit theme for all the devout effusions of sacred eloquence” (9, my emphasis). Here, Burke presents “us” as characterized by emotion and “they” as characterized by reason. He very overtly opposes the use of reason, as it does not consider those feelings of the common moral sentiment, nor does it respect the rules that sentiment makes for

society. Reason does not draw the same lines between “us” and “them,” and so it threatens Burke’s social configuration and, in his mind, the health of British society.

Once Burke has established the rhetoric of sensibility as British rhetoric, he chooses verbs to emphasize the importance of looking to the past and preserving it. His verbs tend to emphasize the strong connection between present and past and to encourage maintaining that connection. Burke says, “The constituent parts of a state [citizens] *are obliged* to hold their public faith with each other . . . as much as the whole state [all citizens] *is bound* to keep its faith with separate communities” (18). He goes on with “the succession of the crown has always been what it now is, an hereditary succession by law: in the old line it was a succession by the common law; in the new by the statute law, operating on the principles of the common law, not changing the substance, but regulating the mode” (18). The effect of these verbs is to create the image of a tight-knit system that is a continuation of the past and that must be maintained to ensure its strength.

Burke’s verbs make it especially clear that this tradition must maintain its power with the seamless constancy that has characterized it in the past. The few times that Burke uses the future tense of a verb (three times out of the several hundred verb phrases I surveyed), he talks about cataclysmic events. The first phrase comes after “. . . as much as the whole state is bound to keep its faith with separate communities.” The next sentence begins, “Otherwise, competence and power *would soon be confounded*, and no law *be left* but the will of a prevailing force” (18). The effect of this statement reasserts the power of sentimentality and the power and safety of its continuity in two ways.

First, this statement is conditional, so we know competence and power are confounded only if citizens forsake their obligation to each other. And we sincerely hope this is unlikely since the whole system would implode upon itself, confounded and unable to operate. This event would ruin the continuity of the entire tradition that had come before. Second, the will of the prevailing force he discusses probably would not be driven by the common moral sentiment; rather, it would be an alien force, and a force that would completely change life as everyone knew it. Since the possibility of the future and the changes offered by the French Revolution is so terrible, it is even more necessary to uphold the system and move it into the future.

The other verb phrase that Burke puts in the future tense is more of a definite assertion: “Every person in your country . . . is disgraced and degraded, and can entertain no sensation of life, except in a mortified and humiliated indignation. But this generation *will quickly pass away*” (41-42). The ideas and groups that do not belong to the common moral sentiment—“they”—will not stand up to the power of sensibility and its system because it is the “natural order of things” and has the power of generations as well as the power of sympathy for its members behind it. Burke here asserts his strong belief in the power of that common moral sentiment and his belief that it does bind society together.

Burke used the tools of the rhetoric of sensibility to establish the philosophy of sensibility as the British tradition, which citizens were bound to uphold by the sentiment that action creates. Burke thereby established the rhetoric of sensibility as the British rhetorical tradition. In the *Reflections*, sentimental rhetoric becomes the rhetoric understood by those who support the status quo, both political and social. Sentimental

rhetoric promotes England by promoting England as it stands and as it has stood for generations.

With his belief in an exclusive group of Britons, the exigency of unbroken, unaltered tradition, and opposition to reason, Burke's philosophy is quite antithetical to Thomas Paine's, as is his rhetoric. Because Paine promoted a system based on rationality, he asked his audience to see Burke's argument as circular logic. He argued that society ought not necessarily venerate the arbitrary choices its ancestors made and in doing that established a rhetoric based on the continuity of human reason rather than human emotion or arbitrary preference. Paine saw Burke's continuity as irrational and arbitrary and wanted a society that had a logical explanation for its bestowal of authority as well as the criteria upon which it judged people. In using rhetoric of reason, Paine appealed to a broad audience, the would-be authorities under a new system, to logically convince them of their rights to authority and to attempt to include humankind in his definition of Britons.

Paine's Rights of Man

To convince his audience of their rights to authority in his *Rights of Man*, Thomas Paine basically makes two rhetorical moves to refute to Burke. First, he establishes the rhetoric of sensibility as a rhetoric that does not accomplish the New Rhetorical goal of sensitivity to audience. In doing this, he shows how Burke appeals to an arbitrarily selected audience, not to the common moral sentiment he propounds. Second, Paine presents a very basic new branch of rhetoric that focuses on appeals to reason but that also incorporates appeals to emotion as well. He thereby takes the universality and power

out of Burke's appeals and shows that they do not appeal to all emotions but only those of people who subscribe to the "standard" political emotions of the current system.

Paine uses repetition and syntactical organization to respond to Burke's notion of the continuity of monarchy and aristocracy and then to provide a different idea, one that appeals to a more diverse audience. Paine begins, "There never did, there never will, and there never can, exist a Parliament, or any description of men, or any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding and controlling posterity to the 'end of time'" (63). His repetition of "never" and "any" makes it clear that Burke's theoretical system never really had any power. In fact, because it was arbitrarily established, it could be just as easily explained away as it was created. Paine's arrangement of the first series from "did" to "will," or past to future, responds to Burke's notion of continuity. Responding to the *Reflections*, in which Burke establishes not only the existence of tradition and continuity but also the importance of it, Paine basically says that this tradition never had the right to exist and so will not be able to continue.

It is interesting that in the last phrase of the series he uses "can" instead of a form of "to be" because in this final position, the word receives the greatest emphasis. While we may expect "does not," or something similar, to address the present, Paine's use of "can" conveys the sense of impossibility of existence. Not only does Paine argue that Burke's tradition did not exist, but it could not exist when examined in the light of reason, and his use of syntax emphasizes that.

The second series of "any"s had similar effect. Burke included every man in his discussion, regardless of description, generation, or country. Again, the final element of the series received special emphasis. This was significant this time because "in any

country” acknowledged Burke’s attempt to use the Revolution and “English” versus “French” sides as ways to include or exclude. Paine rejected this action, including everyone, speaking to everyone, and appealing to all reasons.

Paine’s verb choices grounded his thought in the present, as the majority of his verbs were in the present tense. Thus, his words authoritatively tell the audience how things are now, regardless of how they have been. Paine acknowledged a break with the past with some of his past verb phrases. For example, in the passage where Paine discusses the deposition of Louis XVI, the verbs are in the past tense, and he even makes use of passive verb constructions. He says, “The Monarch and the Monarchy were distinct and separate things; and it was against the established despotism of the latter, and not against the person or principles of the former, that the revolt commenced, and the Revolution has been carried” (68). With this construction, Paine shows the audience a break between past and present. The revolution and all it stood for signaled the end of the past, disrupting the continuity of the traditional political system. One cannot deny that it happened and that it changed society irreversibly; the way that Revolutionary principles irrevocably changed the nature of society and rhetorical appeals means that no one can ever continue on in the same way. Those revolutionary principles point out too much about the flawed nature of the status quo to be ignored. Thus, the present is different from the past and even perpetuates an entirely different tradition.

Although Paine emphasized the power of reason to include, to unite, to level society, and to found a new tradition based on the innate characteristics of man instead of the arbitrary bestowal of power, he did not only recommend using reason. In using a different branch of rhetoric, he used appeals to emotions, but not through “the weakness

of sympathy” (71). He did not appeal to the common moral sense, or the imaginations of those who belong to the arbitrarily empowered group. Paine recommended using emotions that came from within, from the thinker’s own experience and even creation, and his rhetoric reflects that.

When Paine asks his reader to make a distinction between men and principles, he appeals to their ability to reason and to critically see the difference between society and personal convictions that influence that society. The concepts he explains require reason, and they predicate themselves upon critically thinking about tradition. Paine says, “A casual discontinuance of the *practice* of despotism, is not a discontinuance of its *principles*; the former depends on the virtue of the individual who is in immediate possession of the power; the latter, on the virtue and fortitude of the nation” (69). In making this statement, Paine explains that there is a difference between the outer manifestation of an ideology or philosophy and the convictions that create it. This distinction asks the audience to strengthen their reason so that they will have the ability to form convictions on which to build an egalitarian society.

At the same time that Paine reasons with his audience, he asks them to check what they understand in their minds against what they feel in their hearts. He appeals directly to his readers’ emotions when he summarizes Burke’s apparent inability to completely feel: “Not one glance of compassion, not one commiserating reflection that I can find throughout his book, has he bestowed on those who lingered out the most wretched of lives, a life without hope in the most miserable of prisons” (72). Despite Burke’s focus on appeals to the emotions, Paine would still argue for Burke’s inability to truly sympathize with his fellow man. Here Paine introduces his idea of true emotion and its importance in

persuasion and rhetoric, using Burke as a prime example of what is not effective. In opposition to Burke's overzealous but empty appeals to the emotions, Paine would recommend combining appeals to reason and to emotion.

These choices and arguments that Burke and Paine were making were extremely influential not only because of the importance of rhetoric, but also because rhetoric would influence and change reality. The sociopolitical order of the latter half of the eighteenth century believed language could "reveal the mind" (Smith 3). Because of this assumed close connection between language, personal competence, and morality, "ideas about language justified class division," giving language the power to decide where a person fit in society. Given this linguistic and sociopolitical context, these ideas about language were very sensitive to movements that intended to disturb the boundaries that divided classes and genders (Smith 3).

Understanding this sociolinguistic context helps explain Paine's attacks on Burke's language. It is not that Burke was such an extremist. Having spent much of his early political career arguing for moderate reform, Burke was a progressive politician and a colleague of Paine. Many, including Paine, expected him to welcome the French Revolution at its inception. Even Burke's language in his *Reflections* gives evidence of his attempts at moderation. For example, it promotes "a spirit of practicality and moderation [over] insistence on . . . abstract ideas" (Woodcock and Coates 10). Despite Burke's attempts at moderation, however, Paine still saw him "perpetuat[ing] the hierarchies of linguistic grandeur, which, like the hereditary titles of nobility, contract man's potential so that 'he lives immured in the Bastille of a word'" (97).

Paine saw this as Burke's linguistically sustaining an arbitrarily hierarchical sociopolitical system, one that did not heed reason's attempts to level the social playing field or to see language as the intelligent expression of any rational mind. Paine addresses Burke's language for its perpetuation of an arbitrary tradition and "appropriates and uses the language of the dominant culture" to then counteract it with "the common language of radicalism, speaking for and as one of the people simultaneously" (Woodcock and Coates 86).

Paine critiqued sensibility by looking at it and its language from a rational point of view. Because both Burke and Paine offered "a representation of the social 'world' and insisted that it truly reflects 'reality'" (Blakemore 121), their rhetorics and texts have serious political power. In what became a "textual war" between Burke and Paine, as Blakemore puts it, "both revolutionary and counterrevolutionary writers focused on the *meaning* of language that either confirmed or contradicted their respective readings of what words and hence the Revolution really meant" (111, my emphasis). As we saw in the last chapter, Burke actually provided the words Paine used to condemn him (Blakemore 99), and then Paine interpreted those words according to the way he wanted to see reality. As Paine adopted Burke's rhetoric and used Burke's words and appeals to undo the sociopolitical system Burke was attempting to sustain, Paine aimed to make Burke's language "part and parcel of the oppressive order's defeat" (Blakemore 112).

