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***Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill:
An Analysis of their Feminist Views***

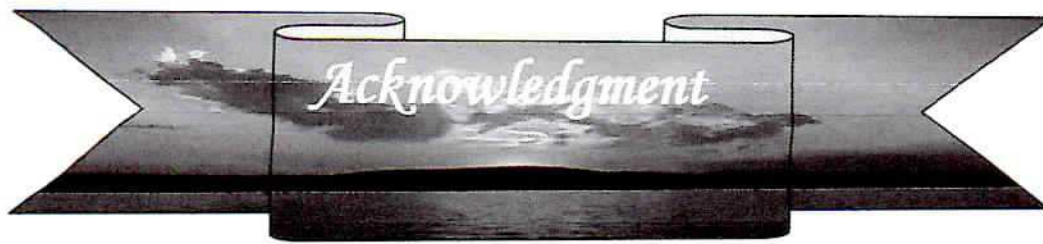
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*For my mother, father, all the members of my family, my Hassen, and for
all my friends and colleagues.*



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Abstract

In this dissertation, I suggest to research the feminist themes in two of the most important essays in British literature : Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and John Stuart Mill's *On the Subjection of Women*. Nevertheless, before analyzing their essays, I have shed light on the main important factors that awakened women's consciousness; the ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution.

History showed us that the factors mentioned above influenced greatly women, motivated them to question their status, and therefore, to ask for their rights. Under these circumstances, Mary Wollstonecraft sprang out in order to defend women's rights. She wrote her pamphlet entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, where her ideas were fully expressed.

X Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* has long been recognized as a central text in late eighteenth century British or even Anglo-American feminism. It offers a powerful critique of women's education and the assumptions surrounding marriage and family life. Moreover, even more important are the complex discussions of gender difference and its elaboration of the ways in which construction of femininity, both at an ideological level and in terms of conduct of everyday life, serve the interests of male desire. Her work is significant also because of possibilities of change in gender order and a transformation of the sexual hierarchy is both desirable and possible, which serves to differentiate feminism from a mere concern within the woman question.

John Stuart Mill was another advocator of women's rights; he wrote an essay entitled *On the Subjection of Women*. Mill asserted that women needed a larger ethical framework to change laws that denied their rights, because they were deeply imbedded in contemporary ethical beliefs pertaining to marriage and family life. Therefore, during the nineteenth century,

feminists aimed to change the laws pertaining to women including married women's property rights, access to divorce, and child custody. In addition to this, Mill claimed that women's suffrage is an essential step toward the moral improvement of humankind.

The essay written by John Stuart Mill was considered as the best for women's demands. Mill described the status of women in Britain as being marginalized. He argued that the legal, political and cultural limitations on women were part of bygone era characterized by command and obedience. Therefore, women, he argued, have the right to be educated as men and work hand in hand with men in order to contribute in the evolution of society.

It follows from what is mentioned above that both Wollstonecraft and Mill were appealing for the equality of the sexes. Thanks to their ideas, great reforms had been achieved in different fields: education, politics and the laws relating to marriage.

I- Introduction:

In this dissertation, I suggest to research the feminist themes in two of the most important essays in British literature: Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and John Stuart Mill's *On the Subjection of Women*. My review of the literature about "feminism" has made it certain for me that as a concept, "feminism" remains very elusive. The generic definitions of the concept to date have been contested on the grounds they tend to homogenise, to colonise and to neutralise the special traits of women's struggle for emancipation across class, ethnic and national borders. Generic definitions of the concept erase the differences existing, for example, between the women's struggle in African countries and the West, between America and Europe, and between ethnic and class groups in the countries of the same continents.

One of the results of this debate about what feminism means is the rejection of the concept itself. For instance, writers like Julia Kristeva from France and Ama Ata Aidoo from Ghana conceive and practise "feminism" so different from the definitions provided for the concept that they refuse to be qualified as feminists. Another result is the replacement of the concept "feminism" by one that is regarded as more compatible with the aspirations of black women; the word "Womanism" has been coined by Alice Walker.

Indeed, "feminism" might be considered as a highly loaded ideological term, but in academic research like the one I have the intention to carry out, it is necessary to define clearly one's terminology. Consequently, by "feminism" I mean a discourse developed about a body of ideas from the point of view of, by, and for women belonging to the bourgeois class in literature. This definition owes much to the fact that the writers who will be studied in my research include both a woman (Mary Wollstonecraft) and a man (John Stuart Mill) writing from the point view of women. Moreover, I consider that ideologically speaking the commitment of both Wollstonecraft and Mill are to the women they know best, I mean the women of their own class i.e., the middle class or the bourgeoisie.

1 - Review of the literature about the history of feminism:

It is not my purpose to go deeply into the conditions that have made for the rise of “feminism” as a discourse. However, a study means to investigate a civilisation issue, makes it imperative to give at least a broad outline about the discourse of “feminism” that Wollstonecraft and Mill had made their own. Using the critical categories of Michel Foucault, I can distinguish two main “thresholds” in the discursive formation about women. One of these thresholds is the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and the other is the move from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. It is during these transitional periods, i.e., thresholds, that epistemological breaks had occurred about the discourse on women.

Foucault in his *Archaeology of Knowledge* traces epistemological ruptures or breaks, like the ones I shall detail below, due to crises in systems of knowledge (Foucault Michel, 1969). One of the indications that the medieval system of knowledge based on Christianity had witnessed a crisis could be found in the desperate attempt to recuperate the classical tradition best represented by Aristotle. The latter’s thought had given birth to what later was known as scholasticism; it could be regarded as a shot of adrenalin to the dying body of Christian thought inherited from the Dark Ages. However, the syncretic episteme (I consider episteme as a body of ideas or thoughts) born out of the combination of Christianity with the classical tradition had produced in the words of Alice A. Jardin (Jardin A. Alice, cited in <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/jardin.htm>), a “thoroughly misogynist culture throughout Europe”.

Alice du Jardin has not gone into details in her discussion about what she considers as the misogynist civilisation of Europe at the end of the medieval period and the beginning of the Renaissance, a period situated roughly between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. She has contented herself with saying that “Everyone was talking about women in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries...and by the sixteenth century women were talking, writing and

publishing at the Court, in the salons and at home” (Jardin A. Alice, cited in <http://www.infed.org/thinkers.jardin.htm>). Writing about women in the way she does, Alice du Jardin gives the impression that because women were placed in the centre of discussion, the rhetoric is “feminist” that is committed to the emancipation of women. She overlooks the fact that the culture of the salon, of the court and the home even at that time is far removed from popular feminist culture.

I think that it is in the domain of popular culture that the rhetoric of “feminism” was heard more loudly, as history books seem to indicate. Indeed, the threshold of history under discussion here had witnessed a socio-political phenomenon known as witch hunting. Witches were mostly women, and as William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* shows clearly, it is their marginal “feminist” discourse, mixing “fair and foul” and “foul and fair” that has befuddled Macbeth’s head and leads to his tragic fall. Therefore, if there is a site to look for “feminist” discourse in the transitional period between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, it is my conviction that it has to be looked for in the margins, and not in the central institutions like the home; the salon and the court, in my view, represented the male norm. So, women during this period were considered inferior, therefore, they were relegated to marginal spaces.

Alice du Jardin sticks too closely to Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge* to realise that “normatively” in discourse did not start in the Classical Age. If the discourses of the “feminist witches” were repressed even in the transitional period between the middle Ages and the Renaissance, it is because their discourse was not considered as being up to the male norms of the time. These norms were established by such prestigious (notorious for “feminists” like me) people as King James I of England and Francis Bacon the first experimental scientist in Britain. An inheritor of the scholastic thought prevailing during his time, James authored both the translation of *King James’s Version* of the Bible and a treatise on witches. As regards Francis Bacon still trailing the prejudices of his gender class, he

compared in one of his essays the process of investigation in scientific laboratories to the process of inquisition applied during the witch-hunting period.

I will be explicit about the first threshold in the “feminist” history at this point because it is relatively less important than the second threshold for the investigation of the feminist thought in Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and Mill’s *On the Subjection of Women*. I have situated the second threshold in “feminist” history in the transitional period between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. During this period, the divine order establishing a hierarchy among beings started to be questioned. According to my studies of British civilisation, this era corresponded roughly to the period between the reign of Charles I which had started in 1625 to end with James II’s reign in 1688. This period had known Constitutional troubles between the Crown and Parliament (Vitoux Pierre, 1969: 33-52).

It is needless to go into details on this period because book length studies have already been published about it. Yet two events of this period deserve to be discussed because they indicate another epistemological break with far reaching consequences for the woman issue. One of them is the establishment of the Royal Society in 1660, the first president of which was the famous mathematician and philosopher Isaac Newton and author of *Principia Mathematica* (1687). The other event is the overthrow of James II from the Crown and his replacement by William of Orange and Queen Mary in 1688. This event known as the Glorious Revolution saw a significant reshuffling in the political discourse in Britain that had moved emphasis from divine to constitutional rights. John Locke set the tone for the new political system with the publication of his *Two Treatises of Civil Government* in 1690.

Together Newton and Locke had laid the foundations of the Enlightenment order of the world. For the former, a few simple, immutable mathematical laws govern the entire cosmos. Newton’s vision of the world turned upside down the divine order that had prevailed

in the Middle Ages and substituted for it a man-centred order wherein Man stands as an observer of God conceived as a clock maker. This clock maker manifests himself in mathematical laws also called natural laws because they are observable in natural phenomena around us. The natural laws doctrine found itself applied in the political discourse of John Locke three years after the publication of Newton's *Mathematica Principia* in 1687 later when the absolute monarchy of James II was toppled down (Donovan Josephine, 1992: 2).

2- Hypotheses and problematic:

One of the hypotheses in this dissertation is that the circulation of feminist ideas started with the conceptual change brought by Newton and especially by John Locke. The latter's political ideas which will be detailed below were announced in 1690 in his essay entitled *Two Treatises of Civil Government*, but it took nearly one hundred years for the circulating of its discourse to be publicly appropriated by a feminist author Mary Wollstonecraft. This appropriation happened in a context that had witnessed the American and the French Revolutions for which Wollstonecraft had a lot of sympathy.

One of our assumptions is that with the writing of her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Wollstonecraft had sought to emancipate the women of her class, by having the men of the same class extend to women the rights they had won after one century of constitutional building of the British political kingdom.

I also assume that her appropriation of Locke's ideas has much to do with the well-known British Romantics' disillusionment with the French Revolution. It has to be remarked that Wollstonecraft, just like her fellow compatriot William Wordsworth, had escaped the guillotine of the Jacobins while supporting the French Revolution in France. In my view, Wollstonecraft is not completely an Edmund Burke condemning the excesses of the French Revolution in the name of a conservative British tradition, nor do I consider her as a Thomas Paine seeking to topple the British Crown through revolutionary blood shedding on behalf of

the female bourgeois class to which she belongs. Instead of placing her in either of these two British thinkers' tradition of thought, I see her somewhere in-between them rewriting the principles of the English Glorious Revolution (it is considered glorious because it knew no blood-spilling) defended by John Locke from the women's point of view. I will clarify further what has already been said about Locke's political kingdom to make clear the issue I want to raise in this dissertation.

Through his essay, Locke intended to defend Whig Principles and the Revolution of 1688. He argued that people have natural rights that are inalienable, in the sense that they could not be taken away by any government. Moreover, he believed that the most basic of rights is property, a concept that preserves life and property as well as material possession. In this respect, Locke stated that all legitimate political authority exists to preserve these natural rights, and this authority is based on the consent of the governed (A. D. Ritchie, 1950: 22).

Unfortunately, women were excluded from this social contract, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, motherhood and wifehood were regarded as women's central roles. By the middle and the end of the eighteenth century, and particularly into the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution separated the work place from the home, isolating women in the domestic sphere.

Moreover, the presumption that women belong in the family under the aegis of their husbands was central to male liberal theorists, even those like Locke who espoused natural rights for all people. Locke writes as follows:

The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind which will but consult it, that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions (II.6) (Locke John, quoted in <http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat-txt>).

Locke further argues that

The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for

their rule(VI.22,p.411)(Locke John, quoted in <http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat-txt>).

Unfortunately, Locke in the above quotation does not mean man in the generic sense, but in the specific sense of the male of all species. In addition, he believes that husbands are to be allowed authority over their wives and children, and although this is not an absolute authority, he does not spell out its limits. In this perspective, he affirms: “But the husband and wife, though they have but one common concern, yet having different understandings will unavoidably sometimes have different wills too; it therefore being necessary that the last determination, i.e. the rule, should be placed somewhere; it naturally falls to the man’s share as the abler and stronger” (<http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat-txt>).

The circulation of Locke’s ideas among his contemporaries had not failed to raise the interest of some women writers of the period. Locke’s questioning of the Divine order defended by Hobbes, and its replacement by another order which is called The Natural Rights Order led writers like Mary Astell just some ten years after the publication of Locke’s *Treatises* to write back questioning the positions assigned to women in domestic and public spheres. Mary Astell questioned the gender-biased reflections of Locke in *Some Reflections upon Marriage* (1701).

One of the lines of argument of my proposed research will be that Mary Wollstonecraft had followed in the footsteps of her fellow feminist English author Mary Astell in the way she vindicated women’s rights. It will be argued that Wollstonecraft had “stylised” from the French Romantic philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1718), just as Astell had done a century earlier with John Locke, to develop polemics, sometimes overt and at other times hidden. To be explicit, in 1763, Rousseau wrote a book entitled *The Social Contract*. Rousseau believed that the social contract is that which is set between all members of society. These rights are qualified as Civil Rights in distinction from the Rights that Locke had called Natural (Rousseau Jean Jacques, 2000:17).

Rousseau excluded women from his social contract; he strongly advocated that the proper vocation for a woman was that of a housekeeper. In addition, he stated that the supreme duty of a woman was to create a heaven of serenity for her husband to relax in when he chose to withdraw from the world outside, and to raise properly the children. Furthermore, he felt that the only education a young girl needed should be provided at home by her mother rather than in a school. A woman, he emphasized, could be allowed to run around outdoors to improve her health. Therefore, we can state that according to Rousseau, women are made to marry, keep house, raise children and improve the lives of their men (Rousseau Jean Jacques, 1995: 579). Besides, Rousseau claimed that women were unable to reason, and only men could be trusted to deal with the high spheres of thought. Thus, for him, women could not be citizens, only men could participate fully in Civil Society.

History books have taught me that Rousseau's ideas in his *Social Contract* are at the basis of the French Revolution. On the basis of this historical consensus I advance the idea that Wollstonecraft's hidden and overt polemics against Rousseau is that the latter's idea of Civil Society leaves no place for women in the new French Republic to which it had given birth in 1789. Wollstonecraft remained a convinced Republican feminist because of her attachment to an English Republic Tradition. Going back to the period of the interregnum in English history (1640-1660), current to these days, and sustained during her time by British thinkers like Thomas Paine, William Godwin and Richard Price, her republicanism departed from the Jacobinism to which Rousseau's thought had given rise, a Jacobinism that is essentially warlike and anti-feminist. The status of women during the French Revolution to which Wollstonecraft was a witness is fully documented in Tzevan Todorov's *Nous et les autres* and Julia Kristeva's *Etrangers à nous mêmes*.

Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* was subject to much criticism. One of the most representative critics is Allan Richardson. The latter argues that the central

theme of Wollstonecraft's essay is education, especially the education of girls and women. He states: "Education runs throughout Mary Wollstonecraft's writing and remains a dominant theme to the abrupt end of her career (Richardson Allan, quoted in Claudia Johnson, 2002: 25). Added to this, education was critically important to Wollstonecraft as a liberal reformer and a radical theorist as well as proponent of women's rights. Moreover, Richardson argued that Mary Wollstonecraft was deeply influenced by Rousseau; she is adapting Rousseau's standard education of active citizenship developed through his book *Emile*. However, on the other hand, she attacks him for limiting such an education to boys. Besides, Richardson says that Wollstonecraft believed that raising girls together with boys in national day school established throughout the country and making female education not only equal, but also indistinguishable from male education, would enable the improvement and emancipation of the whole sex (Ibid., 33). Another critique is brought by Chris Jones. He states that: "in politics, Mary Wollstonecraft must be accounted a republican; she hoped for the disappearance of monarchy and inherited distinction" (Jones Chris, quoted in Ibid., 43). He adds that like most republicans, Mary Wollstonecraft was concerned with virtue as the quality most needed to uphold the state. Moreover, Chris Jones argues: "What Wollstonecraft gained from her radical friends was not just a set of doctrines, but a way of life in which feeling and intellect gained social expression" (Ibid., 46). Besides, Wollstonecraft defended especially women in France. For this, Jones states: "In her letter to Talleyrand and prefacing *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, she complains against the French exclusion of women from the ranks of "active citizen" empowered to take part in the political decisions of the nation"(Ibid., 49).

Anne K. Mellor, is another critic who writes that *A Vindication of the Rights of women* proposed a model of what we would call "equality" or liberal feminism (K. Mellor Anne, quoted in Ibid., 141).

Similarly, Josephine Donovan has dealt with Wollstonecraft's essay stating that the latter believed men and women to have the same moral and intellectual core. She reported that according to Mary Wollstonecraft, there is no sex in souls, they should receive the same mental and spiritual training (Donovan Josephine, 1992: 10). Added to this, Wollstonecraft believed that women should have access to the great enterprises of public life, and not be confined to the domestic sphere.

Unlike Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill did not live through the French Revolution, but he lived through the unprecedented Industrial Revolution that had even more lasting reverberations at the social and political levels than the ones caused by the French Revolution. *On the Subjection of Women* is one of the landmark essays in British Feminist literature. It has received to date a vast bulk of criticism.

One of the most representative critics of Mill's essay is Carolina Woolner; she argued that when *On the Subjection of Women* was first published, both the family and political society were based on dependence. She believed that women were dependent on the aristocracy. In addition to this, she claimed that in *On the Subjection of Women*, Mill argued that society was changing from a feudal patriarchal form to a one based on freedom under law. Added to this, she pointed out that the family and the relations that existed between men and women must develop rationally towards self-reliance, and liberty (Woolner Carolina, 1997 cited in <http://www.pinn.net/main.htm>). Carolina Woolner added: "It is certainly clear that it is written from the perspective of one who understood the position of women in marriage at that time very clear indeed, and also one who appreciated the benefits of women's liberalism from a position with an enthusiasm and passion that could only be conceived in one who has suffered the constraints imposed by the prevailing conventions of the time"(Ibid). It means that John Stuart Mill's *On the Subjection of Women* was influenced by personal circumstances; his private life.

Alice Rossi is another representative critic of Mill's essay. According to her "One hundred years have passed since *On the Subjection of Women* was published, yet it stands almost alone as an intellectual analysis of the position of women and an appeal for political action to secure equality of the sexes"(Rossi Alice, 1997, cited in <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk>).

In *Criticism to Mill*, Diana Coole who is another critic stated that *On the Subjection of Women* "...forms an integral part of [his] liberal vision, it can no more be discussed in isolation than it can be dismissed (Coole Diana, 1997 cited in <http://www.plato.stanford.edu/harriet-mill/>). It means that women can no more be discussed in isolation from the personal circumstances of Mill's own life.

Moreover, Diana Coole argued that Mill claimed for equal sexes, but without engendering an equivalent obligation (Ibid). In practice, married women whether contributing financially or not continue to retain the lion's share of domestic responsibility to this day. Furthermore, In *Criticism to Mill*, Coole employed the argument of Harriet Taylor who is Mill's wife that: "a woman who contributes materially to the support of the family can not be treated in the same contemptuously tyrannical manner as one who is dependent on the man for substance". Through this quotation, Coole wanted to show that Taylor is more radical than Mill. In addition, she aimed to reach the point that men continue to tyrannise their wives, whether contributing financially or not. Besides, Coole believed that Mill understood politics, and that he was aware that it was necessary to appeal to men, who after all held power to effect change, in a rational not threatening way (Ibid).

The above criticism about Mill's *On the Subjection of Women* remains pertinent in some of its aspect. However, I have noticed that this criticism has overlooked the conditions that have made possible Mill's feminist discourse in his essay. I propose therefore to complete the research already undertaken on Mill's *On the Subjection of Women* by analysing its

discourse within the context of the prevalent male thought of the period. I distinguish two strands in this thought: the Utilitarianist and the Abolitionist strands.

It follows that the feminist issue, which will be developed around Mill's *On the Subjection of Women* is more or less the same as the one I have raised about Wollstonecraft's *Vindications of the Rights of Women*. I will also start the analysis of Mill's essay from assumptions equally more or less similar to those I have already made about Wollstonecraft's essay. The first assumption is that Utilitarianists like Jeremy Bentham were to Mill what Rousseau had been to Wollstonecraft. Moreover, in his polemical relation to these Utilitarianist thinkers, Mill just like Wollstonecraft had stylised John Locke to vindicate the rights of women. It will be argued in the research I propose that in the feminist discourse that Mill develops in his essay, a polemically anti-utilitarianist discourse overlaps with the prevalent abolitionist discourse of his time to which he gives a Lockean turn. It has to be remarked that Mill's essay was published during the heyday of the Abolitionist Movement in the United States, the reverberations of which had reached England with the publication of Harriet Beecher-Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

II- Materials and method:

I have already given some indications about the materials I will use in my research. These materials are mostly essays: Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Mill's *On the Subjection of Women*, Astell's *Some Reflections upon Marriage*, Locke's *Two Treatises of Civil Government*, Rousseau's *Emile* and *The Social Contract*.

The choice of essays for my research is made on purpose; in my view, a civilisation issue like the one on which I suggest to carry my research can be done more appropriately through the analysis of essays than any other materials. I believe that in its broad definition as a "way of life", the thought about what this "way of life" means to those who live or have lived through it is best captured in the form of the essay.

I will make mine Edward Hoagland's following definition of the essay: "The emphasis upon mind speaking to mind is what makes essays less universal in their appeal than stories". In my research, I will, as I have already made it clear above, deal with how "the mind speaks to mind" about a feminist issue with references to the landmark essays previously mentioned. Furthermore, I find Hoagland's definition of the concept of essay adequate to achieve my research. To be explicit, Hoagland qualifies his definition by writing that essays, " are addressed to an educated, perhaps a middle-class reader, with certain presuppositions, a frame of reference, even a commitment to civility (civilisation) that is shared –not the grand golden empathy inherent in every man or woman that a storyteller has a chance to tap" (Hoagland Edward, 1986: 27).

2 ✦ It follows from the discussion of the materials above that the most appropriate approach to the issue that I have raised is the dialogic approach. I consider that this approach is appropriate on two grounds. First, the essay as defined above (a mind speaking to mind) recalls Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of literature as a dialogic form. It is true that in his dialogic theory of literature, Bakhtin does not appeal to the literary form of the essay. However, I do not think that he restricted the use of his theory to the analysis of literary works or novels. On the contrary, I believe that in drawing comparisons like the ones he has made about Dostoevsky's novels and the Socratic Dialogues, he suggests the possible application of his dialogic theory to other forms of literature. Essays might well be of a lesser pedigree than Socratic Dialogues. However, the definition that Bakhtin gives of the Socratic Dialogue in *Four Essays: Dialogic Imagination* is strangely similar to the one that Hoagland has given to the essay.

Before explaining the reason of my selection of the dialogic approach, I think it is necessary to define a dialogue according to Bakhtin. The latter considers the dialogic principle as a key conceptual element in daily life; dialogic relations show the coexistence and

interaction between members of society. Bakhtin asserted that the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, could not fail to brush us against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all, the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it, and as a rejoinder to it. It does not approach the object from the sidelines.

The word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it: the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object: A word forms a concept of its own object in a dialogic way. Nevertheless, this does not exhaust the internal dialogism of the word. It encounters an alien word not only in the object itself: every word is directed towards an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates.

The word in a living conversation is directed toward a future answer-word: It provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answers' direction, forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken. The word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is indeed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation in a living dialogue (Medvedev Voloshinov Bakhtin, 1994: 76).

The second reason why I will appeal to the dialogic approach is that I will deal with multiple directions to my discussion of the essayists I have selected for analysis. My study will be essentially a comparative study but its triangular aspect (Wollstonecraft-Locke-Rousseau in the first chapter and Mill-Locke-and Bentham in the second chapter) cannot be adequately carried out within the context of the influence and analogy types of study prevalent in traditional comparative studies.

For Bakhtin dialogue is not simply binary; it allows for other dimensions that he calls "polyphony" and it happens that I am interested in the "polyphony" of Wollstonecraft's

Vindication of the Rights of Women and Mill's *On the Subjection of Women*. I will analyse this "polyphonic" dimension in their essays, as I have indicated previously, through the angle of **polemics and stylisation** (Bakhtin Medvedev, Voloshinov, , 1994: 89).

II. 1- Bakhtin's theory:

Before moving to the first chapter, I think it is necessary to make explicit my theory. Bakhtin defines the hidden polemic as the author's discourse, which is directed toward its own referential object, as in any other discourse, but at the same time, every statement about the object is constructed in such a way that, apart from its referential meaning, a polemical blow is struck at the other discourse on the same theme, and at the other's statement on the same object. A word directed towards its referential object, clashes with another's word within the very object itself. The other's discourse is not itself reproduced, it is merely implied; but the entire structure of speech would be completely different if there were not this reaction to another person's implied word (Ibid., 107). Therefore, we can say that a hidden polemic discourse is double-voiced although, the interrelationship of the two voices here is not a special one. The other's thought does not personally make its way inside the discourse, but is only reflected in it, determining its meaning and its tone. One word acutely senses alongside it someone else's word speaking about the same object, and this awareness determines its structure.

Analogous to the hidden polemic is a rejoinder from real and profound dialogue. Every word of that rejoinder, directed toward its referential object, is at the same time reacting intensely to someone else's word, answering it, and anticipating it. An element of the response and anticipation penetrates deeply inside intensely dialogic discourse.

Concerning the definition of stylization, Bakhtin in his *Dostoevsky's Poetics* begins by asserting the need for a meta-linguistic analysis of the novelistic prose, because the linguistic approach cannot recognize dialogic relations within a discourse, it cannot recognize

relations of agreement, disagreement, affirmation and so on which only arise between two utterances as two individual voices. For this reason, only meta-linguistics can investigate the phenomenon of double-voiced discourse, the predominant form in Dostoevsky's artistic prose (Bakhtin Medvedev, Voloshinov, , 1994: 102).

It is worth mentioning that Bakhtin begins his meta-linguistic analysis by categorizing three types of discourse. The first is direct discourse, which is oriented entirely towards the object, or topic it refers to, it is referentially oriented, its function is to name, to inform, express and, in novelistic prose, this will normally be the authorial discourse. In the second type of discourse, Bakhtin terms objectified or represented discourse, the most common form of this being the direct speech of characters.

Character speech is also referentially oriented but stylistically it is subordinated to authorial discourse. It is treated as the object of authorial understanding i.e., objectified, it is perceived by the author as someone else's discourse. Both these types of discourse are single voiced; they represent a single consciousness and intention.

However, an author can also take someone else's direct discourse and infuse it with authorial intentions. It then becomes double-voiced: in one utterance, two consciousnesses coexist. This is the third type of discourse, and Bakhtin further categorizes this double-voiced discourse into three varieties. The first variety is exemplified in stylization and non-authorial forms of narration in which authorial purpose simply coexists with the purpose of the discourse which is inhabited: "The author's thought once having penetrated someone else's discourse... does not collide with the other's thought, but rather follows after it in the same direction. In the second variety of double-voiced discourse, typified by parody and irony, the invading voice or consciousness interacts in hostile manners with the penetrated discourse, forcing it to serve aims that completely oppose the original intention. In both the first and the second varieties, the author makes use of other people's words for authorial purposes. In the

third variety, the author's discourse remains outside the authorial discourse but is the object of the hidden polemic inflecting the authorial voice. In this case, the other's discourse has moved from a passive to an active relationship with the authorial speech; instead of allowing itself to be infiltrated and used for authorial purposes, it exerts a shaping force upon the author's speech. Forms of hidden polemic can also be located in dialogue, both in every day speech situation, and in a novelistic dialogue. Dostoevsky's prose is almost wholly constituted of double-voiced discourse in all its varieties especially the hidden polemic (Bakhtin Medvedev, Voloshinov, 1994: 103).

Chapter one

I- Introduction:

During the Middle Ages, the social, cultural and political environment of England favoured neither the awareness nor the discussion of the woman question. To be explicit, people in the Medieval Age had religious thoughts; they believed in the great hierarchical Chain of Being. Its major premise was that every existing thing and living in the universe had its place in the divine order. Therefore, the women question and their position in society would not have risen during this period. The majority of women did play their role as wives, mothers, daughters, but an inferior and subordinate one in the divinely ordained patriarchal society. Their status was clearly defined by the Catholic Church, which impressed women with the strong sense of natural inferiority, and in order to emphasize their subordination, it declared that women were naturally wicked. The notion of original sin did entail the corruption of all human species but women were considered more responsible for the Fall of Man (C. Ward Jennifer, 1992: 7-8). Women who dared to question the order were considered as witches; they could not think reasonably.

It is worth noting that reason at that time was synonymous with sanctioned traditions based on what was supposed to be religious foundations. Hence, reasoning against the divine system, often-unleashed sermons condemning them to be marginal. An example is necessary to illustrate this point; in this era, sermons were preached against the phenomenon, which was called witchcraft. Preachers sustained their statement by referring to the Biblical command that states: "you shall not permit a sorceress to live" (Ex: 22:18) (Quoted in William Beuton, 1970: 604). As a result, plenty of women were sentenced to death. Because of their perception, women were subordinated and restricted to the roles of wives and daughters (Op.cit., 1992: 6). Added to this, wife beating was a recognized right of man, and was practised without shame by high as well as low. Similarly, the daughters who refused to

2- Locke's theory on the natural law:

The various changes brought by the scientific revolution provoked a reassessment of the civil society in Europe; one of the most influential concepts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the natural law theory developed by John Locke.

John Locke was born at Newington, a village in Somerset, on August 29th, 1632. He was one of the greatest philosophers in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century. He grew up and lived through one of the most extraordinary centuries; a century in which conflicts between the crown and Parliament, and the over-lapping conflicts between Puritans, Anglicans and Catholics swirled into the Civil War in the 1640s (cited in <http://www.plato.stanford-edu/entries/locke>).

