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**Mary Wollstonecraft's Rebellion in a Patriarchal Society
Through A *Vindication of the Rights of Woman***

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the requirements for the degree of Master in Literature and Civilization*

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Dedication

*To my lovely mother and dearest grand father, Benlaghem
Abdelali.*

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Abstract

Throughout this paper the main arguments attempt to investigate Mary Wollstonecraft's views and achievements, documented in the first female rhetorical book entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Mary Wollstonecraft is the first liberal feminist who worked for the benefit of women during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England. In fact, this reformer plied in many ways to raise the debate on women's social, political, religious, and even economic developments. The findings of this research indicated that British women were considered as second class citizens in society and they were factually living under the authority of men in awful silence. Education, too, was unfair to women; they were generally limited to certain commitments out of intellectual subjects. The current study also defined the act of marriage, rape and other complicated issues that inhibited females from public preoccupations. The involvement of women in literature and their turnout upon writing art was confirmedly unsupported by British males in the domain. In the enlightenment age, Mary Wollstonecraft came to reform the British society, and emphasizing on reason she could steer her sex to new directions. Eventually, this investigation concluded that Wolstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* should be considered as the primary source of feminists and thinkers in England.

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Note

This research work was has been conducted following the guidelines of the MLA7th edition citation style. Yet, because of the use of a large number of electronic resources, and for more accuracy and precision, periodicals and dissertations were cited following the guidelines of the 8th edition in order to provide identifying DOIs and links.

General Introduction

Historians generally focus on the eighteenth century for being the period of the rise of the enlightenment age. Considering the involvement of Mary Wollstonecraft as the mother of Feminism in the age of reason, not merely, as privilege arising but as responsibility, one can simply not dismiss or ignore this woman's role in revealing, not only political, but also women's issues during the period. Wollstonecraft earmarked her thoughts serving women in their lives to register all those theories and clues in the *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. This research work is written objectively to shed light the motives that provoked Mary Wollstonecraft to write this pamphlet which is primarily intended to lead British women to find their strength, dignity, and identity.

For the sake of identifying these motives, this work addresses the felonies practiced on British women and the understanding of gender structures during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It suggests a set of hypotheses meant to study and analyze the main reasons leading Wollstonecraft to write such a document, and reach satisfactory conclusions to answer the initial question, which are :

- First, Women were deprived access to decent education in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries.
- Second, Women were prevented from a number of political rights, as well as their freedom to make decisions, so repression was on both the political and social levels.
- Third, women's emergence in literature, and Mary Wollstonecraft's emergence in particular, marked the beginning of female action for women's rights
- Four, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* contributed in changing British, European and then universal definitions of *woman* and her functions, thus, she could attain a great metamorphosis in British culture and peoples' thought.

In order to validate these hypotheses, this research work explored the important issue of female education in the first pages of the chapter I to shed light on the uneven intellectual condition of seventeenth century women. In fact the low educational levels of women put them in degradation, they were associated with animals and children because of the lack of opportunities in education. Few notable writers and scientists have been addressed to study the problem of education in Great Britain which proved that there has been some disagreement concerning the subject matters that have been provided to girls in classes. Women in society were generally understood to mean the connection of patriarchy to their subordination in British society. This work covers supersensitive matters in the lives of girls and women assigning on Jane Austen's ideas on forced marriage and Aphra Behn's writings about rape and violence used toward her sex. The provided notions insist on the wrongful laws dealt with the crime of rape as explained by Jurist Sir Mathew and French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Despite all, women succeeded in serving their families at home under the power of their husbands.

In this paper the standard meaning of political thoughts in British parliament could not give women a self-awareness to practice similar activities as men in public sphere, in this lights several satirical writers nameable, Eliza Haywood, Jonathan Swift, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Mary Delariviere Manley have attempted to uncover many evidences and reasons which contributed in destroying women as free citizens. The first section finishes with the importance of religion and the spiritual texts that enabled women to recoup a small part of their dignity. On the other hand, the representation of female figures in literature witnessed the emergence of female novels in arduous conditions.

The second chapter looks at Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (often referred to as *VRW* in this research work), as a treatise written by an aspiring and self-educated British woman. The first feminist published her work at the end of the eighteenth century in the concomitantly period of the enlightenment. The present study aims to validate the ways in which women were

oppressed and denied in British society. With this in mind, this part focuses on Wollstonecraft's views and theories on the subjugation that confronted women in her time, than exposes the alteration made by this woman in different fields to serve women, understanding them in deep investigation. This section also shows how Wollstonecraft managed to trace advances in the history of women giving them strength. In addition to this, the work examined the first reactions of readers to the pamphlet, and the new techniques and strategies used by the writer, maybe inspiring thinkers to regrow this genre and pursue what she starte

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1.1. Introduction:

This chapter is intended to provide data on the lifestyle and history of the period being discussed, witness inequalities and practices in which more privilege was dedicated to men than women. This part examines several matters that had a serious negative impact on women's lives, starting by education as a very pensive subject. Reasons of women's oppression are merely caused by lacks in educational opportunities and the traditional stereotypes dominated British society, handled by the most important names of the time as Catherin Macauley and Hannah More, moving to the British society and its conception of women as the weaker sex. A number of offensive and demeaning conducts were performed towards the person of woman within the period discussed.

Political issues in the British parliament have contributed in the definite exclusion of women from the public sphere, focusing on political specialists like Eliza Haywood, Jonathan Swift, and Mary Delariviere who were known by their satirical novels portraying arbitrary powers practiced over women. On the other hand, as shelter for women, church took a great interest on women's private lives, where they found the inner peace, such conditions were not so encouraging for women to assert themselves, yet women writers dared shape their history emphasizing a new understanding of women in a new light.

1.2. Overview of British Women's Education:

Formal education for girls has been secondary to that of boys. Traditionally, education for girls was not so important, and as the family was the starting point for a girl's education, they were first prepared to be future wives and mothers. Parents did not give a chance to their daughters to attend classes, not just because of social rank but they were not obliged to give certain interest to such subjects (Bowden7). British writer Hannah More viewed that girls should be trained in order to become mothers and housekeepers, focusing more on improving and enlarging their minds

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to succeed as companions for their husbands and rational mothers to their children (qtd in Nardin 219).

Furthermore, the Elizabethan system of education was ultimately addressed to upper-class women but called for less erudition. On the other hand, women from all classes were intended to be literate enough to read the bible or to teach religious texts to their children and servants. Similarly, girls from poor families were not allowed to attend schools at all. For the middle classes as well the suggested syllabus was very limited in primary school. Nethermost, in middle schools, they rarely received grammatical subjects, they merely dealt with reading, writing, practicing politeness instead of displaying their intelligence (Balmuth 19).

On the subject, Catherine Macauley, Irish nun and one of the biggest names in Britain to focus on the educational system, spent her life serving to educate the poor girls by building convents in England and Ireland. Mcauley encouraged her sisters to help girls to pursue their studies; her ideas are further explored and explained by Irish teacher Anne Ried, who summarizes Catherine's views in the following words:

... helping so many people in the village Catherine took a great interest in the servant girls, not only in her own house but in numerous grand houses around the area and surrounding neighbourhood. Many young girls were treated badly by their masters who often took advantage and Catherine's heart was filled with pity for them. In her heart she hoped that one day she might have the money to buy a little house where she could give shelter to young girls like this. (17)

In science, in the nineteenth century, English biologist Charles Darwin thought that men were superior to women, in *The Descent of Man*, he simply "reasoned that males are more revolutionarily advanced than females" (qtd in Bergman 3). Darwin's thoughts motivated men to think rationally, whereas

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women's superiority was limited to sexual attraction only, an idea that served as the basis of his Natural Selection¹, that is, the Survival of the Fittest.

