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Women's Roles and Rights in A Vindication of the Rights of Women

by Marv Wollstonecraft

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Dedication:

This research paper is dedicated to my Grandfather's soul Laid, The dearest person in my life, my sweet mother, to my beloved father who has always been proud of me; they have encouraged me attentively with their fullest and truest attention to accomplish my study with truthful self-confidence. And to my treasured siblings Zohra, Fatiha, and Yasser Abdelfatah, A special thanks to my friends Amin Allah for his help.

Mohammed Elalmi

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study:

English literature witnessed several movements and events because of various changes in society in terms of historical, cultural, and religious dimensions. Between the 17th and 18th centuries, the Enlightenment was the most important movement in Britain, Europe, and the whole world which this new period influenced authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft who dealt with the notion of Feminism in her writings.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) is an English writer, advocate, feminist, and one of the famous radical writers whose works are concerned with social class, gender, and consequences of war. She suffered from a continuous headache caused by her second pregnancy, the illness that was the reason for her death.

The topic of the present study is related to the notion of Feminism; the case of the work is A Vindication of the Rights of Women that is written by feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft. The work's first publication was in 1792, and many critics define it as a feminist work.

2. Aim of The study

This study aims to define the relationship between women and society in the 18th century, and how the Enlightenment period influenced both of them. And to show how Mary Wollstonecraft reflects women's lack of education, freedom, and opportunities to be involved in society and literature.

3. Motivation

I chose this topic not randomly, but for many purposes the main ones are:

1. The reality that Mary Wollstonecraft is well-Known by " Mother of Feminism".
2. Many studies have been written on Wollstonecraft's work.
3. It is interesting to discover the effect of the Enlightenment in the society of the 18th century.

4. Research Questions

1. To what extent feminist approaches in A Vindication of the Rights of Women?
2. What is the role of the Enlightenment in 18th-century society and Literature?

5. Hypothesis

In this study, I hypothesized that:

- A. Mary Wollstonecraft's work, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, has feminist interpretations within its lines.
- B. The Age of Enlightenment challenged the traditional notion that represents women as inferior to men.

6. Methodology

This study is Descriptive Analytical research following the concept of the Feminism approach; that is founded by Christine de Pizan, who wrote "Epistle to the God of Love" in the 15th century, Simon de Beauvoir declared.

Chapter One

Historical Background of FEMINISM

Introduction: Historical Background of Feminism:

1. What is Feminism?

Feminism has always been a point of intense discussion. Scholars question the terminology, the nature of the movement, the period, and the characteristics of the movement. The confusion surrounding the word leaves no space for the presence of a simple consensus on a particular meaning. Nothing about feminism is absolute, and the movement does not have a clear frame cut.

"I have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is" Rebecca West declared. In those years, some writers used the alternative term 'Womanism' with the same hostility. Hudson-Weems identifies similar differences between Womanism and Feminism, Womanism is "family-oriented" and specializes in race, class, and gender, whilst feminism is "female-oriented" and specializes in organic sex-related problems women and girls face globally. One long-forgotten author was roused to angry sneers in his memoirs when he recalled meeting an intellectual woman residing in Paris (She comes across, despite his prejudices, as lively and interesting) whose writings reflected 'the strong-minded Womanism of the 19th century'.

Feminism is a variety of political, ideological, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and gain political, economic, personal, and social rights for women. This consists of seeking out to establish educational and professional opportunities for women which are equal to such opportunities for men. Rebecca West says: "Feminism is the radical notion that women are people." Which means it is a commitment to achieving the equality of the sexes. According to the Oxford English dictionary "feminism

is the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim"(Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com). And a suitable definition of feminism is provided by Chris Weedon, at the very start of her book entitled "Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory." She claims that "Feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. This power relation structures all areas of life, the family, education, and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture, and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we become". A Feminist is every person who understands the equality of women and men. A feminist is someone who answers 'yes' to the question 'are women human?'

Over the centuries, and in lots of different countries, women have spoken out for their sex and articulated in different ways their complaints, their needs, and their hopes. As this is a very brief introduction, I have focused on feminism in one county, England, and have to explore its improvement through time. While women in other countries had different experiences, in England, right up till the 1960s at least, the word "feminist" was generally pejorative. " Very few women, however deeply engaged in preventing for women's rights, would have defined themselves as "feminists" and one of these women was Marry Wollstonecraft who was one of the initiators who struggled for women's equal rights in an attempt to provide a belief of 'self-respecting women of integrity' a secure place in the modern world. She calls for a revolution in 'female manners' matching with economic and political developments in society. Also promotes education for women" (O'Brien, 2009, 70). Therefore, in history, Women were exploited to serve men by

marrying, raising children, working as a nurse and teacher at the primary level with unfair and low-paid jobs.

1.2 The Waves of Feminism:

Critics had divided the Feminist movement into three intervals and they called them waves. They depend, in the division, on the needs of every wave and the principle goals and characteristics. The First Wave Feminism began in nearly 1800 and ended in the 1930s, was concerned with gaining the same rights for women and men. Whereas the Second Wave Feminism began in the late 1960s, it carried First Wave Feminism's fighting for egalitarianism among men and women but unexpectedly evolved theories and strategies that sustain the women's subordination and put emphasis on the specific needs of women. However, those two waves paved the way for current improvement which may be considered as the Third Wave Feminism. Nonetheless, every wave is identified through its feminist leaders and its characteristics.