With the defeat and death of Charles I, the system of Monarchy, the House of Lords and the Anglican Church were abolished, and Oliver Cromwell established the Protectorate in 1650s. However, after Cromwell's death, England knew many problems; the Monarchical system, the House of Lords and the Anglican Church were restored. This period lasted from 1660 to 1688; it was marked by continual conflicts between the King and Parliament, and debates over religious tolerance, dissenters and Catholics. This period ended with the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in which James II was driven from England and replaced by William of Orange and his wife Mary (Macaulay Lord, 1986: 167).

I have already explained that Locke was one of the most influential figures of seventeenth-century England; he brought a theory of the Natural law, and he expressed it in an essay entitled *Two Treatises of Civil Government*; it was written in 1690. In this essay, Locke intended to defend Whig Principles and the Glorious Revolution that had taken place in 1688. William and Mary were enthroned, and a new kind of constitution was established in the British Isles (Ritchie A.D, 1950: 22). Locke argued that every individual has a right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that to secure these rights, governments are

instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed” (Ritchie A.D, 1950: 23).

John Locke agreed that the natural state of man is neither a state of war, nor one where the natural law is inoperative. He asserted that man is free by nature; he has some rights that are inalienable. Therefore, the civil government is set up by a contract between the governors and the governed, conferring limited powers on the governors solely for the benefit of the governed (Ibid).

To be explicit, Locke had two purposes that urged him to write his essay *Two Treatises of Civil Government*. First, to reject the doctrine of the divine right, and to criticize the absolute authority of the Monarch that was developed and defended by Sir Robert Filmer. Second, he established a theory, which would reconcile the liberty and citizen with political order.

In his essay, Locke emphasized that labour is the origin and justification of property, and contract or consent is the ground of government and fixed its limits. Behind this lie the ideas of independence of the individual person i.e. the state of nature knows no government; but in it, as a political society, men are subject to the moral law that is the law of God. Men are born free and equal in rights.

To understand Locke’s political theory, I think it would be worth to shed light on the most important chapters developed in his essay *Two Treatises of Civil Government* in which his political theory is fully expressed.

Locke’s *First Treatise* was a polemical work that aimed to refute the patriarchal version of the divine right of Kings developed by Sir Robert Filmer. Locke was against the principles of Filmer who claimed that men are not naturally free, and all legitimate governments possess an absolute authority. In *The Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Locke developed his positive theory of government; he asserted that God created Man and

then we are in fact God's property. The chief end set to us by our creator as a species and as individuals is survival; for this reason, man has no liberty to destroy himself or any creature in his possession. It follows that suicide and murder violate the divine purpose. Locke argued that a man has the right to life, liberty, health and property. These are natural rights; it means, we have these rights in a state of nature before the introduction of civil government, and all people have these rights equally; Locke stated that:

The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges everyone: and reason which is that law, teaches all mankind which will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions..." (II. 6) (Locke John, quoted in Donovan Josephine, 1992: 4).

According to Locke, there are problems with life in the state of nature because the law of nature can be violated for there are no judges, no police; while the civil government is full of political powers.

In chapters three and four, Locke defined the state of war and slavery. The state of war is a state in which someone has a sedate and settled intention of violating someone's right to life. One can deduce that such person puts himself in a state of war with the person whose life he intends to take. One can consider the person who intends to deny one's right to life as an aggressor. For Locke, the state of nature is ordinarily one in which we follow the basic rule interpreted in terms of natural rights. The state of war comes about when someone violates someone else's rights. In the state of war, there will be always an innocent victim on the one hand and an unjust aggressor on the other hand. It follows that for Locke, the state of war is similar to a state of enmity and destruction brought by those who want to get power over the others. In the state of nature, people are living together governed by reason. In this case, the attacked person has a right to war, but the use of force without right is the basis cause for the state of war. In fact, people enter into society to avoid the state of war, because the presence of a supreme power limits war and increases stability and security. In addition, Locke defines

the state of slavery as the extension of the state of war between a lawful conqueror and a captive. Thus, slavery is the state of being in an absolute or arbitrary power of another.

“Of Property” is one of the most famous, influential and important chapters in *The Second Treatise of Government*. Locke claimed that the earth belongs to people; he raised a question in which he asked how does one come upon individual property if the earth and everything on it is the common property of humanity? He answered the question by asserting that for individual property to exist, one should use means in order to appropriate something. He started out with the idea of the property of the person. He stated that each person owns his own body, and all the labour he performs with his own body becomes his own property because he adds his labour to any given object. To illustrate his ideas, Locke used the example of an apple, he stated that the apple becomes mine when I pick it, because I have added my labour to it and made it my property.

It is important to point out that Locke placed a bound on this type of acquisition, a person may only acquire as many things in this way as he or she can reasonably use to their advantage. He qualified the idea of private property by saying that I can only eat as many apples as I can before they go bad. If I take so many apples and some of them rot and go to waste, I have overextended my natural right of acquisition. So, one can take only what he needs. Locke applied these rules to land, a person in a state of nature can claim land by adding labour to it, building a house on it, or for farming it, but only so much as one can use without waste. Locke then defined labour as the determining factor of value, the tool by which humans make their world a more advantageous and rewarding place to inhabit. In this context, Locke states:

And thus, I think, it is very easy to conceive, without any difficulty, how labour could at first begin a title of property in the common things of nature, and how the spending it upon our uses bounded it. So that there could then be no reason of quarrelling about title, nor any doubt about the largeness of possession it gave. Right and convenience went together; for as a man had a right to all he could employ his labour upon, so he had no temptation to labour for more than he could

make use of. This left no room for controversy about the title, nor for encroachment on the right of others; what portion a man carved to himself, was easily seen; and it was useless, as well as dishonest, to carve himself too much, or take more than he needed (*The Second Treatise of Civil Government*. V.51. cited in <http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.txt>)

In short, Locke believed that people have the right to appropriate goods by adding their labour to them; thus, making them their own. This right is bound by what one might call the law of subsistence. People do not have the right to take more than they can use. Money backed by labour and natural right of people becomes the basis for expansion. Once trade is established, people seek to better their condition. The limitations that Locke placed on property in the state of nature without money are as follows:

- One must put one's labour into something to claim it.
- One cannot take more than one can use.

It is arguable that Locke's account involves several devices that were common in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' political philosophy, meaning by this natural rights theory and the social contract. To recapitulate, natural rights are those rights that we are supposed to have as human beings before governments come into being. The individuals are like other animals; they have a natural right to struggle for their survival. Hence, Locke argued that we, as individuals, have the right to possess some means to survive. In order to achieve this, people agree that their conditions in a state of nature are not satisfactory, it would be, therefore, better to transfer some of their rights to a central government, while retaining others, and this is the theory of the social contract.

As far as the function of civil government is concerned, Locke stated that the aim of such legitimate civil government is to preserve, as far as possible, the rights to life, liberty, health and property of its citizens, and to persecute and punish those of its citizens who violate the rights of others.

At the end of *The Second Treatise*, we learn about the nature of illegitimate civil governments and the conditions under which rebellion is appropriate. The argument for legitimate revolution follows from making the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate civil government. The former aims to preserve the life, health, liberty and the property of its subjects. Whereas the latter seeks to violate the natural rights of its subjects, it seeks to reduce them to slaves. In such circumstances, rebellion is legitimate as is the killing of such a dangerous beast of prey. It follows from what has been said that Locke justified rebellion under certain circumstances.

3- The position of women in Locke's theory:

Unfortunately, women are excluded from this natural law theory; Locke asserted that women belong in the family under the aegis of their husbands. In his *The Second Treatise*, Locke stated that husbands are to be allowed authority over their wives and children, and although this is not an absolute authority, he did not spell out its limits. Locke supported his arguments by stating that:

But the husband and wife, though they have but one common concern, yet having different understandings, will unavoidably sometimes have different wills too; it therefore, being necessary that the last determination, i.e. the rule, should be placed somewhere; it naturally falls to the man's share, as the abler and the stronger (Locke John, VII. Cited <http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.txt>)

Locke clearly distinguished between the power of parents and that of political authority. For him, marriage is a contractual relationship, which gives no absolute authority to man, although the male's superior ability may give him the right to manage joint affairs.

Several scholars have pointed out that Locke's theory necessitates conjugal subordination of women because it is rooted in the concept of private property (Donovan Josephine, 1992: 4). Thus, the individuals who form a social contract for the protection of their lives, properties and liberties are in Locke's view the male heads of households (Op.cit., p. 5).

Locke presumed a primary qualification for citizenship, the right to participate in public affairs that require rationality. Nevertheless, women were presupposed lacking in rationality for this reason, they were excluded from the right of citizenship (Donoyan Josephine, 1992: 5).

John Locke and other Enlightenment thinkers, occasionally, touched upon the position of women, and they condemned aspects of their legal or social situation. More importantly, the preoccupation of eighteenth-century writers with the problem of knowledge, the nature of human psychology, and with the study of passions, meant more detailed exploration of the differences between the sexes, and much more explicit discussion of how far such differences were innate, how far they were moulded by the environment.

4- Mary Astell's ideas on the status of women in society:

The position of women in Western Europe was analysed in new terms; it was to be justified by reference to what was natural for their sex, rather divinely ordained (Rendall Jane, 1985: 8). It was in that intellectual climate that Mary Astell (1666- 1731), the daughter of a Newcastle coat merchant, published the first part of her book *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* in 1694, protesting against the “worthlessness of the upper-class women”, and denouncing the neglect of a proper intellectual training; she aimed at awakening the ladies' consciousness. Mary Astell insisted that men used customs in order to reduce women to marginal spaces; her arguments were as follows:

Women are from their very infancy debar'd those Advantages, with the want of which they are afterwards reproached, and nursed up in those vices which will hereafter be upbraided to them. So partial are Men as to expect Brick where they afford no Straw; and so abundantly civil as to take care we [women] shou'd make good that obliging Epithet of *Ignorant*, which out of an excess of good Manners, they are pleas'd to bestow on us [women]!(Astell Mary, quoted in Grundy Wiseman, 1992: 114).

Mary Astell thought that masculine speeches reduced the status of women by defining them as ignorant creatures. She considered the improvement of the female mind to be her

greatest interest, and put forward some educational reforms. For instance, she suggested to women who did not intend to marry to use the money of their dowries to build up a kind of protestant nunneries, where upper middle class women could take up religious and intellectual studies and be useful to society.

The publication of the second part of the *Proposals* in 1697, and her next book entitled *Some Reflection on Marriage* (1700) established her reputation not only as a woman with high intellectual capacities, but also as a precocious reformer of the woman question. She was more than just a woman of learning as were the women of the Renaissance, and her claim was not limited to a spiritual equality with men. Her radical views were articulated within the framework of a feminist thought, and she remained a strong religious conservative woman who nevertheless influenced some leading male novelists of her time such as Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson.

During this period, marriage was a commercial matter; women were not allowed to marry unless they brought with them a dowry. After marriage, men held all their wives' property, so their dependence had just been displaced from their fathers and brothers to their husbands.

It is clearly shown from the title that Mary Astell's *Some Reflection upon Marriage* focused on marriage; she defined it as a "contractual relationship giving common interest and property" (Astell Mary, cited in Lawrence Stone, 1979: 164). Astell claimed that marriage is sacred; she described it as an institution of heaven and the only honourable way of continuing humankind; for this reason, men had to respect their wives (Astell Mary, cited in Kramnick Isaac, 1995: 563).

Mary Astell stayed single all her life; she was influenced by the unhappy life of her neighbours in Chelsea, the Duke and Duchess of Mazarine. At the beginning of her essay, she described the Duchess as being clever, beautiful and rich; she argued that she is superior in

comparison with her husband in all fields; instead of this, her husband enslaved her. Mary Astell believed that marriage should be based on mutual love and friendship; she refused the master-slave relationship between husband and wife.

Unlike many other feminists, Astell demanded the removal of the artificial barriers that limited women's educational opportunities and made of them passive partners to men. She thought that the education granted to women rendered them more submissive and ignorant; this kind of education, she argued, made them fit to become wives, mothers or servants.

As it was already noted above, John Locke set the tone of the new political system with the publication of the *Two Treatises of Civil Government* (1690), after the overthrow of James II and the coronation of William of Orange and Queen Mary in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Mary Astell in her essay criticized masculine monarchy; she and other feminist writers like Mary Chudleigh and Sarah Fyge Egerton praised Queen Ann, the second daughter of James II. Ann's supporters wanted her to become the Queen of England after Mary's death, rather than her cousin and brother-in-law William III (Grundy and Wiseman, 1992: 58). Ann became the Queen of England in 1702, she was a leader of warrior women, she presented a figure of female authority, and some women writers compared her to Queen Elizabeth (Ibid., p. 56). In addition, she represented a model of female and martial authority (Ibid., p. 55).

In her defence of women's political rights, Astell was inspired by Queen Ann's reign. In the appendix added to her essay, she praised her and called her the "Great Queen". Furthermore, she cited her different achievements and considered her superior to all humankind. Astell described Queen Ann as follows:

TO conclude; If that GREAT QUEEN who has subdued the Proud, and made the pretended Invincible more than once fly before her; who has rescued an Empire, Reduced a Kingdom, Conquer'd Provinces in as little Time almost as one can travel them...(Astell Mary, quoted in Kramnack Isaac, 1995: 567).

In short, we can say that Mary Astell challenged the idea of the natural inferiority of women; she believed that society with its institution is the source of their degeneration. In 1706, Mary Astell put forward the argument that men were destroying the possibility of marital companionship by depriving girls of good education. In this respect, she argued: “How can a man respect his wife when he has a contemptible opinion of her and her sex... so that folly and a woman are equivalent terms with him” (Astell Mary, cited in Lawrence Stone, 1979: 228).

John Locke was one of the late seventeenth-century male writers who advocated a more academic education for women. He asserted that the education of women is necessary to help them to educate their children for the first eight or ten years. So, he wanted them to be able to read English perfectly, and to understand ordinary Latin and arithmetic with some general knowledge of chronology and history (Locke John, cited in Lawrence Stone, 1979: 229). It follows from this that the education of women, according to Locke, is important only to grant their children a good education.

5- Jean Jacques Rousseau’s theory on the social contract:

The French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) developed the social contract that influenced greatly the thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He was born a protestant in Geneva, he faced poverty nearly all his life, and he wrote his famous book *The Social Contract* in 1763 where he developed his theory.

Rousseau claimed that life in society was essentially corrupting, but men could achieve true morality by joining in the social contract and living under laws that they themselves made. He argued that the individual member alienates himself totally to the whole community together with all the rights. It is important to say that the conditions will be the same for everyone who gives himself totally. Once the individuals unite themselves into a

body, an offence against one of its members is an offence against the body politic. Duty and interest thus equally require the two contracting parties to aid each other mutually. The individual people must be motivated by their double roles as members of the body to combine all the advantages which mutual aid offers them. Rousseau thought that whatever benefits man had in the state of nature but lost in the civil state, he will gain new ones to make up for them. It means, his ideas will be enriched and his soul will be elevated to the extent that if he will abuse in this new condition, it will not degrade him to a condition lower than the one he leaves behind. He would have to keep blessing this happy moment which snatched him away from his previous state, and which made him a clever being and a man out of a stupid and limited animal ([http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod:Rousseau-seccon.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/Rousseau-seccon.html)). Rousseau sustained this idea by writing that:

Although, in this state, he deprives himself of some advantages which he got from nature, he gains in return others so great, his faculties are so stimulated and developed, his ideas so extended, his feelings so enabled, and his whole soul so uplifted, that did not the abuses of his new condition often degrade him below that which he left, he would be bound to bless continually the happy moment which took him from it forever, and instead of a stupid an imaginative animal, made him an intelligent being and a man(Rousseau Jean Jacques, cited in http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon_01.htm).