As a matter of fact, scientific studies were off-limits to women, Canadian scholar Suzanne LeMay Sheffield explained that most aristocratic women took interest in science "as the telescope and the microscope that became the new « toys » and it became a fashionable in aristocrat circles", while the aim was preventing them from the practical challenge (qtd in Andreolle and Molinari xii). In the same respect, girls were not included in science because it was inappropriate for a young girl, or woman, to arrive to dinner with dirty hands from the laboratory (More qtd in Nardin 221)

Education was one of the greatest preoccupations for Mary Wollstonecraft. Relying on her own experience in the domain as teacher, she viewed that girls, regardless of their social class, were concerned to produce an exceptional future. She also suggested the necessity of a relationship between student and teacher which assists them to predispose a just society (Griffiths 342) .

1.3. The Weaker Sex in Society:

In early modern society, girls were often considered as less important than boys, thus women acquired their inferior status from youth. The novel *Persuasion* by British author Jane Austen tackled the issue and serves as an example in this situation. In the novel Jane Austen blamed such unfair practices towards women saying "but I hate to hear you talking so like a gentleman, and as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creation" (68). By such criticism, Jane Austen insisted that women were treated as a non-person in the British society.

¹ Natural selection : is the centerpiece of *the Origin of Species* and of evolutionary theory , expressed in its clearest form by Charles Darwin, this theory holds that evolution of species occurs through random variations from one generation to the next.

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A family consisting of father, mother and children is the basic building of society, parents are responsible on teaching their children morals, attitudes and all what is expected from them in society, thus, all members of a family must share difficulties in life. This is not the case with the early modern life, where marriage occurred on economic purposes to become a bondage and slavery for women. Mary Wollstonecraft while commenting on this topic noted “Many are the causes that, in the present corrupt state of society, contribute to enslave women by cramping their understandings and sharpening their senses. One, perhaps, that silently does more mischief than all the rest, is their disregard of order.”(VRW 19)

1.3.1. Forced Marriage:

Forced marriage was practiced in the British society to accomplish economic interests, as defined by Jane Austen in her novel *Mansfield Park* :

I am perfectly persuaded that the tempers had better be unlike ; I mean unlike in the flow of the spirits, in the manners, in the inclination for much or little company, in the propensity to talk or to be silent, to be grave or to be gay. Some opposition here is, I am thoroughly convinced, friendly to matrimonial happiness (57)

Jane revealed the devastating effect of choosing to marry for a wrong reason, especially when women had a few economic options other than marriage. The character named Fanny had a chance to improve her financial status, and that of her family, by marrying Henry Crawford, nevertheless, she rejected Henry's offer of marriage, she steadied on her principles that she would only marry a man that she loves (qtd in Baldwin 5). This approach to marriage made women's consent negligible and unnecessary. Girls were considered as properties of their fathers until they become the properties of their husbands. The husbands were given total authority on their wives; this idea is best expressed by Mary Wollstonecraft who commented on it comparing “The *divine right* of husbands” to “the divine right of

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kings", yet, she did express her wish to contest these divine-like rights granted to men (47 *VRW*). In the upper classes, marriage was deemed as an exchange of commodities, in other words, women were valued by their dowry (Rottiers 25).

British society has imposed unfair customs on girls. These young girls had to live with the fear of being forced to marry unknown men. British playwright Aphra Behn was one of the first women writers interested in the male-female relationships in her play entitled *The Rover*, as in this dialogue between Pedro and his sister Florinda:

Don Pedro :I have a command from my father here to tell you ,you ought not to despise him, a Man of a so vast fortune , and such a Passion for you_Stephano, my things _[Puts on his Masquing Habit]

Florinda :A Passion for me !'tis more than e'er I saw , or had adesire should be shown _I hate Vincentio , and I would not have a Man so dear to me as my Brother follow the ill costums of our Country, and make a slave of his sister _ and sir ,my Father's Will, I'm sure, you may divert.(Act I . Scene I 8)

Pedro here delivers father's message to young Florinda, his sister, which includes that she should learn to love a supposed husband. Pedro uses the word "command" which alludes to power and obedience, however, Florinda disdains her father and brother's way of thinking describing that as " the ill customs of her country" (ibid).

In the same context, it was a matter of social prestige that marriage could produce an offspring, thus the husband could not behave as the head of his family until he had children. Women were more serious to give birth since infertility was considered as punishment by God, that by a way or another lead them to escape the unhappy marriage; this practice was called the legal separation "from bed and table"

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. (Brabcovà 23 -24). The most important regards were related to prestige and social views, yet, there was no love to sanctify the marital relationships.

Forced marriage was not a different harming act from rape, both caused physical and moral detriments to women. Rape was dubbed as a dreadful crime against the person of woman. Over that period, Eduard III classified rape as treason, which made it an assault against the King when “violating his consort, or eldest unmarried daughter, or the wife of his eldest son” (qtd in King 30)

1.3.2. Rape and Criminal Law:

Male superiority gave them total authority to treat women awkwardly. Moreover there were many types of violence acting toward women which caused them psychological harm and a physical pain. The crime of rape was a sexual assault, while even screaming could not save the victim. In addition there were no legal punishments against men unless the parents were interested in such. It has been observed that if:

a woman was raped, a sum was paid to either her husband or father, depending on who still exercised rights of ownership over her, and the exact amount of compensation depended on the woman's economic position and her desirability as an object of an exclusive sexual relationship. The sum was not paid to the woman herself; it was paid to her father or husband because he was the person who was regarded as having been wronged by the act. (Clark and Lewis qtd in Macfarlane 3)

In the same light, Jurist Sir Mathew the Lord Chief Justice of England believed that rape “is an accusation easily to be made and hard to be proved, and harder to be defended by the party accused, the never so innocent” (qtd in Anderson 4), He means that there were no provision to protect women from any kind of assault (ibid). On the same topic, French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that

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since males were associated with reason and females characterized with delicacy, women had no right to defend themselves in the act of rape, he wrote "For the attacker to be victorious, the one who is attacked must permit or arrange it..." Rousseau by these sarcastic words is hushing women. Women's task was to serve and please men, the sweetest companion should never reject any order from her master, thus, Mary Wollstonecraft recapitulated Rousseau's views in : "Rousseau declares that a woman, should never, for a moment, feel herself independent, that she should governed by fear to exercise her natural cunning," (qtd in Billingsley 2)

Aphra Behn also included rape as female subject in her play *The Rover*, in which she described Angellica Bianca as a beautiful woman who boasts by her honour, which she considered as a self-worth, but she groveled to masculine supremacy, she said: My richest treasure being lost, my honour/ All the remaining spoil could not be worth/ The conqueror's care or value. (qtd in Pacheco 340). The previous quote shows that this dreadful assault destroyed the person of woman, inasmuch violence was the language of men, it was interdicted to say "No" to male's desire. From the earliest ages, violence was a daily behaving toward women, accordingly, an English proverb said "A spaniel, a woman and a walnut tree, The more they're beaten, the better they be"(author 19), this old proverb may depict a factual notion, that woman was treated as animals. The English society accepted female subjugation, since men's role was to impose his power over women in public sphere as well as domestic life (Fox 20).

1.3.3. British Women's Household Services:

Interestingly, British females in the early modern age had played significant roles in nourishing and educating children and servants, as Marie Rowland observed that it was rather the wife than the husband doing house chores, arrangements, and took care of the children and servants' needs. The women, she

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says: “were more usually at home when the pursuivants arrived. They exploited their supposed frailty and innocence; they provided searchers with meals which distracted their attention; they pleaded bodily infirmity” (qtd in Battigelli 10). Women as mothers were acting in the most appropriate way, Their tenderness was distinctly revealed in guiding her children, this conception was denoted by Mary Wolstonecraft in her writings:

I think I see her surrounded by her children, reaping the reward of her care. The intelligent eye meets hers, whilst health and innocence smile on their chubby cheeks, and as they grow up the cares of life are lessened by their grateful attention. She live to see the virtues which she endeavours to plant on principles, fixed into habits, to see her children attain a strength of character sufficient to enable them to endure adversity without forgetting their mother's example. (qtd in Jacobs 75-76)

Mother's aim was not to gain the husband's admiration. In fact, her pure love urged her to look after her children fussily. In the presented quote Mary Wollstonecraft exposed a word-painting of a modest mother embracing her family with love and fear. Moreover, Wollstonecraft sympathized with mothers who suffered in order to save their children.