In confounding Burke linguistically, Paine created a space in which to assert his beliefs linguistically. He desired to make language available to and useful for every rational being, redefining the New Rhetoric and pushing the New Rhetoric back on the path of its original goal of practical utility. Paine believed human language was "local

and changeable” (Woodcock and Coates 87), and he argues throughout the *Rights of Man* for this belief, “distinguish[ing] [. . .] between the ‘reality’ of rational, revolutionary language and the ‘illusion’ or irrational, traditionary language that enslaves and mystifies exploited minds” (Blakemore 115). Given the linguistic context, it becomes much clearer why Burke and Paine made their political argument about rhetoric, and it also explains why Wollstonecraft established her feminist rhetoric within Burke’s and Paine’s.

Wollstonecraft made her feminist argument a part of this debate to build it on the popular political debate that was raging over the French Revolution. The debate between Burke and Paine was extremely important, not only for its popular sociopolitical bent, but for its linguistic focus, and Wollstonecraft played a major role in that debate. She actually responded to Burke’s *Reflections* before Paine with her *Vindication of the Rights of Man* and, as Steven Blakemore argues, became part of the intertextual war that “reverberated” in their writings (19). When Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* about two years after this revolutionary debate had ensued, she continued to respond to the issues of the rights of man debate to ground her feminist rhetoric in this important linguistic debate and to provide it with a strong foundation. We will examine the nature of this feminist rhetoric in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

WOLLSTONECRAFT'S FEMINIST RHETORIC:

ESTABLISHING AND CULTIVATING THE MEANS OF DEVELOPING FEMALE
UNDERSTANDING

Given the issues Mary Wollstonecraft addressed in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, her argument benefited from and used this rhetorical and political climate Burke and Paine's debate created. Although *Vindication* is a founding document of modern feminism, Wollstonecraft is actually not unique in the issues she addresses. She addressed feminist issues that had plagued women for hundreds of years and that women had argued against for just as long. Wollstonecraft cited inequality, confinement to the domestic sphere, inadequate access to education, and then female education that perpetuated women's focus on beauty and accomplishments and left them empty, silly, and completely dependent on men as the major problems plaguing women's lives. With these circumstances, many women could hope at best to become mediocre wives and mothers and, at worst, the prisoners and perpetuators of their own inadequacies. In the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft proposed combating these problems with education that would cultivate women's understanding (54) and give them some control to choose what kind of people they would be.

Since she was addressing issues and solutions that were neither new nor completely original, Wollstonecraft made her argument unique with the way she addressed these issues. She integrated her arguments with Burke's and Paine's and created a rhetoric that engaged with rights of man rhetoric. By doing this, she gave her argument immediacy, showing that the arguments for the rights of men and their

principles based on reason were inherently an argument for the rights of women. By taking a page from the rights of man argument and characterizing sensibility as the contemporary means of perpetuating a history of female subjugation, Wollstonecraft made a very current argument against sensibility, promoting the rights of man to promote the rights of women.

Wollstonecraft's rhetoric would go on to influence many people indirectly as it influenced rhetoric and other thinkers by changing the way they saw ideal philosophy versus reality. Although there is very little evidence that argues Wollstonecraft influenced her audience directly, there is evidence she helped shape the rhetoric and literature that came after her. William St. Clair, in *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, discounts Wollstonecraft's influence on her immediate audience, saying, "The number of readers [of the *Vindication*] cannot have been high," and that "the *Vindication* did not join the radical canon of Paine, Godwin, [. . . or any of] the other books which helped to shape the emerging new urban culture in the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s" (278). Despite her limited circulation, however, Wollstonecraft's ideas did influence the development of British society, even if it was only through the relatively few. In chapter 4, as we examine the connections between Wollstonecraft both and Campbell and Austen, we will see how her *Vindication* had an effect on her audience and influenced its development.

As Wollstonecraft grounded herself in rights of man rhetoric, she accomplished several important things. First, she established a feminist rhetoric that reinforces the idea that women need to develop understanding. In order for women to function in their roles as wives and mothers, Wollstonecraft believes they must have a developed

understanding, which equips them to make their own choices. Rhetorically, she models understanding as she argues for it and uses her rhetoric to illustrate her argument.

Second, Wollstonecraft built off rights of man rhetoric to establish a feminist rhetoric that would continue to grow and develop. As I discussed in Chapter 1, whereas there is little debate about the magnitude of Wollstonecraft's contribution to feminism, there is considerable disagreement about the nature of that contribution. Moreover, while there is general consensus that Wollstonecraft founded modern feminism, it is also generally agreed that she did not start a recognizable feminist tradition. I argue that Mary Wollstonecraft established a feminist tradition by articulating a feminist rhetoric and that that rhetoric would become a tool for feminists in the early nineteenth century.

Third, by engaging with Burke and Paine's rhetorical debate, Wollstonecraft engaged with and influenced the development of the New Rhetoric. Burke and Paine represent conflicting interpretations of how to best use New Rhetorical ideas in reality while still being true to what they are meant to accomplish. By using elements of both Burke's and Paine's rhetorical systems, Wollstonecraft presents her own interpretation of how New Rhetorical ideas can work in reality.

In this chapter I will show how Wollstonecraft founded this feminist rhetoric by combining appeals to reason and emotion. By interpreting these appeals, I will explain how they positioned her rhetoric within the rights of man tradition and then how Wollstonecraft expanded her rhetoric to form a tool that defined how to actually accomplish feminism's goals as it helped formulate them theoretically. I will show how Wollstonecraft's rhetoric reflected an understanding of the female audience as it argued

for a greater need for understanding in females and presented a way for females to develop that understanding while continuing to promote virtue.

In her *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft attacked the rhetoric of sensibility (which Paine had attacked in Burke in his *Rights of Man*) to further her own sociopolitical causes that were built on Paine's principles. At the time of the revolution, when men were receiving newly recognized rights that were based on their status as human beings, women began to feel that they deserved some improvement of their rights and circumstances. According to what Mary Poovey dubs the "compensatory equation" (4), as men were given more rights, women had more taken from them and were even more restricted in their choices and their options for education and employment. Wollstonecraft engages with this discussion, which sees sensibility as an embodiment or representation of the survival of this tradition, not the origin of it. She also engages with this language because of the strong power it has to dictate sociopolitical situations. Thus, as Wollstonecraft critiques the rhetoric of sensibility, she sees it as a symbol of the forces that would perpetuate the tradition of subverting women.

Building upon Paine's method, Wollstonecraft linguistically infiltrates the rhetoric of sensibility to establish her female rhetoric on Paine's foundation. However, the sociopolitical issues she addresses primarily concern women. Wollstonecraft believes that sensibility philosophy controls the concrete realities of women's lives through its language, and she sheds light on sensibility's reality by showing the gap between sensibility's abstract ideal and the concrete implementation of that ideal. Wollstonecraft illuminates this gap by using words, phrases, and ideas that convey sensibility ideals and that communicate through appeals to the emotions. These appeals present sensibility's

abstract ideal and see sensibility from its ideal point of view. Wollstonecraft then puts these words and phrases in a context that shifts the point of view to one that examines an ideal of the philosophy of sensibility using reason. The effect of the reasonable standpoint is to show that the status quo is not what sensibility necessarily intended, but that what is should dictate theory and rhetoric—that reasonable principles should dictate it.

The first way Wollstonecraft illuminates this gap between the ideal and the real is with a paradox. In chapter 2 of the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft says,

How grossly do they insult us who thus advise us only to render ourselves gentle, domestic brutes! For instance, the winning softness so warmly, and frequently, recommended, that governs by obeying. What childish expressions, and how insignificant is the being—can it be an immortal one? (20)

She labels the notion that women should “[render themselves] gentle domestic brutes” (20) a gross insult, which creates a problem from the sensibility point of view. In sensibility’s philosophy, this label “gentle domestic brute” is predominantly positive towards women and incorporates key words as descriptors of women. Gentleness and domesticity are traits that sensibility identifies as virtuous and quintessentially feminine because they are manners that are proof of a woman’s possessing sensibility’s ideal female character. They give evidence of a being who is naturally, even innately, virtuous and sensitive and one who thrives in the home, perfecting it with her mere presence and inspiring good in all those who surround her. Even the word “brute” does not necessarily have the fiercely negative connotations for sensibility that it has for reason-based philosophy. Although a brute’s condition diametrically opposes that of an exalted being,

the fact that sensibility encourages women to avoid cultivating reason does put them below men. Perhaps, at best, the word “brute” reflects an ambivalence in sensibility philosophy and at worst an internal contradiction in the philosophy, which sensibility is willing to ignore. Overall, the phrase “gentle, domestic brute” represents sensibility’s idea for women and would bestow honor on the recipient rather than insulting her.

Wollstonecraft returns to the insult of encouraging women to be gentle domestic brutes in the next sentence of the passage by describing the way such women are expected to act. In the phrase “governs by obeying,” Wollstonecraft embodies the passive nature of women’s actions in sensibility terms. Sensibility philosophy dictates that women govern their children, husbands, and homes by obeying the dictates of their innate strengths, or their emotions, which sensibility philosophy has shaped through conduct books and outward constructions of virtue. Those trained emotions direct women to act as, in Rendall’s words, “passive conduits of sentiment and refinement” (qtd. in Barker and Chalus 22), and to embody virtue and sensitivity. Notice that women accomplish all of this by not acting, not thinking, not changing, but merely existing. In sensibility philosophy’s ideal, women that govern by obeying create homes that promote virtue and thereby produce more virtuous husbands and children ready to do their duties in civilization. And they fulfill sensibility philosophy’s highest goal for women.

Wollstonecraft appeals to these sensibility-trained emotions to linguistically put the reader in a position to see the world from sensibility philosophy’s abstract point of view. These appeals encourage the reader to look at sensibility in the way philosophers or theorists might see it, or in its pure, abstract form. These appeals also encourage only looking at the philosophy and explaining how it could make its ideal come to fruition.

However, Wollstonecraft understands her audience and their paradoxical lives, which are promised to be one way in the abstract but that come out looking a very different way in reality. She sees this problem and understands that women have no way to change or correct their reality or their lives, in part because they have no way to change the linguistic structure that keeps them where sensibility wants them to be.

Thus, the two paradoxes Wollstonecraft creates in the passage above provide the key to start resolving the paradox of women's existence. In labeling the phrases "gentle domestic brute" and "govern[ing] by obeying" as insults, Wollstonecraft looks at these sensibility constructs from a concrete point of view—how a gentle domestic brute is actually treated and how governing by obeying actually works. She uses rational rhetoric to show that not only does sensibility rhetoric fail to function in reality but it is flawed in another way. There is no way for reality to change sensibility rhetoric, so living, breathing women remain subjugated and silent. Although this trait of sensibility explains Paine's assessment of sensibility (that it is primarily concerned with perpetuating itself and its own reality, and that its existence relies on that perpetuation), it puts women in a negative position and does not provide an actual way for rational, human women to attain the virtue it expects them to attain or to become the wives and mothers it wants them to become.

After she makes appeals to the emotions, Wollstonecraft makes an appeal to reason by analyzing the concrete, realistic manifestation of sensibility's abstract theory. She says, "Men, indeed, appear to me to act in a very unphilosophical manner when they try to secure the good conduct of women by attempting to keep them always in a state of childhood" (20). With this statement, Wollstonecraft calls sensibility's theory what it

actually is in reality. Regardless of whether sensibility philosophy does actually want to exalt women, make them virtuous, and equip them to govern their domestic sphere, it does not actually accomplish any of those goals. Rather, in terms of concrete life, it keeps women “in a state of childhood,” keeping them from maturing emotionally or intellectually through experience.