Furthermore, Rousseau developed an important concept that is the prosperity rights; he asserted that the state controls all their goods under the social control. So, people give up some of their property to the state, and this is what we call the act of alienating property rights to the state. The community does nothing but assure its members of legitimate possession of goods, changing mere claims of possession into real rights and customary use into property.

It follows from what is said that the general will alone may direct the forces of the state to achieve the goal for which it was founded. Sovereignty is individual and is inalienable. In this respect, Rousseau says:

La souveraineté, n'étant que l'exercice de la volonté générale, ne peut jamais s'aliéner, et que le souverain, qui n'est qu'un être collectif, ne peut être représ-

enté que par lui-même ; le pouvoir peut bien se transmettre, mais non pas la volonté (Rousseau Jean Jacques, 2000 :33).

Furthermore, Rousseau thought that the political theorists are unable to divide the source of sovereignty; divide it into the ways it is applied. They divide it into force and will, into legislative power, into power to tax, the judicial power, and the power to wage war, into internal administration and the power to negotiate with foreign countries. They will proceed afterwards to separate them. As a result, they make the sovereign a being of fantasy, composed of separate pieces, which would be like putting a man together from several bodies, one having eyes, another arms, another feet-nothing more, and at the end, it follows that we are deceived every time we see sovereignty divided. We find that the jurisdictions we have thought to be exercised as part of sovereignty in reality are subordinate to the sovereign power. They presuppose supreme wills that they merely carry out in their jurisdiction (http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon_01.htm).

Assuming that the people were sufficiently informed as they made decisions and that the citizens did not communicate with one another, the general will would always be resolved from a great number of small differences, and the deliberation would always be good. However, when the blocs are formed, associations of parts at the expense of the whole, the will of each of these associations will be general as far as its members are concerned, but particular as far as the state is concerned. The differences will become less numerous and will yield less general results. Finally, when one of these associations becomes so strong that it dominates the others, you no longer have the sum of minor differences as a result but rather one single unresolved difference, with the result that there no longer is a general will, and the view that prevails is nothing but one particular view.

It is arguable that everything that each individual gives up of his power, his goods, and his liberty under the social contract is only that part of this entire thing, which is of use to the

community, but it is also necessary to agree that the sovereign alone is the judge of what that useful part is.

6- Rousseau's ideas on women

Once again, women are excluded from the social contract; Rousseau who was viewed as the defender of humanity considered women as being inferior, emotional, therefore they could not reason. Rousseau thought that it would be better to "Consult the women's opinions in bodily matters, in all that concerns the senses, consult men in matters of morality and all that concerns the understandings" (Rousseau Jean Jacques, quoted in Kramnack Isaac, 1995: 569). Rousseau claimed that the supreme duty of a woman was to please her husband; he asserted that: "Woman is especially made for man's delight" (Ibid). He added that: "if a woman is made to please and to be in subjection to man, she ought to make herself pleasing in his eyes and not provoke him to anger, her strength is in her charms" (Ibid).

Rousseau thought that the only education a girl needed should be provided at home by her mother rather than in a school. A girl should be taught from her infancy that women were made to marry, keep house, raise children and improve the lives of their men. In this context, Rousseau states: "Make her a good woman, and be sure it will be better both for her and us" (Ibid., p: 575).

Thus, women generally had fewer rights and career opportunities than men had. Wifehood and motherhood were regarded as women's significant professions. From the very beginning of life, women were considered intellectually inferior to men and weaker than men were; they were unable to perform work requiring muscular or intellectual development.

7- The impacts of the philosophical ideas on women:

From the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth centuries, the intellectual climate of Western Europe came to be dominated by a mood of optimism about the potential of individual human reason and the possibility of understanding the natural environment of

human kind; this mood of optimism came to be known as the Enlightenment. In Britain, the work of John Locke and of Isaac Newton in the 1680s and 1690s set the scene for a century of expanding horizons, as the belief grew that the laws which governed the physical and moral worlds could be understood and set out just as Newton had done in his work on gravity. John Locke challenged the authority of the church, and the liberal interpretation of the Bible. He asserted that the individual had the right to enjoy freedom of speech, of conscience and religion.

During this period, political philosophers in Europe started to question traditional ideas that based the rights of citizens on their wealth and social status. Instead, leaders of the Enlightenment claimed that all individuals were born with natural rights that made them free and equal. They maintained that all inequalities that existed among citizens were the result of an inadequate educational system and an imperfect social environment. Enlightenment philosophers emphasized that improved education and more egalitarian and social structures could correct these inequalities. Such radical ideas about equality and the rights of citizens had impacts on the legal and political status of women. Most Enlightenment thinkers had little to say about the position women held in society, and many of their followers assumed that the concepts of liberty, equality, and political representation were applied only to men.

χ In 1789, at the beginning of the French Revolution, the drafting of the Rights of Man and the Citizens established liberty, property, safety and resistance to oppression as fundamental rights, and declared that all men were born equal. This Declaration provoked strong reaction from intellectuals in Europe; the French Revolution urged people around the world to question their established governments during this period. History showed us that the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man influenced women, and motivated them to question their status and ask for their rights.

II. 1- Mary Wollstonecraft and the French Revolution:

In the history of feminism, the 1790s is often seen as a critical decade; the exciting political atmosphere of the year extending from 1789 to 1793 had brought some women to the point of claiming political rights for themselves in the language of the Enlightenment.

Although earlier women writers such as Christine de Pisan, Mary Astell... had written on the condition of women, and had suggested that educational reforms, in particular, might improve their situation, it was only in the context of a world in which revolutions in America and in France opened up the possibilities of reshaping the social, as well as the political order, that the equality of the sexes was seen to be feasible. The best-known feminist of the late eighteenth century was Mary Wollstonecraft.

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 as 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 many English reformers. Tom Furniss, 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, 2002: 60). Burke added that:

Men have a 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 to consolation in death (Burke Edmund, quoted in Vitoux Pierre, 1969: 288).

Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* replied to those reformers, such as Richard Price by asserting that “We have an inheritable crown; an inheritable peerage...and a 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 of liberalism. Her somewhat eclectic approach meant that she saw the revolution as enacting the ideas both of Locke and of 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 were 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://orgonstate.edu/instruct/ph/302/texts/wollstonecraft/women.contents.html>).

Believing absolutely that society and social institutions should be grounded on reason, Wollstonecraft deplored Burke’s appeal to tradition and to sentiment. She wrote to Edmund Burke “that you have antipathy to reason... want feelings to leads us” (Ibid). But this was simply to ensure the continuation of traditional privilege and injustice.

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 Fitzsimons asserted that “her husband [William Godwin] said that she considered herself as a standing forth in defence of one half of the human species, labouring

under a yoke which throughout the records of time had degraded them from the station of rational beings to the level of brutes (John Fitzsimons, 1952: 18).

As a radical democrat, Wollstonecraft argued very strongly that any profession or institution in which great subordination of rank constitutes its power, is injurious to morality and makes men foolish and vicious. Aristocrats and monarchs, like the army, the navy and the church, professions that depended on hierarchical structures, were thus all subject to her attack (Caine Barbara, 1997: 26).

X I have mentioned above that Wollstonecraft associated herself with a tradition of radical British writings, echoing John Locke's *Second Treatises of Civil Government* (1690).

Wollstonecraft states:

The birthright of man, to give you, Sir, a short definition of this disputed right, is such a degree of liberty, civil and religious, as is compatible with the liberty of every other individual with whom he is united in a social compact and he continued existence of that compact (Wollstonecraft Mary, reported by Furniss Tom, 2002: 60).

Wollstonecraft responded to Burke who defended the idea that the British people already enjoy liberty as a kind of property inherited from their ancestors. Mary asserted that there are different kinds of birthright "those rights which men inherit at their birth, as rational creature" (Ibid). She added that no government on earth has yet instituted such rights:

Liberty, in this simple, unsophisticated sense, I acknowledge, is a fair idea that has never yet received a form in the previous governments that have been established in our beauteous globe (Ibid., 60-1).

Tom Furniss claimed that Wollstonecraft emphasized that people have been denied their birthrights because the existing legal systems protect the property of the few rather than promote justice for all. So, when Wollstonecraft read Burke's celebration of the English liberty as a defence of the property rights of the privileged minority, she argued that: "Security of property! Behold, in a few words, the definition of the English liberty" (Ibid., 61).

Once again, Edmund Burke was strongly criticized; in 1791, Thomas Paine published his well-known pamphlet *The Rights of Man*, where his political theory is expressed. Thomas Paine wrote that men are born, and always continue free and equal in respect to their rights; man has some inalienable rights that are, liberty, property, security, and resistance of oppression. In addition, Paine criticized Burke's beliefs that the British people should preserve their ancient indisputable laws and liberties, and they should keep what had been working all along. Paine responded to Burke by arguing that *the Rights of Man* insisted that every generation has the right and duty to act for itself. In this context, he asserts:

The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave, is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. Man has no property in man; neither has any generation property in the generations which are to follow...I am contending for the rights of the *living*, and against their willed away by the manuscript assumed authority of the dead (Paine Thomas, 1985: 16).

In addition, Paine criticized Burke who believed in the inherited rights of the Monarchs. Paine questioned inheritance, claiming that titles are but nicknames. He answered Burke by stating that:

Man has no authority over posterity in matters of personal right; and therefore, no man, or body of men, had, or can have, a right to hereditary government(Ibid.,172)

He adds:

All hereditary government is in its nature tyranny. A heritable crown or a heritable throne, or by what other fanciful name such things may be called, have no other significant explanation than that mankind are heritable property. To inherit a government, is to inherit people, as if they were flocks and herds (Ibid).

The Rights of Man created a burst of radical activity, and although Paine was forced to flee the country, others were determined to carry on the struggle in England.

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. In addition, she was against the institution of marriage believing that it is an oppressed one, and she compared the status of women to that of the slaves. Barbara Caine, a British writer, argued that Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was the product of the French Revolution; through her writing about the French Revolution, Wollstonecraft was, thus, able to make the question of women's oppression a major political issue (Caine Barbara, 1997: 26). Wollstonecraft's intense enthusiasm for the libratory programme of the early years of the Revolution, and her assumption that women, like men, were rational beings explained the absolute fury that she felt when it became clear that women were being denied rights and freedom by those very revolutionaries. The latter were demanding that men must be liberated from the traditional hierarchical structures and given new freedoms. *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 is mentioned above that Mary's *A 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 in parliamentary presentation.

2- Wollstonecraft's biography and her commitment to the feminist cause:

It is arguable that Wollstonecraft's experience in life influenced greatly her ideas; she handled her own examination of this influence on her work mostly through indirect reference. This idea is shared by Virginia Sapiro who asserted that Mary Wollstonecraft's life may serve as an introduction to her writing, because her own experience and personal friendships

influenced greatly her political ideas (Sapiro Virginia, quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 318). In addition, Laurie Fink argued that in the *Rights of Women*, the opening paragraph illustrates two kinds of rhetoric: that of the philosophic authorities she has read, and that of her experiences as a woman (Fink Laurie, 2003: 7). This idea may be illustrated by a quotation written by Wollstonecraft:

After considering the historic page, and viewing the living world with anxious solitude, the most melancholy emotions of sorrowful indignation have depressed my spirits, and I have sighed when obliged to confess, that either nature has made a great difference between man and man, or that the civilization which has hitherto taken place in the world has been very partial. I have turned over various books written on the subject of education, and patiently observed the conduct of parents and the management of schools; but what has been the result? - a profound conviction that the neglected education of my fellow creatures is the grand source of the misery I deplore; and that women, in particular, are rendered weak and wretched by a variety of concurring causes, originating from one hasty conclusion (Wollstonecraft Mary, 1792, cited in Adriana Cracium 2002: 109).

I have already explained that my aim in this chapter is to analyse the work of Mary Wollstonecraft entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* published in 1792. Since this pamphlet was inspired from the personal experience of its author, I think it would be worth to introduce Wollstonecraft's life and afterwards I am going to analyse her work by referring to the main important factors that urged her to write her pamphlet and what her expectations were.

Mary Wollstonecraft was born in Spitalfield, London on April 27th, 1759. She never found life easy. She was the second child and from her early age noticed the favouritism shown to her brother especially by her mother. She had two younger sisters Everina and Eliza, and three younger brothers, Henry, James and Charles. Her grandfather Edward Wollstonecraft had been an upwardly middle weaver, and when he died in 1765, he left one third of his estate to Mary's father, one third to her older brother Ned, aged seven, and one third to a grown daughter from a previous marriage. Mary and her other three sisters received

nothing (Adriana Cracium, 2002: 7). Wollstonecraft's father had inherited wealth from his father, but spent the entire fortune. He drunk heavily and apparently was abusive verbally and perhaps physically. He attempted to become a gentleman farmer. So, he moved from one farm to another losing money as he went. As a result, he subjected his family to a spiral of downward mobility. Her family life worsened as her father took to drinking and mistreating his Irish-born wife, Elizabeth Dickson. To protect her mother from her father's drunken rages, Mary would keep on the landing across the doorway of the room where her mother slept (Ibid).

Mary's escape from her unhappy life at home was passionate. The first was to Jane Arden, whom she met when the family spent five years in Beverly, Yorkshire, and their longest sojourn. Jane's father was an itinerant and a lecturer in philosophy. Mary was impressed and envied Jane's home life.

Valerie Patten argued that Wollstonecraft stressed the fact that Beverly was the only place where she received her only useful schooling (Patten Valerie cited in <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/wollstonecraft.htm>).

In 1774, Mary's family moved to Hoxton in London and here she met Fanny Blood. The latter's family were poor, but related to the land-owning Irish blood. At that time, Fanny was eighteen and Mary was sixteen years old. The two girls formed an intense friendship. In this respect, Wollstonecraft argued: "a friend whom I love better than the entire world beside, a friend to whom I am bound by every tie of gratitude and inclination: To live with this friend is the height of my ambition" (reported by Patten Valerie cited in <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/wollstonecraft.htm>).

Wollstonecraft wanted to be independent, so at the age of nineteen, she took a position that was one of the few available to middle class educated women; a companion to an older woman. She travelled in England with her charge, but two years later, in 1781, she returned

home to attend her mother who was dying. Two years after Mary's return, her mother died and her father remarried and moved to Wales.

Mary's sister Eliza married, therefore, Mary moved in with her friend Fanny Blood and her family. The latter lived in a poor and crowded condition. Mary supported the family through needlework; another of the few opportunities opens to women for economic self-support.

In 1783, Eliza gave birth within another year. Her husband, Meredith Bishop, wrote to Mary asking her to return to nurse her sister who was suffering from a natal depression, and to take care of her daughter. The latter died before her first birthday.

Mary's theory was that Eliza's condition was the result of her husband's treatment. So, Mary helped her sister to leave her husband and arranged a legal separation. Wollstonecraft tried to find a way of providing for herself and her sister a means of living; she hatched a scheme that consisted of opening a school in Islington with Eliza and Fanny in 1783. The plan failed but Wollstonecraft tried again the following year in Newington Green; Everina joined her. At that time, this place was a centre for Dissenters. It is in Newington Green where Wollstonecraft met the clergyman Richard Price whose friendship led to a meeting of many of the liberals among England's intellectuals (Adriana Cracium, 2002: 8).