The household crafts also helped British women to express their thoughts, as well as improving their skills. In the same subject, women succeeded in creating a housewife identity, they could produce food and exchange recipes, and at the same time serve all the members of the family (Bacon 11). They washed their clothes in the river even if it was icy, using washboard, washing bats, and a lye or a hard soap, following a common techniques like bucking, soaking, drying, and bleaching (“History of Laundry”).

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Mary Wollstonecraft argued that women had to shape public opinion through education, she noted; “this habitual slavery to first impressions, by which society binds women to false assumptions about their roles and capacities, viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone” (6). Thus, for Mary, women had to understand political contexts in order to find their mislaid identity (qtd in Lizotte 6) .

1.4. Disadvantaged Countrywomen :

In regard to Rousseau's theories, by nature women and men were not equally balanced especially in public sphere practices. He criticized the “political promiscuity” that essentially called for the same preoccupations to both sexes. Rousseau rejected the act because of the differences in physical and moral traits, he noted

Woman's reign is a reign of gentleness, tact, and kindness; her commands are caresses, her threats are tears. She should reign in the home as a minister reigns in the state, but contriving to be ordered to do what she wants (2).

According to Rousseau's notions, women are prevented from practicing political activities, referring to relevant duties, women must put their concerns on (Lizotte 2). Similarly, the British law granted men the use of violence against their wives.

Eliza Haywood one of the first professional women writers of the period under scrutiny had a great interest in ideological conflicts about sexes. She wrote in her novel *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* : “The bloody and inhuman did being perpetrated by this injurious husband, merely in opposition to his wife,”(509). From Haywood's view, it can be inferred that the British law demeaned women, preventing them from their plainest rights even in their marital lives where husbands took great pleasure in brutalizing silent women. Haywood asserted

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and because he knew it would give her some sort of affliction, [it] was sufficient to convince her, that he took pleasure in giving pain to her, and also made her not doubt but he would stop at nothing for that purpose, provided it with safe, and came with the letter of the law.”
(ibid)

thus, what would have been worsen than punishing women in such manner laughing at their pain (Muse 185).

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), the Anglo-Irish satirist and political pamphleteer, wrote many novels and poems to expose the British political corruption, he claimed in his literary work *Guliver's Travels*: “I was surprised to find Corruption grown so high and so quick in the Empire...Which made me less wonder at many parallel cases in other countries, where vices all kind have reigned so much longer” (qtd in Gamache 7- 8). Jonathan observed that aged people, weak women, and the vagrants children were dying every day because of starvation and inequitable politics of British Empire (Gamache 9) .

Furthermore, female satirical novelists directed their concerns on political behaviors toward women, criticizing the absence of women in public spheres like Mary Delarivier Manley who mainly attacked politicians by her works, *The New Atlantis* and *The Secret History of Queen Zarah* in which she expressed in the following lines:

The Persons in Power were ashamed to bring a woman to her Trial for writing a few amorous Trifles purely for her own Amusement, or that our laws are defective, as most persons conceiv'd, because she had serv'd her self with Romantick Names, and feign'd scene of action ?(qtd in Altaher 87)

Manley wrote these words when she was arrested, for political implications, she castigated unfair policies that prevented women from expressing themselves.

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Simultaneously, she was against the fact that the Queen was not allowed to be in touch with the public:

Were she [Queen Anne] but to judge all things by her own eyes and ears, all things would be administered with the same impartiality and justice as if your self had held the balance, but alas! What defence is there against corruption of the favourites and the by-interests of ministers ?(qtd in 83).

Manley made a modest gesture to illustrate some strategies for women writers to reveal social and political troubles and satirized them in novels.(83-87)

Wollstonecraft started from the idea that humans are not able to perfectly know God's aims, thus, she never despised God for the depravity made by human beings. She was persuaded that God's will and human deeds are principally based on the same reason, in addition, she appreciated the power of reason along that soul which connects the creature with their creator, (qtd in Hipatia and Reuter 927). She noted "Firmly persuaded that no evil exists in the world that God did not design to take place, I build my belief on the perfection of God" (7 VRW), Wollstonecraft claimed that human beings must be the image of God.

1.5. Life Under Church Bell :

Religion played a notable role in the private lives of early modern British women, protestant and catholic women both were subordinated to the purport of scripture. The church of England dictated religious moralities to teach women to behave as ideal wives. In addition to these, the biblical texts involved prayers, topics and even the wording for marriage ceremony, The form of *Solemn of Matrimony* which stated the duties of new bride, *An Homily of the State of Matrimony* is another book that suggested that woman should be silent under authority of her husband.(Alvares 4-5)

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Despite all, women were more religious than men. They referred to God as a source of mercy, whereas men associated him to power (Stark 233). British historian Henry Chadwick noted that “Christianity seems to have been especially successful among women, It was often through the wives that it penetrated the upper classes of society in the first instant” (qtd in Stark 233), likewise the dubliner professor of history and antiquity Peter Brown said, “such women could influence their husbands to protect the church” (ibid), these two historians explained that Christianity was predominant among females more than males.

Churching was a ceremony taken soberly by the English courts during the seventeenth century, based on the ancient belief that women after giving birth were unclean, hence, they had to attend church services to have a special purification (Evenden 32). Some historians argued that postpartum women disliked this social occasion, whereas the most part surrendered (33). Moreover, the midwives marked a significant participation in welcoming and nursing the new mothers, therefore it was common that the successful midwifery was licensed which helped them to work in public.(35)

Solemn of Matrimony: is a book which includes texts of wedding ceremony by which man and woman establish a marital life, the ceremony was raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptised.

An Homily of the State of Matrimony: homilies appointed to be read in churches in the time of Queen Elizabeth of famous memory and now reprinted for the use of private families, in two parts.

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The English country gentleman Reginald Scott was the first one to reject the existence of magic in his work *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* relying on reason and religion. He opposed what he considered as women's superstition able to stand as a threat to the divine power. Nevertheless, Scott's book was burned in the accession of James I, who wrote a book of *Daemonologie* for reinducing those skeptical about the existence of witchcraft (qtd in Yilmas 12).

Besides, in the second book of the work, Philomathes asked why witchcraft were used more by females, and Epistimon²'s response is in the subsequent words:

The reason is easy, for as that the sex is frailer than man is, so is it easier to be entrapped in the gross snares of the Devil, as was overwell proved to be true by the serpent's deceivng of Eve at the beginning, which makes him the friendlier with that sex since then.(qtd in Yilmas 13)

According to the two historians, women rather than men believed in such practices because they were weaker, less intelligent and guileless that they were lured by the devil swimmingly (ibid).

The most commonly discussed, Wollstonecraf's arguments were deeply rooted in Christianity and spirituality. Her arguments were merely acquired from the dissenting minister of Newington Green Chapel, that was an incentive for her to escort radical groups who, by their turn, encouraged her to write and develop her feminist theories about gender issues. She encountered disruptions like other women writers of the first wave of feminism, nevertheless, she could publish her works in the form of letters (Beck 11).

² Philomathes and Epistimon are two characters who debate on the various topics of magic, sorcery, witchcraft and demonology.