Wollstonecraft uses words that appeal to a person’s ability to look at a situation and assess it to change the point of view from which the audience looks at sensibility. By looking at sensibility from a point of view influenced by reason, the audience has a way to look at the effects of sensibility philosophy that it previously could not consider or necessarily even acknowledge. Although sensibility philosophy wants to promote virtue, it makes women sacrifice their natural virtue for manners, ultimately stifling the good influence that women could have on their families. For Wollstonecraft, sensibility philosophy does not make sense in a pursuit of virtue because it tries to elicit virtue (coded in sensibility terms as “good conduct”) by withholding lessons and traits that would develop virtue. In light of reason, sensibility philosophy actually inhibits women from attaining virtue and becoming good mothers and wives.

While Wollstonecraft could be seen as trying to change sensibility philosophy’s final goal of civilization and virtue, she shows that she is concerned with changing the means by which civilization and virtue are promoted, retaining the same ends and merely changing the means. In Wollstonecraft’s view, women’s “good conduct” or virtue is no longer the product of ignorance and complacency but the product of choice and decision. Thus, although women are different physically from men, Wollstonecraft is not

convinced they are different when reason—or understanding—is concerned, and she wants the reality she promotes to reflect that.

A second notable example of Wollstonecraft's juxtaposition of appeals to emotion and reason also appears in chapter 2, reinforcing my previous example. This example gives more evidence that sensibility is separate from reality and that this gap directly affects sensibility theory's ability to produce effective rhetoric. Here Wollstonecraft makes appeals to the emotions through which sensibility works, describing the way sensibility rhetoric creates its reality. She says,

The regal homage which [women] receive is so intoxicating, that till the manners of the times are changed, and formed on more reasonable principles, it may be impossible to convince them that the illegitimate power, which they obtain, by degrading themselves, is a curse, and that they must return to nature and equality, if they wish to secure the placid satisfaction that unsophisticated affections impart. (21)

Examining “regal homage” from the sensibility philosophy point of view sheds light on why sensibility philosophy promotes female emotionality so strongly. In sensibility rhetoric, the “regal homage” that sensibility philosophy promises women is the love of a man based on appreciation of, or at least a socially driven desire for, the woman's surface traits, her beauty and accomplishments. Women are taught to act based on what they comprehend with their senses, and male attention and affection both have the potential to create strong, positive emotions in women. If this attention can create such a strong, positive response, women would see this regal homage as the highest and best honor they could receive. The fact that these feelings can completely intoxicate, overcome,

overwhelm, or take hold of a woman's emotions, especially in women who have developed their sensibility and are practiced in its use attests to their effectiveness and goodness.

Once Wollstonecraft has established this view of the sensibility system, appealing to female emotions with the assumption they recognize the intoxication she mentions, Wollstonecraft changes her point of view. That is to say, by pointing out how these feelings are intoxicating, she then shows what that intoxication hides from women. Wollstonecraft continues the above passage from chapter 2, suggesting that "the illegitimate power, which [women] obtain, by degrading themselves, is a curse, and [. . .] they must return to nature and equality, if they wish to secure the placid satisfaction that unsophisticated affections impart" (21-22). With this change of point of view, a regal homage becomes illegitimate power and women are degraded where they were meant to be exalted. The mere fact that this "regal homage" could suddenly be degraded by language gives more evidence for the gap between the abstract and the real. It becomes clearer that sensibility rhetoric is meant to perpetuate the abstract reality it creates and that reason-based rhetoric is constructed by the people that have constructed and now inhabit that reality.

Wollstonecraft uses the phrase "illegitimate power" to attack sensibility in one of its own crucial terms. In my reading of Burke in Chapter 2, I argued that sensibility claims much of its power from the fact that it builds off tradition and has such cultural inertia because it maintains what came before without changing it. It sustains that power by building and legitimating itself on tradition and then continuing forward with an unbroken chain of tradition and legitimacy. By calling what sensibility offers to women

illegitimate, Wollstonecraft denies that sensibility is accomplishing this essential goal of legitimacy. Furthermore, in denying sensibility's legitimacy, she undermines the whole system and shows how it undermines itself. As sensibility continues to treat women the same way and offer them the same destiny, it creates a tradition of illegitimacy, actually weakening the foundation upon which sensibility is built.

Since Wollstonecraft uses the phrases "illegitimate power" and "regal homage" to refer to basically the same situation for women, an analysis of "regal homage" from a point of view grounded in reason is warranted. As I mentioned, the "regal homage" that sensibility bestows on women is meant to be its highest honor; however, in actuality, Wollstonecraft would suggest it is a terrible place to put any human being, let alone one who is supposed to be highly respected. In terms of sensibility philosophy, "homage" could easily mean "acknowledgment of superiority in rank, worth, beauty, etc.; reverence, dutiful respect, or honour shown" (OED online), and that is what women receive for their beauty, accomplishments, and outward appearance of virtue, or manners. However, Wollstonecraft is using the more archaic meaning of the word: "Formal and public acknowledgement of allegiance, wherein a tenant or vassal declared himself the man of the king or the lord of whom he held, and bound himself to his service" (OED online). Using this meaning of the word "homage," Wollstonecraft makes men the vassals to women's goodness and women the vassals to men's reason, swearing allegiance to men's sovereignty. In this context, women swear this allegiance under the influence of their emotions; and when these wear off (and we assume they usually do), women realize that the homage they receive is temporary while the homage they swear to

men lasts forever. In terms of reason, Wollstonecraft points out that sensibility philosophy completely fails to address the actual situation women find themselves in.

The word “regal” widens the gap between these two meanings of “homage,” intensifying sensibility’s disconnect from reality. In its theory, sensibility’s treatment lifts beautiful women to thrones of virtue to make them sources of power and influence within their homes. However, reason reveals that the scepters sensibility gives women wield no power and provide almost nothing to equip them to make a difference in the world or even in their own lives. “Regal” intensifies the level of promises that sensibility makes to show the stark contrast between what it intends and what it actually delivers. By offering only emotion to women, sensibility makes impossible that “placid satisfaction” and those “unsophisticated affections” by binding women in that situation through language that has no grounding in reality and does not understand the women it would shape. Sensibility ultimately yields no fruit by producing women that are not fit wives or mothers and that have no potential way to become fit.

With her emotional appeals that show the promises sensibility makes and her rational appeals that show the actual reality it provides, Wollstonecraft does two things. She explains how and why there is such a stark difference between what should be and what is and, in doing this, positions herself as a new voice in the Burke and Paine debate. She also models a way of thinking for women. In modeling this reasonable point of view, Wollstonecraft explains how reason-based rhetoric could accomplish sensibility’s goals of civilization and virtue more effectively than sensibility has done.

This brings us back to the paradoxical nature of female life, which Wollstonecraft explains. Because women receive a disorderly education and learn “by snatches” (23),

they are never able to develop the exactness that men develop in their education. She ends with the statement, “This negligent kind of guess-work . . . never brought to the test of reason prevents their generalizing matters of fact—so they do today, what they did yesterday, merely because they did it yesterday” (22-23). Thus, even though the actual manifestation of sensibility does not match what it would have it be, it does reflect the pattern of sensibility philosophy.

Instead of trying to fix the outcome of sensibility, since she retains its ultimate goals of virtue, Wollstonecraft promotes a different way of encouraging virtue altogether. She says, “Many are the causes that [. . .] contribute to enslave women by cramping their understandings and sharpening their senses” (22). She suggests that promoting understanding – the product of reason, experience, education, and even properly shaped emotions – aims to accomplish the same goals that sensibility strives for. However, she believes promoting understanding addresses them more effectively because it deals with the concrete details of women’s lives and strives to understand them better than sensibility does. She has her audience understanding her and acknowledging her authority because she speaks this language of emotions, but she then introduces a way to do even better, both thinking and speaking rationally and talking about the main problem that women face—virtually underdeveloped understandings.

Again, we can see how Wollstonecraft is influenced by Paine’s rhetoric in his critique of sensibility. Paine takes issue with the sensibility method of preserving tradition merely because it was tradition. Wollstonecraft is also able to begin explaining the problems that sensibility’s focus on emotions causes by using reason to look at that sensibility, showing women a way to deconstruct the paradoxical life they live.

Wollstonecraft acknowledges Paine in using his argument, in looking at tradition based on reason and stepping outside of the emotional reality that sensibility promotes as *the* version of reality and seeing it as *one* version of reality.

The third passage that uses a combination of appeals to reason and emotion comes near the end of chapter 2 of the *Vindication*. This passage defines the means by which Wollstonecraft recommends women strive for virtue, comparing the concrete manifestation of sensibility philosophy's method to virtue with the manifestation of rationality. She says,

Noble morality! and consistent with the cautious prudence of a little soul that cannot extend its views beyond the present minute division of existence. If all the faculties of woman's mind are only to be cultivated as they respect her dependence on man; if, when a husband be obtained, she have arrived at her goal, and meanly proud rests satisfied with such a paltry crown, let her grovel contentedly, scarcely raised by her employments above the animal kingdom; but, if, struggling for the prize of her high calling, she look beyond the present scene, let her cultivate her understanding without stopping to consider what character the husband may have whom she is destined to marry. Let her only determine, without being too anxious about present happiness, to acquire the qualities that ennoble a rational being, and a rough inelegant husband may shock her taste without destroying her peace of mind. She will not model her soul to suit the frailties of her companion, but to bear with them: his character may be a trial, but not an impediment to virtue. (32)

The first thing Wollstonecraft does here is to define morality in terms of both sensibility philosophy and rationality, appealing to the audience's sense of pity and then its reason. Wollstonecraft's first word, "noble," introduces the tension between the two definitions which results from the sociopolitical tensions they reflect. The word "noble" could refer to the system of nobility upon which sensibility was founded and whose survival sensibility counted on: "illustrious or distinguished by virtue of rank, title, or birth; belonging to a high social rank, esp. one recognized or conferred by a sovereign or head of state" (OED). With this definition, morality comes from that arbitrary title and power that comes from the social system. There may even be the implication that this morality becomes innate in people of the nobility as they perpetuated the tradition of being part of the nobility and holding up its values. By quite stark contrast, especially in terms of the rights of man debate, the other connotation of the word "noble" is "illustrious or distinguished by virtue of position, character, or exploits" (OED). This definition gives a sense of something noble as something gained or earned through actions, and it shifts the authority of acquiring nobility from the social system to the individual. With this definition, morality would be something that a person develops through hard work and experience.

By beginning with this exclamation "noble morality!," Wollstonecraft engages with this negotiation of meaning. However, as she proceeds in the paragraph, her rhetorical appeals make her choice of definition for women very clear. In the first half of the paragraph, she appeals to the audience's sense of pity to show the deplorable state that sensibility's version of morality puts women in. If a woman develops sensibility's morality and ultimately renders herself dependent on her husband, which is exactly what

sensibility would have a moral and virtuous woman do, she is in a pitiable place: “meanly proud,” wearing a “paltry crown” (which we have already discussed the downsides of), “groveling contentedly,” and “scarcely raised above the animal kingdom.” With these words, Wollstonecraft paints the picture of a depraved, low, almost savage person who believes she has attained all that she deserves and could ever desire in life.