In January 1875 Fanny Blood left for Portugal where she married. When Mary heard about her pregnancy, she became concerned for her friend whom she knew to be suffering from tuberculosis. Mary abandoned the school and went to nurse and to take care of Fanny. Unfortunately, Fanny and her baby died soon after a premature birth. Mary despaired, she stated: "I have lost all relish for pleasure- and life seems a burthen almost too heavy to be endured...My constitution is so impaired, I hope I shall not live long" (Wollstonecraft Mary reported by Patten Valerie cited in <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/wollstonecraft.htm>).

When Mary returned to England, she closed her financially struggling school. It was during this period that she was encouraged by Price to set down the doctrine, which she had evolved on how to teach girls. She wrote her first book *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* in 1787.

Oppressed by her debts, Mary's next move was to work as a governess to the children of Lord and Lady Kingsborough, Anglo-Irish aristocrats who were living in Mitchelstown near Cork in Ireland. Mary influenced the Kingsborough's daughter Margaret; she later became a political radical and sought to reform marriage laws. Although Mary felt some affection for the children, she despised their mother who appeared to be more devoted to their dogs than her children were.

After a year of travelling in Ireland and England with the family of her employers , Viscount Kingsborough, Mary was dismissed from her duties for becoming too close to her charges. Mary then sought out Joseph Johnson who had published her *Thoughts*. He was impressed by Mary's emotional character and intellectual force; he was considered as her saviour. He encouraged her to use her writing talents to support herself. Through Johnson, Mary met many of her liberal and radical circle including William Godwin, Mary Hays, Thomas Paine and Henry Fuseli. The next three years, from 1788 to 1790, were probably her most productive. Johnson published *Original Stories from Real Life*. Later on, Wollstonecraft was involved in political matters. During the French Revolution, Edmund Burke published *Reflections on the Revolution in France* attacking Richard Price who preached sermons supporting the French Revolution. Wollstonecraft responded to Burke by writing an essay entitled *Vindication of the Rights of Men*.

In 1792, Wollstonecraft decided to go to France to support the revolution. Once there, she soon met Gilbert Imlay; an American adventurer. Mary like many foreign visitors realized quickly that the revolution was creating danger and chaos for everyone, and moved with

Imlay to a house in the suburbs of Paris. A few months later, when she returned to Paris, she registered at the American Embassy as Imlay's wife though they never actually married. As wife of an American citizen, Mary would be under the protection of the Americans.

Pregnant with Imlay's child, Wollstonecraft began to realize that Imlay's commitment to her was not as strong as she had expected. She followed him to Le Havre and then after the birth of their daughter Fanny followed him to Paris. He returned almost immediately to London leaving Fanny and Mary alone (Wollstonecraft Mary cited in <http://womenhistory.about.com/cs/Wollstonecraft>).

When Imlay returned to England, Mary sent him a passionate letter that showed that she was suspicious of his wavering love. In 1795, Mary followed him to England, dismayed to discover his infidelity; she attempted suicide. Imlay rescued Wollstonecraft from her attempted suicide, and a few months later sent her on an important and sensitive business venture to Scandinavia. During her time there, Mary wrote letters of her observations of the culture and people she met as well as of the natural world (Heng Mary, cited in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 294-308). She returned from her trip, and in London discovered that Imlay was living with an actress. She attempted another suicide, and she was again rescued (Op.Cit).

After Wollstonecraft's suicide attempt, Mary Hays re-introduced her to the radical theorist William Godwin. His first impression had been that she talked too much, reducing Thomas Paine to silence at the gatherings they had all attended. However, after a short period, a mutual attraction developed between them. Though both Godwin and Mary famously disapproved of marriage, they decided to take this step when Mary became pregnant. When Mary gave birth to another daughter on August 30th, 1797, she died of infection eleven days later on September 10th of the same year.

Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin's funeral was held at St. Pancras Church on September 1797. Her tombstone acknowledged her as "Author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*" (Jones Vivien, cited in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 224).

3- Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*:

In the light of what has been said above, it follows that Mary Wollstonecraft got her ideas from her own experience. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* was a demand for legal, educational, and political equality.

After having introduced Wollstonecraft's biography, I am going to analyse her pamphlet *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in terms of education, marriage, religion and politics. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* was considered as the central text in late eighteenth-century British or even Anglo-American feminism because it offers a powerful critique of women's education (Caine Barbara, 1997: 23).

Mary Wollstonecraft, who associated herself with the English radical movement, was much inspired by the ideas of the enlightened writers relating to the natural rights of the individual and by the republican language of liberty, justice and equal rights. She wanted to apply the logic of that revolutionary political thinking to women (Rendall Jane cited in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003:234).

Wollstonecraft was greatly influenced by the Enlightenment thinkers who defended the rights of those people who are oppressed, and she responded to those who considered women as inferior. She exploited Enlightenment language "mind speaking to mind" to prove the sameness of reason. This idea may be illustrated by a citation from Ewa Badowska:

...But *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) – a political manifesto written against the discourse of sensibility as a model for gender relations- thoroughly suffused with the kind of language that is ordinarily regarded as marginal, or even inimical, to political discourse (Badowska Ewa, quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 320).

Since Wollstonecraft used the Enlightenment language, I have opted for Hoagland's essay *Mind Speaking to Mind* in order to achieve my purpose. Edward Hoagland wrote that essays are not like stories; they are then addressed to an educated reader.

4- Wollstonecraft's ideas on education:

Through *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft cried for an awakening of women possible only through education; for this reason, the theme of education was important in Mary's works. In this respect, Allan Richardson, a Professor of English at Boston College, argued: "A keen and vital concern with education, especially the education of girls and women, runs throughout Mary Wollstonecraft's writings and remains a dominant theme to the abrupt end of her career" (Richardson Allan, quoted in Claudia Johnson, 2002: 24).

Wollstonecraft claimed that education is essential for the complete development of any individual. Although she thought that all humans (male and female) have the same innate ability for reason, she did not claim that all humans are innately rational. Instead, rationality must be cultivated and directed by education. In this respect, she argued:

By individual education, I mean....such an attention to a child as will sharpen the senses, form the temper, regulate the passions as they begin to ferment, and set the understanding to work before the body arrives at maturity; so that the man may only have to proceed not to begin the important task of learning to think and reason(Wollstonecraft Mary, 1792 quoted in Adriana Cracium, 2002: 21).

Besides, Wollstonecraft reflected upon the lack of education provided to women, and she suggested that men are responsible for women's imperfections because women had not been granted education; their knowledge was very limited. As a result, Wollstonecraft argued that through this imperfect cultivation, women could not attain but knowledge of evil. According to Wollstonecraft, it is very important to improve women's education, to cultivate their minds and souls rather than their bodies, to redirect that education away from

accomplishment and towards a training of the intellect along radical lines (Caine Barbara, 2001: 28).

Sophia was one of the founders of the Bluestocking circle; the latter was an informal women's social and educational movement that came into being in England in the mid-eighteenth century. She wrote a pamphlet entitled *Women not inferior to Men*, where she denounced the lack of solid education for women, and she argued that men deprived women of education in order to exclude them from the public sphere. In this respect, she argued that:

... Their reason for this assertion is what I have already hinted at, viz. because we were form'd by nature to be under perpetual subjection to them, for want of abilities to share with them in *government and public offices* (Sophia, quoted in Jones Vivien, 1990: 228)

Many critics believed that Wollstonecraft's educational ideas were shared by many of her contemporaries, among them Catherine Macaulay who was a well-known historian and radical writer. It is worth noting that Macaulay's *Letters on Education* anticipated many of Wollstonecraft's arguments, notably that women's intellectual and physical weakness are products of (mis) education, and that women and men should be educated together. Mary praised Macaulay in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, she considered her as: "the woman of the greatest abilities, undoubtedly, that this country had ever produced" (Op.Cit., 142).

Wollstonecraft sent a letter to Catherine Macaulay telling her: "You are the only female writer who I coincide in opinion with respecting the rank of our sex ought to endeavour to attain in the world. I respect Mrs Macaulay Graham because she contends for laurels whilst most of her sex only seeks for flowers" (Ibid., 24).

David Glover, Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Southampton, and Cora Kaplan, Professor of English at the University of Southampton, believed that Wollstonecraft turned her readers' attention to the way in which "females...are made women when they are

mere children (Glover Davis and Kaplan Cora, 1988: 117). In this context, Wollstonecraft stated:

Women are made, not born: Everything that they see or hear serves to fix impressions, call for the emotions, and associate ideas, that give a sexual character to the mind (Wollstonecraft Mary, reported by Ibid).

One can deduce, thus, that Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* constituted an attack on the views of female education put forward by many writers, especially Rousseau and countless others who regarded women as weak, artificial, and incapable of reasoning effectively. Wollstonecraft rejected the education in dependency that Rousseau advocated for them in *Emile*.


Wollstonecraft once described the French philosopher Jea Jacques Rousseau in her letters as "A strange inconsistent unhappy clever creature" (Wollstonecraft Mary, cited in Adriana Cracium, 2002:16). Moreover, later in her life she wrote to Imlay "I have always been half in love with him" (Ibid., p. 26). From this, it follows that Rousseau always influenced Wollstonecraft especially *On Education or Emile*. In her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft shows her admiration for his political writings, especially *The Social Contract* and *Emile*, but she reveals also her disappointment over his views on women. Rousseau claimed that: "Nature had created man happy and good, but society depraves him and makes him miserable" (Rousseau Jean Jacques cited by in http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/english_016/franklen/sophie.txt).

In the eighteenth century, morality took on a new meaning founded on the natural goodness of man. All of Rousseau's educational theories derive from his attempt to preserve nature's pure state. His concept of negative education allowed a child to discover for himself and to be punished by the nature he sought to defy. The tutor must not try to reason with the child or show authority. Books would not be forced on the child; at twelve, Emile would hardly know what to do with a book. Positive education or indirect instruction would only

begin at the age of adulthood, and then the studies would be based on the student's natural curiosity. Rousseau stressed the importance of teaching things with practical applications.

Wollstonecraft admired Rousseau's writings on the one hand; she read them with pleasure, and often identified closely with him, but on the other hand, she criticized him. In her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, she stated: "Indignation always takes the place of admiration, and the rigid frown of insulted virtue effaced the smile of complacency...When I read his voluptuous reveries 'On the subject of woman' " (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted by Caine Barbara, 1997: 30).

Allan Richardson stressed the fact that Wollstonecraft criticized Rousseau for having limited such educational system to boys alone; boys and girls should be educated together (Richardson Allan, L. Claudia Johnson, 2002: 33). In this respect, Wollstonecraft stated:

 Raising girls together with boys in national day schools established throughout the country and making female education not only equal, but indistinguishable from male education, could enable the improvement and emancipation of the whole sex" (Wollstonecraft Mary, reported by Ibid.,153).

I have already pointed out that Catherine Macaulay influenced greatly Wollstonecraft. Vivien Jones, Senior Lecturer at the University of Leeds, argued that Macaulay also admired Rousseau's *Emile*, but she believed that girls should be educated alongside with boys. The inevitable result, she argued, will be a revolutionary change in sexual power relations, the tyranny of passion overthrown by rational friendship (Jones Vivien, 1997: 101). Macaulay advised parents as follows:

Let your children be brought up together, let their spirits and studies be the same: let them enjoy, in the constant presence of those who are set over them, all that freedom which innocence renders harmless, and in which nature rejoices... sting (Macaulay Catherine Graham, 1790: 114).

This shows that Wollstonecraft was particularly engaged with Rousseau's *Emile*; she greatly admired the educational ideal set down in the first four sections of *Emile*, but the

contrast between Emile's broad education and Sophie's narrow training devised explicitly to render her docile and obedient, appalled her (Caine Barbara, 1997: 30).

I can say that *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was in part Wollstonecraft's response to Jean Jacques Rousseau who, in *Emile*, had recommended that girls should be given a different education from boys; one that would train them to be submissive and manipulative. Wollstonecraft argued that the rights of men, which she had previously espoused, applied equally and unconditionally to women because God could not have created one human being superior to another. In this respect, Wollstonecraft declared, "There is no sex in souls" (Wollstonecraft Mary cited in <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/txts/wollstonecraft/women-contents.html>). Since men and women have the same moral and intellectual core, they should receive the same mental and spiritual training.

Wollstonecraft's criticism of Rousseau, and indeed of many other contemporary writers who set out to explain the nature and the duties of women, centred on their implicit denial of reason to women. Since reason was the privileged signifier by which we differentiate humans from animals, the denial to women of reason was a denial of their very humanity. Moreover, this was extended through the denial to them of personality and character (Ibid. 31).

Rousseau viewed women's options as entirely limited to the roles of wife and mother. His scheme for Sophie was not radical enough. He believed that women's education must be planned in relation to men. In this context, he argued: "She will always be in subjection to a man, and she will never be free to set her own opinion above his (Rousseau Jean Jacques, cited in <http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/english016/frenklen/sophie.txt>).

In addition, Rousseau emphasized freedom of movement and physical education for Emile, asserting that weak bodies contain weak minds. Emile is not instructed in religious matters until he reaches adulthood. He has a natural sense of morality, but a woman cannot

reason, so she cannot maintain a state of morality, and men must guard her throughout her life. Rousseau stressed that the sole duty of a woman is to please her husband and raise her children. In this respect, he stated:

De la bonne constitution des mères dépend d'abord celle des enfants; du soin des femmes dépend la première éducation des hommes; des femmes dépendent encore leurs mœurs, leurs passions, leurs goûts, leurs plaisirs, leur bonheur même. Ainsi toute l'éducation des femmes doit être relative aux hommes, leur plaire, leur être utiles, se faire aimer et honorer d'eux, les élever jeunes, les soigner grands, les conseiller, les consoler, leur rendre la vie agréable et douce : Voilà des devoirs des femmes dans tous les temps, et ce qu'on doit leur apprendre dès leur enfance (Rousseau Jean Jacques, 1966 : 475).

From this quotation, it follows that Rousseau stressed the fact that men and women are essentially different, and this required different educations. Women are created to please men, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honoured by them, to raise them when young, to care for them when grown, to council them, to consol them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet, and at the end, he emphasized that the duties mentioned are particular to women at all times, and they ought to be taught to them from childhood.

Wollstonecraft supported Rousseau's insistence on the importance of direct maternal care, including breast-feeding, and of the role of mothers in the education of young children, seeing these activities as making mothering into a larger and more important function. Indeed, Wollstonecraft was criticizing those women who neglected the care of their homes and children in order to undertake other pursuits, and the proof was that she criticized Lady Kingsborough for having preferred to take care of her dog instead her children. Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft condemned Rousseau for having considered women as artificial and sensitive, and she also criticized him because he considered women as irrational creatures, their sole role being to please men and to take care of their children.

Millicent Garrett Fawcett argued that Wollstonecraft responded to Rousseau by informing him that women had too many duties; the chief duty is to be a rational creature, and

next to have the right of citizenship that includes so many duties, including motherhood (Fawcett Millicent Garrett, quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 251).

Wollstonecraft thought that Rousseau and others who favoured the arts of coquetry and of ornamental accomplishments “tend to make women the creatures of sensation” instead of reason, they “have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters... and consequently, more useless members of society” (Wollstonecraft Mary, cited in www.infed.org/thinkers/wollstonecraft.htm).