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1.6. Women's Representation in Literature:

The female novel started to appear by the early 1700s. They commenced by fictional writings in the form of letters called the epistolary novel, that was definitely, at the top of literary fashion of the period. In the same period, a great part of readerships appeared in the market of new professional writers, controlled by men, therefore, female works were not well considered by critics.(Carter and McRae 78)

The age of the Enlightenment helped women to open a new window accessing literature and education. Mary Astell (1666-1731) the rhetorician and advocate for women's education contended that people always ignored women's internal quality and women are capable of the best things as a matter of fact (qtd in Chen 9). In the age of reason, women started writing fiction from their own experiences, but their literary works were inane from men's viewpoint because they could not get used to the fact that women could tackle such subjects. The most known and unknown women writers were educated by their fathers or self-educated, their common aims behind rising their pens was to make their voices heard, such a talk should indicate Mary Austell who published her famous work, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of the their True and Greater Interest* in which she intended to urge people to pay attention to women's emergence. Austell was not alone fighting for women's rights, other Feminists like Aphra Behn, Jane Austen, Catherine Cockburn and Mary Wollstonecraft contributed effectively in women's concerns.(qtd in Chen 10)

Women writers like Aphra Behn, Manley Delariviere, Eliza Haywood and others begun with fictional short stories focused on third-person. The literary works were produced in women's own experiences, thus, in novels they presented the very detailed lives of the British women, political and social issues where the heroine always appeared in misery and discomfort situation, resisting her parent's

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oppression in social matters. On the other hand, Eliza Haywood published fourteen short seduction texts like *Secret Histories, Novels and Poems* and many others works between 1721 and 1730, more, women's writings were embraced with enthusiasm in the readership part (Williams 114).

1.7. The First British Women Writers :

1.7.1. Aphra Behn:

Aphra Behn is the first professional English woman writer of the seventeenth century, she is careerist because she adeptly, actualized the success in three genres, therewith she is anatomized as a “mother of novel”, “Restoration dramatist” and a new Sappho” (Howard 13). Aphra Behn appeared prosperously in prose, epistolary narrative and fiction. In a short period, Behn could manipulate several themes such as, history, political commentary, marriage, rape and other negotiable issues (22). Likewise, Apra Behn asserted that her works were not written merely to entertain readers, in more clear terms she declared: “ I do not pretend here to entertain you with a feign'd story, or anything peic'd together with Romantic Accidents, but every circumstance, to a tittle, is truth” (qtd in 14). By the same token, Aphra Behn's writings are sequentially mentioned in: (*Oroonoko, Agnes de Castro, The History of Nun, The Lucky Mistake*) and the majority were published after her death (16).

1.7.2. Mary Wortley Montagu:

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was born on 26 May 1689 in London, alongwith, she was the eldest daughter of the first Duke of Kingston called Evelyn Pierrepont who retrofitted her with a good education at home. In the same respect, the young girl of 26 married Eduard Wortley Montagu with whom she lived unhappy marriage especially when he became a non-sentient and ungenerous husband (Behbehani 460-461).

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Furthermore, Montagu was considered as the first woman writer to publish travel letters in 1763, focused in content on Turkish culture. She moved to the Ottoman Empire in 1717 with her husband the British Ambassador to the Sublime Porte and there she wrote several letters on Ottoman's customs and beliefs especially that of aristocrats women, after she return to England than she created an account to edit her journals but her daughter Lady Bore prevented the epistles' publication. (Modarresi 47)

1.7.3. Mary Astell:

Mary Astell is not a much known writer, she was born in 1666 from middle rank, and the fact that she belongs to a noble family gives her more opportunities in education and recruitment. She suffered a lot after the death of her uncle and father who were certainly buttress her in obtaining formal education. Although, Mary Astell was not so attractive in the domain of literature, howbeit, she was autonomous identified by her smartness and steepest tongue, more, she was biased to women athwart men's dictatorship. At the age of twenty-one May moved to London in order to improve her revenue by writing, she begun with short jokes and booklets (Sutherland xi- xii). Gradually, Mary Astell became a good rhetorician and her rhetorical theory is written in the first fifty-four pages of her letter *A Serious Proposal Ladies*, fundamentally based on natural reason and logic (Sutherland 125).

1.8. Wollstonecraft's Historical Background and Influences:

Mary Wollstonecraft belongs to a family rooted in London's middle rank merchant, most interested in religion, and attached to the church of England (Leonard 9). She was born in 1759, in a rural community (Falco 1). The young girl lived a jaded adolescence at Beverley, helping her mother in house services, and

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mothering her other brothers and sisters under control of a father addicted to alcohol and obsessed with business dealings (12). It is reported that both Mary and her mother were victims of her father's abuse, and that Mary was often obliged to save her mother from her father's attacks (Falco 2). In Beverley, and during that period, Mary awkwardly received little formal learning. Years later, she started to develop opportunities by acquiring a good knowledge, particularly about literature, history, science and the basics of French language. Once the ambitious girl matured, she decided to study gender issues, as well as social and political fundamentals. Her beginnings in the professional life were unsuccessful as she never managed to obtain a decent position. It was until she started writing as a book reviewer for the *Analytical Review*, as a Political Commentator on the French Revolution, and as a travel writer while traveling to Scandinavia that she managed to support her family (ibid). Wollstonecraft's beginning at writing were characterized by the use of an assailable style and a remarkable embarrassment in grammar and spelling (Leonard 2-3).

Hence, Mary Hays introduced Wollstonecraft to William Godwin, the English political philosopher, in January 1796. Inasmuch, the two women writers shared the same enlightenment ideas, while most of their writings were published by Wollstonecraft's drover Joseph Johnson (Bour 145). Mary Wollstonecraft was a perseverant woman, her strong personality as well as the nature of her work enabled her to meet the most eminent writers, philosophers, and publishers of the time, naming William Godwin who married her despite the climatic state she was in (Brajkovic 10). After that, Wollstonecraft decided to leave London and move to France wishing to continue her career, where she became famous genuinely by writing the two *Vindications*³ (11).

³ *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

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The French Revolution was the main motivator for proto-feminist activity, that heeded to the rights of men in Britain, during that period many philosophers began to think that the French Revolution was a very important event so that it might change the political and social status in Great Britain. Remarkably, French Revolution was known by two redounded writers called Edmund Burke Thomas Paine the son of protestant and catholic parents who was deeply interested in the political life in Britain and Mary Wollstonecraft the British philosopher and feminist ,best known for her book *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), both of them wrote texts that revealed their opinions and beliefs concerning class and gender issues (Kohl 69).

As one of the brilliant reactant names, Mary Wollstonecraft was also provoked by this revolution's debate to come out with the *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) as a proximate react to Edmund Burke's derisive *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Furthermore, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, she referred to the role of women at some points. two years passed and she decided to focus much more on the rights of women in her treatise, by which she criticized those theorists like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Milton who stated that woman should receive only domestic education (Ray 2).

Wollstonecraft's conduct book was preceded by similar pamphlets including Mary Hays' *An Appeal to the Men of Great Britain* (1798), Mary Robinson's *Letter to the Women of England*(1799) and Mary Anne Radcliffe' *The Female Advocate*(1799), their common aim behind these writings was to involve women in political matters,suggested that women deserved equal rights with men (Hodson 2-3). In the same subject and with the virtue of the French Revolution, women writers travelled outside the country, looking for a radical change to the British society and by creating a wide space of diaries, journals and letters, they had a notable part of readership in and outside Great Britain (Wang 13).

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Generally speaking, the roots of Feminism were found in the late eighteenth century, feminist analysis and documents were only conceded with the ideas of Enlightenment age, furthermore, Feminism's emergence was imputed to the publication of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, but this fact should not overlook the other Feminist writers of the time such as Mary Hays who was known by the two memorial books, and many others considered as the pioneers of Feminism.(Davies 2). A great shift in Feminism was fulfilled by changing the relationship of women and literature, what Elizabeth Carter cemented in *Poems on Several Occasions* :

There never was perhaps an age wherein the fair sex made so conspicuous a figure with regard to literary accomplishments as in our own. We may all remember the time, when a woman who could spell was looked on as an extraordinary phenomenon, and a reading and writing wife was considered as miracle; but the case at present is quite otherwise ... The men retreat, and the women advance (39). Elizabeth Carter had a hopeful view, that one day women would make their admired class in the British society.