According to Leslie Goldstein, equality in legal and political rights and formal equality of opportunity are the central issues of this wave. Feminists aimed to achieve the opportunity to vote, to hold public offices, to gain more official jobs and education. In addition to legal rights in marriage such as disobey their husbands; sue for divorce, keeping their children after divorce, and legal protection against husbands' physical abuse.

1.2.1 First Wave of Feminism:

The first wave of feminism emerged in Europe and the United States of America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It thrived in the context of industrial society was related to both The Women's Rights and Women's Suffrage Movements, with their emphasis on political and social reforms, Thus the first wave of feminism began out with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and activities and writings of Gimike sisters (United States) which culminated in the winning of the vote in 1920. The earliest form of feminism was concerned with the same rights for women and men: same standing as citizens in public life and, to some extent, same legal status at home. These thoughts appeared in response to the French Revolution and the American War of Independence, both of which supported the significance of liberty and equality. Feminists in France claimed that the Revolution's values of liberty, equality, and fraternity should be applied to both men and women, while in America, women activists called for an extension of the beliefs of the American Declaration of Independence to women, including rights to citizenship and property.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, women were actively campaigning for their rights in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Women were then more specific in local issues; they focused on white women's education and marriage law. In Britain, "Militant political movement among women began in 1903 with the formation of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) for the right to vote, under the leadership of Emmeline Pankhurst. Marry Wollstonecraft, Lucy Stone were renowned feminists at that time. And this wave ended with the passage of the nineteenth amendment to the US constitution in 1919, granting women the right to vote in all states.

Wollstonecraft is far from being a radical feminist, but she wants to integrate women as individuals equal to men into society. Therefore, Wollstonecraft is principally involved with the conservative methods upon which society builds femininity, mainly its misleading education of young girls. "Despite the reality that, she supports the women being wives and mothers, she shows the importance of women's education considering their huge influence on society as being the first schools" (Sanders, 117-20).

A: Goals and Issues of the First Wave:

- ✓ Equal Political Rights for Women.
- ✓ Equal Opportunities for Education and Employments.
- ✓ Right to own property.
- ✓ Borrowed energy but also competed with the Anti-Abolitionist movement.

B: Texts of the First Wave:

- Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions Seneca Falls Conventions, 1848 by Elizabeth Cady Stanton.
- Vindication of the Rights of Women, 1792 by Mary Wollstonecraft.
- A Room of One's Own by Virginia Woolf.

1.2.3 Second Wave of Feminism:

The second wave of feminism which occurred in 1960-1980, came as a reaction to the experiences of women after World War II. Where other groups such as blacks and homosexuals were being oppressed. "It was born out of the Civil Rights movement and

focused on issues like sexuality and reproductive Rights" (Chicago Women's Liberation Union.) This new social movement is dedicated to raising awareness about sexism and patriarchy, legalizing abortion and birth control, achieving the same rights in political and economic realms, and gaining sexual liberation.

Despite the reality that the second-wave movement continued to fight in the light of the first-wave principles, however, it took a slight divergence to the politics of reproduction, to women's experience, to sexual difference. Moreover, five principal aspects are concerned within second-wave feminism: sexual difference, biology, experience, discourse, unconscious, and social and economic condition.

Second-wave feminism attempted to illustrate how issues of race, class, and gender oppression are all related. Also differentiated between Sex and Gender; Sex as being biological and Gender being a social construct, varying from culture to culture and changing over time. The wave saw typically "feminine" Objects like lipsticks, high heels, or even bras as forms of male oppression.

The term "wave" only comes into use during the Second Wave, in 1968, a New York Times article written by Martha Weinman Lear "The Second Feminist Wave", Lear wrote, "Proponents call it Second Feminist Wave, the first having ebbed after the glorious victory of suffrage and disappeared, finally, into the sandbar of Togetherness." The term wave became popular and helped connect different eras of feminism.

A: Goals and Issues of the Second Wave:

- ✓ Getting women the right to hold credit cards under their names.
- ✓ Raising awareness about Domestic Violence.

- ✓ Sheltering For women fleeing rape and domestic violence.
- ✓ Naming and legislating against sexual harassment in the workplace.

B: Texts of the Second Wave:

- The Second Sex, 1949 by Simon de Beauvoir.
- The Feminine Mystique, 1963 by Betty Friedan.
- Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination, 1979 by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar.
- The Combahee River Collective Statement in 1981.
- Ain't I a Woman Black Women and Feminism, 1981 by Bell Hooks.

1.2.3 Third Wave of Feminism:

The third wave of feminism (the 1990s-2000s) arose partially as a reaction to the perceived failures of second-wave feminism key concerns, the diversity of "women" is recognized, and "emphasis" is placed on identity, gender, race, nation, social order, and sexual preference. Third-wave feminism manifests itself in "grrl" rhetoric stretching out from the mid-Nineties onward and finding ferment soil and voice in the context of the contemporary informational age, globalization, and new world order. The specific American term for third-wave feminism is "grrrl feminism", and in Europe is known as "new feminism", also recognized under the connotation of; Girlie feminism, riot grrl feminism, 'cybergrrl feminism', or 'transfeminism'. However, Third-Wave feminists usually distinguish themselves astoundingly as 'free' women, irrepressible, mainly independent

from men. New feminism gave women the opportunity to abuse their voices and artistic expressions.