Moreover, Rousseau added that in all human beings, passion was natural and necessary; but in man, it was controlled by reason, an attitude of the male sex only. In this context, he states:

Women, therefore, must be subject all their lives, to the most constant and severe restraint, which is that of decorum; it is therefore necessary to accustom them early to such confinement that it may not afterwards cost them too dear... we should teach them above all things to lay a due restraint on themselves (Rousseau Jean Jacques, quoted by Greene Gayle and Kalin Coppélia, 2004: 156).

Wollstonecraft stressed the fact that women were told and taught from their infancy that they had to obey their husbands and take care of their beauty to attract them in order to guarantee their protection. She asserted that:

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, *softness* of temper, *outward* obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile *kind* of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful every thing else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives (Wollstonecraft Mary quoted in Adriana Cracium, 2002: 117).

Wollstonecraft claimed that the characteristics ascribed to women are not natural but constructed; they are the result of limited education. According to her, to restrict women’s social role to marriage is to restrict their minds; to enforce them to over-exercised sensibility instead of allowing them to exercise their reasons and to enrich their knowledge (Jones Vivien, 1997: 05). In this context, Wollstonecraft asserted that:

The conduct and manners of women... prove that their minds are not in a healthy-state; ... One cause... I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers; the understanding of the sex has been so bubbled by this specious homage, that the civilised women of the present-century... are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect.

In a treatise, therefore, on female rights and manners, the works which have been particularly written for their improvement must not be overlooked; ... the books of instruction, written by men of genius, have had the same tendency as more frivolous productions... (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in Adriana Cracium, 2002: 109).

Added to this, Wollstonecraft stressed the fact that men and women are equal; therefore, they should have the same opportunities. She asserted that: "... Women should have equal rights to education, intellectual development, physical exercise, legal and moral responsibility, political representation, and economic opportunities" (Ibid., 98).

5- Wollstonecraft's ideas on marriage:

It is worth mentioning that Wollstonecraft defended the idea that educating women will strengthen the marriage relationship; she argued that:

Both the characters and conditions of women are capable of great improvement, and that, by means of a moral rational plan of female education, in which a judicious attention should be paid to the cultivation of their understanding and taste, as well as of their dispositions and manners, women might be rendered at once more agreeable, more respectable and more happy in every station of life" (Ibid., 135).

Elizabeth Robin Pennel, a British writer, argued that Wollstonecraft, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, defended women's rights not to unfit them for duties assigned them by natural and social necessities, but that they might fulfil them the better (Robin Pennel Elizabeth, quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 212).

Wollstonecraft thought that women are rendered weak and wretched, especially by a false system of education gathered from books written by men who have been anxious to make of women alluring mistresses than rational wives. She said that men, in their youth, are prepared for professions but women can only look to marriage to sharpen their faculties. She

argued that when a man enters any profession, he has his eye steadily fixed on some purposes, thus, his mind gains great strength by having all its efforts directed to one point, and full of his business; for man pleasure is considered as a mere relaxation: Whilst women seek for pleasure as the main purpose of existence. In fact, the education they receive from society, the love of pleasure may be said to govern them all (William Enfield, quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 71). This idea may be illustrated by a quote from Wollstonecraft:

In short, women, in general, as well as the rich of both sexes, have acquainted all the follies and vices of civilization, and missed the useful fruit... Their senses are inflamed, and their understanding neglected, consequently, they became the prey of their senses, delicately termed sensibility, and are blown about by every momentary gust of feeling (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 132).

The despotic control men attempted to exercise over women can be exemplified by a quote from Jean Jacques Rousseau who stated : “What is most wanted of women is gentleness [a woman] should early learn to submit to injustice and to suffer the wrongs inflicted by her husband without complaint” (Rousseau Jean Jacques, cited in http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon_01.htm). So, Rousseau holds that women ought to be weak and passive.

In addition to Rousseau, in his work entitled *Paradise Lost*, John Milton described women as being formed to suit their husbands and for pleasure; he asserted that: “Women are formed for softness and sweet attractive grace” (Milton John 1667, quoted in 2000: 4-296-297).

Wollstonecraft criticized Milton who thought that women are designed by sweet attractive grace and docile blind obedience to gratify the senses of men. She responded to him by asserting that:

How grossly do they insult us who thus, advise us only to render ourselves gentle, domestic brutes; for instance, the cunning softness so warmly, and frequently, recommended, that governs by obeying (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in Adriana Cracium, 2002: 118).

It is worth mentioning that Roy Porter, a historian and an English writer, reported that once married, a woman, especially in polite society, had four cardinal functions. The first duty was to obey her husband. Second, she had to produce heirs, and the third duty of the married woman was to run the household. This involves producing food, drink and comforts, and giving instructions to domestic servants. Concerning her fourth duty, she should be woman-like i.e., soft and docile (Porter Roy, 1982: 28). In addition to this, Wilkes Wetenhall reported that the duties of a wife to her husband, in every degree and state of life, could be no less than love, faith, and obedience to all his lawful desires, and pleasures (Wilkes Wetenhall, cited in Jones Vivien, 1990: 35).

It is important to point out that the status of married women was legally defined by the common law doctrine of coverture, which dictated that when a woman married, her husband subsumed her legal personality. The best-known formation of this doctrine was that contained in William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* published in 1756. William Blackstone claimed that:

The husband and wife are one person in law: that is the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing... and her condition during her marriage is called her coverture (Blackstone William 1756, quoted on Barbara Caine 1997: 64).

Coverture meant that women's bodies, earned and inherited possessions, and children belonged by law to their husbands. It follows from this that a married woman was not allowed to carry on legal or business matters because she was under the wings of her husband.

Barbara Caine reported that this doctrine means, a married woman could not enter into contracts, sue or be sued, nor could she make a valid will without the consent or participation of her husband. Moreover, Blackstone assumed legal right over any property she might have at marriage and any property that came to her once she was married. A husband could not alienate his wife's real property, but any rents or interest belonged to him i.e., the savings or

the earnings she had before her marriage or obtained during it. The husband also had other rights in law; he decided the family domicile, and he had the right to correct his wife's behaviour and to confine her, if necessary, to ensure her compliance with his domestic and sexual needs (Caine Barbara, 1997: 66).

It is important to say that radical feminists attacked the institution of marriage. Then, it was more than a matter of abstract principles. Defined as the ownership of another person's body, children, and labour force, marriage was looked uncomfortably similar to the institution of slavery.

Wollstonecraft rejected the institution of marriage asserting that it is an oppressive one. She referred to marriage as "common and legal prostitution" (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in Adriana Cracium, 2002: 97). She claimed that: "With varying degrees of conviction, such texts chillingly advise women to exercise self-discipline of uncomplaining submission to the inequalities of marriage" (<http://www.orgonstate.edu/instruct/ph/302/texts/wollstonecraft/women.contents.html>). It follows from the quotation that men used some arguments in order to convince women to be submissive. Then, men used the institutions of marriage in order to oppress, and to dominate women. For this reason, Wollstonecraft calls marriage "a lawless kind of power resembling the authority exercised by the favourites of absolute monarchs" (Ibid).

According to Charles Kegan Paul, Mary Wollstonecraft was not against marriage but its institution. In this respect, he stated:

For Wollstonecraft did not, as has been supposed, attack the institution of marriage, she did not assail orthodox religion...the book was really a plea for equality of education, a protest against being deemed only the plaything of man, an assertion that the intellectuals rather than the sexual intercourse was that which should chiefly be desired in marriage, and which made its lasting happiness (Paul Charles Kegan, quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 188).

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft deployed arguments similar to those used in the earlier *Vindication of the Rights of Men*. She emphasized that all humans are by nature rational beings. So, society should not constrain any individual's pursuit of reason and virtue; the most long-standing social traditions may also be the most tyrannical ones. The social orthodoxy that Wollstonecraft challenged was the belief that women were less rational in comparison with men; possessing a weaker ethical sense but greater sensibility. According to this belief, women were designed by nature and by God for domestic duties only i.e., to raise children, to manage a household, and to provide emotional support to men.

Wollstonecraft thought that women's limitations were not the result of innate inferiority, but rather of social convention and faulty education. Women appeared to be irrational creatures because they were trained in sensibility rather than rationality. Mary asserted that: "Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, and feelings" (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in Adriana Cracium, 2002: 156). Wollstonecraft was against early and traditional marriages based on convenience, or sentiment where the husband patronizingly viewed his wife as a toy for his enjoyment.

According to Wollstonecraft, women were relegated to marginal spaces, they became the upper servants of men; they used all means in order to please their husbands. The latter wanted women to be child like, weak and delicate rather than strong, passive rather than active, submissive rather than assertive. In addition, men thought that women were too good-humoured to debate something philosophically, indolent rather than economically self-reliant, able to earn their own living.

Wollstonecraft stressed the fact that women should not enter in marriage with the idea of her husband as her economic protector, since he could leave her or die; she must depend on herself and instead of putting too much time into ornamental needlework for instance, a

woman should learn marketable skills. Wollstonecraft claimed that: “How many women... waste life away the prey of discontent, who might have practised as physicians, regulated a farm, managed a shop, and stood erect, supported by their industry instead of hanging their heads surcharged with the dew of sensibility, that consumes the beauty to which it at first gave lustre” (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in Adriana Cracium, 2002: 156).

Wollstonecraft asserted that a stable marriage is a partnership between a husband and wife; it is a social contract between two individuals; she held that marriages should be based on common affection, respect, which was not possible unless husbands and wives were equals, and educated. She thought that love would fade over time, and only a relationship based on friendship would remain tolerable into old age. In addition, she asserted that: “The divine rights of husbands, like the divine rights of kings, may, it is to be hoped, in this enlightened age, be contested without danger” (Ibid., 99).

It is important to say that Mrs Herter Charpone developed the same idea; she summed up the relationship between a husband and his wife from the English middle and upper class of the eighteenth century. She claimed that the relationship between wife and husband should be based on love, affection and mutual understanding. Mrs Herter Charpone wrote that:

A husband has a divine right to the absolute obedience of his wife in all cases, where the first duties don't interfere, on the other hand, I believe it . . . absolutely necessary to conjugal happiness, that the husband has such an opinion of his wife's understanding, principles and integrity of heart as would induce him to exalt her to the rank of his first and dearest friend (Mrs Charpone Herter, quoted in Stone Lawrence, 1979: 218).

Jane Austen wrote a novel entitled *Pride and Prejudice*, where she developed her ideas about marriage. Austen, who was born in 1775 and lived only into her early forties, is considered by many to be one of the finest novelists of the English language. She wrote six novels in all, and each of them is about courtship and marriage. Austen believed that any given individual often finds himself in conflict with the rules of society, and usually rebelling is the path to happiness, but Austen emphasized that the real path to happiness is through

compromise. In her novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen described Miss Elizabeth Bennet as a lively, independent woman, whose family's financial situation and her strong mindedness suggests that she may never marry. Mr. Darcy is a rigid and proper man, who falls in love with Elizabeth in spite of their differences. By the end of the novel, Elizabeth and Darcy learn to compromise. In marrying, they not only fulfil themselves as individuals, but also affirm the principal values of society.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, one can deduce Austen's ideal view of marriage as a social institution; this novel illustrates Austen's view of marriage as well as society. The theme of marriage is set in the opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of good fortunes must be in want of a wife" (Austen Jane, 1981: 1). Norman Sherry pointed out that during the Victorian period, a single man who possessed great amounts of money was automatically destined to be the object of desire for all unmarried women, Austen wanted to show that women married for money (Norman Sherry, 1996: 53).

The differences between *Pride and Prejudice* and other eighteenth century novels, is that the heroine differs. Marilyn Butler sustained this idea by stating that:

Instead of the innocent, impulsive fallible girl, the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice* dislikes, teases, and ends in part by debunking the hero...Where other heroines were sycophants of social and masculine prerogative, Elizabeth Bennet is fearless and independent (Butler Marilyn, 1975: 199).

Butler claimed that by making Elizabeth independent, Austen wanted to show that society would learn to compromise and lose a bit of its rigidity as Darcy did. In addition, she aimed to show that marriage is the perfect ending; it is an affirmation of personal fulfilment. Both Elizabeth and Darcy had managed to improve themselves by being together.

In principle, Mary Wollstonecraft stressed the fact that educating women will strengthen the marriage relationship. She believed that a stable marriage is a partnership between a husband and a wife; it is a social contract between two individuals. Thus, a woman needs to have as much knowledge and sense to maintain the partnership. A stable marriage also helps a woman to provide a proper education to her children.

Wollstonecraft acknowledged that female chastity and fidelity are necessary for a stable marriage; this requires male chastity and fidelity as well. Wollstonecraft claimed that the essential reform necessary for the equality of both sexes is to provide women the same education granted to men; an education that recognized her duty to educate her own children, to be an equal partner with her husband in the family, and which recognizes that women like men are creatures of both thoughts and feelings; creatures of reason.

6- Wollstonecraft's ideas on religion:

Feminist critics have found it difficult to reconcile Mary Wollstonecraft's religious faith with her feminist polemics. According to her husband William Godwin, Wollstonecraft "received few lessons of religion in her youth" (Godwin William 1813, cited in http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/godwin/memoirs/toc.html).

However, Godwin reported that for the first twenty years of her life, Wollstonecraft was a regular churchgoer, and her first published work *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) was steeped in orthodox attitudes, advocating fixed principles of religion, and warning of the dangers of rationalist speculation and deism (Godwin William 1813, cited in http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/godwin/memoirs/toc.html). In addition to this, "Her religion", as Godwin wrote in his *Memoirs* (1820) shortly after her death "was almost entirely of her own creation. But she was not on that account less attached to it, or the less scrupulous in discharging what she considered as its duties...[Wollstonecraft's religion] in reality, was little allied to any system of forms" (Godwin William, 1987: 215). It means that,

when Wollstonecraft abandoned the Christian orthodoxy, she only served to underline her commitment to what had become a highly personal faith. Furthermore, Godwin asserted that:

Her mind constitutionally attached itself to the sublime and amiable. She found an inexpressible delight in the beauties of nature, and in the splendid reveries of the imagination. But nature itself, she thought, would be no better than a vast blank, if the mind of the observer did not supply it with an animating soul. When she walked amidst the wonders of nature, she was accustomed to converse with her God. To her mind she was pictured as not less amiable, generous and kind, than great, wise and exalted (Ibid).

Wollstonecraft asserted that true religion is not a matter of sentiment and feeling but rather “a governing principle of conduct, drawn from self-knowledge, and rational opinion respecting the attributes of God” (Wollstonecraft Mary, cited in <http://www.orgonstate.edu/instruct/ph/302/texts/Wollstonecraft/women-contents.html>).

Wollstonecraft thought that “liberty and reason are the conduct of an accountable being, must be regulated by the operations of its own reason; or on what foundation rests the throne of God?...Liberty is the mother of virtue” (Ibid). One can understand from this quotation that Wollstonecraft stressed the fact that only those free to think and act for themselves will take their place by God’s throne.

According to Rousseau, a woman had to submit to her husband even in religious matters. In his work *Emile*, specifically in book five, Rousseau described Sophie as a religious girl who knew little principles of religion, and who practised only those related to morality. This idea may be illustrated as follows :

Sophie a de la religion, mais une religion raisonnable et simple, peu de dogmes et moins de pratiques de dévotion ; ou plutôt ne connaissant de pratique essentielle que la morale, elle dévoue sa vie entière à servir Dieu en faisant le bien. Dans toutes les instructions que ses parents lui ont données sur ce sujet, ils l’ont accoutumée à une soumission respectueuse, en lui disant toujours: " Ma fille, ces connaissances ne sont pas de votre âge ; votre mari vous en instruira quand il sera temps” (Rousseau John Jacques, 1966 : 520).

