

Sense and sensibility critical response

Literature



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Published in the 19th century, the story of Sense and Sensibility is set around 1792. The protagonists are Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, two English maidens. As depicted by these Dashwood sisters, the teenagers in the 18th century were somehow different from the adolescents of today. This paper will attempt to show why Marianne Dashwood, as a well-bred lady, did not behave as was expected of her.

Marianne is depicted as a very emotional person who always acts upon what she feels. It is easy for everyone around her to see her emotions. She is the opposite of her sister, Elinor, who thinks before acting and is much more reserved. As such, Marianne puts herself in situations which make townspeople talk about her and her family. There are several instances in the novel where Marianne manifests such behavior.

When Marianne falls in love with John Willoughby, she does away with being coy which is contrary to how single English ladies were brought up in the 18th century. In Chapter 10, Willoughby visits Marianne who is resting due to her accident. During their conversation, Marianne opens up to Willoughby about activities she is interested in. As she herself put it during her conversation with Elinor:

"... I have been too much at my ease, too happy, too frank. I have erred against every common-place notion of decorum; I have been open and sincere where I ought to have been reserved, spiritless, dull and deceitful - had I talked only of the weather and the roads, and had I spoken only once in ten minutes, this reproach would have been spared."

Another circumstance where Marianne goes against the rules of English society is when she allows everyone to see that she preferred Mr. Willoughby among any other gentleman. When the season of private balls starts,
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Marianne is always in Mr. Willoughby's company. During this period in England, single ladies were supposed to mingle with available bachelors during balls. Ladies who were not spoken for were not to show any preference by always being a gentleman's dance partner or letting a certain gentleman monopolize her time. In Chapter 11, the author describes Marianne's actions as such:

" Elinor could not be surprised at their attachment. She only wished that it were less openly shewn; and once or twice did venture to suggest the propriety of some self-command to Marianne. But Marianne abhorred all concealment where no real disgrace could attend reserve"

Still another event in the novel which manifests the difference in Marianne's actions from other English ladies can be found in Chapter 13. During a morning ride, Marianne consents to riding un-chaperoned with Mr. Willoughby and letting him talk her into seeing the inside of a house belonging to someone Marianne was not acquainted with. Marianne initially argues with her sister, Elinor, about the incident, explaining that Willoughby was pleasant company. Elinor replies that pleasantness does not excuse propriety. Later, Marianne does agree with Elinor about the inappropriateness of going to see another person's home.

The novel contains several other circumstances where Marianne acts in the moment, without caution to what society will think of her actions. By doing so, she acted unlike a well-bred English lady

Work Cited:

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. ReadCentral. com, 2011. Web. 24 January 2013.

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