An outstanding British contributor to third-wave feminism is Nira Yuval-Davis, the author of *Gender and Nation* (1997), who had instigated the notion of 'transversal politics'; it consists of the breaking national, ethnic, and religious boundaries between women and to open exchange of ideas between them. (Krolokke, 15-20)

A: Goals and Issues of the Third Wave:

- ✓ Embrace of Intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw; a Scholar of gender and critical race theory coined the term Intersectionality to describe how different forms of Oppression intersect.
- ✓ An Aesthetic embrace of 'girliness': Third-Wavers argued, was no less valuable than masculinity or androgyny.
- ✓ Recognizing danger as well as pleasure in patriarchal standards of beauty.

B: Texts of the Third Wave:

- *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 1990 by Judith Butler.
- *The Beauty Myth*, 1991 by Naomi Woolf.
- *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate Politics*, 2000 by Bell Hooks.

1.3 Women in The Victorian Era:

The world has always been led by men due to the fact they are seen as strong, powerful, and tough. In short, they are often portrayed as the rulers of society who authorized themselves to look down and underestimate women since they are vulnerable by nature. Thus, the conflict between society and women rose since they are confined at home under "the Angels of the house" motto in a male-oriented and ruled society. The Victorian doctrine of womanhood was polished by the concept that an ideal female must be obedient and self-sacrificing. That is why they are generally given the traditional roles of wives, mothers, and daughters.

At that time, women were classified by their social class, appearance, beauty, and sexuality. They were defined physically and intellectually as the weaker sex, in all ways subordinate to male authority. In private life, women were subject to fathers, husbands, brothers even grownup sons. But Throughout history, and in particular during the Victorian era (mid-to-late-1800s), women-especially from the higher and middle classes-had little opportunities beyond those of the hearth and home. During the reign of Queen Victoria, a woman's place was in the home, as domesticity and motherhood were considered by society at large to be sufficient emotional fulfillment for females. These constructs kept women far away from the public sphere in most ways, Queen Victoria became an icon of late-19th-century middle-class femininity and domesticity, but during the nineteenth-century charitable missions did start to extend the female role of service, and Victorian feminism emerged as an effective political force. The New Woman was a response to these restricting roles of spouse and mother.

1.4 Women in the Modern Society:

A new perspective, self-consciousness, inventions, believes, thoughts, styles, and a sense of liberation from traditional conventions have emerged. Within society, women have essential roles to perform. The roles of women are generally identified in the social, political, economic, cultural, and religious spheres. In those spheres, when they are to own efficient competencies and abilities, so they are capable of rendering their participation efficiently. In addition to the skills and abilities, women need to generate attention in terms of the factors influencing their participation. Possessing information concerning these factors also enables them in overcoming the limitations that may arise withinside the course of performance of roles. When women are performing numerous kinds of roles, they need to ensure that they work efficiently towards promoting well being of their family and community. In other words, they need to make sure that their contribution is useful to the individuals. And Feminism has a big role in this movement; it is the perception that focuses on changing society for the better. This is an attempt to assure the same opportunities and fairness for both men and women, which do not exist this time.

1.2 Twentieth-Century Literature and Women:

Women's roles in literature have developed all through history and had lead women to develop into strong independent roles. Modern literature has served as an outlet and sounding board for women's rights and feminist pioneers. Female writers have come to the forefront and provided today's readers with a large array of ethnic and cultural perspectives. The unique voice of female minorities is a common theme in many coming of age novels that permits every author to set up a separate identity for their characters and

themselves. Women in modern literature frequently consist of strong independent females juxtaposed by oppressed women to offer examples for young female readers and to critique brief comings of our society. The emergence of the independent female novelist in America has allowed for a brand new evolution of the role of women in fictional literature.

Chapter Two

The Age of the Enlightenment

2. Introduction:The Age of the Enlightenment:

The Age of Enlightenment refers to the 18th century in European philosophy and is frequently thought of as a part of a larger period which includes the Age of Reason. It is a period of scientific awakening, largely centered around France. It is also known as a time of illumination due to the fact writers, artists, and thinkers started to use reason. Anything which can not be understood by rational knowledge and the modern status of sciences was described as meaningless or superstitious. Philosophy has become very famous among intellectuals and people who read philosophical operas. However, the overall concerns were about the realistic use of our knowledge. In different words, the two fundamental characteristics of the philosophy of enlightenment are:

- Faith in the European Reason and human rationality to reject the tradition and the pre-established institutions and thoughts.
- Search for realistic, beneficial knowledge as the power to manipulate nature. As a result of the efforts of these thinkers, wonderful development of the understanding of science, mathematics, and philosophy occurred.

2.1 The Enlightenment:

The Enlightenment (1685-1900) is the period in the history of western thought and culture, stretching kind of from the mid-decades of the 17th century through the eighteenth century, characterized by dramatic revolutions in science, philosophy, society, and politics; those revolutions swept away the medieval world-view and ushered in our current western

world. Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke, Isaac Newton, and Voltaire questioned accepted knowledge and spread new thoughts about openness, investigation, and religious tolerance all through Europe and the Americas. Many consider the Enlightenment a primary turning point in Western civilization, an age of light changing age of darkness. Enlightenment thinkers in Britain, in France, and all through Europe questioned traditional authority and embraced the perception that humanity might be improved through rational change. In his essay "What Is Enlightenment?" (1784), the German philosopher Immanuel Kant summed up the era's motto in the following terms: "Dare to know! Have the courage to use your reason!" The Enlightenment produced numerous books, essays, inventions, scientific discoveries, laws, wars, and revolutions. The American and French Revolutions were immediately inspired by Enlightenment beliefs and respectively marked the peak of its impact and the start of its decline. One result of the Renaissance was a new interest in science. During the 1600s, people began to observe, experiment, and reason to discover new knowledge.