One can deduce that Sophie is religious; she knew some principles, but she does not devote too much time practising them. To be explicit, her parents always advised her from her

infancy to learn the principles related to morality; the good deeds, because when she gets married, her husband will teach her other principles in due time.

It is important to say that Wollstonecraft was against the fact that man would be the sole preacher; for this reason, she invoked the Protestant imperative to deal directly with one's Maker. She argued that since no priest may stand between a creature and the Creator, why a mere man should stand between a woman and her God. In this respect, she claimed:

For if it be allowed that women were destined by Providence to acquire human virtues, and, by the exercise of their understandings, that stability of character which is the firmest ground to rest our future hopes upon, they must be permitted to the foundation of light, and not forced to shape their course by twinkling of a mere satellite (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in Taylor Barbara, 2002: 109).

Wollstonecraft viewed God as perfect and good; she thought that our God is rational and wise. In her view, humanity is constantly attempting to improve itself to achieve a more God-like state. From this premise, she created two arguments for equality: the first is that oppressed people, most notably the uneducated, are capable of achieving complete perfection, and that society has a duty to provide the tools they need to improve themselves. The second argument is that society cannot be perfect unless all its members are perfect and, thus, society is threatened by the immorality of the uneducated.

In addition to this, Wollstonecraft stressed the fact that only a soul "perfected by the exercise of its own reason" is "stamped with the heavenly image", but "man ever placed between [women] and reason, she is always presented as only created to see through a gross medium", and so is estranged from her own moral potential (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in Taylor Barbara, 2002: 110).

Wollstonecraft claimed that universal reason is a gift from God to all people; she is arguing that God, who is the Father of All Creation, smiles equally to all his offspring. So, who are men to raise themselves to a higher position in His sight? (Ibid).

Wollstonecraft denies gender differences set by men to justify their superiority, and to emphasize women's inferiority. She asserted that to liberate women from masculine tyranny would bind them more closely to their God (Ibid).

Wollstonecraft responded to those thinkers, such as Milton and Rousseau who denied the rights of women, and who considered them as being inferior. In the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft criticized Jean Jacques Rousseau who describes women's reason as the practical complement to the masculine one. Rousseau thought that women are unable to discover principles relating to reason because only men possessed the ability of discovering these principles. Therefore, Rousseau asserted that men and women are complementary; the latter is imagined as a moral person of which a woman is the eye and a man is the hand. In addition to this, Rousseau emphasized the implications of gender difference, as exhibited by anatomy "in the union of the sexes", on the mind and morals of the female in contrast to the male. Rousseau agreed that anatomy proves that man and woman are different.

... Par l'anatomie comparée, et même à la seule inspection, l'on trouve entre eux des différences générales qui paraissent ne point tenir au sexe ; elle y hors d'état d'apercevoir : nous nous savons jusqu'où ces liaisons peuvent s'étendre ; la seule chose que nous savons avec certitude est que tout ce qu'ils ont de commun est de l'espèce, et que tout ce qu'ils ont de différent est du sexe (Rousseau Jean Jacques, 1966: 466).

Tom Furniss argued that Wollstonecraft's argument is grounded on the possibility that masculine and feminine differences are not anatomically determined, and that both men and women are capable of achieving "manly" virtues through self-effort and education (Furniss Tom, quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 125).

In his *Paradise Lost*, Milton stated that a woman represents evil, and she is excluded even from God's providence. He explained that : " Adam asks: " O why did God,/ Creator wise, that peopled highest heav'n, /with spirits masculine, create at last/ This novelty on earth, this fair defect/Of nature[woman].” (Milton John, 1667). From the quotation, it follows that

Milton defined creativity itself as a masculine act, and Milton's paradisiacal happiness deprived a woman of soul, reason and creativity (A. Fink Laurie, quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 19-20). Milton believed that women could not reach God's providence; only men could. He claimed that "I may assert Eternal Providence, / And justly the ways of God to men" (Op.Cit.).

Mary Wollstonecraft criticized John Milton for his description of women as inferior creatures. She advised women to change their behaviours and manners, she advised them as well not to submit or obey men in order to restore their dignity. In her response to Milton, Wollstonecraft claimed:

It is time to effect a revolution in female manners-time to restore to them their lost dignity- and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world. It is time to separate unchangeable morals from local manners. - If men be demi-gods- why let us serve them! And if the dignity of the female soul be as disputable as that of animals- if their reason does not afford sufficient light to direct their conduct whilst unerring instinct is denied-they are surely of all creatures the most miserable! and, bent beneath the iron hand of destiny, must submit to be a *fair defect* in creation (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in Adriana Cracium, 2002: 129).

Wollstonecraft responded to Milton by emphasizing that God must be fair because he is our Creator, and "He must be just, because He is wise, and He must be good, because He is omnipotent (Op.cit.,p.129).

Daniel Robinson thought that Wollstonecraft based her ideas upon her own rational Christianity that asserted that: "God is justice itself"; thus "women were destined by providence to acquire human virtues" (Robinson Daniel, quoted in Claudia Johnson, 2002: 72).

According to Mary Poovey's essay, it is Milton, more than Rousseau, who is really under attack by Wollstonecraft in *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*; Eve in *Paradise Lost* is created to fit Adam's innermost desires. Milton claimed that when a woman thinks alone, she thinks evil (Poovey Mary, quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 384-8).

In principle, Wollstonecraft defended strongly the rights of women, she was calling for a revolution of female manners, and she was criticizing strongly those who reduced the status of women.

Anne K. Mellor believed that *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* proposed a model of what we would call now equality or liberal feminism, grounded on the affirmation of universal human right, embodying the ideas of such Enlightenment thinkers as Voltaire, Rousseau and Locke (k. Mellor Anne, cited in Taylor Barbara, 2002: 141). Besides, the intellectual and political climate of the late eighteenth century did indeed favour the emergence of a women's consciousness.

7- Wollstonecraft's ideas on politics:

Mary Wollstonecraft, who associated herself with the English radical movement, was much inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment writers relating to the natural rights of the individual and the republican language of liberty, justice, and equality.

Jean Jacques Rousseau was the one who prepared the ideological foundation of the French Revolution through his defence of the popular will against absolute monarchy, and the natural rights of man. The belief that each individual is responsible for his or her own soul is to have some positive implications for the position of women and was to give them a less passive role in both family and society. It is true that being denied the right to full citizenship, women could not take part in male political activities.

Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* put the women question into the main stream of British politics. Her husband William Godwin claimed that Mary drew her feminist experience, as a self-taught middle class woman, in search for economic and political independence, and from the intellectual and political mood of the late eighteenth century, (Godwin William cited in http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/godwin/memoirs/toc.html).

Wollstonecraft was convinced that the idea of the extreme softness and delicacy of the female mind could only reinforce the cultural assumption that stood for women's inferiority, and the denial of their self-assertion. David Glover and Cora Kaplan agreed that Wollstonecraft turned her reader's attention to the way in which females are made women when they were mere children (Glover David and Kaplan Cora, 2000:10). They added that Wollstonecraft claimed that women were shaped as follows: "Everything that they see or hear serves to fix impressions, call forth emotions, and associate ideas, that give a sexual character to the mind (Wollstonecraft Mary, cited in Ibid).

In Wollstonecraft's writings, we find a detailed and extended account of the social construction of gender; she resists Jean Jacques Rousseau's claim that femininity is an instinctive set of sexed traits (Ibid).

David Glover and Cora Kaplin thought that Wollstonecraft, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, described the bourgeois women as prisoners of a threatening and abusive power, literally and metaphorically "immured in their families, groping in the dark" (Ibid., 5). Mary wrote a letter to her sister Everina, when Lady Kingsborough dismissed her, telling her: "Thank heaven that I was not so fortunate as to be born a Lady of quality" (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in Adriana Cracium, 2002: 8). Wollstonecraft's sympathy with women of the lower class was clearly shown in her *Vindication* as follows::

I pray particular attention to those in the middle-class because they appear to be in the most natural state...as a class of mankind they have the strongest claim to pity, the education tends to render them vain and helpless (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/txts/wollstonecraft/women-contents.html>).

Wollstonecraft's opposition of slavery was a result of her feminist version; she compared the status of the English women to that of the slaves. Moira Ferguson reported that in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Wollstonecraft drew primarily on the language of natural rights for its argument in favour of a discourse on slavery and female subjugation

(Ferguson Moira, cited in Claudia Johnson, 2002: 69). According to the British philosopher John Locke, who is known for his theory of natural rights, God created man and we are in fact God's property. Locke considers the person who intends to deny someone's rights to life an aggressor, because the state of nature is ordinarily one in which we follow the basic rule interpreted in terms of the natural rights. In addition, Locke defined the state of slavery as the extension of the state of war between a lawful conqueror and a captive. So, slavery is the state of being in an absolute or arbitrary power of another.

Anna Neill reported that Wollstonecraft placed women within the purview of a Lockean liberal state whose function is to grant civil protection to self-owning subjects. Locke's pre-civil man claims ownership over that which he mixes with his own labour and then contracts into a civil community in order to protect what is rightfully his (Neill Anna, quoted in Harriet Devine Jump, 2003: 420). Wollstonecraft shows how women have been denied civil protection, thus, treated as slaves, subject to the arbitrary will of their fathers and husbands (Ibid). So, according to Locke, each person owns his or her own body (Locke John cited in <http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.txt>).

Shanley Lyndon, who is a critic, asserted that the belief that men and women occupy separated spheres and perform wholly different tasks resulted from their receiving quite distinct education, and this fact led to social decay (Lyndon Shanley, quoted in Op.Cit ., 365).

In short, Wollstonecraft asked for a fundamental change in society's perception of the function, and the potential of women (Ian Ousby, 1993: 1033). She emphasized that the progress of human society would only be complete when women would be given the same educational and civil opportunities as men.

In her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft threw down the gauntlet, especially to male readers in order to change the status of women. She declared that:

...If they be really capable of acting like rational creatures, 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, give them the salutary sublime curb of principal, and let them attain conscious dignity by feeling themselves only dependent on God (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted by Taylor Barbara, 2002: 100).

Mary Wollstonecraft's pamphlet was an appeal to men to change the status of women. She claimed that the affection of husbands and wives could not be pure when they have few sentiments in common, and when little confidence is established at home. She asked men to grant women the opportunity to use their talents in politics, commerce and education.

In 1869 John Stuart Mill a utilitarian philosopher, answered Mary Wollstonecraft in an essay entitled *On the Subjection of Women*.

Chapter two

I- Introduction

The effect of complex economic changes on gender roles during the nineteenth century is extremely difficult to measure; no simple contrast between a traditional, pre-industrial world and a modernised, urban, industrialised society can do justice to the changing balance between paid and unpaid labour, between domestic work and work undertaken in factories. Women's work expectations were undoubtedly shifting: but the question, which is of interest here, is how far women themselves identified and articulated what was happening, and how far they voiced their own concerns and grievances.

Although an economic revolution had begun in the sixteenth century, the impact of the machine did not come until after 1800. Until then, in many places, life centred round the home. Work was done in the home because, until Watt's invention of the steam engine, the only power used in most manufacturing processes was hand power. The dominant pattern was for economic activity, whether for industrial workers like weavers, or for artisans, to take place in or around the home. The wife and children took part in the general activity of the family. It follows that the home was the centre, and naturally, the wife had her position. Thanks to these activities done at home, a woman derived her dignity, her prestige and her consciousness of the security of these things (Fitzimons John, 1952: 13- 4).

1- The position of women before the Industrial Revolution:

From the earliest ages of humankind, women had managed certain industries in the home, and the variety and complication of cottage manufactures had increased in Stuart and Hanoverian England. Under the old system of life, many village women took an active part in tilling the family patch of ground, looking after the pig or cow, marketing the goods, and sometimes, helping to manage some small local businesses. Thus, economic activity involved the wife, in general, and provided her with a deep emotional satisfaction, because she was able to use her talents for organising and adapting (Ibid., 15).

Before the Industrial Revolution, there were many material activities in the home that granted women their satisfaction. The home was the centre of education; the few schools and colleges that existed were for the upper classes. The home was considered as a school; the mother provided to her child all things he needed to adapt himself to life. Of course, it was not an education in the modern sense; literacy was not relevant in those days, even among the women of the upper class and the nobility, because it was not necessary for a woman to have a high level of education at that time. Dr. Johnson said that a man would “sooner see a good dinner on his table than hear his wife talk Greek” (Dr. Johnson Reported by Fitzsimons John, 1952: 16).

Conditions of life in the home before the Industrial Revolution were very bad, dirt was everywhere, bad smells, and added to this people worked very hard. So, the whole establishment was unsanitary; it could not be otherwise with the home as the centre of domestic industry. Yet, despite these very bad conditions, the woman was satisfied because her place in society was assured.

2- The position of women during and after the Industrial Revolution:

Before the Industrial Revolution, the home was the centre of activity, whether industrial or educational, and it was the woman who made the home. Her work was productive and creative; she worked hand in hand with men, and she had no desire to compete with men-folk because there was a balance between them, and she was satisfied with it. However, the Industrial Revolution was to change all that, and to bring unrest into society; it created more problems than it solved.

At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, capitalism started to grow slowly in a simple form in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the individual wages began to be substituted for the family ones; individual workers were drawn into small-scale, organised industry. Then, came the great changes in agriculture whereby thousands of cottage holdings

were destroyed, and the cottagers had to look elsewhere for work. They drifted to the new industrial towns that mushroomed.

When the Industrial Revolution came, it found a large floating labour force ready to work in factories. The first development came in coal industry, iron and textiles. Women worked in coalmines, and in fact, children worked there too. The home that was the centre of economic activity began to recede; it retreated slowly without opposition. In many places, weavers were willing to work at home for fewer wages than those they had received in the factory. The workers did not want to lose their freedom, and saw in the machine a menace to their way of life. For the first time, wages became the most important item in the family's economic life, and everybody had to go to work in order to make that income sufficient to keep them alive. Women working in a factory had no time or mean to learn the domestic virtues, nor did they have an opportunity to practise them.

The home, which had formerly been the centre of life, lost much of its importance. One of its chief activities, industrial production, had been transferred to the factory. Women no longer played a vital role, because the family was no longer the productive unit. Friedrich Engels illustrated this idea by arguing that: "the early factory caused the destruction of family life, since it drove work out of the home and separated husband, wife and children in different occupations in different locations" (Engels Friedrich, reported by Lawrence Stone, 1979: 417). It follows from the quotation that the world of industry, which grew up after the first fevered fifty years, was a masculine world in which the skilled work was done by men; this was unlike the previous form of society that had developed with women.

As well as losing its economic function, the home too was to lose its position as an educational place. With the growth of the industrial system, even the factory workers needed a minimum amount of literacy. Consequently, the number of schools grew, and children were

no longer educated at home by their mother; the home had lost its importance, and with it women lost their place in society.

The growth of high farming and big business tended to drive women out of these activities, turning some of them into women of no occupation, others into field-labourers or factory hands, and others into workers' wives entirely devoted to the care of the home (Trevelyan G.M., 1986: 500).