In the same vein of pity, Wollstonecraft points out that a woman from sensibility’s point of view not only exists in this state, which is deplorable enough, but also that sensibility put her there—she obediently became a passive conduit like she was instructed to be, only to receive such a paltry crown for her obedience and desire to be virtuous and moral. Wollstonecraft paints this picture of passivity with phrases like “cautious prudence” and “a little soul,” a soul that cannot see beyond the “present minute division of existence”—all the result of sensibility and its only developing women’s emotions. Although she would acknowledge the depraved state of women, Wollstonecraft sees the responsibility for this falling on sensibility. She makes this clear first by using the passive voice when she talks about a woman’s mind—“only to be cultivated respecting her dependence on men.” Then she attributes responsibility by using an active verb, but one that does not really require action: once a woman has attained her goal, she “rests satisfied” and is scarcely raised by her employments. Beyond that, those employments are not the product of her own will, but have been dictated by sensibility, a system outside of her. Here, sensibility restricts and molds the person, imposing the appearance of virtue and morality but keeping it from being any product of the individual.

In the second half of this paragraph, Wollstonecraft defines morality in terms of rationality and each individual's right to make decisions, to act, to reflect her convictions, and to accomplish her goals. In rational terms, morality is attained, not imposed. Wollstonecraft argues that women who "struggle," "look beyond," "cultivate," "determine," and "acquire" (all active verbs that have connotations of hard work, time, and personal vision and conviction) attain virtue to use it in a way that is pleasing and ennobling. They "gain the high prize of their calling," which accomplishes the basic goal of sensibility by changing the means by which it is sought and attained.

The appeals that Wollstonecraft uses in the second half of the paragraph inspire the emotions as they speak logically to the mind. Wollstonecraft's emotional appeal centers on the word "ennoble," which means "to impart a higher character to; to dignify, elevate, refine" (OED). The audience reveres, respects, looks well upon, and is happy for an ennobled being, and this being fulfills the end goal of virtue. However, this emotional appeal is greatly underscored by Wollstonecraft's rational explanation of how a woman could actually attain this state. Basically, Wollstonecraft explains that a woman must shift her focus and take control of her own existence; she must "cultivate her understanding," having the final goal of developing a rational faculty through her own hard work. With this change of focus a woman should still marry, but that marriage need not be her highest attainment for its own sake; in pursuing a marriage while cultivating an understanding, woman has some control over her virtue, which resonates with principles of the rights of man. From a rhetorical standpoint, Wollstonecraft shows us that a complete focus on emotion (which sensibility dictates) will only lead to the pitiable state she creates for her audience. Contrastingly, a balanced focus that synthesizes attention to

both emotion and reason leads to virtue and happiness within the domestic sphere and within traditional female roles rather than sensibility's "throne," which is not what it promises to be.

With her appeals to both emotion and reason, Wollstonecraft rhetorically reinforces the change of focus she sees as necessary in society, changes that will make her plan for women cultivating reason and attaining virtue possible. In one of her most famous passages, Wollstonecraft argues, "It is time to effect a revolution in female manners—time to restore to them their lost dignity—and make them, as part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world" (45). In calling for a revolution in manners, Wollstonecraft calls for a change in the means by which women attain the ends of manners—virtue—as well as the source of those manners, which she argues in her statement: "It is time to separate unchangeable morals from local manners" (45). In other words, it is time to decide which are universal moral goals and which are local means by which some group has tried to accomplish the goal. By separating and comparing morals and manners, Wollstonecraft shows how merely producing acceptable manners is the focus of sensibility, a practice that is consistent with sensibility's desire to just make sure women have those manners, those essential surface features. At the same time, she shows that fostering the development of morals is the focus of rationality. In focusing on the morals, or the sources from which manners issue, rationality makes it possible to analyze how women will attain morals and what their manners will actually represent. Wollstonecraft's revolution in female manners makes it necessary to step back and think rationally about—rethink, even—how women can attain that virtue that comes from understanding and even how to cultivate that understanding.

We can infer what Wollstonecraft believes manners should be based on from her statement that “the only solid foundation for morality appears to be the character of the supreme Being; the harmony of which arises from a balance of attributes” (46). For Wollstonecraft, the basis upon which female manners and inner natures, the former being a manifestation of the latter, is understanding, or a balance between reason and emotion. We see how she defines understanding with the way she balances appeals to reason and emotion, and this way is illustrated in this next example.

The fourth and final example I will provide of how Wollstonecraft makes a combination of appeals to reason and emotion comes in Chapter 7. This passage makes use of Wollstonecraft’s combination of appeals, but it departs from the end goal of my three previous examples. Having anchored her feminist rhetoric in the rationalist tradition and in opposition to sensibility, Wollstonecraft uses this passage to rhetorically embody and represent her feminist agenda of improving female understanding. In this example, Wollstonecraft suggests that a plan for women’s development would benefit from a combination of reason and emotion, a balance she argues that modesty achieves. Wollstonecraft combines appeals to reason and emotion to concretely illustrate her message of attaining a balanced character through modesty. She says,

Modesty! Sacred offspring of sensibility and reason!—true delicacy of mind!—may I unblamed presume to investigate thy nature, and trace to its covert the mild charm, that mellowing each harsh feature of a character, renders what would otherwise only inspire cold admiration—lovely!—
Thou that smoothest the wrinkles of wisdom, and softenest the tone of the sublimest virtues till they all melt into humanity;—thou that spreadest the

ethereal cloud that, surrounding love, heightens every beauty, it half shades, breathing those coy sweets that steal into the heart, and charm the senses—modulate for me the language of persuasive reason, till I rouse my sex from the flowery bed, on which they supinely sleep life away!
(121)

This first paragraph's message is that modesty is the outward manifestation of a balanced, well-rounded inner nature, focusing on the formation of the nature rather than the manners. As Wollstonecraft makes this argument, the images she uses for the paragraph and the way it combines appeals reflect and symbolize the balance she discusses and its effects.

In the images she creates, Wollstonecraft tries to materialize her abstract ideas, to give them some form, some physical or concrete manifestation. Perhaps the most obvious instance of this is her calling modesty, or the integration of reason and emotion, "sacred offspring." Not only does Wollstonecraft create a body for this ideal with her phrase, but she also instills that body with importance by calling it sacred. I do not want to argue that Wollstonecraft is making modesty out to be a savior or a physical product of God, but certainly the image and the combination of words carries those overtones. And as women strive to be more virtuous—truly virtuous—they can look to modesty and its symbolism to help them do that.

By making modesty concrete as "sacred offspring," Wollstonecraft appeals to the emotions; however, she follows with a concrete image that appeals to reason. When she says that she desires to "investigate [modesty's] nature," or understand it empirically, she continues to make modesty concrete. Empirical investigation takes a concrete, physical

object as its subject—not only does this reinforce the image of modesty as a being, but it also makes more real the process of coming to know and understand modesty and makes the investigator extremely important. For women, to whom Wollstonecraft wants to give more responsibility for their virtue and happiness, this image makes clearer the way that women can promote their understanding.

Wollstonecraft lastly creates the image of physical beautification as the physical manifestation of reason. Wollstonecraft says modesty “smooths the wrinkles of wisdom,” showing first the physical representation of primarily reason as wrinkles and then exercising modesty as the process by which those wrinkles are smoothed to create outward beauty in the being. In this image, modesty has no place and nothing to work on without the “wrinkles of wisdom,” and it would not create the same beauty in the being if it was not smoothing those wrinkles. We see the physical impossibility of modesty without reason as well as the physical boon that modesty is, making both reason and emotions in balanced combination important.

The fact that Wollstonecraft uses imagery to materialize her theory puts her in even closer relation to the New Rhetorical theory. As we will see in the next chapter of this thesis, there was a branch of New Rhetoric that believed it was particularly important for rhetoric itself to be a useful tool in practice. At the same time, the branch also believed in the importance of a theory behind the rhetoric, driving its development and determining how the rhetoric could be even more effective. This branch believed it was extremely important for the rhetoric to inform the theory as the theory informed the rhetoric. We can see a similar relationship in Wollstonecraft through her use of imagery to make her ideas more concrete. As she develops her theory in the *Vindication*, she takes

opportunity to make that theory concrete and to show how it looks in actual use. We can see that relationship inform Wollstonecraft's belief that modesty should modulate the language of persuasive reason and thereby create a reality that reflects the balance that modesty governs.

Beyond using language to create concrete images, Wollstonecraft juxtaposes words to make balanced phrases. She uses modesty linguistically to illustrate how modesty works and communicate its importance for women. The first juxtaposition, or mixture of appeals to reason and sensibility, is "delicacy of mind." One of the main assumptions underlying sensibility philosophy was that women were very physically delicate, which must have meant they also had very delicate senses. Here Wollstonecraft proposes uniting that natural delicacy with rational thinking; she sees in sense or emotions the potential to temper thoughts and reason, to soften that faculty. The "true" she uses to modify "delicacy of mind" signals that the phrase does not mean weakness of mind, as it could easily mean in sensibility's terms, but that it represents the fusion of two strong faculties. These faculties work together to produce a faculty that outweighs or outshines the abilities of its separate component parts.

The next juxtaposition is "mild charm." It begins with the notion of charm, a trait that sensibility encouraged in women as one of their greatest strengths. Charm used beauty to communicate to men's senses and emotions, creating love (or perhaps lust) that was based on surface details. Wollstonecraft does not approve of a relationship built on this source of attraction because not only does it create a tenuous bond between two people, but it degrades women and bestows on them sensibility's "royal homage" and "paltry crown." Thus, Wollstonecraft tempers natural female charm with something else

to soften or weaken it and change the effect it has. Although Wollstonecraft does not name that something else outright, I infer that the tempering agent is development of the mind.

Furthermore, this mild charm tempers and softens the fruits of pure reason, represented by “cold admiration.” In her juxtaposition of the words “inspire cold admiration—lovely,”¹ Wollstonecraft explains that modesty’s nature balances cold admiration, or the fruits of pure reason, and adds some warmth and beauty to it. One essential point here is that Wollstonecraft talks of modesty’s “nature,” creating the originating idea or concept of modesty and its outer manifestation, or the manners of modesty. This idea of modesty is what Wollstonecraft wants to convey to women so that they can cultivate the idea to produce the manners. Rhetorically, Wollstonecraft shows us this by saying modesty’s nature “mellow[s] each harsh feature of a character [. . . and] renders what would otherwise only inspire cold admiration—lovely!” By using the word “character,” Wollstonecraft conveys the concept of something formed internally that dictates actions and traits.

Linguistically, this juxtaposition is unexpected because it is odd that the verb “inspire” would have the object “cold admiration.” The verb “inspire” means “to breathe life into through a feeling or idea” and has connotations of warmth. Beyond this, the phrase “cold admiration” seems something of an oxymoron. However, the phrase “cold admiration” contains elements of both reason and sensibility—“calculating void of feeling” and “admiration,” respectively. The combination of mild charm and cold admiration that modesty makes possible produces moderate beauty. In turn, this moderate

¹ “May I unblamed presume to investigate thy nature, and trace to its covert the mild charm, that mellowing each harsh feature of a character, renders what would otherwise only inspire cold admiration—lovely!”

beauty—beauty on both the inside and outside and beauties that temper each other—fosters virtue.