2.2 The Late Enlightenment and Beyond: 1780-1815

From earliest times, people have been curious about the world around them. Thousands of years ago, people started to use numbers, study the stars and planets, and watch the growth of plants and animals. These activities were the beginnings of science. Science is an organized study of the natural world and the way it works. Using the scientific method, Europeans of the 1600s and 1700s developed new thoughts about a society based on reason. As scientists made discoveries, European thinkers began to apply science to society. For those thinkers, science had confirmed that the physical universe

followed natural laws. By using their reason, people could learn the way the universe worked. Using this knowledge, people additionally could resolve existing human problems and make life better.

One of the most important scientific thinkers was the Frenchman René Descartes; in 1637 he wrote a book known as Discourse on Method. In his work, Descartes claimed that mathematics was the source of all scientific truth. In arithmetic, he said, the answers were always true. This was because mathematics started with simple, apparent concepts and then used logic to move steadily to different truths. Today, Descartes is considered as the founder of current rationalism this is the perception that reason is the chief source of knowledge.

And because the scientific revolution led many people to depend more on reason than faith, it faded the power and impact of Christian churches. This was in particular true with the Roman Catholic Church. However, Christianity did not cease to exist. Missionaries continued to gain converts all through the world, and church membership continued to grow in lots of areas. Although scientists supported reason as a way of gaining knowledge, many continued to trust in God. They argued that God had created the universe according to mathematical laws. God then allowed the universe to run itself by those laws. This religious approach is known as deism. Isaac Newton was primary among the deist scientists. He believed that God had created natural laws that couldn't be defined in any other way. For example, he believed that the force of gravity was a scientific law. However, it couldn't exist until God had made it. In this way, religion coexisted with reason throughout the Scientific Revolution which is found by English philosopher Francis

Bacon, who lived from 1561 to 1626. Bacon believed that thoughts based on tradition should be placed aside.

During the 1700s, many thinkers believed that reason could be used to make government and society better. The Enlightenment was centered in France, where thinkers wrote about changing their society and met to talk about their thoughts. They believed they were getting into a new era of concepts and ideas. Even so, they knew that lots of their thoughts came from older traditions. The Greeks had looked at nature and seen styles that could be observed. Greek philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, had all stressed reason and analysis. The Enlightenment thinkers were also inspired by the Romans. Many laws and thoughts of government had come from the Romans, who had emphasized systems of order.

France has become the primary center of the Enlightenment. As the Enlightenment spread, thinkers in France and elsewhere have become known by the French name philosopher which means "philosopher." Most philosophers were writers, teachers, journalists, and observers of society. The philosophers wanted to use reason to change society; they also disagreed with Church leaders who opposed new scientific discoveries. The philosophers believed in each freedom of speech and the individual's right to liberty. They used their abilities as writers to spread their thoughts throughout Europe. The philosophers of the Enlightenment wanted to build a better society than the one in which they lived. Many of their essays defined how the government has to work and the way people should treat one another.

2.3 The Enlightenment and Women:

The Enlightenment raised questions about the role of women in society. Previously, many male thinkers claimed that women were much less important than men and had to be controlled and protected. By the 1700s, however, women thinkers started calling for women's rights. The most effective supporter of women's rights was the English writer Mary Wollstonecraft. She sought to eliminate inequality in education between men and women. Many people today credit her as the founder of the modern movement for women's rights. Mary Wollstonecraft argued that the natural rights of the Enlightenment should extend to women as well as men.

In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft wrote a book known as *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In this work, she claimed that all people have a reason. Because women have a reason, they must have the same rights as men. Women, Wollstonecraft said, must have the same rights in education, the workplace, and political life. Mary Wollstonecraft is frequently considered the founder of the current women's rights movement.

2.4 Points to remember about the Enlightenment:

A. Where the Enlightenment movement did took place?

- North America
- Europe

B. Who were some important people?

- Francis Bacon (A.D. 1561–1626)
- Galileo Galilei (A.D. 1564–1642)
- John Locke (A.D. 1632–1704)

C. What were people's beliefs?

- Christianity
- Deism introduced in Europe and America

D. What role did language and writing play?

- Studied ancient Greek and Roman texts as well as ideas of Jews and Muslims.
- Developed new ideas about science and philosophy.
- Reason seen as a way to truth.
- New ideas about government

E. How the Enlightenment affected the present day?

- Supported rights of individuals specially women's rights.
- Inventing scientific tools (microscope, telescope) and vaccines for disease developed.

3. Biography of Mary Wollstonecraft:

Mary Wollstonecraft, the married name Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, was an 18th Century author, philosopher, and radical who promoted the rights of women. And whose wonderful works have stimulated readers for decades. People name her 'Mother of feminism'.

