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Hasnu Kwatra  
*Chapman University*

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## "I do not wish [women] to have power over men; but over themselves":

### Feminism and Abolition through the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft

Hasnu Kwatra

The abolition movement was one of the most significant movements in history. It was the struggle for freedom and equality. During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Evangelical activists such as William Wilberforce ministered the beginnings of the abolition movement.<sup>[1]</sup> However, alongside the abolition movement, there was an underlying struggle for the freedom and rights of women. Mary Wollstonecraft brought these issues to the surface through her writings and activism. There was great debate on the views presented at the time of the movement to emancipate slaves. Unlike the evangelicals, the main antagonists of the slave trade in late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Britain, Wollstonecraft's anti-slavery views were derived mainly from her feminist ideas and arguments. This paper will explore the relationship between Mary Wollstonecraft's anti-slavery views and its relationship to her feminist views.

There have been numerous intersecting perspectives on the life of Mary Wollstonecraft, and her view of the treatment of women and the abolition movement. Janet Todd, author of *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life*, Lyndall Gordon, author of *Vindication: A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft*, and Claire Tomalin, author of *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft*, depicted her as a tragic, even pitiable, yet ultimately an admirable figure. These biographies discuss Wollstonecraft's philosophical views and her dependence on writing as a means of coping with the struggles of her life.<sup>[2]</sup> Gordon maintains that Joseph Johnson, who was the editor of the liberal journal, *Analytical Review* shaped Wollstonecraft's radical views on the treatment of women and slaves.<sup>[3]</sup> Johnson introduced her to his political associates, who included Thomas Paine, Henry Fuseli, William Blake, and William Godwin, her future husband. Those influences encouraged her greatest works.<sup>[4]</sup> Being a part of Joseph Johnson's intimate circle of friends, Wollstonecraft "encountered not only the stimulus, but the means to gratify her aroused curiosity. [Later,] she [also found] a new source of information and ideas available to few women then – the newspapers... or the clubs... so, for the first time on a regular basis she had access to current events and – whether by word of mouth or in print – to the lively exchange of opinion between people to whom such events and the social trends behind them were of profound importance."<sup>[5]</sup>

Janet Todd's account of Wollstonecraft's life emphasizes her realization of the flawed social stigma. Wollstonecraft describes the social stigma as discrimination against women: "on this scheme of things a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal, and an animal not of the highest order."<sup>[6]</sup> During the 1700s in Britain, with the class system still in place, a majority of women were uneducated and had little rights compared to men.<sup>[7]</sup> Women were especially discouraged from getting an education as they were expected to remain in the private sphere and be subservient to their husbands and to care for their children.<sup>[8]</sup> Wollstonecraft acknowledges her discontent with the opportunities available for women which was rooted in the social stigma against women.<sup>[9]</sup>

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In addition to numerous biographies, there have been many feminist interpretations on Mary Wollstonecraft as a political theorist, philosopher, and her works. In Penny Weiss' "Wollstonecraft and Rousseau: The Gendered Fate of Political Theorists," Mary Wollstonecraft is analyzed as a political theorist. Weiss explores the exclusion of Wollstonecraft among other political theorists at the time of her contemporaries such as Rousseau and John Locke, and she analyzes how gender was the main cause for the lack of acknowledgement. Weiss begs the question: "How can we understand the relative invisibility of Mary Wollstonecraft in the history of political thinkers?"<sup>[10]</sup> She contends that Wollstonecraft did not receive the credit she deserved in terms of her political theory due to her gender. A primary way that Weiss explains Wollstonecraft's invisibility is through her "nonexistence in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*."<sup>[11]</sup> Weiss primarily utilizes Rousseau's career and works to display Wollstonecraft's political endeavors. Similar to Rousseau, Wollstonecraft wrote on "education... she wrote a novel... [Wollstonecraft] published her self-reflective letters... and she wrote on political changes in France, on mores and mortality, and on the political role of reason."<sup>[12]</sup> Weiss emphasizes the fact that Wollstonecraft's arguments did confront matters of her time. For instance, Wollstonecraft addressed the French Revolution in *The Vindication of the Rights of Man*, she also raised the issue of education just like Rousseau in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters with Reflections on Female Conduct, in the more Important Duties of Life*; yet, Wollstonecraft was not acknowledged as a political theorist during her time. Wollstonecraft also engaged in numerous political dialogue with prominent literary figures at the time such as: "Rousseau, Burke, Milton, Richard Price, John Gregory, Pope, Mary Hayes, Locke, Bacon, Hume, James Fordyce, de Stael, and Catherine Macaulay."<sup>[13]</sup> Weiss also discusses the various ways that women's writings or writings in the defense of women are discounted. According to Weiss, "to engage in political thinking is to draw out the consequences of certain ideas, institutions, and processes for our communal social life. It is inherently tied to the real world and is normative."<sup>[14]</sup> Weiss also points out that Wollstonecraft's writings are often seen as responses to her contemporaries as opposed to a contribution to gender political theory. Ultimately, Weiss attributes the degradation of Wollstonecraft as a political theorist and her works to the innate resistance towards feminism. Weiss uses Wollstonecraft's understanding and response to the resistance to feminism: "Men, in general, seem to employ their reason to justify prejudices, which they have imbibed, they can scarcely trace how, rather than to root them out. The mind must be strong that resolutely forms its own principles; for a kind of intellectual cowardice prevails which makes many men shrink from the task, or only do it by halves."<sup>[15]</sup> Here, Wollstonecraft adequately comes to her own defense and is able to encapsulate the reception of her works.

In Virginia Sapiro's essay, "Wollstonecraft, Feminism, and Democracy: 'Being Bastilled'", Sapiro analyzes Wollstonecraft as an "Enlightenment liberal," and "civic humanist."<sup>[16]</sup> She argues that Wollstonecraft had conceptualized the treatment of women as a social construct; while Wollstonecraft addressed the issue through her writings, due to her limiting circumstances, she was unable to resolve this issue and was "bastilled" till the end. Sapiro closely analyzes Wollstonecraft's writings to depict her deconstruction of liberalism. Sapiro identifies Wollstonecraft as an Enlightenment thinker. She refers to Wollstonecraft's appeal to reason in *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* as a reflection of her progressive political and philosophical beliefs:

In what does man's pre-eminence over brute creation consist? Reason. What acquirement exalts one being over another? Reason. What acquirements exalt one being over another? Virtue. For what purpose were the passions implanted? That by struggling with them we might attain a degree of knowledge. Reason and the struggle with passion are the basis for virtue; these things should direct the laws that blind us, but these things should direct the

laws that bind us, but these things are also the outcome of a properly run society. They are cause and effect in a good society.<sup>[17]</sup>

Sapiro explained through the aforementioned quotation that Wollstonecraft defies all preconceived notions about women by referring to reason and passion as the causes for virtue. This also depicts her as an Enlightenment thinker. Essentially, Wollstonecraft broke down barriers of liberalism "to include women; she also changed the social and economic structure of liberalism by rejecting property rights as the core of democracy."<sup>[18]</sup> Sapiro heavily analyzes Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Women, or Maria*, to explain how Wollstonecraft surfaced the issue of the treatment of women. In that piece, Sapiro explains that Wollstonecraft extends her political analysis into the family construct.<sup>[19]</sup> This piece identified the male figure of a family as the patriarch and it served as a symbol for Wollstonecraft's perception of men in society as they oppressed women. Sapiro asserts that throughout Wollstonecraft's works, "[she] appeared in the process of finding the means to the leap from personal narrative to political consciousness."<sup>[20]</sup> While Wollstonecraft was able to make bold statements through her works, she was not able to effectively use her writings to affect political or social change.