1.9. The Pamphlet:

The term pamphlet first arose in Anglo-Latin in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this word is derived from a Latin amorous poem Pamphilus seu de Amore . The pamphlet is used in literature to indicate any small book be it a prose or poetry, these literary categories were generally performed in purpose to luxuriate male readers (Raymond 7) . Moving to the early sixteenth century, where pamphlet was generally used to mean a book written to tell whores' stories; then, it became cheaper to sell available to all, in this content, John Taylor defined pamphlet in his own words in a comic poem:

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And as a new whore is belov'd and sought,

So is a new booke in request and bought.

When whores wax old and stale, they are out of date,

Old pamphlets are most subjects to such fate. (Raymond 9-10)

Raymond explained that the word pamphlet tackled in the sixteenth century as small, insignificant, ephemeral, disposable, untrustworthy, unruly, noisy, deceitful, poorly printed, addictive, a waste of time.(10)

Pamphlets in the sixteenth century were generally considered as small brochures of a limited page numbers, stirringly, these booklets were written in plebeian words in the form of speeches discoursed aloud in public to access a great part of audience. The predominant pamphlets were widely used to understand political functions and religious texts as well (qtd in Verhoest 36). Historians and specialized have classified pamphlets into two prominent types regarding their functions, the political and religious pamphlets their main purpose was to unite public's stands, then the other type was particularly focused on social conflicts, dramatic events like wars and other involves issues (ibid). The development of pamphlets across times marked a changeable influence, in the first stage, there were invasive fictional works written in freehanded style, secondly they exhibited amusing writings to the readership, in the final stage pamphlets used in purpose of social and political reformations (37).

1.10. Conclusion :

Women during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries went through a set of repressive impulsions in education and other sides of society presenting them as very weak human beings with lost identity. They were deprived from science on the basis that it made them less feminine and less beautiful; yet, science itself was used to

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undermine them and their position, setting them as *naturally* inferior to their male counterparts, and by nature must be submissive and immature.

Forced marriage and rape became almost synonymous practices in the lives of the women of the discussed period. Women were constantly scared and maybe even terrified of having to marry men they never met, on the basis that they could provide them financial security. Rape on the other hand, even though legally forbidden, was unpunished and the female victims were never given any consideration. To give an illustration, most of the intellectuals and historians of these centuries observed and debunked corruption used to exclude British women from society and the public sphere.

Although the poor literary style used in novels, poems and other genres dealt with during the discussed period by females, the writings and performances could devolve British women's thoughts and the remarkable pressures caused by the arbitrary ideologies. Strenuously, all what has been noted in this research work gives a new birth to stirrs supported by women for women, clustered in Mary Wolstonecraft's eulogized *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

Chapter Two:
Wollstonecraft's Vindication and
Its Implications

2.1. Introduction :

In the initial stage of the process, this part investigates the groundwork and technicalities of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. The fundamental interest is on the French Revolution as the primary historical source that led to the rise of Feminism and its pioneers during the eighteenth century. Research has proven that there is an impact by literature on Wollstonecraft's life as a person and as writer as well, as explained further in the following paragraphs. The presented rules deliberate her style, strategies, and the main obstacles that occurred at the beginning of her career. The two writers Mary Warters and Mitzi Meyers assist with useful bywords appreciating Mary Wollstonecraft's efforts as a diligent woman writer of her age. For the most part, history of humanity has been extremely unfair with women, therefore, the mother of Feminism reflects her enlightened thoughts stunningly on British people.

The studied rhetoric book suggests effective arguments saving British women from subjugation, essentially, inspired from religious principles. The mental strength of women is a major theme recorded in this work, and by looking at things more objectively, men and women must be adopted to proper attitudes in society, and when they define their duties equally, the natural rights would be realized perfectly. Evermore, emphasizing on reason, women are basically addressed to add their names in political provisions in a privileged position, shaping their opinions on public sphere.

2.2. The First Feminist:

Mary Wollstonecraft, the first feminist in the early modern time, dared to argue with the most important political personalities. She was a real struggler feminist who did not write for academic or upper-class audiences, but for the large public (Hassan 10). Feminist activism diverted Wollstonecraft's life to one that is more dynamic and unique in comparison with other women writers of her time.

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At the very beginning, Wollstonecraft's arguments were enjoyed by women and a small audience, and as point of interest, a few of her conduct books were published. Mary Waters highlighted in her book *British Women Writers and the Profession of Literary Criticism* that women writers had to apologize in their prefaces "... on the grounds of financial need for the transgressive immodesty of going public..."(86), she mainly, pointed the difficulties that faced Mary Wollstonecraft and others through writing in public sphere, in other words, women had to endure negative reactions if they dared of something out of their authority. Despite all, Mary Wollstonecraft took a risk in order to superinduce her name in public sphere as a literary reviewer. Mitzi Meyers also appraised Wollstonecraft's efforts, she argued that Wollstonecraft shifted from a "tentative confessional author to the authoritative public figure who altered the social, political, and literary sphere during the period of the 1790's"(82).

Captivatingly, Wollstonecraft wrote her vindication to state the inequalities that she primarily faced in the unhappy environment, in this light she said " A great proportion of the misery that wanders, in hideous forms, around the world, is allowed to rise from the negligence of parents..." (30-31), according to what she said previously, she wanted to escape from her reality to the idealism she proposed to live in. Furthermore, at that period, Wollstonecraft's relationships were countable, she had a permanent and professional nexus with the publisher Joseph Johnson whom she described as both the "father and brother" (qtd in Rothschild 32) for her. Her relationship with Johnson gave her a new strength to work more, in connection with this, Mary Warters wrote " Wollstonecraft's work for Johnson [...] was central to her own intellectual growth; everything that she read and wrote contributed to her fund of knowledge and her cognitive training, laying the groundwork for the books for which she is best remembered"(87). Johnson the father also advanced her money, because she had no other source of income (Rotshschild 32).

Furthermore, religious texts were considered as the primary references included in Mary Wollstonecraft's writings, she meant to change the idea that the Bible is a

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question of rejection for Feminists, she aimed also, in a broad sense, to introduce another kind of Christian outlooks (Dalarna 19).

Importantly, Wollstonecraft's didactic texts were structured in order to change the traditional understanding of autonomy and citizenship, besides; she was not only targeted against patriarchy but precisely against aristocracy. Moreover, the importance of historical circumstance was regarded by Wollstonecraft to trace a challenged Feminist thought that would be discussed by new generations (Le Doeuf 8 -18). ~~and~~ Although she was described as a radical Feminist, her absolute purpose was not to make an end to male superiority, but to reform the basics of society, accessing gender equality.

In her *Vindication of The Rights of Woman*, Mary believed that women were not created frail by nature, and society was the initial responsible for women's backwardness, so they had no right to blame women in every unreasonable behaviour she did (Hassan10). She asserted what has been said in, " the weakness and sensuality attributed to a certain class of women in eighteenth-century Europe are not part of their biological nature but the inevitable results of their education and social conditioning" (ibid). Moreover, Wollstonecraft as a believer Feminist was extremely confident in woman's abilities, she said also " Let woman share the rights and she will emulate the virtues of man; for she must grow more perfect than emancipated..."(ibid). The strong personality and faithfulness of the writer usually felt in words and this is what Mary Wollstonecraft genuinely emphasized in her major documents.