Wollstonecraft was born on 27 April 1759 in Spitalfields, London, but her father, a drunk, squandered the family money, like her mother, she frequently suffered abuse at his hands. She was the second of the seven children of Elizabeth Dixon and Edward John Wollstonecraft. Because of the actions of her father and her mother's death in 1780, Wollstonecraft set out to earn her very own livelihood. As a woman, Wollstonecraft obtained little formal schooling but she set out to educate herself, in 1784, Mary and her sister Eliza established a school in Newington Green. From her experiences teaching, Wollstonecraft wrote the pamphlet *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787).

When her friend Fanny died in 1785, Wollstonecraft took a role as governess for the Kingsborough family in Ireland. Spending her time there to mourn and recover, she finally found she was not suitable for home work. Three years later, she returned to London and became a translator and an adviser to Joseph Johnson, who published numerous of her works, including the novel *Mary: A Fiction* (1788). A noted publisher of radical texts. When Johnson released the *Analytical Review* in 1788, Mary became a regular contributor. Within four years, she published her most well-known work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). In which she argues that women are not inferior to men, but seem like only because they lack education. She indicates that both men and women must be treated as rational beings and imagines a social order based on

reason. The thoughts in her book were revolutionary at the time and caused exceptional controversy.

Wollstonecraft wrote the book in part as a response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, published in late 1790. Burke saw the French Revolution as a movement that would inevitably fail, as society wanted traditional structures such as inherited positions and property to strengthen it. Wollstonecraft's preliminary response was to write *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), a rebuttal of Burke that argued in favor of parliamentary reform, and mentioning that religious and civil liberty were part of a man's birthright, with corruption caused in the main by ignorance. This argument for men's rights wasn't unique – Thomas Paine published his *Rights of Man* in 1791, also arguing in opposition to Burke – but Wollstonecraft proceeded to go one step further, and, for the first time, a book was published that argued for women's rights to be on the same footing as men's. Wollstonecraft also "wrote *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*", which asserted that women had strong sexual desires and that was degrading and immoral to pretend otherwise.

In 1792, while visiting friends in France, Wollstonecraft met Captain Gilbert Imlay, an American timber merchant, and adventurer. Taken by him, she soon became pregnant. They named their daughter Fanny, after Mary's best friend. While nursing her firstborn, Wollstonecraft wrote a conservative critique of the French Revolution in *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*. She also wrote a deeply personal travel narrative, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, which became her most famous book in the 1790s. After their travels to Scandinavia, Imlay left her, She returned to London to work once more for Johnson and

joined an influential radical group, which gathered at his home and included William Godwin, Thomas Paine, Thomas Holcroft, William Blake, and, after 1793, William Wordsworth. In 1796 she started a liaison with Godwin; Mary recovered, finding new hope in a relationship with William Godwin, the founder of philosophical anarchism. Despite their belief in the tyranny of marriage, the couple finally wed due to her pregnancy. In 1797, their daughter Mary (who later famously wrote *Frankenstein*), was born. Eleven days later, due to headaches of childbirth, Wollstonecraft died. And After Wollstonecraft's demise, Godwin published a *Memoir* (1798) of her life, revealing her unorthodox lifestyle.

3.1. Mary Wollstonecraft and the French Revolution:

Mary Wollstonecraft was a feminist writer. She was considered by many critics as the mother of feminism. So much had been written about this feminist writer, author of the great feminist manifesto *A Vindication of the rights of women* (1792) that sometimes, the woman gets lost in the myths about her; other times it is difficult to write something new.

In November 1789, Richard Price, a minister at the local dissenting chapel, preached a sermon praising the French Revolution, he argued that British people, like the French, had the right to remove a bad king from the throne. Edmund Burke, who was considered the defender of political thoughts, was appalled by these sermons; he opposed revolutions. So, in 1790, he published his book *Reflections on the Revolution in France* as a warning to much English reform. Tom Furnish, the senior lecturer in the department of English Studies at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, reported that according to Burke, the people of Britain already enjoy liberty as a kind of property

inherited from their ancestors (Furniss Tom, quoted in Claudia Johnson, 200:60). Burke added that:

Men have the right to do justice...they have a right to the fruits of their industry, and to the means of making their industry fruitful. They have a right to the acquisitions of their parents... to instruction in life, and consolation in death (Burke Edmund, quoted in Vitoux Pierre, 1969:288).

Edmund Burke in his Reflection on the Revolution in France replied to those reforms, such as Richard Price by asserting that "We have an inheritable crown; an inheritable peerage...and people inheriting privileges, franchises, and liberties from a long line of their ancestors" (Burke Edmund,1993:123)

Wollstonecraft was upset by Burke's attack on her friend; she defended him by writing a pamphlet entitled A Vindication of the rights of man (1790). Ashley Tauchert thought that Wollstonecraft's first Vindication could, "in some important respect, be said to be shaped by her engagement with, and rejection of, aspects of patriarchal politics and thinking" (Tauchert Ashley quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003:266).

Wollstonecraft's enthusiasm for the early stages of the French Revolution was almost unbounded. The Rights of Man shows very clearly her sense of the revolution as the embodiment of the central tenets of the Enlightenment and liberalism. Her somewhat eclectic approach meant that she saw the revolution as enacting the ideas both of Locke and Rousseau. Wollstonecraft stressed the fact that:

It is necessary emphatically to repeat, that there are rights which men inherit at their birth, as rational creatures who are raised above the brute creation by their improvable

faculties; and that, in receiving them, not from their forefathers but, from God, prescription can never undermine natural rights (Wollstonecraft Mary, cited in <http://originate.edu/instruct/ph/302/texts/Wollstonecraft/women.contents.html>).