Wollstonecraft reiterates this idea of beauties tempering each other with the last juxtaposition in this paragraph. She says, “[modesty] heightens every beauty it half shades,” presenting almost a maxim that women can live by. Again, on the surface this statement seems impossible. The notion that outer beauty, which serves its purpose by making itself noticed, can increase by being shaded seems nonsensical. However, it is evident that Wollstonecraft is taking sensibility’s symbol of virtue, outer beauty, and increasing it by partially shading it. While she is not explicit about how she would shade beauty, I infer that using the mind takes some of a woman’s attention away from her beauty, adding to it with a balance that creates more beauty that could exist from all outer beauty or all inner beauty.

While my readings of Wollstonecraft only begin to interpret the rhetorical moves she was making, they, in a sense, reflect the nature of her project. While Wollstonecraft was ostensibly writing to men, she was writing for women, and she wanted to speak in a way that could teach women to understand. I don’t mean to imply that women were simple-minded or unable to comprehend ideas, but they certainly were not trained in classical rhetorical modes or tools, and so Wollstonecraft did not want to complicate her message. She made deliberate and contextually influenced decisions. At the same time, she was speaking to men as well, and so she adopted a highly self-consciously rational voice both to appeal to that part of her audience and to model the linguistic manifestation of the system she was promoting. Both of these goals give her project lasting influence, which helps refute criticism that Wollstonecraft did not influence her contemporary

audience. Wollstonecraft's rhetoric planted the seed that many writers would bring to fruition in the decades following her death.

These rhetorical readings of passages from the *Vindication* establish that, like Burke and Paine, Wollstonecraft dealt with rhetorical issues alongside social ones. Furthermore, for all three thinkers, the rhetorical and social were integrally related. These readings also reveal Wollstonecraft's major role in feminist history, establishing her as the author of modern feminist rhetoric and the founder of the feminist tradition that continued into the 1820s under the influence of that rhetoric. Wollstonecraft was able to establish a modern feminist tradition by building on *the* popular political discussion of the period and incorporating her rhetoric into the rights-of-man rhetoric. With this feminist rhetoric, Wollstonecraft contributed to shaping the New Rhetorical movement by influencing its development and growth. She also let that movement influence her rhetoric, incorporating elements of its developing theory into her practice, thereby accomplishing the ultimate goal of the New Rhetoric.

CHAPTER 4
THE NEW RHETORIC AND
THE SHAPING OF AUSTEN'S *PERSUASION*

Given the prominence of the New Rhetoric and Wollstonecraft's "rights of woman" rhetoric in the early Romantic period, female novelists of this era were, not surprisingly, heavily caught up in these movements. Women novelists played a particularly pivotal role in helping to make this New Rhetoric a vehicle for feminist discourse. And as they used, experimented with, and modified the basic rhetoric of Mary Wollstonecraft, they refined and strengthened the means by which women could pursue and develop understanding. In effect, they endeavored to give women more freedom to choose to be virtuous and means to develop virtue, guided by principles of understanding outlined in the rhetoric of these feminist novels.

Many Romantic-era women penned novels that addressed the means of developing understanding and used language to subtly question or depart from the norm. These novels suggested ways to increase female moral agency and responsibility, all within the domestic sphere. Amelia Opie, for one, wrote fiction that was certainly not detached from reality. A friend of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, Opie wrote her best-known work, *Adeline Mowbray* (1805), about a woman who became the mistress to a liberal social philosopher and had his child out of wedlock – a plot that seemingly parallels Wollstonecraft's life story. The novel focuses on using reason and actually blames many of Adeline Mowbray's missteps (as well as those of her lover) on overzealous adherence to the abstract concept of reason, which in reality led her to be quite unreasonable. Although seemingly intent on championing traditional virtue, the

novel is problematic because virtue is not necessarily rewarded and vice is not necessarily punished. The ambiguity of the novel's ultimate message increases with its discussion of experience and the need for concrete application of abstract ideas. Rather ironically, this purportedly anti-Wollstonecraftian novel actually draws heavily upon Wollstonecraft's language of balance and integration.

Another female writer of this era who participated in the Wollstonecraftian tradition was Fanny Burney, especially in her last novel, *The Wanderer* (1814). Listed as a feminist landmark in Barbara Caine's *English Feminism 1780–1980*, this novel certainly engages with feminist issues. While the novel seems more overtly focused on social issues and national definition than are some other feminist novels, there are many moments in which the Wollstonecraftian concept of balance and understanding comes out of the women in the novel and their relationships. Telling the story of a small community of a few families, Burney introduces “the wanderer,” a young French woman who escaped from her country by gaining passage on an English boat. Harboring a secret identity and past, the wanderer interacts with other women in the novel, often transgressing boundaries of propriety and femininity and eliciting reactions from the other female characters of the novel. With each comment, Burney subtly reveals ideas about women's roles, abilities, responsibilities, and rights. While there is never any direct comment on these issues, we can end up with a sense of Burney's questioning the status quo.

A particularly noteworthy example of the feminist rhetoric linking early nineteenth-century fiction to Wollstonecraft's project is Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, which comments on many current political discussions as it tells the unconventional love story

of an aristocracy-born woman past her “bloom” and a self-made man. As Austen’s last completed novel, which integrates many of the smaller themes Austen was working on in earlier novels, *Persuasion* yields a rhetorical reading that fits Austen into the current feminist project as it elucidates this feminist rhetoric. Embodying Margaret Kirkham, Claudia Johnson, and Alison Sulloway’s general goal of “working from far more historically based critical ground,” *Persuasion* is able to be more specifically integrated into Margaret Kirkham’s view of “Austen and Wollstonecraft as writers committed to principles of Enlightenment humanism, [which] included the belief in women’s capacity to reason and the need for women’s education” (6). As we examine how Austen was engaging with contemporary political issues to further the development of feminism, we find that it is through rhetoric that she contributed to political issues and engaged with a movement that had virtually been outlawed from all good conservative society. This rhetorical project also validates Looser’s suggestion that Austen criticism must “consider her texts in tandem with discourses of other identities and practices at issue in her own time” (9). With this consideration, we see more deeply Seeber’s concept of “the dialogic nature of [Austen’s] work” (15) and see her feminist discourse or rhetoric as a model for a means of developing understanding through experience by using rhetoric that encouraged that experience.

Reading Austen in this way requires that we build on existing scholarship on her engagement with the New Rhetorical tradition. Most importantly, Lynn Rigberg, in her book *Jane Austen’s Discourse with New Rhetoric*, explains that although Austen did not receive a formal rhetorical education, her father’s teaching in the Austen home would have given her many opportunities to learn and converse about rhetoric and the current

ideas. Rigberg particularly links Austen with George Campbell, both because of the likelihood that Austen's father, as a reverend, would have been familiar with Campbell's works on religious oratory and because of the parallels she sees between Campbell's and Austen's ideas. Rigberg reads all six of Austen's major novels to establish where Austen uses language that ties her to Campbell.

Building off Rigberg's insights on Austen and Campbell, we can establish the feminist nature of Austen's rhetoric and its relation to Wollstonecraft's rhetoric. In this chapter, I will argue that Jane Austen's feminist argument is influenced by Wollstonecraft's rhetorical tradition of understanding, agency, and moral responsibility. Austen also explains how and why it is necessary to promote the main goal of feminism, namely developing female understanding. It is through her rhetoric, which relates to both Campbell's and to Wollstonecraft's, that we see Austen explaining and even modeling how to develop understanding and why it is so important. After surveying George Campbell's reworkings of the New Rhetoric, I will look at the way Campbell's rhetorical theory influenced Austen's feminist message. Finally, I will analyze how Campbell acts as a bridge for Wollstonecraft's and Austen's feminist theories. The last half of the chapter will be devoted to a rhetorical feminist reading of *Persuasion*. Here I will establish a connection between Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen and integrate Austen into the Wollstonecraftian feminist tradition of promoting female understanding through a rhetoric of education, experience, and balance.

The Psychological Branch of the New Rhetoric

As seen in previous chapters, the New Rhetoric came as a response to the inability of rhetoric to respond to scientific discovery and accommodate new ideas. Departing

from the branch of development discussed in chapter 2, we will examine the branch in which the New Rhetoric begins to really accomplish those basic goals defined by Locke years earlier. This branch was largely the work of Hugh Blair (1718–1800) and George Campbell (1719–1796) during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and these rhetoricians focused on psychological-philosophical theories of rhetoric.

Establishing themselves really as the first theorists of modern rhetoric (Golden 17), Blair and Campbell responded to the classical traditions with very developed answers. They codified the New Rhetoric into more than just a “tendency”—with this branch it became a rhetorical movement. Blair, Campbell, and other New Rhetoricians expanded the definition of rhetoric from merely persuasion to “those speech patterns that appeal to the understanding” (Golden 13). Recasting the rigidly compartmentalized classical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos into categories that could overlap, these New Rhetoricians created a dynamic rhetoric (Golden 13-14, 17). They worked with a rhetoric that adapted to be efficient in multiple disciplines and that was in turn influenced by those same disciplines.

Blair, whose major rhetorical contribution came a few years after Campbell’s chronologically, influenced this psychological-philosophical branch of rhetoric through his most famous work, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783). Blair was heavily indebted to his teacher Adam Smith for many of the basics of his rhetorical theory. However, he contributed heavily to discussions on the connections between the fields of rhetoric and literary criticism. He believed that each of these disciplines held great potential to influence the other and promoted using literature as a means of developing taste, an essential characteristic of a good rhetorician. Perhaps Blair’s most noteworthy

contribution to the New Rhetoric was his exploration of the relationships between different types of appeals. He believed that composition itself cultivated reason (Golden 33) and that logical and ethical pursuits promoted the progress of the understanding and its search after knowledge. Blair believed that “the most busy man, in the most active sphere, cannot be always occupied by business” (Golden 35), and so he encouraged finding a “middle station” in which there is an equal (or effective) balance of “pleasures of sense and those of pure intellect” (Golden 35).

At least for this project, however, George Campbell is the even more influential of the psychological-philosophical New Rhetoricians because he promotes this rhetoric of understanding and balanced, multi-faceted appeals. Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is a complex work in the way it engages and responds to other rhetoricians, and I in no way intend to try to survey his entire theory nor attempt to represent it here. I rather try to focus on the rhetorical elements in Campbell that correspond to those in Wollstonecraft to show how those elements bolster feminist rhetoric and the complementary theory and rhetoric it attempts to form. Campbell was highly aware of the context in which he was writing and thinking, knowing full well Locke’s opinion that rhetoric was the “perfect cheat.” Yet he saw the potential for change in rhetorical theory, particularly insofar as it proved willing to incorporate the new scientific branch of thought into language and logic (Walzer 33).

It was in this branch of the New Rhetoric that feminist rhetoric found a place to grow and develop. Because this branch was so focused on the audience and understanding its needs, it was accessible to women, who had typically been excluded from any rhetorical theory. This branch of rhetoric then allowed them to use the language

in ways that had never been possible because its theory took into account all of the members of its audience and tried to formulate a theory that was applicable to all of them.

Campbell's philosophy of rhetoric basically focuses on answering Locke's famous indictment of rhetoric as a "powerful instrument of Error and Deceit" (Golden 13), and he did this by devising significant provisions to appeal to and understand his audience. To know how to produce a certain effect in a certain audience, Campbell determined that the rhetorician must determine his end in speaking. Because Campbell believed that rhetoric was "a uniquely comprehensive art that engages all the faculties of the mind" (Golden 35), he believed that accomplishing the ultimate end of communication with the audience could be the aggregate effect of appealing to the audience in combinations of different ways. Campbell defined the four basic ends of rhetoric as "enlighten[ing] the understanding, pleas[ing] the imagination, mov[ing] the passions, or influenc[ing] the will" (Golden 145); while Campbell asserts that it is necessary to have one principal end, he also believes it is possible, even necessary, to use other ends to accomplish the principal one.