2.3. Wollstonecraft's Powerful Message :

Mary Wollstonecraft, is essentially the younger novelist of the eighteenth century(Johnson qtd in Keupink 4), she became a worldfamous writer with her political text *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, the very weighty book, that aims principally on deleting the negative definition of woman in British society, the powerful message is a set of disbandments, that substantially accesses woman's

concerns, such as reason, marriage, roles, class and other important questions, the writer gathered all the critical issues in "urges that women be educated so that they too can become fully rational and self responsible citizens, moral agents, and family members" (5), the vindication involves the personal experiences of the writer in explaining certain matters. (qtd in Keupink 4-5)

2.3.1. Mary Wollstonecraft on Education:

Primarily, the Vindication is based on reason to understand woman's nature as Charles Taylor pointed out 'reason is the capacity to see and understand' (121), it is commonly discussed that identity is the first question addressed in her political discourse (woman's role and identity), she assumes that women must absorb their own identities from: knowledge, education and reason as well. Moreover, her observation on society's structure is used to push woman inside society as an individual, and to overturn the traditional rudiments in which, "women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights of mankind" (VRW x). By this Wollstonecraft aims to draw an appropriate way in order to involve woman in public, and she does not deny the difference between woman and man at all, but sometimes she blames women who directly follow sensibility and passion instead of reason. (Partenza 86-89)

It is generally accepted that the Vindication of the Rights of Woman is firstly dedicated to the French Minister of Education known by Talleyrand, in response to the public education's system in revolutionary France, she says "I dedicate this volume to you, to induce you to reconsider the subject, and maturely weigh what I have advanced respecting the rights of woman and national education" (xxi VRW). Wollstonecraft here is interested to find ways in which she could develop the more available subjects for girl's education (Jacobs- Beck 62). Therefore, the most important part in the Vindication is devoted to national education, as Wollstonecraft claimed:

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Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice.(vi)

In clear terms, the writer is agitating for educational rights as the first question in her book. In the same document, Mary Wollstonecraft is described as a reformist rather than radical because she does not focus on pedagogy details, she is more directed to the students and their perspectives, and her absolute keenness is to create a harmony between students in learning practices. The same idea is included in her *Vindication*: In order to open their faculties they should be excited to think for themselves; and this can only be done by mixing a number of children together, and making them jointly pursue the same objects.(361)

Wollstonecraft is giving principles rather than objectives allowing children to learn from each other in groups. As a matter of fact, gender relations and equalities are principally studied in Wollstonecraft's *VRW*, she thinks that the just society would basically be built on the different capacities of children.

To make men citizens two natural steps might be taken, which seem directly to lead to the desired point; for the domestic affections. That first open the heart to the various modifications of humanity, would be cultivated, whilst the children were nevertheless allowed to spend great part of their time, on terms of equality with other children.(*VRW* 356)

Wollstonecraft believes that children regardless their sexes, can effectively shape their thoughts in cooperative activities, and this method will create an independent educational environment. By this way Mary provides spaces for learners to think, controlling their changeable grades and attitudes in the same time

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(Griffiths 345). Identically, in Mary Wollstonecraft's opinion, education would become truly perfect when it develops virtue and independence:

Consequently the most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen body and form the heart. Or , in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render them independent. In fact, it is the force to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason. (VRW 37)

She illustrates principles for a perfect education. According to her, the exercise based on reason is the best way to an independent and virtuous mind.

Similarly, Mary states her views of educational system to critic the teachers in the first degree, she describes them as "pedantic tyrants", because of their irresponsible attitudes toward teaching (qtd in Manus 18). She thinks also that school is a place where children grow intellectually and physically. She summarizes the image of school in her vision saying, "boys and girls, the rich and poor, should meet together " (ibid). In other words, children should wear a uniform, moreover, her vindications instate that classes should not be longer than one hour at the time, —,"for at this age they should not be confined to any sedentary employment for more than an hour at a time"(ibid). In the same context, Mary Wollstonecraft puts academic curriculums and a pedagogical plans of an ideal school, she argues that :

To render this practicable, day-schools for particular ages should be established by governement, in which boys and girls might be educated together. The school for the younger children, from five to nine years of age, ought to be absolutely free and open to all classes. (VRW368)

Mary Wollstonecraft puts her emphasis on educational system to enable individuals obtain their strenght and emancipation from learning that create a certain

relationship and interaction between children and their parents as the first step to the society construction.

2.3.2. Change in British Society:

Mary Wollstonecraft's unhappy childhood in a patriarchal society and her experiences in private life made her a strong believer in human equality under God's authority. She views also that women could not accept to live the rest of their lives pleasing men, and the fact that she is one of the few female's reformist, in the first place, she confesses of the sexual differences, and essentially she views that both men and women must realize their duties in order to get the natural rights in society (Brace 435), Wollstonecraft says :

I mean therefore to infer that the society is not properly organized which does not compel men and women to discharge their respective duties, by making it the only way to acquire that countenance from their fellow-creatures, which every human being wishes some way to attain.(VRW 322)

In her project, Wollstonecraft understood that women were living sketchily, they were generally focusing on sentiments and beauty, spending money pettily, hereby, Wollstonecraft dissuaded women to use their minds for a better household management, thinking deeply on rational advancement, she says :

And how can woman be expected to co-operate unless she knows why she ought to be virtuous? unless freedom strengthens her reason till she comprehend her duty, and see in what manner it is connected with her real good. If children are to be educated to understand the true principle of patriotism, their mother must be a patriot;(xxvii)

Marriage also takes a notable part in Wollstonecraft's writing that surely plays a significant role in the structure of society, indeed, she castigates that kind of relationship without passion she observes "And this desire making mere animals of

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them, when they marry they act as such children may be expected to act, -- they dress, they paint, and nickname God's creatures "(xxxvi *VRW*). Mary argued that marriage should be associated with love and respect to raise the happiest family. Where man and woman know how to accomplish their duties in the appropriate way, in addition to this her statements were in several times directed to men, asking them to help women change their minds detecting self competences (Kerry 28)

In Wollstonecraft's terms marriage is a long life of friendship full of emotions. Identically, Wollstonecraft suggests that man and woman should complete and support each other for a moderate society she says, "I will venture to predict that virtue will never prevail in society till the virtues of both sexes are founded on reason; and, till the affections common to both are allowed to gain their due strength by the discharge of mutual duties (381 *VRW*), one another clue that Wollstonecraft refers to, is that a single or a married woman must earn her own financial income, in regards to this she says:

And is not the government very defective [...] that does not provide for honest independent women by encouraging them to fill respectable stations? But in order to render their private virtue a public benefit they must have a civil existence in the state, married or single. (339)

Notably, Wollstonecraft stresses on reason in most of her writings as a fundamental point to enlighten citizens' minds. She also insists on the concept that British women should change their cultural attitudes in society, she declares "in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in. In every age there has been a stream of popular opinion that has carried all before it "(36), she urges woman to feel of the serious responsibility in order to change social stereotypes.

2.3.3. Political Adjustments

Politically speaking, Mary Wollstonecraft starts the radical movements against criminal laws during the French Revolution of the eighteenth century, after she attacked Burke's *Reflections*, she wrote her second *VRW*, inspired from Commonwealth tradition (Kwatra 52). Besides, in her political theories, Wollstonecraft describes the subjugation imposed by men upon women, she views that women must establish self-government, particularly those of the middle rank (Benfield 111). Wollstonecraft in her political position and with the commonwealthman period tends to understand freedom and slavery from the male's arbitrary power, she mainly thinks that the real independence is to accept the opinion of others. (coffee 6)

In view of Wollstonecraft's extremist thoughts, she is against the lifestyle of noblemen and how they look at things haughtily; she argues "An aristocracy, of course, is naturally the first form of government. But, clashing interests soon losing their equipoise, a monarchy and hierarchy break out of the confusion of ambitious struggles, and the foundation of both is secured by feudal tenures."(*VRW* 12) Wollstonecraft admonishes the participants of bad results if they keep behaving as tyrants and perfect creatures in the government.