Virginia Muller's essay, "What Can Liberals Learn from Mary Wollstonecraft," deconstructs Wollstonecraft's contribution to the definition of liberalism. Muller provides a unique perspective on how Wollstonecraft challenges the arguments of "narrow Lockean liberalism," and widens the definition of liberalism.<sup>[21]</sup> Muller points out how Wollstonecraft's narrative made her standpoint unique in terms of political theory. "In her later *Rights of Woman* Wollstonecraft successfully constructs a general theory about the status of women in society more than in the earlier works."<sup>[22]</sup> Arguably, *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman* "was written as a response to Talleyrand... who had presented to the Constituent Assembly of France a plan for public education – but only for males."<sup>[23]</sup> Muller interprets Wollstonecraft's arguments as a critique on the notions of enlightenment. She explains that Wollstonecraft perceived the notion of reason and natural rights came from a male perspective and were enforced in a patriarchal manner, which resulted in undermining the true meaning of reason. According to Muller, Wollstonecraft "adopts what is essentially a utilitarian argument: the education of women and their enjoyment of full rights as equal citizens will ensure the progress of civilization, while their denial, she insists, will imperil the future."<sup>[24]</sup> Muller contends that Wollstonecraft's pieces were aimed to ignite awareness among women and their status of servility. Wollstonecraft accurately depicts the role of women in the late 1700's as well as their subjugation. Muller also points out some contradictions within Wollstonecraft's *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Initially, Wollstonecraft claims that women's lives are being limited and controlled via their lack of education; however, as she claims that the lack of education is forcing women to get married and run a household, she proposes that a "rational system of education would better prepare women for the very role in family governance and childbearing that traditionally oppressed women."<sup>[25]</sup> Ultimately, Muller provides a unique perspective into how Wollstonecraft challenged the traditional definition of liberalism by including women as well as critiquing the use of reason in regards to Enlightenment thinking.

Wendy Gunther-Canada's piece, "Mary Wollstonecraft's 'Wild Wish': Confounding Sex in the Discourse on Political Rights," explores the transition and evolutions of Wollstonecraft's political theory from the *Vindication of the Rights of Man* to the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Even though Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Man* was written anonymously, Gunther-Canada contends that Wollstonecraft assumed "the gendered mask of political authority," to challenge Burke's "construction of female subservience."<sup>[26]</sup> Gunther-Canada visits the social context of Wollstonecraft's writing in order to demonstrate the transitions between both *Vindications* as well as Wollstonecraft's

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deconstruction of gender and politics. Gunther-Canada asserts that Wollstonecraft's understanding of gender was limited because she was restricted to the "conventions of female propriety that honor silence. To write is to invite public censure."<sup>[27]</sup> Along with providing an extensive historical basis for both *Vindication* pieces, Gunther-Canada deeply examines the transition of Wollstonecraft's political theory. In the *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, Wollstonecraft "articulates her understanding of the meaning of the [French] Revolution."<sup>[28]</sup> According to Gunther-Canada, Wollstonecraft wrote both *Vindication* pieces as a response to the French Revolution, which essentially marked the end of the Enlightenment period. Gunther-Canada points out how in *The Vindication of the Rights of Man*, Wollstonecraft homogenizes issues of class and gender through her analysis of the "Enlightenment philosophy [which] reflects a reified masculine model of subjectivity."<sup>[29]</sup> While the piece is a response to Burke's *Reflections*, she utilizes her response to make clear the tension between her conceptions of Enlightenment rhetoric in relation to the conventional understanding. According to Gunther-Canada, in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft challenges the gender political discourse by "[moving] women from silent objects to speaking subjects."<sup>[30]</sup> In this piece, Gunther-Canada highlights Wollstonecraft's references to biology, philosophy, and politics in relation to gender and status differences. Essentially, Gunther-Canada maintains that Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* pieces served as the basis for "a radical examination of the relationship between theory and practice, revealing the contradiction between gender and authority."<sup>[31]</sup> Further these pieces have also been the foundation for political writing and analyses that followed.

Carol Poston's essay "Mary Wollstonecraft and 'The Body Politic'", explores the relationship between Wollstonecraft's abusive past and her writings. According to Poston, Wollstonecraft's voice throughout her writings is "really that of an abused child striving to eliminate sex and the body altogether from political discourse."<sup>[32]</sup> Poston explores how Wollstonecraft essentially discounts "sexual passion" and basic human desires from women as she describes them as male constructs. Wollstonecraft's earlier works display her changing views on the institution of marriage and the need for sexual passion. For instance, in Wollstonecraft's earlier works, she referred to marriage as a "stop to improvement," Wollstonecraft contended that women needed more time and opportunities to grow mentally and by marrying at a young age, that growth was being thwarted. However, Poston points out that in Wollstonecraft's later works, she acknowledges the importance of marriage and she views it as a sort of channel for sexual passion and love. Poston specifically refers to the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, and Wollstonecraft's view on marriage. Poston interprets Wollstonecraft's references to marriage as "the institution designed to channel this power, sexuality can still be a disruptive social force... Wollstonecraft focuses on how sexual passion should cool or be curbed once marriage has taken place."<sup>[33]</sup> Further, Poston contends, "Wollstonecraft is speaking as the adult survival of abuse, not necessarily sexual but certainly emotional and physical."<sup>[34]</sup> While Wollstonecraft's writings progress in terms of marriage, she consistently reference "the sexual force is gendered male..." To that, Poston asks: "But do women have any sexuality themselves? Is there a female body of desire?"<sup>[35]</sup> According to Poston, Wollstonecraft does not identify women as having any sexual desire. Ultimately, Poston sees Wollstonecraft's writing as "... the voice of the formerly abused child becomes in adulthood the political voice that resists patriarchal oppression, loathes power that comes from sheer authority, resists male dominance in just about any form, and, finally and most tellingly, is furious at female passivity that refuses to resist patriarchal power."<sup>[36]</sup>

In "The Vindication of the Writings of Women: Mary Wollstonecraft and Enlightenment Rhetoric," Miriam Brody applies Wollstonecraft's writing to rhetorical tradition of the Romans, specifically, Roman orator Quintilian. Throughout her essay, Brody illuminates how Wollstonecraft assumed a masculine voice through her writing since women during her time did not explicitly address political or social issues

through their writings. As Brody deconstructed Wollstonecraft's masculine voice, she also described how Wollstonecraft's adamant voice dissuaded her female audience. Brody explained "Wollstonecraft's problems were legion, writing a persuasive argument to an audience she imagined often as male and certainly dedicated to a man."<sup>[37]</sup> Through her analysis, Brody concludes, "Wollstonecraft completely reverses the iconography of manly writing as it had been represented in traditional rhetoric."<sup>[38]</sup>

In Moira Ferguson's essay, "Mary Wollstonecraft and the Problematic of Slavery," Ferguson emphasizes Wollstonecraft's presentation of the subjugation of women throughout her *Vindication* pieces. Ferguson also analyzes Wollstonecraft's use of colonial language to give her relevance among her literary peers. Essentially, when Wollstonecraft parallels the experiences of black slaves and that of women, she creates a "group identity, a political position from which they can start organizing and agitating."<sup>[39]</sup>

Ferguson points out how Wollstonecraft utilizes her contemporary's piece to further her own stance. For instance, In the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft quotes from Vicesimus Knox, to demonstrate the terrible condition of slavery for women:

The subjects of these self-erected tyrants [i.e., those who establish what norm of human affairs will be, either "some rich, gross, unphilosophical man, or some titled frivolous lady, distinguished for boldness, but not for excellence"] are most truly slaves, though voluntary slaves; but as slavery of any kind is unfavorable to human happiness and improvement, I will venture to offer a few suggestions, which may induce the subjugated tribes to revolt, and claim their invaluable birthright, their natural liberty.<sup>[40]</sup>

While the aforementioned quotation encapsulates the tenable condition of slavery, Ferguson points out that when Wollstonecraft included Knox's quotation in her footnotes, she had actually altered it to make it appear as though Knox was referring to women, however he was just referring to the condition of slaves. Further, Ferguson also utilizes Wollstonecraft's familiarity with the slave trade and abolition debate to examine her use of colonial language in relation to the subjugation of women.<sup>[41]</sup> Ultimately, Ferguson provides a unique insight into the relationship between Wollstonecraft's colonial language as well as her parallels of the subjugation of women to that of black slaves throughout her *Vindication* pieces.