In her pamphlet, Wollstonecraft not only supported Price but also showed everything she thought wrong with society, including the slave trade, the game laws, and the way the poor were treated. John Fitzsimmons asserted that "her husband (William Godwin) said that she considered herself as a standing forth in defense of one-half of the human species, laboring under a yoke which throughout the records of time had degraded them from the station of rational beings to the level of brutes.(John Fitzsimmons, 1952:18).

It is worth noting that the publication of *A Vindication of the rights of man* brought Wollstonecraft to the attention of other radical thinkers such as Thomas Paine, John Cartwright, William Godwin, and William Blake, The following year, Mary Wollstonecraft published her most important book *A Vindication of the rights of women*, through which she attacked the educational restrictions that kept women in a state of ignorance and slavish dependence. She was especially critical of a society that encouraged women to be docile and attentive to their looks to the exclusion of all else. *The Vindication of the rights of women* was specifically a response to the legislation that established a new system of education for boys but not for girls. It follows from what I mentioned above; Mary's *Vindication of the rights of women* covered a wide range of topics relating to the condition of women. She did not only defend women's equality with men in education, but she also appealed for their equality within the law as well as their right I'm parliamentary presentation.

3.2. Summary of the Vindication of the Rights of Women:

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is a treatise on overcoming the ways wherein women in her time are oppressed and denied their ability in society, with concomitant issues for their families and society as a whole. The dedication is to Charles M. Talleyrand-Périgord, the late bishop of Autun whose perspectives on female education were distasteful to Wollstonecraft. The introduction sets out her view that neglect of girls' education is essentially responsible for the situation of grownup girls.

They are treated as subordinate beings that care only about being attractive; they do not have the tools to vindicate their essential rights or the attention that they are in such a situation.

In the first chapter, Wollstonecraft promotes reason and rationality and discusses the deleterious results of absolute, arbitrary political power and the vices related to riches and hereditary honors. Chapters two and three detail the numerous ways wherein women are rendered subordinate. They are taught that their appearance is of paramount concern, and they tend to cultivate weakness and artificiality to seem attractive to others. Writers like Rousseau and Dr. Gregory desire that women stay virtual slaves, enshrined in the home and concerned only with their "natural" proclivities of being modest, chaste, and beautiful. Women are taught to indulge their feelings and consequently have unhappy marriages because passion can not be sustained. Women's confinement in the home and incapability to participate in the public sphere consequences their insipidness and pettiness. Wollstonecraft wants to inspire a "revolution in female manners."

In chapter four she excoriates the idea that pleasure is the ultimate aim of a woman's life. Reason and common sense are generally neglected in favor of emotion and sentiment, and younger girls are taught every early to concern themselves only with their persons. In addition, marriage should resemble friendship because husband and wife have to be companions. In chapter five Wollstonecraft lambastes many of the writers who have perpetuated these thoughts. In chapter six she explains the significance of early associations for the improvement of character; for women, false notions and early impressions are not tempered by knowledge or nuance. Girls start to prefer rakes to decent men.

In chapters seven and eight Wollstonecraft addresses the subject of modesty and explains that modesty is not similar to humility. Women's modesty can only improve when their bodies are reinforced and their minds enlarged by active exertions. Women's morality is undermined, however, when reputation is upheld as the most significant thing they should preserve intact. Men place the burden of upholding chastity on a woman's shoulders, yet men also have to be chaste.

In chapter nine Wollstonecraft calls for more financial independence for women, expresses the need for duty and activity in the public sphere, argues for the need to be a very good citizen as well as a good mother, and describes the numerous interests women would possibly take on in society. Chapters ten and eleven concern parenting duties, stating that there should be refinement in education for women to be good mothers.

Chapter twelve concerns Wollstonecraft's thoughts on education reform. These consist of a conflation of public and private education, co-education, and a more democratic, participatory educational structure.

Chapter thirteen sums up her arguments. She details the numerous ways wherein women indulge their silliness. These include visiting mediums, fortune tellers, and healers; reading stupid novels; engaging in rivalries with other women; immoderately worrying about dress and manners; and indulging their children and treating them like idols. Overall, women's faults do not result from a natural deficiency but stem from their low status in society and inadequate education.

3.3. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman Main Characters:

- **Jean-Jacques Rousseau:** A broadly respected and read 18th-century Genevan philosopher, writer, and composer. His political philosophy was influential in the Enlightenment. His novel *Émile: or, On Education* was a treatise on the education of the whole person for citizenship. Wollstonecraft painstakingly critiques a lot of Rousseau's thoughts concerning women and their "nature" in *Vindication*.
- **Edmund Burke:** An Irish politician, writer, orator, political theorist, and philosopher. He served in the House of Commons as a member of the Whig Party for plenty of years, supported the American Revolution, and opposed the French Revolution. His conservative (classical liberal) *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.
- **John Milton:** An English poet and civil servant for the Commonwealth of England, best known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*. He is touted as a man of genius by Wollstonecraft, even though she gives some criticism of his obvious perspectives on women.
- **Dr. Gregory:** A Scottish physician, scientific writer, and moralist whose book *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774) was widely read in the 18th century.