Mary Wollstonecraft mainly calls for reform in her *VRW* to involve women in masculine traits, because she observes the absence of women's political rights who she thinks are from civil and political senses "slaves". She also thinks be it a woman or man they are not different and could not gender reject the other since politicians are distinguished by their prepotent intellect (qtd in Monopoli 2646). Regardless to gender, Wollstonecraft is still in believe that with reason woman could challenge man in his domain, "considering woman as a whole(...) instead of apart of man"(qtd in Partenza 90) and "allowing them to share the advantages of education and government with man,[and] and see whether they will become

better, as they grow wiser and become free”(ibid)-as she states in her *VRW*, asking for a chance to women's participation in political activities.

2.3.4. Inspiration in Religious Faiths:

Admittedly, Mary Wollstonecraft reinforces her ideas with religious principles because she knew that ~~the~~ British women identified with biblical texts (Beck 64). From this point forward Wollstonecraft could understand her gender's direction, in connection with this William Godwin, the husband of Wollstonecraft, says in his *Memoirs* “Mary had been bred in the principles of Church of England, but her esteem for [Dr. Price] led her occasionally to attend upon his public instructions. Her religion was, in reality, little allied to any system of forms; and she has often told me, was founded rather in taste, than in the niceties of polemical discussion” (qtd in Beck 64- 65) Dr Price is a Dissenting minister of Newington and a member of radical group that Wollstonecraft belongs to.

Equally important, Wollstonecraft believes that the advancement of civilisations is acquired with the strong presence of religion. The ideas of Wollstonecraft are inspired from the bible because she knows ‘rightfully’ that God views all creation as equal, accordingly, she argued that women should worship only God to obtain ~~the~~ individual spirituality, not those beliefs stated by the King of the parliament in protestant and catholic churches :

The Hightlight and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, doubtless possess many attributes of which we can form no conception; but reason tells me that they can not clash with those I adore_ and I am compelled to listen to her voice ... For to love God as the fountain of wisdom, goodness and power, appears to be the only worship useful to a being who wishes to acquire either virtue or knowledge.... It follows, then I think, that from their infancy women should either be shut up like eastern princes, or educated in such a manner as to be able to think and act for themselves... Why do they [men] expect virtue

from a slave, from a being whom the constitution of civil society has rendered weak, if not vicious ? (qtd in Morgan 72)

In the lines above Wollstonecraft condemns man and the constitution of the suppression used toward woman even in her relation with God and the worst, they anticipate virtue from a 'slave', they do not know that this kind of exploitation can divert a person from weak to vicious.(ibid)

2.4. On Reception of Wollstonecraft's Vindication:

It was discussed by historians that the first appearance of Wollstonecraft's *VRW* led to shock, cynicism and marvelling, while it suffered continuous misclassification. On the other side, her biographers avouched that Wollstonecraft's work was positively received especially by those who implored for social, educational, and political reformations (Janes 293). The *Gentleman's Magazine*, the most successful of the eighteenth century periodicals observed about the disparity between Godwin's version and the *VRW* :

The readers of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, will perhaps be surprised when he is informed, that, during her last illness, no religious expression escaped the author's lips. In that work, the grand principle is, that woman is not inferior of man, but his equal in moral rank, walking along with him the road of duty, in which "they are both trained for a state of endless improvement (qtd in Janes 298).

Moreover, this vindication seems to be directed to female audience only, but infact, Wollstonecraft believed that women could not perform the revolution alone, which means that men are also needed to effect the change. In other words, Mary Wollstonecraft addressed readers of both genders to accomplish her aims in the *VRW* (Smith 556). Indeed, Mary Wollstonecraft indicates the middle-class women as the first specific audience to her book, she claims :“ the instruction which has hitherto been addressed to women, has rather been applicable to ladies...but, addressing my sex in a firmer tone, I pay particular attention to those in middle-

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class because they appear to be in the most natural state.”(qtd in Smith 556-557) in connection with this and in regards to the distressful state of British women, Mary Wollstonecraft will again presuppose that men would excuse her to retrieve women's respectable state (*VRW* xxxvi) because for her even if men are more reasonable and superior they cannot act without women's support, as concerns, Wollstonecraft wants to recreate a dynamic relationship and a mutual feeling of liability between men and women.

Actually, scholars put a great interest on Wollstonecraft's style and language, they have intrinsically remaked that illustartions and aesthetic tropes are predominantly used in her *VRW*. Wollstonecraft herself asserts this in the advertisement she presented for her treatise:

When I began to write this work, I devided it into three parts, supposing that one volume would contain the full discussion of the argument which seemed to me to rise naturally from a few simple principles; but fresh illustrations accuring as I advanced, I know present only the first part to the public. (xv)

Wollstonecraft's polemics are mainly supported by examples and simple principles in a broad sense to be more relevant to audience perceptions, by this she tends also to teach readers observation skill(Volcova 894). Futhermore, Mary Wollstonecraft's style of writing is a distinguished from those sentimental letters of a cry words, divisively, her literary work seems to be more rimmed and factual, in which she came close to the serious matters in society. The fact that she was more limited to exact rules does not mean that she was exempted from the harsh critics, her choice of arguments and style is almost described as signs of misogyny by the contemporary critics, for this reason she sought to avoid such stereotypes by defending her style as follows :

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I shall disdain to cull my phrase or polish my style. I aim at being usefull, and sincerity will render me uneffected; for wishing rather to persuade by the force of my language, I shall not waste my time in rounding periods, or fabricating the turgid bonbast of artificial feelings, which coming from the head, never reach the heart. I shall be employed about things, not words! (*VRW* xxxv)

In Wollstonecraft's explicitness about her aim, she wants to be forceful not superficial in some cases, for this concept she has used the word *flowery*, than she refers to the importance of time, focusing more on the way she could join the male intellectual society as a fundamental part not just an inferior woman, and this was the most punchy point in her life as a writer.

Recent critics also are directed to Wollstonecraft's style and themes, in the subject, American philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer propounds three fundamental themes involved in *VRW* that are : reason, women's inferiority, and educational opportunities (qtd in Monroe 143). On the other hand, the American literary critic Mary Poovey reprehends Wollstonecraft because she puts herself in a separate position from women instead of recognizing them as allies, additionally, Poovey referred to Wollstonecraft's failure in describing women's state out of ideological notions (146). Similarly in linguistic perspectives, French feminist Luce Irigaray argues that language in Wollstonecraft's book is not so adapted to women's ignorance : It is to resubmit herself . . .to ideas_ notably about her_ elaborated in and through a masculine logic but to bring out by an effect of playful repetition what was to remain hidden: the recovery of a possible operation of feminine in language (qtd in Monroe148-149).

Feminist Orientalism had the same arguments as Wollstonecraft's main ideas. They investigate in women's significant issues with the exigency to present women academic subjects in Western and Eastern societies (Hassan 11). Mary Wollstonecraft believes that the English writers who describe women "as a kind of

subordinate being, and not as a part of the human species” (qtd in Zonana 600) are imitating the “ true style of Mahometanism”(ibid) that in Islamic culture women are treated as animals without soul, in this respect Liela Ahmed the Egyptian American writer on Islamic feminism retorted that she can observe “no record ...in the body of orthodox Muslim literature of the notion that women are animals or have no souls,”(ibid).