As the aforementioned interpretations analyze Mary Wollstonecraft as a political theorist and her contribution to liberalism, the rest of this paper will explore the unique relationship between Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist and anti-slavery views. Mary Wollstonecraft instilled her feminist theory as a result of her life experiences and consistent barriers, however, it was her feminist views that motivated and shaped her anti-slavery views. Her writings are the primary examples of this relationship. Wollstonecraft's early works yield the development of her feminist theory while her later works depict her anti-slavery views and ultimately a culmination of both.

The evangelical view at the time on the evils of slavery significantly differed from Wollstonecraft's beliefs. William Wilberforce, a prominent evangelical, contended that slaves were to be freed so that they may be converted to Christianity.<sup>[42]</sup> William Wilberforce was born at Hull in 1759, he had great charisma and quickly gained a close group of friends.<sup>[43]</sup> When Wilberforce got older he became more involved with the Church. He was significantly influenced by Isaac Miller, eventually Wilberforce "was possessed not with a sense of nearness and goodness of God which never left him all the rest of his long life."<sup>[44]</sup> There were many reasons for the continuance of the slave trade and slavery. First was economy - "the produce of the slave-using colonies was an indispensable element in the commercial



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system on which the Old Empire was based, that it could only be grown by slave-labour..."[45] The second cause was political. The continuance of the slave trade meant that stable trade for Britain. Finally, the investment in the slave trade, was so vast that its demise would have a detrimental effect since, "[the] English-men who profited from the slave-system – retired or absentee proprietors, bankers, mortgagees, sugar-merchants – constituted a large and powerful 'vested interest'." [46] Also, William Wilberforce brought forth the question of the institution of slavery and plantation slavery "before the Privy Council and select committees of Commons and Lords ... between 1789 and 1791." [47] Further, Wilberforce's writings made it clear that the evangelical viewpoint in support of the abolition movement was rooted in both religion and humanity. [48] For instance, in 1803, Wilberforce expressed his concern for the horrific conditions of slaves. "No efforts have been made for the religious and moral improvement of the Negroes, and any plans of that kind, when adopted by others, have been considered as chimerical, if not dangerous." [49] Wilberforce clearly displays here, his concern for slaves. His intentions for freeing the slaves become more apparent in his later works. In *An Appeal to the Religion, Justice and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire, in Behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies*, 1823, Wilberforce advocates for slaves and uses religion to do so. [50] Throughout the piece, Wilberforce refers to the "Christian Eye" in relation to the atrocities committed against the slaves. [51] He contended that slaves would be more resourceful if they were permitted to attend church with the rest of the community, and the way that could be accomplished was through granting them their freedom:

Generally speaking, throughout the whole of our West Indian islands, the field slaves, or common laborers, instead of being encouraged or even permitted to devote the Sunday to religious purposes, are employed either in working their provision-grounds for their own and their families' subsistence... [52]

Wilberforce here is advocating for the slaves, but his intentions in doing so, lie in converting them rather than making them equal. Wollstonecraft, in contrast, valued the struggle of man, rather than the expansion of religion. She broadened the base of the struggle for equality by including women, and she did so at a time when such activism was shunned, especially by other women.

Wollstonecraft was born on April 27, 1759. In a time where women were perceived as second-class citizens, Wollstonecraft challenged this notion and fought for women's rights through her writing and way of life. Before analyzing her works and involvement with the anti-slavery and, eventually, the suffrage movements, it is essential to understand how her feminist views were formed. As a young girl, Wollstonecraft would sleep in front of her parent's bedroom to protect her mother from her father's beatings. [53] The hardships only got worse when Eliza, Mary Wollstonecraft's sister, got married. In order to help her sister, Wollstonecraft organized Eliza's escape from her horrible marriage and she established a home in Newington Green in North London to support her helpless and homeless sister. [54] Wollstonecraft also opened up a school as a means of financial support. However, being faced with further tragedy through the passing of her younger sister, Fanny, the school went to ruins due to a lack of management. [55] As a result, Wollstonecraft used writing as her expression during her times of struggle. From witnessing domestic violence to constantly supporting her brothers and sisters, Mary Wollstonecraft developed an unfailing resilience towards life. Wollstonecraft worked as a lady's companion, a seamstress, a schoolmistress, a governess, and a writer. It was through those challenges that she solidified her stance on rights for women and wrote about it. Wollstonecraft aimed to live "entirely by the pen." [56] As her writing progressed, her feminist views became more apparent and her anti-slavery views became more developed. Being in a society that discouraged women from pursuing

their goals, if they were not traditional ones, Wollstonecraft was determined to live life on her own terms and adjust the world.

Wollstonecraft's religious beliefs were much different than that of the evangelicals. The religious reform at the time helped her in developing her own understandings regarding spirituality.<sup>[57]</sup> Her husband William Godwin explained in his memoirs, "Wollstonecraft was an advocate of natural rather than revealed theology...her religion was, in reality, little allied to any system of forms, ... and was founded rather on taste, than in the niceties of polemical discussion... to her mind he was pictured as a less amiable, generous and kind, than great, wise and exalted."<sup>[58]</sup> Essentially, Wollstonecraft developed her feminist ideologies "not from her emancipation from religion but directly from this attempted philosophical integration."<sup>[59]</sup> It was *Rational Dissent* which had a particularly strong influence on the development of first educational and then her political thinking.<sup>[60]</sup> Wollstonecraft could resonate with the Dissenter's use of print culture to convey their message.<sup>[61]</sup>

In the beginnings of the abolition movement, women were not necessarily 'direct activists' as they were influential. Women often expressed their political influence through their writings. This enforced the social stigma that women were better as moral support rather than political activists. Amazing women such as Georgina, Duchess of Devonshire, Ann Yearsley, and Hannah More published anti-slavery poems and stories that resulted in an increased awareness of the movement. It is important to understand the progressions made by female activists prior to Mary Wollstonecraft. This will ultimately illuminate Mary Wollstonecraft's actions and writings in support of the abolition movement. Mary Wollstonecraft was also a member of the Blue-Stockings Society. The Blue Stockings Society was a group of women in the mid-Eighteenth century who replaced societal meetings with intellectual conversations and the production of critical literary works. Wollstonecraft's involvement, progressed the fight for the education of all women. At this time, Mary Wollstonecraft and her peers were not only fighting for equal rights, they were resisting the oppression of women intellectually and societally. Hannah More could be attributed as a significant influence of Mary Wollstonecraft's writings and beliefs. She was allegedly involved with William Wilberforce throughout his activism within the evangelical movement for abolition. The evangelical view at the time significantly differed from Wollstonecraft's beliefs. The aforementioned writers were radicals when it came to the anti-slavery movement. Their passion heavily impacted Wollstonecraft's writing and actions regarding feminism and abolition. The result of surrounding herself with such influential figures was her *Vindication* pieces.

Wollstonecraft's publisher Joseph Johnson cofounded the *Analytical Review*, which was one of Wollstonecraft's premier encounters with anti-slavery rhetoric. Wollstonecraft primarily reviewed anti-slavery texts and wrote pieces that highlighted her concern for the condition of women and their empowerment. One of the first books she reviewed was, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vasa, the African Written by Himself*. In this book, Equiano outlines his experience in the Middle Passage. Wollstonecraft also reviewed the anti-slavery text *Zelco: Various Views of Human Nature, Taken from Life and Manners, Foreign and Domestic*, by John Moore.<sup>[62]</sup>

The French Revolution had a significant impact on the future of Wollstonecraft's anti-slavery writings. It began with Wollstonecraft's review of Reverend Richard Price's sermon, *Discourse on the Love of Our Country*. When Edmund Burke attacked Price's sermon in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Wollstonecraft was one of the first literary peers to respond; and she wrote *The Vindication of the Rights of Men*.<sup>[63]</sup> In *The Rights of Men*, Wollstonecraft emphasizes the institution of slavery in a political and humane sense; however, she does not discuss gender.