For my analysis, the importance of Campbell's theory lies in its ability to blur the lines between appeals and to show how effective integrating them can be. It also reveals how, according to Campbell, appeals are related: "Knowledge, the object of the intellect, furnishes materials for the fancy; the fancy culls, compounds, and . . . disposes these materials so as to affect the passions; the passions are the natural spurs to volition or action, and so need only to be right directed" (Golden 146). We can see how appeals and their effects become interconnected and there become a myriad of ways for a speaker to use rhetoric and make appeals.

The last major contribution Campbell makes with his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is the justification for a rhetorical philosophy that has effective praxis as its ultimate goal but that aims to influence praxis by analyzing what makes the praxis effective. This may seem counterintuitive, since rhetoric is traditionally a practical product for actual use and therefore is directed by theory without changing that theory (Golden 33). In other words, attempting to form an abstract, generalized philosophy seems to take the focus off the actual practice. Campbell's answer to the friction or conflict between theory and practice is to suggest that the relationship between the two change. For Campbell, instead of using the conventional model in which there is a one-way influence of theory on practices, Campbell insists the influence should go both ways: practice should influence and modify theory as much as theory influences practice. As Walzer puts it, Campbell wanted "local, even situational, elements [to] influence perception and, therefore, what seems to be true" (34). With this relationship between theory and practice, Campbell allowed rhetoric to be more effective through an overarching theory while still keeping the focus on the rhetoric, or the actual tool rhetoricians use to persuade. He wanted interaction and influence between the abstract or theoretical and concrete reality to produce the most effective tool.

This relationship between theory and practice comes about at least in part from Bacon's metaphor of the ant, the spider, and the bee and the relationship between all of them. In his *Novum Organum*, Bacon "immortalized the dichotomy of excesses" of pure theory and practice by representing those "who merely collect things and use them" as the empiricist ants and those who "spin webs out of themselves" as the rationalist spiders. Bacon's ideal was the middle, balanced way of the bee, which "gathers material from

nature but then transforms it by a power of its own” (Walzer 36). We will see shortly how this metaphor can be applied to feminist rhetoricians and their philosophies.

With this integrated project of using both theory and praxis to develop rhetoric and looking at how each influences the other, Campbell sees four different roles, or four different stages in the development of a rhetoric. The first stage is oratory, the tool that communicates; the second stage names the elements and develops taxonomies; the third stage attempts to identify the relationship between elements of rhetoric and successful persuasion; and the fourth stage explains in psychological terms the causes for successes explained in stage three and takes in all of the information from the first three stages to develop its product: the theory. With these four stages of rhetoric come four different types of rhetorical practitioners—the orator, the systematizer, the analyzer of effectiveness, and the philosopher. We will see below how Campbell’s delineation of roles seems to influence the development of feminist rhetoric.

Connecting Campbell and Wollstonecraft

Campbell’s movement to find the middle way between the extremes makes the importance of Wollstonecraft’s similar move even more significant. We see a similar move from Wollstonecraft with her combination of appeals to reason and emotion, her desire to find the middle ground of understanding. Although Wollstonecraft and Campbell are working on different projects in different places and different parts of society (Campbell always wrote specifically for preachers and the rhetoric they used to preach the word of God, while Wollstonecraft was arguing for women’s abilities and rights), there is continuity in their projects and their aims. Both clearly belong to the branch of the New Rhetoric that aims to correct the excesses of sensibility and its spiders

ensconcing themselves in theory by incorporating rationality into a theoretical framework that would let theory influence praxis and praxis influence theory.

Working with Bacon's ideal of the middle road and using theory but keeping it focused on the tool, Campbell was able to pursue a theory of effective rhetoric while legitimating his theory for his eighteenth-century audience. By creating this system of two-way influence, Campbell was able to address the Enlightenment's goals of "timeless truth" and "foundational, axiomatic statements on which practice could be reformed" (Walzer 34). At the same time, he navigated the goals of the New Rhetoric and worked to develop a useful, effective rhetoric for a range of audiences. By addressing the Enlightenment "science of the mind," Campbell was able to fulfill "the need rhetoric had as a discipline to establish itself as a human science" (Walzer 34). By grounding his theory in "timeless, uniform mental operations," he was able to justify expanding the province of rhetoric.

Campbell's grounding of his theory in the science of the mind and his focus on understanding the audience helps legitimate feminist rhetoric. By making the basic human intellect an important power to understand, Campbell encourages the understanding of and even attention to female intellectual development. Even more importantly, Campbell's theory aims to empower speakers, to make them able to communicate to their audience by understanding how to find the best means of persuasion possible. Most importantly, in terms of Austen and Wollstonecraft, his theory of the four stages of the development of rhetoric gives context, foundation, and direction to the development of feminist rhetoric from Wollstonecraft to the early-nineteenth-century feminist novelists. Using Campbell's terms, we can see Wollstonecraft as the

orator, using the rhetoric directly and addressing its audience. In the same vein, the feminist novelists of the early nineteenth century become the analyzers and the philosophers, explaining how and why feminist rhetoric can be effective in its promotion of understanding and its desire to instill in women the traits that will help them develop moral agency. Unable to overtly argue for the feminist cause, these novelists strengthened feminist rhetoric by developing the philosophy behind Wollstonecraft's praxis.

Connecting Campbell and Austen

Many early nineteenth-century feminist writers chose the novel as the context for their rhetoric because it was a traditionally female, domestic form. Certainly at some level it is difficult to fathom a rhetorical reading of early nineteenth-century female texts because, as a general rule, women were not part of the traditional, classical rhetorical culture. This traditional rhetoric culture saw rhetoric—and its public, even political, nature—as man's domain remained firmly fixed. To speak of women writing novels, functioning as rhetoricians, or engaging in the rhetorical discussion of the day is to introduce a paradoxical idea into that discussion. However, Austen saw the novel as a form of writing that evinced a great knowledge of human nature and an ability to illustrate its nuances (Harris 21). She saw the potential of the novel to work on the theory behind feminist rhetoric because it could create a reality without ever entering the public sphere. She also recognized that characters could embody traits and illustrate how those traits worked. By looking at Austen's use of Campbell's rhetoric it becomes clearer how Austen made her novels contexts for rhetorical tools and used those tools to further the novels' messages. It also makes clearer why: in the context of the novel, Austen could

use her characters to dramatize rhetoric, illustrating and even testing the theory behind feminist rhetoric.

Highlighting the ubiquity of rhetoric in Austen's writing, Rigberg suggests that "rhetoric as it was perceived in her time stands as the unifying element to all of Austen's major themes" (1). She goes on to say that Austen's works become part of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century discussions on rhetoric because of her characters' language and the way Austen constructs her novels (1). Austen was engaging with a political culture that saw rhetoric largely as the tool by which people revealed both their own backgrounds and political beliefs. She especially uses the tool of language to establish female values, especially encouraging understanding as the method by which women can determine and supervise their own development towards virtue.

While Jane Austen's *Persuasion* has come into critical popularity for many reasons, perhaps the most significant one is its political relevance. As other scholars have suggested, *Persuasion* can be read as a chronicle of how women contributed to the development of British society and politics. Because of the novel's resounding meritocratic themes and its being set in the short peace between Napoleon's initial defeat and Waterloo, many see *Persuasion* as engaging with and commenting on real events in society and offering interpretations and solutions for them.

Amidst all the discussions of *Persuasion*'s politics, previous critics have generally overlooked its distinctive political and social rhetoric. Austen uses elements of Blair's and Campbell's rhetorical theories as well as their expanded definition of rhetoric to make politically and socially conscious points without writing polemic. In doing this, Austen creates a contemporary argument for the feminist movement, which she otherwise

would have been unable to influence without sparking much criticism or opposition. Upon examination, *Persuasion* becomes part of the modern, or Wollstonecraftian, feminist movement, legitimating and extending the arguments set out in the 1790s. *Persuasion* can be read as a vindication of the feminist argument in Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Consequently, *Persuasion* is to modern feminist rhetoric as Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is to the New Rhetoric in that Austen basically uses Campbell's approach to the rhetoric.

Using arguments Wollstonecraft made in the *Vindication*, Austen personifies various feminist traits and uses the narrative to explain not only why those traits are important for feminine development but also how to engender them. With her instances of successful persuasion, of successful changes in female character, Austen weaves a rhetoric-based theory that ultimately aims to improve the way the rhetoric functions. In the remainder of this chapter, I will look at Austen's ideas about vanity, understanding, and virtue in relation to Wollstonecraft's ideas and then explain how Austen demonstrates the importance of eschewing vanity and embracing understanding to develop the convictions that produce virtue. With her characters' language, Austen characterizes the values feminist rhetoric promotes and shows the actions those values produce. While Austen uses language that ties her to Wollstonecraft and Campbell, she is not directly rhetorical. Rather, her work extends the work Wollstonecraft was trying to do and pushing the feminist movement forward. Austen helps develop feminist rhetoric by clarifying and adding to feminist rhetorical theory.

Austen functions within feminist rhetoric in two ways. First, she is Campbell's ideal rhetorician, one who "possesses reflective knowledge, including the taxonomy or

rhetorical kinds and devices as well as rules for deploying them to the best effect” (Weinsheimer 141). Second, she functions as his ideal philosopher, one with reflective knowledge as well, but who also knows “not just the rhetorical rules *per se*; [she] also knows the principles that explain why they work” (Weinsheimer 141). With these traits, Austen is able to function as a “rhetorical bee,” a concept Campbell adopted from Bacon. In his introduction to *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Campbell rejects both the empiricist ant that merely collects things and uses them for himself and the rationalist spider that spins a web out of himself. It is the bee who gathers materials and transforms them by “a power of its own” that Campbell wishes to promote, and he aims to do so by creating the roles of the rhetorician and the philosopher. While these are separate roles, both rhetorician and philosopher work to appeal to their audience more convincingly and specifically through reflection on how to appeal through rhetoric. Looking at Austen as a combination of both rhetorician and philosopher and *Persuasion* as the culmination of Austen’s rhetoric project, we see Campbell’s influence on feminist rhetoric and the benefits it reaps from Campbell’s theory.

Persuasion

One way Austen performs her role as rhetorician through *Persuasion* is by taking Wollstonecraft’s arguments of what women need to do and explaining why that will help women progress and how they need to go about it to progress. In her analysis of rhetoric in *Persuasion*, Rigberg breaks persuasion into two processes. First, “in terms of the rhetor,” she says, “persuasion is the activity meant to influence the audience” (194). Here we see Wollstonecraft’s function of trying to show the audience why a certain action is necessary. Second, Rigberg continues, “in terms of the audience, persuasion is

conviction, the mindset which an audience brings to the rhetorical arena” (194-195).

Austen analyzes how to change or influence that conviction, that persuasion in the audience and to find out how to recommend women transform ideas by their own power.