2.4.1. New Definitions to British Women

Remarkably, after the death of Mary Wollstonecraft many women writers of different backdrops published their novels as an accurate care of Wollstonecraft's reputation as well as her radical theories. The Anglo- Irish writer of adults, Maria Edgeworth wrote *Belinda* (1801) in relation to her father and Wollstonecraft's theories. She mainly agreed with Wollstonecraft's arguments that; women should be more rationalists not just in school but importantly as mothers and wives. In this lights, Anne K. Mellor, professor of English Comparative Literature points out the “ Belinda Portman is the embodiment of all that Wollstonecraft called for in women: sound sense, wide reading, prudence, personnal modesty, and a loving heart ” (qtd in Brandeberry 50). Samewise, Even Stone one of the greatest defenders of the eighteenth century also focused on women social rights particularly on relationship between woman and man, he thought that woman could not heave her state in society untill she become a companion of her husband: “ Educating women to be more interesting companions for men rather than as individuals with their own economic or intellectual purposes is an ambiguous advance, not one that moves very far along the path toward equality” (qtd in Bild 192).

Although Mary Wollstonecraft's *VRW* emerged in awkward period, she sought to induce her liberal principles permanently. Accordingly in the Victorian age, Wollstonecraft was acknowledged as influential writer to women the suffragette movement, for instance, Elizabeth Robins Pennell confessed that Wollstonecraft

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would invariably retain her status as “ the first woman who braved public opinion and lifted up her voice to declare that woman had rights as well as a man”(qtd in Schmidt 17). Mary Wollstonecraft as an enlightened philosopher does not approach only education and social issues but she goes more general to human rights which asserts that human beings have the right to live in healthy state, in this context Richard Horton explains that “Mary Wollstonecraft, born in 1759, was the first English writer to set out a coherent doctrine of “native unalienable rights”.(2213) Mary Wollstonecraft by her work could reform British systems changing people's directions.

Wollstonecraft unarguably considered herself as a featured heroine in historical destiny as she told her sister “ you know I am not born to tread in the beaten track” (qtd in Taylor 121). She estimated her own might it was not a bumptiousness but in a more privilege was in the strictest confidence she spoke. In the same token American Feminist Ruth Benedict who had an impact on cultural anthropology inspired by John opie's famous *Portrait of Wollstonecraft*, while visiting London's National Portait Gallery, she expressed her discretion saying: “ And the woman in the little frame arrested me, this woman with the auburn hair, and the sad, steady, light-brown eyes, and the gallant poise of the head. She had saved her soul alive; it looked out from her steady eyes unafraid” this impartial description denoted women's interest in Mary Wollstonecraft. The case being discussed here seemed very grateful to her discussed project wondering for her secret of intrepidity despite the unhappy moments she lived.(qtd in Taylor 121-122)

2.4.2. Wollstonecraft as a Model:

European Feminist thinkers started their movements in ninegteenth century asking for women's equality in social and political matters. Many activists were hardly pushed and encouraged by wollstonecraft's arguments which enabled them to give speeches in public as she did before a decade. Wollstonecraft's *VRW* was wholehearted in particular by American women's moral reformers like

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Angelina and Sarah Grimke who spoke publicly about abolishments and other quandaries(McLay 112). On the same wave, the French Women's newspaper *La Femme Libre* ascribed to Jeanne Deroin, one of the Eminent thinkers in French feminist movements who condemned the way women were oppressed in choosing their partners, thereto, the article reported: " let us refuse as husbands any man who is not sufficiently generous to consent to share his power; we want no more this formula,wedemand equality in marriage" (qtd in Mclay 113).

The European Union gender policy tends to extend the equal rights and opportunities for women following Wollstonecraft's paths to the inevitable justness particularly in British society. In last few years, the EU gender policy⁴ has established other political concepts such as positive action measures and gender mainstreaming, these two articles deal with equal salaries and public preoccupations for women and men, essentially approach women's roles as a housewife and the educational opportunities than studying cultural notions of women in society which reveal the main reasons and consequences of violence used against women (Lombardo 160).

2.4.3. A Liberal Pamphlet:

The *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is the first liberal pamphlet written by Mary Wollstonecraft, the document was published in 1792 to be the first Feminist work acknowledged by the English public. Importantly, Mary Wollstonecraft's recalcitrancy in public sphere enabled her to think differently exposing new radical ideas to reform British society, as she unmasked the most oppressive acts used toward her sex. In addition to this the writer reinforced the obligation of women's participation in the revolution, she emphasized: "It is time to effect a revolution in female manners_time to restore to them their lost dignity_ and

⁴ EU Gender Policy: is a European movement based on the equality between men and women artibuted in employment, work and pay.

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make them, as part of the human species, labor by reforming themselves to reform the world”(qtd in Ferguson 436). In this revolutionary rhetoric pamphlet, Mary Wollstonecraft used harsh words addressing women and the whole British society in order to develop women's entity. The use of literary devices were perfectly placed for change and sensitization not for esthetic purposes, hence, this pamphlet is abjunctive in literature.

Conjointly, the writer illustrates arguments and examples in which she examines women's attitudes with aid of male rationality, more, she uses the semi-imperative form 'let' as she says : “Let them not be treated like slaves; or, like the brutes who are dependent on the reason of man, when they associate with him; but cultivate their minds,”(VRW 71) she repeats the same form with males :

Let the husband beware of trusting too implicitly to this servile obedience; for if his wife can with winning sweetness, caress him when angry, and when she ought to be angry, unless contempt has stifled a natural effervescence, she may do the same after parting with a lover (186).

By using this semi-imperative form, the writer wants to prepare readers for an important lesson, that British people without referring to their classes or genders are strongly invited to participate in revolution, she explains: “Let men take their choice. Men and women were made for each other, though not to become one being; and if they will not improve women, they will deprave them.”(566) Mary Wollstonecraft elucidates that in her *Vindication* she tends to emancipate females but with the help of males, together for a better future.(Smith 556-565)

2.5. Conclusion:

As has been noted, Mary Wollstonecraft the first feminist and activist on social and political subjects is spotlighted by her treatise *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* that calls primarily for British disregarded women to have all the priorities in private and public life explaining how women and men are totally equal

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creatures. Significantly, Wollstonecraft fights against those hypercritical of the time who has been bounded in some inequitable thoughts that woman and man are definitely two different animals have disaccorded aspirations in life. Readers received Wollstonecraft's book with enthusiasm since it was the first writing to free women from complexity and subjection. As *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is directed to all audiences females or males, naturally they agree with her on some points and disagree on others. In a given data we can notice that by this work Mary makes a great change in British people's attitudes where she could really spread new concepts for a prosperous society to encroach that to the whole worlds who consider her a the first literary repertoire of feminist movements.

General Conclusion

Eventually and in the long run this research work comes to an end, reasserting that this topic is one of the most significant, particularly, when we refer to females in the history of British literature, before and after the enlightenment age. On the whole, arguments were prudently centralized on Mary Wollstonecraft's attributions and how could the really genuine pamphlet serve British women in personal and public preoccupations. With this in mind, the direct relationship between the tackled topic and the field of research in which this work was conducted had a positive impact on the presented wheezes. Credibly, the collected data reinforced the main theories, then, pioneers, writers and philosophers were chosen to investigate the multipoint reasons and consequences of women's turmoils with considerateness of specific periods. All things considered, the oppressions acted toward British women were all impulsions nudged to new concepts and effective reformations, arranged in the form of orderly headings to open new windows for any other research.

Thereupon, the two chapters were written integrally on the developments of British women's matters before and after the Enlightenment age. Chapter one highlighted the social and political structures than the most predominant arbitrary ideologies that faced women in a patriarchal society. In literature, few women writers could challenge men in the domain, despite of the atrocity of style and content, they started with booklets, letters and jokes serving women's concerns. Chapter two accented the genuine, unique and liberal pamphlet written by Wollstonecraft providing radical amendments for women and society as whole, she called decisively for the participation of women in public sphere. In fact the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was the only treatise to guide British women after a long time of marginality and idling. Accordingly, this study can enrich our understanding of British women before and after Wollstonecraft's second *Vindication*, and more details on this topic can be found in references.

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