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Wollstonecraft's anti-slavery views were evident when she explicitly responded to Burke's piece:

On what principle Mr. Burke could defend American independence, I cannot conceive; for the whole tenor of his plausible arguments settles slavery on an everlasting foundation. Allowing his servile reverence for antiquity, and prudent attention to self-interest, to have the force which he insists on, the slave trade ought never to be abolished; and, because our ignorant forefathers, not understanding the native dignity of man, sanctioned a traffic that outrages every suggestion of reason and religion, we are to submit to the inhuman custom, and term an atrocious insult to humanity the love of our country, and a proper submission to the laws by which our property is secured.[64]

It is critical to note that Wollstonecraft wrote this response without disclosing her gender; by staying anonymous, Wollstonecraft was able to freely use masculine and feminine styles of writing interchangeably.[65] *The Vindication of the Rights of Men* provided Wollstonecraft with "sexual immunity and enabled her to speak as though she were the man and the worthy opponent to Burke that her readers had believed her to be." [66] Wollstonecraft's critical response and gender ambiguity in the piece gave her the credibility needed to write and publish *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*. [67] Not only does Wollstonecraft identify her stance, however through maintaining gender neutrality, she provides the reader with the notion of the injustice done to man through the institution of slavery. She also takes into account the influence of religion at the time and uses it to criticize the practice of slavery.

Mary Wollstonecraft's writings and views were heavily influenced by Dr. Richard Price. She began attending Dr. Price's chapel in 1784 around the same time when she opened her own school. Wollstonecraft was able to encounter other radicals and was galvanized by their worldviews and activism. This impelled her to write her *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* and eventually her *Vindication* pieces.

Prior to her most famous works, *The Vindication of the Rights of Man* and the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft was already discussing slavery.[68] In *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, she refers to slavery in context of women being subjugated by men.[69] This book was a compilation of letters she had written to her sisters suggesting the need to teach women how to make their own way in life. The explicit call for the equality for women, made Wollstonecraft's arguments famous, due to its controversial nature.[70] This piece is extremely reflective of Wollstonecraft's personal life as it depicts "the failings of the daughter's mother, and offers the author's reasoned thought as an alternative to the failed mother's negated authority." [71] She went against the grain of "male-authored" texts and the ideal that female education was solely for the purpose of preparing for marriage and dependence.[72] Along with presenting a unique perspective on a mother-daughter relationship, Wollstonecraft's piece "records [her] reflection on the failure of maternal affection, and of maternity generally. It offers reasoned thought in the place of failed instinct; culture for nature." [73] As this is Wollstonecraft's earlier work, it is clear that her writing is heavily influenced by her personal experiences. She utilizes her failed relationship with her mother as a means to gain independence and challenge conventional relationships. Further, Wollstonecraft depicts the mother as being submissive in nature, essentially symbolic of the oppressed white women in the late 1700's.

*Mary: A Fiction*, vividly depicts the pain faced by Wollstonecraft and is as well, a critique of the problems confronting women, especially those 'unfortunate females,' like Wollstonecraft herself, 'who are left by inconsiderate parents to struggle with the world, and whose cultivation of mind renders the endeavor

doubly painful'.<sup>[74]</sup> *Mary* is considered, in fact a semi-autobiographical novel.<sup>[75]</sup> It conducts through a disappointing world which teaches the heroine that none but the doomed or dying are fully worthy of love, until at last it sends her 'hastening to a world *where there is neither marrying, nor giving in marriage*'.<sup>[76]</sup> Wollstonecraft signifies the sexual subordination at the time and this view on marriage went against custom. Traditionally, slavery did not include the oppression of women in society. Further, her reference to slavery prior to the abolition movement shows her idea of oppression: "She who submits, without conviction, to a parent or a husband, will as unreasonably tyrannize over her servants; for slavish fear and tyranny go together."<sup>[77]</sup> Through these pieces, Wollstonecraft conflicted the orthodox definition of slavery. Her inclusion of women and political understanding of the anti-slavery issue at the time, gave her credibility and support from her literary peers.

Her response is important also because this was the stepping point for Wollstonecraft to write her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Wollstonecraft's feminist and anti-slavery views are spread throughout all of her writings. However, in the *Vindication of the Rights of Man* and the *Vindication of the Rights of Women* clearly links the together. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* had been a reply to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Wollstonecraft's response was one of the first of forty-five replies to be published, and considering the social context along with the ridicule Wollstonecraft endured for living her life her way, it was quite the achievement. Moreover, the colonial language use in the piece surpasses the political and rhetoric tradition at the time. Her response was important also because it was a stepping-stone to her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Essentially, in *The Vindication of the Rights of Man*, Wollstonecraft argues for the first time that slavery is a human construction.<sup>[78]</sup> She graphically represents slavery as "authorized by law to fasten her fangs on human flesh and... eat into the very soul."<sup>[79]</sup> In this piece, Wollstonecraft consistently challenges the legal situation. By retaining a gender-neutral voice and upholding political language, Wollstonecraft is able to establish her stance on slavery. She argues, "no slavery is natural and all forms of slavery, regardless of context, are human constructions."<sup>[80]</sup> Further, Wollstonecraft consistently references political authority and addresses man's natural rights: "To what dreadful extremities were the poorer sort reduced, their property, the fruit of their industry, being entirely at the disposal of their lords, who were so many petty tyrants!"<sup>[81]</sup> Here she is explicitly referring the French Revolution; however, in doing so, Wollstonecraft is displaying her understanding of the political structure as well as her compassion for the oppressed. While Wollstonecraft did not touch the subject of gender and the oppression of women in this piece, her references to oppressive political authority clarifies her stance on the French Revolution as well as the abolition movement. Yet it is clear throughout the piece that Wollstonecraft's main concern is to "demonstrate that 'masculine' (unadorned, rational) writing is possible in a female-embodied subject."<sup>[82]</sup>

*The Vindication of the Rights of Women* had a strong sense of conviction because Wollstonecraft knew that in order to address the problems faced by women, as well as to educate and empower them, it was essential to write as a woman.<sup>[83]</sup> In the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft makes over 80 references to the institution of slavery in relation to the role and treatment of women.<sup>[84]</sup> She argued that women like herself were also a sort of slave. Wollstonecraft initiated her argument by "supposing that women are voluntary slaves - slavery of any kind is unfavorable to human happiness and improvement."<sup>[85]</sup> Furthermore, Wollstonecraft makes it clear when she refers to women as slaves in the same context as Africans: "I mean in a political and civil sense; for, indirectly they obtain too much power and are debased by the exertions to obtain illicit sway."<sup>[86]</sup> By referring to women as having "too much power," Wollstonecraft is asserting that there is a cloud of fear among men regarding the strength of women.<sup>[87]</sup> As Wollstonecraft homogenizes white women and their life experiences, she yields that

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women have an undiscovered amount of strength. In accordance, Wollstonecraft contends that women are denied their education and rights because men fear the capabilities of women.

Wollstonecraft utilizes her introduction to set the tone for the remainder of the piece. She ultimately states that the degradation of women through the denial of equal education by a patriarchal society has consumed society. Further, she uses sarcasm to grab the attention of the audience, especially the female readers: "My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their fascinating graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone."<sup>[88]</sup> This quotation highlights Wollstonecraft's concern and realization of the perception of women. In addition, Wollstonecraft seems to present a condescending tone towards her female audience. It is apparent that Wollstonecraft assumes that all women are ignorant to their status in society and that they have surrendered to patriarchal norms without a hint of criticism. Such generalizations weaken Wollstonecraft's arguments and it continues the sense that Wollstonecraft assumes her audience to be primarily male.