- **Samuel Richardson:** An extremely famous 18th-century writer. He is best known for his epistolary novels: *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), *Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady* (1748), and *The History of Sir Charles Grandson* (1753)
- **Dr. James Fordyce:** An 18th-century Scottish Presbyterian minister and poet best known for his collection of sermons *Sermons for Young Women* (1766), or *Fordyce's Sermons*.
- **Madame de Stael:** A Swiss, French-speaking writer who lived in Paris and different European cities at the turn of the 19th century.
- **Madame Genlis:** A French harpist, writer, and educator. In Britain, She wrote over 80 works, such as novels and educational tracts.

3.4. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman Quotes and Analysis:

“If women are by nature inferior to men, their virtues must be the same in quality, if not in degree, or virtue is a relative idea; consequently, their conduct should be founded on the same principles, and have the same aim.”

Wollstonecraft, 26

One of the main arguments Wollstonecraft challenges in her work is that women are naturally not as good as men from an ethical perspective. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and others believed this (indeed, most men and women in the 18th century did), and Rousseau particularly asserted that women's virtues were different from men's. Wollstonecraft strongly disagreed, explaining that whilst men were physically superior to women, both sexes were endowed with souls by their Creator and are capable of developing their reason

and endeavor to ideal their virtue. Virtue is not relative to sex but to individual differences, this means that anybody's behavior should arise from the same ethical standards and have the same kind of human goals. Even if men could show a better capacity to be virtuous than women could, anyone has the same virtues to attempt for.

“But I still insist, that not only the virtue, but the knowledge of the two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree and that women, considered not only as moral but rational creatures, ought to Endeavour to acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the same means as men, instead of being educated like a fanciful kind of half being, one of Rousseau’s wild chimeras.”

Wollstonecraft, 39

The inferior schooling women receive is without delay responsible for their subordinate status and their paramount concern of cultivating their physical beauty and attraction instead. Girls should attend school with boys, have physical exercise, learn the same subjects as boys, and live with their households rather than boarding schools. This will result in the improvement of their reason, virtue, and modesty and will free them from their physical and mental shackles.

“... Obeying a parent only on account of his being a parent, shackles the mind, and prepares it for a slavish submission to any power but reason.”

Wollstonecraft, 153

Wollstonecraft says a wonderful deal about parenting. As she elaborates, parenting is a God-given responsibility to men and women, but women, as they are responsible for reproduction, are even more beholden to the rearing of their children. Their lack of

awareness and capriciousness leads them to raise unruly children. If they have daughters, they instill the same unfortunate values in them. Some mothers, repressed by the nature of their sex, tyrannize over their children and thus violate the laws of nature. Wollstonecraft advocates for education reform for women so that, amongst other things, they will be better mothers.

3.5. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman Theme:

- **Marriage as friendship:** Wollstonecraft expected a perfect marriage as one that was underpinned by the tendencies of a good friendship: mutual esteem, respect, generosity, and compromise. A husband and wife should be partners and companions and have things in common. The passion of their courtship will soon give way to the deep harmony of friendship, and they must learn to embody that change. Women should want to marry a man who is more than a gallant protector or a fascinating rake; men should want to marry a woman who has more to provide than her evanescent beauty. Were marriage more like a partnership, both man and woman would be better parents to their children.
- **Education reform:** Wollstonecraft noticed the need for co-education; boys and girls would be progressed by attending school collectively. She believed they needed to attend school collectively from the earliest age, regardless of gender or class, and have time to develop their bodily and intellectual strengths. She did suggest a later stratification based upon social class, however. Education reform was particularly essential for women since their lack of continuous and

significant education was the most salient reason for what Wollstonecraft identified as their ignorance, indolence, and subordination. Education would permit women to learn how to exercise reason and ideal their virtue. It would result in their turning into better wives and mothers, which would redound to the benefit of society.

- **Reason and rationality:** Reason is of utmost significance in Wollstonecraft's writing. Like John Locke before her, who wrote of the reason being essential to governance for a man rising from a state of nature, Wollstonecraft argues that women should stop focusing on their feelings and attempt to use their rational faculties. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy explains, "Wollstonecraft wanted women to aspire to full citizenship, to be worthy of it, and this necessitated the improvement of reason. Rational women would understand their real duties. They would forgo the world of mere appearances, the world of insatiable needs on which eighteenth-century society was based, as Adam Smith had defined more lucidly than anyone, and of which France was the embodiment, in Wollstonecraft's conception." God created men and women and endowed them both with immortal souls; thus, both sexes are capable of reason. It is not "natural" for women not to exercise reason. Women must develop a reason to be effective and honest parents and to develop virtue, which will suppress tyrannical impulses and free women from their shackles.

- **Liberalism:** Although some scholars have identified socialist or radical elements within Wollstonecraft's work, she was virtually working in the tradition of liberalism. Wollstonecraft did not challenge the concept that women were generally supposed to be in the home, even though she did suggest more financial independence. She also excoriated the rich, but she did not go so far as to say that property was undesirable.

General Conclusion

General conclusion:

The British society became affected by the rigidly accentuated tone of feminism. The first root of feminism in Britain goes very remotely back to 1792 when Mary Wollstonecraft published a work entitled vindication of the rights of women. The work is considered as the pioneering attempt to ingrain the concept of equality between men and women in British society. Officially, London's society of women's suffrage (born in 1857), was an association with the reason to promote women's right to vote. From then on, the right to vote became increasingly important for all the feminist associations and movements that came after 1857. All the feminist movements made a consensus over the crystallization of the right to vote as the cornerstone of the feminist cause. In 1918, the representation of the people act had been passed through parliament giving women aged over thirteen years the right to vote. As time progresses, feminism grew different in answer to the socio-economic and socio-cultural shifts that had been undergone by British society. From the 1960s onwards, feminism struggled to make a law that could promote feminist cause does coincide with the brand new socio-cultural order as well to reply to the new rising feminist needs and challenges.