In comparing Wollstonecraft’s and Austen’s treatments of vanity and understanding, we can see the different functions of the two and then can analyze how Austen advocates influencing the audience’s persuasion. Austen, as does Wollstonecraft, believes that women’s actions must be the results of their own choices. Both writers see it as impossible for women to make choices that lead to happiness when they have not first trained and shaped their convictions because those convictions must inspire them to make good choices. Where Wollstonecraft argued for the need for women to be able to make good choices, Austen explains how they can learn to do that.

It is important to recognize that Wollstonecraft is in a very different situation from Austen because their specific political contexts influence their arguments. I especially want to emphasize that I am not trying to compare Wollstonecraft and Austen to judge them or put one above the other. Rather, I want to demonstrate how much feminism grew between their efforts, especially in light of the development of the New Rhetoric over the decades between the two authors. Wollstonecraft was directly influencing and influenced by the public sphere, and during the 1790s that meant she was engaging with sensibility. Claudia Johnson in *Equivocal Beings* argues, “During the 1790s, sentimentality [was] politics made intimate” (2). Because sensibility permeated feminist life and politics, it makes sense that her feminist argument would focus on its difference from sensibility. In light of her context, Wollstonecraft presented important ideas, but they could only be developed so far—she realized that her audience largely

needed to merely be convinced that sensibility was not what it said it was. In Austen we can see the rhetorical freedom to expand on what those initial ideas meant.

The statement Wollstonecraft makes on vanity is that it is the antithesis of virtue. She says, “Would ye, O my sisters, really possess modesty, ye must remember that the possession of virtue, of any denomination, is incompatible with ignorance and vanity!” (130). In order to possess that modesty, that sacred offspring of reason and emotion, and to attain happiness, it is impossible to be directed by vanity. Wollstonecraft works to convince the audience that they want to have modesty and that they want to stay free of vanity.

Rhetorically, Wollstonecraft introduces her idea of moral agency and virtue as a product of deliberate action, illustrated for example by the passage in the preceding paragraph. She uses “would ye,” implying desire but even more so, success. She goes on with, “Would ye . . . really *possess* modesty” and conveys the idea that there are different levels at which a woman could be defined modest. For Wollstonecraft, if women were to really, truly hold and enjoy modesty, that offspring of reason and emotion, they must avoid ignorance and vanity. Virtue and modesty are traits that can only be possessed by cultivation. They can be assigned or bestowed in name from some exterior force, but to truly experience them and know how to act in accordance with modesty and virtue, they are traits that must be cultivated so they can be possessed.

Whereas Wollstonecraft insists women will not be happy as long as they are ruled by vanity, Austen explains why vanity is a trait that precludes happiness. Rather than trying to persuade her audience to stop living according to the rules of sensibility, she encourages development that is directed by individual change and conviction. As Austen

aims to “collect and evaluate moral evidence of rhetorical value” (Rigberg 193), she analyzes how rhetoric can reach her audience more effectively and incorporates principles that would influence rhetoric to also influence female conviction. Austen illustrates her principles through narrative to go beyond only making suggestions for action to explaining the reasons behind the action, ultimately hoping to bring women to their own virtuous action by changing and shaping conviction.

In *Persuasion*, the first way Austen analyzes vanity to influence the audience’s mindset is by examining its role in forming Elizabeth Elliot’s character. Examining Elizabeth shows how vanity takes over the self and precludes it from feeling much else. Also, examining her actions, a product of her vanity, shows how vanity gives the woman a sense of power to choose without supplying the accompanying happiness. For example, when Elizabeth is trying to decide whether to invite Mrs. Musgrove and her party to dinner in Bath, she reveals the various factors influencing her decision. Propriety dictates that she should welcome her relations into her home, but the Elliots do not have a big enough china service to accommodate everyone, and hence her vanity forbids it. Ultimately, although “it was a struggle between propriety and vanity; . . . vanity got the better, and then Elizabeth was happy again” (177).

Rhetorically, Austen uses the juxtaposition of “propriety” and “vanity” to further give evidence of the conviction level of her argument. We know from Wollstonecraft that propriety is sensibility tool to shape manners from the outside, and she tells us that those beings who respect propriety as evidence of virtue do not understand what virtue can mean. In Wollstonecraft’s view, vanity is more damaging to a woman’s development than propriety is: vanity is antithetical to virtue. Where it exists, virtue cannot develop.

Whereas propriety distracts women from reality with its abstract ideals, vanity fills the place that virtue would inhabit. Whereas propriety is characteristic of manners, vanity is characteristic of conviction. When Austen tells us that vanity won out in Elizabeth's decision, we see the levels at which Austen understands female development and the level that Austen attempts to influence with the help of Wollstonecraft and her terms. In *Persuasion*, Austen would not merely persuade women to ignore the dictates of propriety. Rather, she would go so far as to develop that conviction so that vanity cannot take root. Austen's juxtaposition of the two words shows her connection with Wollstonecraft as well as the level above Wollstonecraft upon which she is building her argument.

As we learn more from Austen, we will see that Elizabeth's "happiness" is really just satisfaction that she got what she wanted, or, in Wollstonecraft's terms, her happiness is the product of "cunning." Austen adds, "These were her internal persuasions" (177), and there is nothing else there. Vanity is a strong force, and if it develops, it can overtake a person and change their convictions so that actions merely accomplish what women think they want. Elizabeth's struggle is analogous to a woman of sensibility's struggle, which gives her two basic choices: she can either adhere to those outside rules that sensibility sets to determine what her manners should be like or she can give heed to her innate, natural convictions. Although choosing the personal convictions would be preferable for the feminist, she chooses vanity because her convictions have received no shaping from moral principles. Thus, even choosing propriety would be preferable to the absence of anything but pure, raw selfishness.

This example influences the audience to support the Wollstonecraftian position that vanity creates a void, useless person. Elsewhere in the novel, Austen further explains

and illustrates why her readers should train their convictions to yield moral actions. For example, in her comparison of Elizabeth's and Anne's definitions of "happiness," Austen reveals the difference in conviction that produces each definition as well as the actions that reflect each mindset. Austen says,

At the Bath concert, both Elizabeth and Anne were very, very happy ... as they walked in. Elizabeth, arm in arm with Miss Carteret, and looking on the broad back of the dowager Viscountess Dalrymple before her, had nothing to wish for which did not seem within her reach; and Anne – but it would be an insult to the nature of Anne's felicity, to draw any comparison between it and her sister's; the origin of one all selfish vanity, of the other all generous attachment. (149-150)

In this example, Elizabeth's internal persuasions appear in opposition to Anne's, and Austen shows the audience how they can choose, giving them the chance to choose by internalizing the difference between what Anne represents and what Elizabeth represents. It is in this example that we see the differences between effectively recommending and moving to action, the difference (at least in degree) between Wollstonecraft and Austen, and the difference between Wollstonecraft's initial feminist rhetorical idea of balancing reason and emotion and Austen's Campbell-influenced engagement of the audience psychologically. Here Austen compares the sisters' convictions to show the difference between the actions those convictions produce. In presenting both actions and convictions, Austen is able to illustrate the goodness of the internal persuasion for others, for an audience. From Austen's unwillingness to actually compare Anne's actions or feelings resulting from her persuasions, or the "nature of her

felicity,” we can infer that there is such a difference in quality of Anne’s actions that a comparison would do Anne an injustice.

The ways that Austen and Wollstonecraft treat and characterize understanding illustrate this difference between their means and targets of persuasion as well. They reveal Austen’s extension of Wollstonecraft’s project that is trying to show the audience the error of sensibility’s ways and the need for it to be replaced by another system. With Austen’s project, the author means to model and instruct how that change can come about and then how that new state of mind can be refined into happiness and a state of mind that always creates happiness. Austen’s ability to do that is the product of Campbell’s division of rhetorical tasks and his identification of the convictions that must be addressed to drive moral action. Campbell’s influence is seen in Austen’s treatment of understanding as well.

Wollstonecraft’s treatment of understanding is similar to her treatment of vanity. Because it has been so neglected, Wollstonecraft’s first task is simply to make women aware that they possess understanding. From there she must show that using it would benefit women and lead to happier lives. Wollstonecraft says, “Women ought to endeavour to purify their heart; but can they do so when their uncultivated understandings make them entirely dependent on their senses for employment and amusement, when no noble pursuit sets them above the little vanities of the day, or enables them to curb the wild emotions that agitate a reed over which every passing breeze has power?” (29). Here Wollstonecraft aims to persuade her audience to merely accept that there is a problem with the status quo. And this is a necessary exercise in light

of how thoroughly steeped her female readers are in the late-eighteenth-century norms of sensibility.

On the other hand, we can see Austen's attempts to go beyond arguing there is a problem and to instead address the audience's convictions, or their understanding. She wants to illustrate how one type of conviction fares in comparison with another, with which she means to change the audience's mindset by showing them its results instead of telling them about them. For example, Austen uses Louisa Musgrove as an example of a woman possessing many positive traits but lacking strong understanding. In fact, Austen characterizes Louisa as possessing some of the best and most modern accomplishments possible for a woman. However, as she illustrates the results of Louisa's talents and virtues, Austen is able to analyze even more closely the vital nature of understanding.

Perhaps one of the best examples of the vital importance of true understanding and of the audience's experience learning how to be understanding surrounds the nut incident on the walk to Winthrop. The audience first begins to recognize the importance of understanding in Austen's portrait of Louisa Musgrove. Characterized earlier as having a "modern mind and manners" and "all the usual stock of accomplishments," Louisa was, in Anne's words, one of the "happiest creatures of her acquaintance" (38). Yet, despite all of Louisa's accomplishments and qualities, Anne admits she would "not have given up her own more elegant and cultivated mind for all [her] enjoyments" (38). Knowing this about Louisa, the audience is prepared to interpret the actions and speech of a woman who has so many of the components that would engender understanding but who does not quite possess it. Austen delves more deeply into analyzing convictions that

are shaped by understanding by presenting convictions that are influenced by components of understanding but that ultimately do not produce evidence of true understanding.

Louisa's interaction with Wentworth smacks of sensibility, even in its rhetoric. When Louisa "enthusiastically" "cried" that she would "rather be overturned by [the man she loved] than driven safely by anybody else," Captain Wentworth recognizes one trait that he admires. Using the same impassioned tone as Louisa, he cried, "I honour you!" (72). While Wentworth respects Louisa's character, rather than merely her beauty, their interchange gives no evidence of potential for the mature balanced relationship of Wollstonecraft's balance between reason and emotion. Although Louisa admires the Crofts, an example of the ideal marriage relationship between complements with equal understanding, she does not possess the traits or the convictions necessary to create that relationship.

Austen's illustration of the need for a balance between reason and emotion is reminiscent of Campbell's approach. Where Wollstonecraft says that there must be a balance between reason and emotions, Austen shows us it is not as simple as merely saying that. This interchange between Louisa and Wentworth involves a bit too much emotion to be mature or completely sincere. Yet we find that Anne's convictions lead her to ultimately reject Mr. Elliot because, although he seemingly possesses almost every desirable trait, he lacks some emotional quality that would make him real. Austen's ideas are again evocative of Campbell as she presents these instances in which conviction comes out through action and the audience has to judge for itself what actions say about conviction. While Campbell suggested a balance among appeals to reason, emotion, understanding, and will, he did not prescribe exact proportions for each. Rather, he

recommended appeals to each faculty but left it up to the rhetor to determine proportions based on the audience. In these examples we can recognize Campbell's philosophy as the audience must ask themselves how they would respond in the same situation. As they form their own convictions through the experience of thinking about these issues, they validate Campbell's philosophy as well as Austen's.

