“the ugly feminists” (Wolf 2008). Wolf describes the ways in which some women are afraid of identifying as feminists solely because of the stigma associated with being ugly or unattractive. If a woman’s value is based on her physical appearance and submissive nature, a female will reject the feminist label because she is “not radical” (Douglas, 2007). To be a feminist, one simply needs to believe that there should be equality for all genders and sexes. Being a female feminist does not mean that you need to burn your bra and hate men (Douglas 2007), it means that you believe you should not be condemned for your sexual behaviour, that you should receive the same pay as your male counterpart, and that you should be able to exist freely without criticism simply for being born female.

However, women continue to condemn the movement that sought to bring them equality. Misconceptions regarding feminism undermine the entire ideology of the term and work against the people it is meant to benefit. The “ugly feminist” is merely a caricature used to hinder the progress of feminism (Wolf 2008) and thus works to further patriarchal social constructions. Women being silenced, and then women silencing other women, prevents women as a whole from receiving the same rights as their male counterparts.

Feminism today needs to be redefined to be more accepting of all women, with no attention even paid to

Condemning the Patriarchally Perpetuated Woman-Made Glass Ceiling

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The word feminist must be updated to include all women, rather than only including what Naomi Wolf has termed
the different beautification processes which they go through. “Ugly feminists” are thought to be the only feminists - wearing baggy shirts, no bras or makeup and short hair (Wolf 2008). However, patriarchal society conceals the fact that feminists wear makeup too. In actuality, feminists are allowed to exhibit behaviours that are opposite of the supposed “ugly feminist”, i.e. wearing bras, makeup, having long hair, etc. Feminism should support inclusivity for all women, and women should have a choice about how they wish to express themselves. “The ugly feminist” exemplifies how a judgment can turn women against one another and this undermines the feminist movement of today. Women do not want to identify as feminists because they do not want the association of being thought of as “ugly”, which is actually a patriarchal perpetuation that further silences women. There is no moral contention should men choose to aestheticize themselves - this is a judgment specifically reserved for women. The examination of this judgment through women’s appearances and the media will show that in order for feminism to subordinate the negative idea that the “ugly feminist” embodies, societal ideals must be challenged.

Pro-choice is what feminism is built on; the choice to put makeup on or not, the choice to have children or not, the choice to have a career or not. The point is that the choice is a woman’s, not women’s or men’s. Due to societal standards, women are now programmed to believe that they must be independent of men but aspire to be with them. Women are expected to challenge the confining practice of beautification in order to be equal to men (Cahill 2003). The choice of whether or not a feminist wears makeup should be a choice freely allocated to that individual. Beautification should be part of a series of choices made by individuals about how they express their individual identities; it should not be a defining factor in what they believe in. Identifying as a feminist should not be contingent on whether a woman chooses to wear makeup, perfume or a bra, it should be based on her internalized beliefs and solidarity with women as a whole.

If a woman spends time on her appearance it does not mean that she is not a feminist, nor does it mean that she is giving into the patriarchy: the process of beautification can give a woman a sense of empowerment which is not something that is easily available to women in present day. However, women also spend time on their appearances for other women. This type of beautification can be because of the negative judgment cast by other women. When one person condescends to another without reproach such condescension becomes permissible. This multifarious contemporary issue, ‘the beauty backlash’, is destroying women physically and depleting them psychologically. If women are to free themselves from these metaphorical chains, they must find a
new way to view the actual ideology that feminism entails (Wolf 2008), rather than what the patriarchy would have one think. The attention women give to each other’s appearance contributes to the commodification of the female body as much as a man noticing or commenting on a woman’s physical appearance. Judging each other does not support the kind of unity the feminist needs today. If women embrace this one concept, then others will follow and women will be able to represent themselves in any way they choose without fear of judgment.

One part of the commodification of women is a societal expectation on how women should behave (Butler 1988). Women are “supposed to be” housewives and take care of the children. As time progresses, women are now also meant to want to pursue careers. The modern woman is expected to perform all of her roles as mother, career woman, caregiver, etc. In the popular high school TV show, One Tree Hill, a female character makes the statement that “there is a double standard for girls and there always will be. Don’t be too fat, or too thin or too dark, or too light. Don’t be too sexual, or too chaste, or too smart or too dumb. Be yourself, but make sure you fit in” (2005) and it speaks to the fact that unless changes are made in the way society thinks, then women will always be under considerable pressure to isolate and dismiss the “unattractive” qualities about themselves and inflate the “attractive” ones. What women should be is who they want to be. If they want to be a housewife but also be a feminist, that should be accepted. If they want to have a career and no children, but also be a feminist, that should be accepted as well. These variations of the modern woman need to be accepted by the feminist movement or they will exclude many women from their ideals. Feminism should be inclusive for all women; giving them the choice to dress and work and exist as they wish.

Feminism means different things to different people, but ultimately it should adhere to the idea that “each sex separately may be able to give the other more comradeship, more freedom, more self-realization, more honesty, more justice and [I believe] more beauty (Middleton 140).” Feminism today is suffering from a negative dichotomy based on the way we view each other, and society as a whole must revisit the reasons as to why it began in the first place: to be treated as equals socially, economically and politically (Douglas 2007). There has been consistent resistance to feminist thought, with some of it coming from women themselves, but if women can once again join together in combating gender inequality, one day when a woman is asked what a feminist looks like, she will be able to say, “A feminist looks like me.”
Throughout Persuasion there are many social interactions, many conversations had and walks taken, but the most important conversations have literature at their core. By analyzing The Baronetage that Sir Walter Elliot reads, the conversation that Anne has with Captain Benwick, and the letter that Captain Wentworth writes to Anne, this essay will investigate how Jane Austen portrayed writing as the truest form of authenticity because of its permanence, dependability, and resolution.

When we meet Sir Walter Elliot, he is pouring over his favourite book. It may be that he “never took up any book but the Baronetage” (Austen 3) but the fact remains that there “he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one.” The book has no story, however, it is simply a list of the British nobility. His presence within the pages means a great deal to him, as we know because his entry in the book is “the page at which the favourite volume always opened” (3) since he flips to it so often. We know that Sir Walter Elliot is a man that only cares about “vanity of person and situation” (4) and this book encapsulates both. He feels that he is a better person for being published in it, and this throws Anne into a deeper insignificance when we meet her because as he's looking at the book he smiles at the “Marys and Elizabeths” (4), the names of his other two daughters, that are present in the book, but he never mentions Anne. It is significant that he doesn’t think of Anne as being related to this book since