In the second chapter, Wollstonecraft further explains how women are raised to believe that there is simply no need for them to pursue an education, and that value is found in ones looks. She explains:

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least, twenty years of their lives.<sup>[89]</sup>

Wollstonecraft identifies how women are taught to be submissive and argues that such behavior is in fact damaging to humanity. Wollstonecraft's distaste towards the treatment of women is evident when she claims that a woman "was created to be the toy of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused."<sup>[90]</sup> By seeming to dehumanize females, Wollstonecraft is able to effectively communicate the seriousness of the oppression faced by women. She also refers to men as "tyrants and sensualists," as they want to make "slaves" out of women.<sup>[91]</sup> Additionally, Wollstonecraft makes an appeal to reason as grounds for advocating for women to have to opportunity to increase their education. By doing so, she is able to respond to her contemporaries such as Rousseau, who believed that education should be tailored to ones gender. He also contends "that a woman should never, for a moment, feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her natural cunning, and made a coquettish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire."<sup>[92]</sup> Wollstonecraft is widening the subjugation of women from men to themselves. She blames women for feeding the patriarchal system that limits their opportunities, in turn leaving them in their slavish condition.

In the third chapter, Wollstonecraft elaborates on how women are taught to suppress their emotions in order to sustain their marriage. Also, she points out that the opportunities for education and should not be regulated according to sex. God created both men and women; one is not lesser than the other. Interestingly, Wollstonecraft goes on to critique the anti-slavery movement at the time by claiming, "slavery to monarchs and ministers...is not yet abolished... Let not men then in the pride of power, use the same arguments that tyrannickings and venal ministers have used, and fallaciously assert that woman ought to be subjected because she has always been so."<sup>[93]</sup> Here, Wollstonecraft is identifying the existence of the anti-slavery debate and that society should not resort to the traditional justifications for the perpetuation of slavery. By referencing the anti-slavery debate, the hot topic at the

time, Wollstonecraft is able to relate to a broader audience. Further, she utilizes the concept of slavery to parallel the treatment and perception of women. Ultimately, Wollstonecraft wants to instigate "a revolution in female manners." She wants to "restore to them their lost dignity – and make them, as a part of the human species..."<sup>[94]</sup>

Wollstonecraft then goes on to explain that objectification and leisure was the purpose of a woman's life. Her humanitarian perspective towards equality is unique in that she does not aim to make one sex better than the other. She desires an equality between the two. In expanding the use of the term 'slavery,' Wollstonecraft identifies different forms of oppression and how women are subjected. She explains how the ideals of beauty and compliance have consumed women and have made them docile. She points out that all painted pictures of women are portrayed as objects, not beings with reason.<sup>[95]</sup> The various limitations on gaining reason have driven women to become "obsequious slaves."<sup>[96]</sup> According to Wollstonecraft, women have essentially "resigned the natural rights, which the exercise of reason might have procured them, and chosen rather to be short-lived queens than labour to obtain the sober pleasures that arise from equality."<sup>[97]</sup> A primary cause for the degradation of women, according to Wollstonecraft, is the frivolous attention given to women by men. Wollstonecraft continued the use of the slave metaphors, when she explains the consequential state of women:

Confined then in cages like the feathered race, they have nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch. It is true they are provided with food and raiment, for which they neither toil nor spin; but health, liberty, and virtue, are given in exchange...The passions of men have thus placed women on thrones, and, till mankind become more reasonable, it is to be feared that women will avail themselves of the power which they attain with the least exertion, and which is the most indisputable.<sup>[98]</sup>

Ultimately, this condition prevents them from being adequate mothers, wives, and citizens.<sup>[99]</sup>

Wollstonecraft does not shy away from describing the slavish way that women are treated within the institution of marriage. The recurring motif of slavery maintains Wollstonecraft's tone of conviction and it in turn gives her relevance and power to reach a greater audience. She argues that "the duty expected from them is, like all the duties arbitrarily imposed on women, more from a sense of propriety, more out of respect for decorum, than reason; and thus taught slavishly to submit to their parents; they are prepared for the slavery of marriage."<sup>[100]</sup> This quote clearly illuminates the never-ending oppression of women. Wollstonecraft's view of marriage was definitely unconventional for her time. While she was adamant about the institution of marriage being tyrannical, she also contended that if women were given the same opportunity for education as men, then marriage could be a wonderful experience of love and companionship.

Wollstonecraft also uses her references to slavery, to explain the consequences of the subjugation of women. She concludes that the continuance of such oppression results in inadequate parenting: "Woman, however, a slave in every situation to prejudice, seldom exerts enlightened maternal affection; for she either neglects her children, or spoils them by improper indulgence."<sup>[101]</sup> The lack of educational opportunities afforded to women, according to Wollstonecraft, results in the lack of the emotional capacity necessary for women to properly raise their children. Such a claim is definitely derivative of Wollstonecraft's experiences with her own parents. As previously mentioned, Wollstonecraft witnessed domestic abuse while growing up that prevented her from having a fulfilling mother-daughter relationship. It is also important to note that throughout the

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essay it is evident that Wollstonecraft sees white women as a homogenous group that is oppressed and who focus on trivial pursuits.

Wollstonecraft further illuminates the oppression of women through exploring the restrictions put on women by their parents. "A slavish bondage to parents cramps every faculty of the mind; and Mr. Locke very judiciously observes, that 'if the mind be curbed and humbled too much in children; if their spirits be abased and broken much by too strict an hand over them; they lose all their vigour and industry'."<sup>[102]</sup>

Wollstonecraft proposes that education is the key to resolving the lack of reason among women. She believes that women should be taught beginning at infancy and the education of women should be similar to that of men. According to Wollstonecraft, if education is balanced between the two sexes, and women are given as much of a foundation to develop reason and wisdom as men, then they will be able to more effectively complement one another resulting in more fulfilling marriage.<sup>[103]</sup> Previously, Wollstonecraft claimed that virtue and knowledge should not be regulated by gender, and she introduces the idea of man and woman can complete one another in the right circumstances. Thus education for both is crucial.

Wollstonecraft argues that the seemingly extraordinary intersect of women, as well as of slaves and servants, was the result of a lack of a cultivation of their minds:

The attention to dress, therefore, which has been thought a sexual propensity, I think natural to mankind. But I ought to express myself with more precision. When the mind is not sufficiently opened to take pleasure in reflection, the body will be adorned with sedulous care; and ambition will appear in tattooing or painting it. So faris this first inclination carried, that even the hellish yoke of slavery cannot stifle the savage desire of admiration which the black heroes inherit from both their parents, for all the hardly earned savings of a slave are expended in a little tawdy finery. And I have seldom known a good male or female servant that was not particularly fond of dress. Their clothes were their riches; and, I argue from analogy, that the fondness for dress, so extravagant in females, arises from the samecause - want of cultivation of mind.<sup>[104]</sup>

This passage makes Wollstonecraft's anti-slavery views more complex. The aforementioned quotation highlights the mistakes of women and how they contributed to their own mistreatment through vanity. Here, Wollstonecraft explains how the notion of vanity and emphasis upon material things has been passed down to the slaves... leading to further enslavement. Essentially, Wollstonecraft is critiquing society and its method of enslavement through enforcement of value in reflections.