In the context of the book, we can infer how Austen might interpret the interchange between Wentworth and Louisa. First, the emotion that accompanies this interchange is too intense to be the interchange between mature, understanding people. Their enthusiastic, emotional protestations are untempered by reason, which becomes clear when Wentworth later realizes Louisa privileges her own will over reason and was perhaps more serious about being overturned than he believed her to be. The silence that follows this mutual outburst also comments on its nature. It seems that the two did not have anything else to say to each other on the subject, having crammed it all into their emotionally-charged speeches, which again gives evidence of a lack of maturity. Perhaps we could even assert that any two people would agree with each other on this subject. Regardless, Wentworth and Louisa's finding such seeming satisfaction in this interchange reminds us of Campbell's ants, who merely gather and use, employing rhetoric without enough attention to what it all means.

The effect of Captain Wentworth's speech is to show the problem of trying to take Louisa's rhetoric and make it match up with his theoretical expectations—his heartfelt, serious desires for a woman with “a strong mind, with sweetness of manner” (54). Wentworth shows how elusive and how important understanding is for happiness. He tries to make his expectations and what is actually there in Louisa match up only to

reassert that understanding must come from the inside and for the convictions to produce actions. Louisa's rhetoric and actions, no matter how much she says she wants to be understanding, will never help her achieve the level of understanding Wentworth desires, at least not until she eases her determination to have things her way. Austen conveys this with Wentworth's advice to Louisa: "It is the worst evil of too yielding and indecisive a character, that no influence over it can be depended upon" (74). In other words, he would convince Louisa of the evil of a person with a character that cannot be persuaded to change because he or she has no conviction. However, he then introduces a statement that reflects the other extreme and that is too untempered to reflect understanding: "Let those who would be happy be firm. . . . If Louisa Musgrove would be beautiful and happy in her November of life, she will cherish all her present powers of mind" (74-75). Or, in other words, do not let experience (being trod underfoot) change you—be impossible to persuade because you are so determined in your actions by your own convictions that you believe you need not listen to anything else.

The other events that move the audience's convictions to action revolve around Anne's relationship to Wentworth. There are three moments when Anne comes to realizations about her relationship with Wentworth that, analyzed together, argue for Austen's way of showing the audience how to develop understanding. The first instance occurs when Captain Wentworth first arrives at Uppercross and Charles and Mary come back to report on what happened. Anne finds that Captain Wentworth will breakfast at the Great House instead of the cottage the next day. Austen says, "Anne understood it. He wished to avoid seeing her. He had enquired after her, she found, slightly, as might suit a former slight acquaintance, seeming to acknowledge such as she had acknowledged,

actuated, perhaps, by the same view of escaping introduction when they were to meet” (52). Here, although Anne acts with as much understanding as she can, she is influenced by insecurities and fears. She persuaded herself that he wished to avoid seeing her by letting her fears convince her of that.

The next instance of “understanding” about Wentworth comes after the walk to Winthrop when Captain Wentworth helps Anne into the Crofts’ carriage. “This little circumstance seemed the contemplation of all that had gone before. She understood him. He could not forgive her,—but he could not be unfeeling. . . . Still he could not see her suffer without the desire of giving her relief. It was a remainder of former sentiment; it was an impulse of pure, though unacknowledged friendship” (77). Anne’s ability to think with understanding is still influenced by fear. She does not want to hope that Wentworth’s care and touch could have meant anything, so she lets her emotions override the rest of her mind. Only after Anne’s experience at Lyme does she have the confidence to use her understanding to interpret circumstances. We see Anne come to a new level of understanding, evidenced by her actions toward Captain Wentworth at the concert and the realization she makes about him.

When Anne sees Captain Wentworth at the concert and notices his changed behavior, she “could not contemplate the change as implying less.—He must love her” (150). Certainly Captain Wentworth’s actions have become easier to read, but Anne has become more confident through her experiences and her willingness to draw upon them. Lynn Rigberg says, “Well educated by experience, perhaps even more than formal education, Anne rightly preferences her own perceptions [after her experiences with Captain Wentworth and Mr. Elliot], and is persuaded, after due consideration, by her own

convictions” (199). She has become more capable, through practice and effort, to judge for herself and to develop and use her understanding to bring her happiness.

This growth is not necessarily new, but it is more developed, more enhanced. Anne gives evidence of the same strength of mind and moral conviction in her first experience with Wentworth. The question of what Anne should have done in 1806 when Wentworth proposed the first time hangs over the novel, as it has apparently hung over Anne and Wentworth for the past eight years. Lynn Rigberg concludes in her reading of the experience that Anne did the right thing then by adhering to Lady Russell’s advice (199). At the time, she knew that her understanding was not developed to the point that she could make the decision, nor had her experience prepared her to enter into such an unsure, seemingly risky venture. In listening to Lady Russell, Anne did not give evidence of a weak or overpersuadable character. Rather, she gave evidence of her recognition of the power of understanding and the need for it to develop in time with experience. She showed respect and solid moral judgment in recognizing her inability at so young an age to make this decision. Consequently, she used the same solid moral judgment in using her developed understanding and her mature convictions to go against Lady Russell’s objections and instead give heed to the powers inside of her that she had learned to trust. Anne proves to be consistent in her actions throughout, effectively showing the importance of context, timing, and experience level in developing understanding.

These experiences illustrate Austen’s belief that understanding is a state of mind, not necessarily a constant state of being. Although the direction of understanding can waver, it is always open to being persuaded by experiences that the person goes through and analyzes. Anne gives evidence of her sustained attempt to understand Wentworth’s

feelings toward her because of her generous attachment and her abiding love for him. By tracing this experience with Anne, the audience comes to realize what understanding is and how it is gained.

The last subject I will discuss as the basis upon which Wollstonecraft and Austen collaborate is virtue. Campbell does not comment on virtue except to say that virtues are very similar to emotions and that they are “motives to action” (80). By examining virtue in Wollstonecraft’s and Austen’s domains, we see how Austen sustains and deepens Wollstonecraft’s call for a redefinition of what virtue means and how Austen strengthens the argument that virtue leads to happiness. We also see Austen training the audience to develop virtue themselves, an idea that is at the basis of all of Wollstonecraft’s and Austen’s rhetorical and narrative choices.

As I have discussed, in sensibility philosophy virtue is defined as a trait that women naturally possess. However, Wollstonecraft does not agree with this, showing that when women live in the way that is idealized in abstract sensibility philosophy, they are actually quite miserable and depraved. Wollstonecraft argues for a redefinition of virtue. She sees it as directly related to the exercise of both reason and emotions and to the development of the understanding. She says, “The most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart. Or, in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent” (21). For Wollstonecraft, virtue is agency that is educated and developed so that it dictates moral choices.

In Austen, we see this redefinition in the way she engages the audience. Virtue comes from the inside, from experiences and instruction and analysis that persuades the

convictions to be virtuous. Therefore, understanding becomes a vehicle to virtue. The virtuous woman is not the perfect model of some arbitrarily imposed ideal but the product of agency that allows women to use the convictions they have shaped through experience. The virtuous woman engenders convictions that produce virtuous actions. And, as we have seen, by teaching about the persuasion of the convictions through experience and balanced analysis, Austen teaches how to be virtuous. She promotes the use of moral agency to work toward virtue and enables women to use that agency by educating and developing those convictions that drive the use of agency.

In doing this, she also promotes female happiness and reinforces a connection between virtue and happiness that came out of Wollstonecraft's ideas and Campbell's. In fact, the similarities between Austen's and Campbell's concepts of "virtue" are quite pronounced. Anne Ruderman in *The Pleasures of Virtue* helps establish the connection between Austen and Campbell. She argues for Austen's connection with classical values by "suggesting [. . .] an agreement with the classical defense of moderation as fundamental to virtue and to happiness" (8). Although Campbell's connection with classical values is less overt, the author certainly upheld classical rhetoric. Campbell believed that "the Ancients," or Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, had established a strong, useful rhetorical tradition, and he wanted to blend seamlessly into that tradition. He believed that because he was a beneficiary of the scientific revolution, he was in the best position to complete the classical rhetorical theory by explaining why rhetoric worked in psychological terms. Rather than trying to revise classical rhetoric, Campbell merely wanted to add to it. In this sense, he also accepted the classical values of virtue

and happiness. This coincidence of values establishes another way in which Campbell and Austen overlap.

With Wollstonecraft's rhetoric, her audience could finish her *Vindication* knowing there needed to be a change. With Austen's *Persuasion*, women began to see how to make that change in themselves. Certainly we see Wollstonecraft's rhetoric influencing Austen's theory, and we can also see how Austen's philosophy and ideas could potentially influence Wollstonecraftian feminist rhetoric. As part of this connection between Wollstonecraft and Austen are Campbell's ideas that rhetoric and philosophy are complements and that rhetoric can influence moral agency. In fact, as Lynn Rigberg suggests, "As readers of Austen have come to expect, in the persuasive process, judgment must be formulated carefully by a mind educated in rhetoric, with respect to those factors Campbell acknowledges as integral to moral thinking" (199). As we have seen how all three work together, we see how Austen ties in to not only the new rhetorical tradition of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but also into the tradition of Wollstonecraftian feminism.

As I have traced the development of the New Rhetoric and the early development of modern feminist rhetoric, I have attempted to make multiple contributions. In some ways, it is only fitting or even only possible to talk about the New Rhetoric in light of a movement like this feminist one, as its ultimate goal is to understand human psychology and all of the people that make up humanity in order to better communicate with them. It is also helpful to have traced the development of feminist rhetoric alongside that of the New Rhetoric as a means of finding yet another way to comment on how women influenced society from their outsider's point of view. Certainly we would call the New

Rhetoric the dominant movement, but the development of the New Rhetoric would not be complete or really even possible without the development of small, outsider movements. The New Rhetoric wanted to understand all facets of its audience to be able to better provide it the tool of oratory or rhetoric as a means of communication among people. If there was no bringing “other” ideas and weaving them into mainstream ideas, there really would not have been a new rhetoric.

As I have tried to show in this project, without this means of tying into mainstream society, there would not have been any feminist movement to speak of. Certainly women would have written and certainly feminist ideas would have survived, but the extent to which they could have influenced society or had society influence them would be much more dubious than it already is. Ultimately, the entire course of modern British history would have been different had it not been for feminist rhetorical influence, as would the entire course of feminist history been changed if there had been no way for women to engage with the world around them.

The development of feminism certainly changed because of this feminist rhetoric. As I argue, those ideas that came out of the French Revolution were able to continue to grow and develop and help women. If nothing else, they helped produce a woman like a Jane Austen who then produced works that have survived and flourished, both critically and politically. And, although it is difficult if not impossible to trace these feminist ideas and their means and level of influencing someone like Austen, I think it is just as impossible to ignore the influence these ideas did have.

The implications of a link between Wollstonecraft and Austen could potentially spark much more critical work. Perhaps the most obvious or immediate question is

whether we can see this feminist rhetoric in the feminist movement of the 1840s. If there is not a link between them, it would be interesting to know how these two rhetorics differ and what that says about each particular feminist movement. The most interesting question to me is how and where can we see Wollstonecraft's and Austen's rhetoric today. I wonder if this rhetoric was assimilated into other branches of feminism and how Wollstonecraft's and Austen's work has changed as it has been used and how it has remained the same.

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