Post War British feminism grew extensively different from that of the pre-second world war. There was a transformation from a politically focused cause and a demand of relative freedom to a larger target that engulfs almost everything by the claim of equality under all possible circumstances. Feminism worked to carry women out of the traditional world. That is to say, a completely independent woman. This was accomplished through an arsenal of laws that had been passed by parliament. In general, feminism succeeded in pushing politicians to legalize contraception (the pill 1961), the abortion act of 1967 which

legalized abortion, divorce reform act of 1969 which allowed divorce to be pronounced only by the motif that marriage is simply going bad, and the sex discrimination act of 1975 that made inequality between women and men forbidden. Feminism can not be considered historically as independent from the socio-economic, socio-cultural, and philosophical mood that ruled the period. All these concerns were continually lying behind the nature of the feminist cause.

During the Enlightenment period, Women both in France and in England actively demanded their political and social rights; however, those rights were not gained. On the contrary, feminism arose out of the tensions created by men and denied to women. The intense debates about the meaning of Womanism during the French Revolution meant that women and situations have become an important issue in the political debates of the 1790s. So, all through this era, the term women's rights were widely used to refer to what could be called later Feminism. Although this term didn't appear until the late eighteenth century in France and later on in Great Britain, it is used to explain earlier Women's rights activities. These early feminists including both men and women had been advocated greater quality for women in public establishments such as the government, the family, and the equality of the sexes in general. Feminists believed that women's right is God-given, and they strongly criticized traditional boundaries to women's abilities to control their own lived and destinies.

It's worth noting that among the British advocates of women's rights was Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797). She started requesting women's rights when most people believed that women were not as good as men. Her pamphlet *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* became the most well-known work to be criticized at that time, Wollstonecraft

stressed the reality that women were born equal to men, and their inequalities were a social construction. And she asserted that all this may be reversed by offering girls with education and training the same as boys and women with employment same as men. Wollstonecraft established herself in an intellectual community and attempted to explain her conflict for personal freedom and growth.

In 1790, she wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, criticizing people who denied women's rights and reduced their value such as Jean Jacques Rousseau who views of women were pretty conservative. In her defense of women's rights, Wollstonecraft asserted that greater equality for women would lead to greater tranquility in families and society. And her principal attention was on education, she asked for an education based on rational concepts which mixed intellectual training with useful skills. Wollstonecraft believed that women should enhance their minds and their souls instead of their bodies. She also believed that married women were treated like slaves, so she rejected the institution of marriage and asserted that relationships should be based on friendship and love.

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ملخص:

شهد الأدب الإنجليزي العديد من الحركات والأحداث بسبب التغيرات المختلفة في المجتمع من حيث الأبعاد التاريخية والثقافية والدينية. بين القرنين السابع عشر والثامن عشر، كانت الحركة التنويرية أهم حدث في فرنسا، وبريطانيا، وأوروبا، والعالم كله حيث أثرت هذه الفترة الجديدة على مؤلفين مثل ماري ولستونكرافت التي تعاملت بمفهوم النسوية في كتاباتها.

ماري ولستونكرافت (1759-1797) كاتبة إنجليزية، ومحامية، ومناصرة لحقوق المرأة، وأحد الكتّاب الراديكاليين المشهورين الذين تركز أعمالهم على الطبقة الاجتماعية، والجنس، وعواقب الحرب. عانت من صداع مستمر بسبب حملها الثاني، المرض الذي كان سبب وفاتها.

ويتعلق موضوع هذه الدراسة بمفهوم الحركة النسوية؛ حقوق الإنسان و أثر الحركة التنويرية على المرأة و المجتمع، وكذلك دراسة عمل الكاتبة ماري ولستونكرافت و المتمثل في "دفاعاً عن حقوق المرأة" و إبراز أهم أفكاره و نقاطه التي أتت بهم الكاتبة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية نسوية، الحركة التنويرية، حقوق المرأة

Résumé :

La Littérature Anglaise a connu de nombreux mouvements et événements en raison de divers changements dans la société en termes de dimensions historiques, culturelles et religieuses. Entre les XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, les Lumières ont été l'événement le plus important en France, en Grande-Bretagne, en Europe et dans le monde, car cette nouvelle période a influencé des auteurs tels que Mary Wollstonecraft qui a traité le concept de féminisme dans ses écrits. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) était une écrivaine Anglaise, une avocate, une féministe et l'un des célèbres écrivains radicaux dont le travail porte sur la classe sociale, le sexe et les conséquences de la guerre. Elle souffrait d'un mal de tête constant en raison de sa deuxième grossesse, la maladie qui a causé sa mort. Le sujet de cette étude concerne le concept de féminisme ; Droits de l'homme et l'impact du mouvement des lumières sur les femmes et la société, ainsi que l'étude de l'auteur Mary Wollstonecraft de "Défense des Droits de la Femme" et mettant en évidence ses idées et points les plus importants apportés par l'auteur

Mots Clés : Féminisme, le mouvement des lumières, Droits de la femme