Another dominant motif found throughout the piece was the idea of power and abuse. Wollstonecraft made constant references to power in the hands of men. "Is one half of the human species, like the poor African slaves, to be subject to prejudices that brutalize them...only to sweeten the cup of men."<sup>[105]</sup> Here, she equates women and African slavery. African slaves were integral to sugar plantations and general labor, likewise, women were fundamental to a stable home life. She acknowledges the wrong that is being done to the slaves and establishes a parallel relationship between men and women. According to Wollstonecraft, men were enjoying the labor of women, as women were enjoying that of slaves. By equating the treatment of slaves to that of women, makes the issue of the institution of slavery relevant to her feminist theory. The references to contemporary African slavery continues when Wollstonecraft discusses the oppression of women in context of their submissiveness:



"why subject [woman] to propriety- blind propriety if she be capable of acting from a nobler spring, if she be an heir of immortality?"<sup>[106]</sup> This passage highlights how slaves and white women were subjected to the control of white men. By including women in the definition of slavery, Wollstonecraft revolutionized the anti-slavery movement and paved the path for feminism.<sup>[107]</sup> Furthermore, by incorporating religion in her argument, Wollstonecraft legitimizes her stance and is able to advocate for equality and freedom on a humanitarian level.

Essentially Wollstonecraft is claiming that men dominate women as slaves. By filling the text with references to slavery, she permeates the text with the subjugation of women, she included. Wollstonecraft is able to identify woman as a whole group that is oppressed by men. However, as the piece continues, the sense of unity among women that Wollstonecraft had created ultimately diminishes when she criticizes them for readily accepting their inferior status. Such blatant condemnation of white middle-class women definitely stems from her experiences. Since Wollstonecraft had independently crossed many barriers throughout her life so she could question the resourcefulness of other women.

While continuing to equate white women with slaves, Wollstonecraft points out the amount of time it would take for both groups to relieve themselves from the condition of slavery: "Man, taking her body, the mind is left to rust; so that while physical love enervates man, as being his favorite recreation, he will endeavor to enslave women: - and, who can tell, how many generations may be necessary to give vigour to the virtue and talents of the freed posterity of abject slaves."<sup>[108]</sup> Wollstonecraft furthers her argument that women are just valued for their bodies and no attention is given to her growth. She acknowledges that the subordination of women is extensively rooted in society's history that it will take a great shift in gender discourse to see a change in the treatment of women. Wollstonecraft calls to the God-given rights of man to exclaim her disdain of the injustice faced by women. "If women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights of mankind, prove first, that they want reason - else this flaw in your new constitution will ever shew that man must, in some shape, act like a tyrant, and tyranny, in whatever part of society it rears its brazen front, will ever undermine morality."<sup>[109]</sup> Here she identifies that reason is in fact the capacity for self-government and she denounces the notion that reason varies based on gender. In accordance, women should not be denied that reason.

Wollstonecraft's awareness of the anti-slavery debate is further highlighted as she refers to resistance in terms of slaves. Specifically, when she responds to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's claim that "women have, or ought to have but little liberty; they are apt to indulge themselves excessively in what is allowed them. Addicted in everything to extremes, they are even more transported at their diversions than boys."<sup>[110]</sup> Wollstonecraft refutes this claim by encouraging women to break free: "The answer to this is very simple. Slaves and mobs have always indulged themselves in the same excesses, when once they broke loose from authority. - The bent bow recoils with violence, when the hand is suddenly relaxed that forcibly held it."<sup>[111]</sup> Here, Wollstonecraft is actually referring to the San Domingo slave rebellion. This rebellion showed the British public that slaves and the oppressed could in fact break free from their oppressors.<sup>[112]</sup> Likewise, Wollstonecraft urges women to escape and realize their strength. Also, this reference solidifies Wollstonecraft's understanding and participation in the anti-slavery debate.

It is essential to note the underlying political theory evident throughout this piece. *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* was an indicator of the development of Wollstonecraft's political theory alongside her feminist theory. She argues that a woman is a citizen in her own right and their status and existence is not to be determined via the male figures in her life. Ultimately Wollstonecraft "contests the discourse



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of sexual difference, and creates a political theory that moves women from silent objects to speaking subjects."<sup>[113]</sup> Her references to slavery make her stance on the anti-slavery debate evident and legitimize her arguments for the rights of women. She reasons "the textual representations of female nature binds femininity to difference."<sup>[114]</sup> She specifically refutes the notion that a woman's reason is determined solely by her gender. She explains that the differences between men and women have been perpetuated by male authors who upheld the subjugation of women: "Hapless woman! What can be expected from thee when the beings on whom thou art said to depend for reason and support, have all an interest in deceiving thee?"<sup>[115]</sup> Here, Wollstonecraft points out that men are not to be trusted with providing women with truth, as they are the ones who have caused the subordination of women and lack of educational opportunities for women in the first place. "[I] throw down my gauntlet, and deny the existence of sexual virtues, not expecting modesty. For man and woman, truth, if I understand the meaning of the word, must be the same."<sup>[116]</sup> Wollstonecraft clearly denounces the traditional value of men possessing more virtues and ability to learn than women. Wollstonecraft solidifies her political theory by claiming that women have been bestowed with the same capacity of reason as men; thus, women should have the right for self-government. Further she sympathizes with women by stating that women have been bound to a "slavery which chains the very soul of woman, keeping her forever under the bondage of ignorance."<sup>[117]</sup> This quotation further highlights Wollstonecraft's value of education. According to Wollstonecraft, the greatest power one has is of independent thought, as such, women had endured a significant injustice by being denied their right to the same education as males as well as the opportunities to facilitate their independence, as they grew older.

Wollstonecraft adds to her argument and political theory by asserting that a woman should have the right to an education so that she may serve herself.<sup>[118]</sup> She precisely utilizes femininity and reason to further her "political theory of the thinking woman."<sup>[119]</sup> It is quite evident that the Enlightenment had a significant amount of influence upon Mary Wollstonecraft's arguments and the articulation of those arguments. She lengthens the idea of humanism to include women by challenging the norm of male-authority in all regards. Essentially, her theory is deeply rooted in a "humanist appeal to reason that denies sexual difference... and she [refused] to concede reason to men."<sup>[120]</sup> It is clear that Wollstonecraft's own life is reflected in *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* as she questions the relationship between gender and authority. However, it is interesting that while Wollstonecraft argues, "reason is not gendered," her writing exemplifies gendered language.<sup>[121]</sup> As seen in *The Vindication of the Rights of Man*, Wollstonecraft utilizes a masculine voice and in the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, she resorts to a feminine yet adamant voice.

Wollstonecraft assigns great value to "independent or singular thought," she consistently emphasizes the need for women gain greater access to education.<sup>[122]</sup> Wollstonecraft clearly condemns women who have not taken hold of their circumstances and freed themselves from the bondage of man. According to Wollstonecraft, "women enslave themselves through an obsession with fashion and an eager acceptance of inadequate education."<sup>[123]</sup> Wollstonecraft imposes an unsympathetic standard for women, thus fuelling oppression rather than alleviating it. She maintains a clear distance and separation from her audience. By doing so, Wollstonecraft ultimately distances her audience, which counteracts her intention of conveying her argument to her female audience. She also does not take into account other women's sense of belonging, social context, or struggles.

Wollstonecraft's demanding call to equality among the sexes highlights her awareness of the various external factors that make men and women unique; however, those differences yield a unity among the two. This understanding is demonstrated through Wollstonecraft's review of "Samuel Stanhope Smith's *An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species*".<sup>[124]</sup> In

this essay Smith explores the different climates and social factors that result in the differences between men and women. Wollstonecraft was able to take this philosophy and apply it to her argument in the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, where she demanded for the equality of the sexes.

During the time of Wollstonecraft's writings, "a woman [who engaged] herself in the masculine world of political debate was a double monstrosity; women not merely picking up the pen, but doing so to preach to men about the way the world should be run" was revolutionary.<sup>[125]</sup> Writing was primarily a masculine activity. Although women were permitted to learn how to read and write, they were not encouraged to voice their opinion on political or social matters through writing or any form of expression. Wollstonecraft's writing exemplifies Enlightenment rhetoric in the way that she relates her language to politics and society. Interestingly, Wollstonecraft not only utilizes Enlightenment rhetoric, but she challenges the masculine nature of it. She establishes the importance of reason; however, she also acknowledges the notion that the lack of education for women is denying them of that reason.

While Wollstonecraft makes strong claims for women to resist their male masters, she lacks in sympathizing with other women, her audience. She makes her lack of sympathy evident when she refers to Lady Kingsborough, the chatelaine of the Irish house where Wollstonecraft used to work as a governess. Wollstonecraft explains,

I once knew a weak woman of fashion, who was more than commonly proud of her delicacy and sensibility...I have seen this weak sophisticated being neglect all the duties of life; yet recline with self-complacency on a sofa, and boast of her want of appetite as a proof of delicacy that extended to, or perhaps, arose from, her exquisite sensibility; for it is difficult to render intelligible such jargon.<sup>[126]</sup>

According to Wollstonecraft, white women were weak because they are distracted by vanity and trivial desires. She claims that a strong woman engages in virtuous acts such as educating oneself, properly raising a family, and exercising individual thought. In degrading women's intelligence and sense of self, Wollstonecraft ultimately dissuaded her female audience from accepting her request for the better treatment of women.

Wollstonecraft's piece received an interesting reception. Some of her peers admired the quality of her work, while others denounced her claims. "Horace Walpole, the gothic novelist, called her a 'hyena in petticoats'; John Adams, the second president of the United States, called her 'this mad woman,' 'foolish', 'licentious'."<sup>[127]</sup> One of her contemporaries, Hannah More had a sour reaction to Wollstonecraft's piece.

I have been much pestered to read the Rights of Woman [she wrote to Horace Walpole] but am invincibly resolved not to do it. Of all jargon, I hate metaphysical jargon; beside, there is something fantastic and absurd in the very title. How many ways there are of being ridiculous! I am sure I have as much liberty as I can make use of, now I am an old maid; and when I was a young one, I had, I dare say, more than was good for me... to be unstable and capricious, I really think, is but too characteristic of our sex; and there is, perhaps, no animal so much indebted to subordination for its good behavior as woman.<sup>[128]</sup>

Hannah More, in her writings, aimed to explain equality among souls yet she contended that females were the inferior sex.<sup>[129]</sup> Both Wollstonecraft and More were impacted by the religious revival at the

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time. More was trying to extend the influence of the Church of England while; Wollstonecraft was developing her own philosophies.

Wollstonecraft's writings have displayed the evolution of her feminist theory and anti-slavery views. It was of course her personal experiences that yielded her passionate early works and feminist ideologies; however, it was her exposure to political writings and literary peers that translated her feminist views to her anti-slavery views. Essentially, her feminist and anti-slavery views have an intertwined relationship. In Wollstonecraft's earlier works, one can see how her difficult life experiences led her to question conventional female-to-female relationships as well as the gendered roles. Her experience also yielded a limited point of view towards women. As Wollstonecraft had overcome her difficult circumstances, she expected all women to be able to do the same, and this was evident in her later works where she integrated her anti-slavery views and feminist views. While Wollstonecraft's audience did not favor such harsh judgment towards white females, Wollstonecraft did garner a lot of attention and male responses. Further, as Wollstonecraft encountered political writing, she was able to integrate her feminist theory and present her antislavery views in a desirable manner. Her later works depict a complementary relationship rather than a causal one, between Wollstonecraft's feminist and antislavery views.

Ultimately, Wilberforce and Wollstonecraft were fighting for the same cause, yet they use different arguments in support of their abolitionist convictions. Their unique stances and motivations were apparent in their writings. Wilberforce relied on the traditional evangelical viewpoint to further his cause while Wollstonecraft looked to reason and her own feminist ideals. With the addition of women in the definition of those who were being oppressed, she broadened the scope of the need for change. Her analysis of the demeaning social expectations for women, was not widely accepted at her time; however, it set the foundation for great change in the future. While the relationship between her feminist views and anti-slavery views is intertwined, Wollstonecraft's belief in the rights of man, broadly interpreted, was clearly evident. Significantly, Wollstonecraft's writings reveal the intertwined relationship between her feminist and anti-slavery views. It is apparent that her life experiences and recourse to writing manifested in an interconnected view on feminism and slavery. Wollstonecraft revolutionized the definition of slavery through referring to man as all of mankind. Her anti-slavery views were depicted in both her *Vindication of the Rights of Men and Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, the founding document for feminism. Her writings indicate her compassion for humanity in its entirety, not just for women or slaves. As a result, many influential feminists to this day have utilized Wollstonecraft's convictions to hasten the fight for equality.

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[1] Craton, Michael, *Sinews of Empire: A Short History of British Slavery* (New York: Anchor, 1974) 130.

[2] Lyndall Gordon, *Vindication: A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975).

[3] Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a revolutionary life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

"Joseph Johnson (1738-1809), born near Liverpool, son of Baptist minister; became radical publisher working in St. Paul's Churchyard, London. His bookshop formed a center of literary and political activity; circle included Godwin, Blake, Paine, Fuseli among many others; employer and publisher of Mary Wollstonecraft. The *Analytical Review, or History of Literature, Domestic and Foreign, on an Enlarged Plan*. Containing *Scientific Abstracts* of important and interesting *Works*, publishes in English; a general account of such as are of less consequence, with short characters; Notices, or *Reviews* of valuable

foreign Books; *Criticisms on New Pieces of Music and Works of Art*; and the *Literary Intelligence of Europe*. London: Joseph Johnson."

[4] Ibid.

[5] Eleanor Flexner, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Biography* (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geohegan, 1972), 105.

[6] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*. (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792).

Caroline Franklin, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a literary life*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 94.

[7] Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a revolutionary life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 12.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Caroline Franklin, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a literary life*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 103.

[10] Penny Weiss, "Wollstonecraft and Rousseau: The Gendered Fate of Political Theorists," in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* edited by Maria Falco (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 15.

[11] Ibid, 23. "In showing how women have been omitted from *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, I do not mean to present those series as sorts of bibles. Rather, I use them to demonstrate that no matter from what perspectives, no matter how novel or interesting or exciting their ideas, what traditional academic disciplines use as their bibles will fail to acknowledge their contributions."

[12] Ibid, 21.

[13] Ibid, 23. The aforementioned authors were during and before Wollstonecraft's time. While she engaged in political debates with these authors and critiqued their theories, Wollstonecraft was not included within said figures.

[14] Ibid, 24.

[15] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 12.

[16] Virginia Sapiro, "Wollstonecraft, Feminism, and Democracy: 'Being Bastilled'" in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* edited by Maria Falco (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 08.

[17] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 81.

[18] Virginia Sapiro, "Wollstonecraft, Feminism, and Democracy: 'Being Bastilled'" in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* edited by Maria Falco (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 09.

[19] Ibid, 41.

[20] Ibid, 43.

[21] Maria Falco, *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 09.

[22] Virginia Muller, "What Can Liberals Learn from Mary Wollstonecraft" in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* edited by Maria Falco (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 51.

[23] Ibid, 51.

[24] Ibid, 52. "The problem with the argument from utility arises whenever we imagine a scenario in which the oppression of women is socially useful. Wollstonecraft's argument from a principle of utility prefigures J.S. Mill's in his *Subjection of Women* (1869) in John Stuart Mill's: *Three Essays, with an introduction by Richard Wollheim* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978)." As found in her endnotes.

[25] Wendy Gunther-Canada's piece, "Mary Wollstonecraft's 'Wild Wish': Confounding Sex in the Discourse on Political Rights," in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* edited by Maria Falco (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 55.

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[26] *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* edited by Maria Falco (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 09.

[27] Wendy Gunther-Canada's piece, "Mary Wollstonecraft's 'Wild Wish': Confounding Sex in the Discourse on Political Rights," in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* edited by Maria Falco (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 62: "William Goodwin (1987) claims that Wollstonecraft did not want to be known as an author. 'At the commencement of her literary career, she is said to have conceived a vehement aversion to being regarded, by her ordinary acquaintance in the character of an author, and to have employed some precautions to prevent its occurrence.'" William Goodwin. 1987. *Memoirs of the Author of the "Rights of Woman."* Edited by Richard Holmes. New York: Penguin. 226. As found in her endnotes.

[28] Ibid, 63.

[29] Ibid, 64.

[30] Ibid, 72.

[31] Carol Poston "Mary Wollstonecraft and 'The Body Politic'", in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* edited by Maria Falco (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 76.

[32] Ibid, 10.

[33] Ibid, 91

[34] Ibid, 87.

[35] Ibid, 96.

[36] Ibid, 103.

[37] Miriam Brody "The Vindication of the Writes of Women: Mary Wollstonecraft and Enlightenment Rhetoric." Found in, Maria Falco, *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996),108: "Mary Wollstonecraft dedicated the Vindication to the French minister Talleryrand, hoping her words might find a more sympathetic audience among those who were advancing the rights of man. She directly addresses both men and women as she writes. She reassuringly cajoles, 'but, fair and softly gentle reader, male or female' (259) or, often in the diction of a jeremiad, when she exhorts 'O my sisters' (238) or 'Be just then, O ye men of understanding' (319)." As cited in her endnote. Essentially, Wollstonecraft viewed her audience as men and she assumed her vindictive tone in order to achieve a reaction; however, in doing so, she lost much support from her female peers.

[38] Ibid, 11.

[39] Ibid, 12.

[40] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 77.

[41] Moira Ferguson, "Mary Wollstonecraft and the Problematic of Slavery." Found in Maria Falco, *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996),140. Ferguson furthers her explanation of Wollstonecraft's view of the subjugation of women by men through providing biographical context: "Aside from her commentary on Equinao's and Yarico's experiences, among others, Wollstonecraft also recognizes other ways that sexuality oppresses white women. She had dealt on a personal level with her sister Eliza's postpartum depression by effecting Eliza's separation from her husband, Hugh Skeys. She felt, it seems, as if Keys were responsible for her sister's condition; she treated him, more or less, as a male predator, a villain of sorts. At the same time, the Rights of Woman appeared at a time in her life when she was immersed in a difficult personal situation; the choices open to a woman who wants to work and to love – she was discovering – were very limited." As found in her endnote.

[42] William Wilberforce. *An appeal to the religion, justice, and humanity of the inhabitants of the British Empire in behalf of the negro slaves in the West Indies* (London: Printed for J.Hatchard, 1823).

[43] Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-slavery Movement* (London: F. Cass, 1964), 70-71.

[44] Ibid, 72.



[45] Ibid, 36-38.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Craton, Michael, *Sinews of Empire: A Short History of British Slavery* (New York: Anchor, 1974).

[48] William Wilberforce, *A letter on the abolition of the slave trade addressed to the freeholders and other inhabitants of Yorkshire* (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807).

James Walvin, *Black ivory: a history of British slavery* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992), 40.

[49] Ibid, 05.

[50] William Wilberforce. *An appeal to the religion, justice, and humanity of the inhabitants of the British Empire in behalf of the negro slaves in the West Indies* (London: Printed for J.Hatchard, 1823).

[51] Ibid, 18.

[52] Ibid, 16.

[53] Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a revolutionary life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 09.

[54] Ibid, 11.

[126] Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975).

[56] Ibid.

[57] Eleanor Flexner, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Biography* (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geohegan, 1972), 143.

[58] Maria Falco, *Feminist interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 218.

William Godwin, *Memoirs of The Author of "The Rights of Woman"*, "This memoir, first published in 1798 (only six months after Wollstonecraft's death), did much to scandalize the memory of the champion of women's rights... Godwin's telling of the story of Wollstonecraft's radical confrontation of theory and practice became the subject of notoriety not critical inquiry."

[59] Caroline Franklin, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a literary life*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 15.

[60] Ibid.

D.O. Thomas, *The Honest Mind: The Thought and Work of Richard Price* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), chs1-5.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Falco, Maria J. "The Problematic of Slavery" *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996), 127.

[63] Ibid,129.

[64] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Man*. Farnborough, Eng.: GREGG., 1970.

[65] *Analytical Review*, 8 (Dec 1790), 416.

[66] Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a revolutionary life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 88.

[67] Caroline Franklin, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a literary life*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 92, 219.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a revolutionary life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 77.

[70] Gary Kelly, *Revolutionary feminism: the mind and career of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 101.

[71] Ashley Tauchert, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Accent of the Feminine*. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 26.

[72] Caroline Franklin, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a literary life*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 98.



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- [73] Ashley Tauchert, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Accent of the Feminine*. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 27.
- [74] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters with Reflections on Female Conduct, in the more Important Duties of Life* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1787), 88.
- [75] Caroline Franklin, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a literary life*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 15.
- [76] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria: or, The wrongs of woman*. (New York: Norton, 1788), 105.
- [77] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 77. Caroline Franklin, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a literary life*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 22.
- [78] Maria Falco, *Feminist interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 129,130.
- [79] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, in a Letter to the Right Honorable Edmund Burke; Occasioned by *His Reflections on the Revolution in France*. 2d ed. (London: Joseph Johnson, 1790), 77. Maria Falco, *Feminist interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 129,130.
- [80] Maria Falco, *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996),129.
- [81] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, in a Letter to the Right Honorable Edmund Burke; Occasioned by *His Reflections on the Revolution in France*. 2d ed. (London: Joseph Johnson, 1790), 10.
- [82] Ashley Tauchert, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Accent of the Feminine*. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 56.
- [83] Maria Falco, *Feminist interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996),125.
- [84] Ibid.
- [85] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 77.
- [86] Ibid.
- [87] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 77.
- [88] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1790), 09.
- [89] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1790), 19.
- [90] Ibid, 34.
- This reference possibly originates from Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, where he allies melancholy with the non-beautiful, the non-sublime, and, by a process of categories, the non-feminine.
- [91] Ibid, 24.
- [92] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 25.
- [93] Ibid, 45.
- [94] Ibid.
- [95] Ibid, 61.
- [96] Ibid, 52.
- [97] Ibid, 55.
- [98] Ibid, 56.
- [99] Ibid, 66.
- [100] Ibid, 155.
- [101] Ibid, 155.
- [102] Ibid, 144
- [103] Ibid, 140.
- [104] Ibid, 186,187.

- [105] Ibid.
- [106] Ibid, 144.
- [107] Ibid.
- [108] Ibid, 76-77.
- [109] Ibid, 68.
- [110] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 144-145.
- [111] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 144-145.
- [112] Falco, Maria J. "The Problematic of Slavery" *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996), 140.
- [113] Falco, Maria J. "Mary Wollstonecraft's "Wild Wish": Confounding Sex in the Discourse on Political Rights." *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996), 72.
- [114] Ibid.
- [115] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 166.
- [116] Ibid, 120.
- [117] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 215.
- [118] Ibid, 90.
- [119] Falco, Maria J. "Mary Wollstonecraft's "Wild Wish": Confounding Sex in the Discourse on Political Rights." *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996), 75.
- [120] Ibid.
- [121] Ibid, 76.
- [122] Ibid, 135.
- [123] Ibid.
- [124] Ibid.
- [125] Falco, Maria J. "The Vindication of the Writings of Women: Mary Wollstonecraft and Enlightenment Rhetoric" *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996),106.
- [126] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), 130.
- [127] Lyndall Gordon, *Vindication: a life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 04.
- [128] Hannah More, *Essay on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Wilkie, 1777), 03.
- [129] Caroline Franklin, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a literary life*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 25.