4- Science and the woman question during the nineteenth century:

Gender roles have become one of the issues of contemporary interest in the culture of the Victorian period. As Roy Porter and Lesley Hall have observed: "the Victorians and sex have been exhaustingly, if not exhaustively written about" (Porter Roy and Hall Lesley, 2002: 463).

Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), a British psychologist and writer, author of *Man and Woman: a Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters*, used data that he collected over twelve years. Ellis examined whether attributes such as intelligence, hysteria, emotional capacity and artistic ability had their origins in biological differences; he grounded his study of gender on biology. His arguments were exposed as follows:

The knowledge we have gained does not enable us definitely to settle special problems- what it does enable us to do- women are nearer to children than are men- but woman is not undeveloped man- the child represents a higher degree of evolution than the adult- the progress of the race had been a progress of evolution than the adult- the progress of the race had been a progress of youthfulness- in some respects it has been a progress in feminisation- absurdity of speaking of superiority of one sex over another- the sexes perfectly poised- but social readjustments may still be necessary- we may face all such readjustments with equanimity(Ellis Havelock, quoted in Josephine M. Guy, 2004: 487).

Ellis Havelock explained that the present knowledge of men and women cannot show what they might be or what they ought to be, but what actually they are under the conditions of civilization. He added that by showing that under varying conditions men and women are, within certain limits, indefinitely modifiable, a precise knowledge of the facts of the life of

men and women forbids us to dogmatise rigidly concerning the respective spheres of men and women; an experience alone could demonstrate this matter in detail. In addition, Ellis claimed that women present the characters of short men, and to some extent of children. The whole organism of the average woman, physical and psychic, is completely different from that of man. The differences may often be slight, and they extend to the smallest details of organic constitution (Ellis Havelock, quoted in Josephine M. Guy, 2004: 488).

Like his predecessors, Charles Darwin relegated women to a position subordinate to men because of their role in reproduction. In his theory of evolution, Darwin assumed that women were inferior to men because nature had delegated to women the simple task of bearing and nurturing children. A woman's worth was in her reproductive organs. Darwin's theory of evolution claims that women are naturally inferior to men because of their role in reproduction.

According to Darwin, a woman's natural role is to bear and care for children, while man's natural role is to support and protect his family. The task of a man requires intelligence; he must think of ways to provide the necessities for his family (food, shelter, etc.) and shield his offspring from danger. The intellectual processes of men increased because they used logic and reason to find ways to fill the needs of their families. Nature requires less from a woman because her role in procreation; it is purely physical. Neither the formation of the child inside her womb nor the production of milk in her breast is dependent on a female's ability to think. Because women did not exercise their grey matter, their minds evolved at a much slower rate than their male counterparts did. Herbert Spencer, an evolutionist, claimed that women lacked the ability to reason and comprehend general principles because they were the latest characteristics that men acquired from evolution.

Though females did not actively participate in the strengthening of their minds, nature allowed them to evolve for the survival of the human race. Men acquired the talent of

thinking first. And since this trait proved to be the key in the survival of the species, the trait then passed over to women. If this passing of traits did not happen, men could have eventually evolved into a different species. This great mental endowment would seem, at first to be a benefit but members of different species cannot reproduce; hence, the human race would have become extinct. The realization of this caused Darwin to explain:

It is indeed, fortunate that the law of the equal transmission of characters to both sexes has commonly prevailed throughout the whole class of mammals; otherwise, it is probable that man would have become as superior in mental endowment to woman as the peacock is in ornamental plumage to the peahen" (Darwin Charles cited in <http://members.aol.com/VERSAI/society.htm>University).

Through various methods of analyzing the brain, many craniologists and neuro-anatomists sought to give merit to Darwin's ideas of female inferiority. Both groups studied skulls and the cranial regions of dead bodies. Male and female brains looked and operated in the same fashion, but male brains were relatively larger. According to these scientists, this difference proved that women did not have the mental capacity of men. Reporting as much as a 12% to 19% difference in brain weight and size, they reassured that men would never lose their evolutionary edge ; In 1887, George J. Romanes, biologist, concluded that the average brain weight of women is about 5 ounces less than the average brain weight of men. He also believed that women would never evolve to the level of men because men's brains will have grown larger.

Assuming that the size of one's brain corresponded with one's intellectual capabilities, craniologists laboured intensively to prove that the brains of women were smaller than those of men. Techniques used to ascertain a brain's weight or size included filing an empty skull with seed or shot, weighing the actual brain, and measuring the facial angle of the skull. These methods often provided favourable but erroneous results. The amount of seed or shot that could fit inside of a skull varied according to how it was packed in. The weight of a brain can be affected by old age, disease, or the manner in which it is preserved. Usually, the craniologists

themselves hindered the research. It was not unusual for one not to have prior knowledge of the sex of the person whose brain or skull he measured. Because these scientists brought their own personal biases to the laboratory, all large skulls or brains were immediately thought to come from a male.

Craniologists who opposed judging one's mental capabilities by brain size used the arguments of their own colleagues against them. They claimed that if only brain size determined intelligence, some animals would have to be considered more intelligent than man (Fausto-Sterling Anne, 1985:18).

Evolutionists adopted their beliefs, which automatically classified men as superior to women by the virtue of their physical stature. Spencer applied Hermann von Helmholtz law of the conservation of energy to the human body. Helmholtz discovered that though it can change form, energy cannot be lost or created because a female's main function was to reproduce, she necessarily devoted her energy for maintaining the mental cycle. Men do use some energy to fuel their reproductive organs, but, because they do not perform mothering tasks, they can devote most of their energy to thinking.

The theory of the small female brain offered by craniologist conflicts with this aspect of the argument. Because a woman's brain is smaller than a man's brain, she would require less energy to perform the same tasks including thinking. Scientists refuted this fact by insisting the reproductive organs require more energy than her brain does (Ibid) .

Darwin's theory of evolution provided a formidable argument against women being allowed more than an elementary education. According to the evolutionist, the small-evolved brain of a woman was not equipped to think logically. Women, who were white, were taught to read, write and compute to a level at which they could effectively manage a home. Women were skilled at intuition, but they could not adequately grasp knowledge.

Like many scientist, the medical community viewed the human body with the mind of a physicist. Doctors accepted the idea that a woman's energy is centred around her reproductive organs. When a woman suffered a medical problem, doctors usually diagnosed the problem as a misdirection of energy. Energy channelled from the womb: would cause an imbalance in her [the woman's] body resulting in exhaustion, infection or disorders of the reproductive organs, which in turn might cause pathological reactions in other parts of the body (Kirkup Gill and Keller Laurie Smith, 1992: 75).

The reproductive system was virtually the root of every physical and mental problem a woman may incur. In 1869, Dr. M. E. Dirix endeavoured to describe the pitiful situation of women:

Thus, women are treated for diseases of the stomach, liver, kidneys, heart, lungs, etc. yet, in most instances, these diseases will be found on due investigation, to be, in reality, no diseases at all, but merely the sympathetic reactions or the symptoms of one disease, namely, a disease of the womb (Barbara Ehrenreich, 1978 : 122).

4- Feminists' response:

Sparked by Darwin's theory of evolution, nineteenth-century scientists tried to convince society that women were inferior to men. Craniologists used questionable measuring techniques to obtain the results they desired. When neuroanatomists discovered the parietal lobes, not frontal lobes, were the key to human intelligence, the parietal lobes of females suddenly shrunk. Evolutionists stretched the laws of physics to justify their position. Scientists promoted their theories even though they contradicted the facts of their own period. Lower class women expended a great deal of their energy in physical labour; however, this did not seem to harm their capability to reproduce. Wives who joined the work force usurped "natural selection" by sharing the responsibility for the physical well being of the family with their

husbands. Female factory workers stepped out of the evolutionary boundaries of breeder and nurturer.

The extent of the disagreements in the scientific and medical establishments led some writers concerned with gender problems, most notably John Stuart Mill to eschew these arguments altogether in favour of those drawn from legal and political spheres.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), British philosopher, economist, moral and political theorist, and administrator, was the most influential English-speaking philosopher of the nineteenth century. His views are of continuing significance, and are generally recognized to be among the deepest and certainly the most effective defences of empirism and of a liberal political view of society and culture. The overall aim of his philosophy is to develop a positive view of the universe and the place of humans in it, one that contributes to the progress of human knowledge, individual freedom and human well-being. His views are not entirely original, having their roots in the British empirism of John Locke and David Hume, and the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham. Nevertheless, he gave them a new depth, and his formulations were sufficiently articulated to gain for them a continuing influence among the broad public (Beuton William, 1970: 460).

In his work *On the Subjection of Women*, Mill thought that the inadequacy of contemporary knowledge of male and female natures stood in the way of any attempt to ground behavioural norms in biology or sex. Moreover, what had historically been taken to be natural behaviour, Mill claimed, was merely the result of custom and practice. So, for Mill, it was only experience that would demonstrate whether or not women and men were capable of the same kinds of activities; moreover, for such experience to be properly assessed, he argued that it was necessary for women to be given the same opportunities as men. Furthermore, Mill stressed the fact that unless women were given the right to vote and the opportunity to be elected to public

office, it was impossible to know whether or not they were capable or suited to such occupations (M. Guy Josephine, 2004: 270).

5- John Stuart Mill's biography and his commitment to the feminist cause:

Before analyzing Mill's *On the Subjection of Women*, it is necessary to introduce first his biography to understand more his ideas. John Stuart Mill was born in Petonville, then a suburb of London. He was the eldest son of James Mill, a Scotsman who had come to London and become a leading figure in the group of philosophical radicals that aimed to further the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham. John Stuart Mill's mother was Harriet Barrow, who seems to have had little influence upon him (Thomson David, 1950: 50). James Mill's income was at first slight. In order to improve his living, he worked as a reviewer. However, his essay entitled *History of India* secured him a position in the East India Company, and he rose to the post of chief examiner. In spite of his duties and the work he performed, James Mill spent considerable time on the education of his eldest son John Stuart. The latter began to learn Greek at three and Latin at eight. By the age of fourteen, he had read most of the Greek and Latin classics, he had made a wide survey of history, had done extensive work on logic and mathematics, and had mastered the basis of economic theory. His education was undertaken according to the principle of Bentham's association to psychology, which aimed to make of the younger Mill a leader in views of the psychological radicals (Thomson David, 1950: 50).

Utilitarianism is a moral theory, which aims to provide pleasure to the greatest number of people. Bentham thought this was the key to reform the whole legal system. He claimed that the aim of good legislation should be "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" (Bentham Jeremy, cited in Vitoux Pierre, 1969: 294). In addition to this, he reported that the individual is the best judge of his or her own happiness. The way to provide people happiness is to leave them free to make their own choices. Bentham justified his assumption by stating that:

Nature had placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand, the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne (Bentham Jeremy, cited in G.L Williams 1994: 8).

It follows from the quotation that Bentham propounded a system claiming to be final and to be scientific, empirically based upon the ascertained facts of human nature and society. Bentham held that all men inevitably pursue and avoid pain that the measure of desirability is purely quantitative and happiness is a sum of pleasure. Some desires are self-regarding; others are benevolent, for we take pleasure in that of the others. Bentham advocated *laissez faire* in economics; arguing that it was a way to increase production. In addition, Bentham like many of his fellow citizens thought that the less law there is the better (Ritchie A.D., 1950: 41).

John Stuart Mill's new philosophy was a progressive, and reforming one. At the beginning, John Stuart Mill was greatly influenced by Bentham's principles; Mill thought that he had discovered the great tool for reforming all laws and social institution. For the next five years, he busily and happily got on being a reformer of the world; first, he started to write articles aiming to awaken people's awareness. In 1823, aged 17, he was arrested distributing pamphlets on birth control. He was walking along the streets throwing articles into the areas in front of the houses where the girl servants would find them. John Stuart Mill thought that the working class would be bred to the limits of subsistence; he claimed that by controlling numbers, it would be possible to improve people's conditions.

At eighteen, John Stuart Mill spent considerable time and effort editing a manuscript into the long coherent treatise so that they would become later on at the hands of every individual. Guided by his father, he threw himself into the work of philosophical radicals. Shortly thereafter, in 1823, his father secured him a junior position in the East India Company.

He rose in rank, eventually to occupy his father's position as Chief Examiner. In 1820, Mill made a visit to France; this gave him the opportunity to acquire the French language, and to master it well. Mill became a life-long student of French thought and history.

In 1826, Mill suffered a sudden attack of intense depression; this lasted for many months. He asked himself whether he would really be made happy if the reforms he had learnt to work for were realized; he discovered that he would not. In these circumstances, John Stuart Mill said: "At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down" (Mill John Stuart, quoted in Robin Gilmour, 1996: 157). Mill came to believe that his capacity for emotion had been severely weakened by his father's rigorous education; his intellect had been educated but not his feelings. By reading Wordsworth's poetry, he found something of the cure that he needed, and the depression gradually disappeared.

Robin Gilmour, Professor at the University of Aberdeen, reported that Mill's nervous breakdown was the result of an imbalance in his education; what was needed was a rediscovery of the importance of feeling (Gilmour Robin, 1996: 157). John Stuart Mill illustrated this idea by writing that: "The maintenance of a due balance among the faculties now seemed to me of primary importance. The cultivation of feelings became one of the cardinal points in my ethical and philosophical creed" (Ibid).

It is necessary to mention that many writers described John Stuart Mill as follows:

John Stuart Mill expresses the revolt of the human mind against the philosophy of the eighteenth century....Where the eighteenth century was innovative, he goes on to say, the nineteenth century was conservative; where the eighteenth century was infidel, the nineteenth was religious, the eighteenth "abstract and metaphysical"; the nineteenth "concrete and historical", the eighteenth prosaic; the nineteenth poetical (Willey Basil, 1950: 200).

John Stuart Mill abandoned the rigid creed of his father; he learnt that happiness is a state of mind and being, a condition of spirit, and not the total result of merely seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. This discovery led him to revolutionize Benthamism, for the distinction between higher and lower pleasures undetermined the whole basis of the materialist philosophy of Utilitarianism. He stressed the fact that human liberty means more than just leaving the individual alone to pursue his own selfish pleasures as it is a social pursuit of the greatest happiness of the greatest number by deliberate and possibly coercive measures. It followed that legislation must have a more positive function in society than Bentham had allowed. It must seek to enable men to exercise their natural capacities, use talents, and develop their potentials, untrammelled by artificial legal impediments and evil economic conditions. The good society, for Mill, is one of the richest diversity derived from the free interplay of human character and personality; he saw that to attain anything like that society in nineteenth-century Britain, a long series of far-reaching reforms would be necessary. These reforms consisted of breaking with the crude doctrines of *laissez-faire*, a profound change of the notion of the natural harmony of interests, whereby each pursued his own good. It means his own profit in business and his own pleasure in social life would automatically promote the general good (Thomson David, 1950: 49-50).

In 1830, Mill was introduced to Harriet Taylor. Her Husband was a druggist whose grandfather had once been a neighbour of James Mill's. The younger Mill rapidly became intimate with Mrs. Taylor, who came to influence profoundly the rest of his life.

Robin Gilmour reported that the father dominated the first part of Mill's *Autobiography*, and Harriet presided over the rest, an embodiment of noble 'feminine' feeling, and a symbol of Mill's victory over the elements in his upbringing that had brought about the mental crisis he endured. Robin Gilmour claimed that, if praise over Mill's virtues now seems excessive, it is partly because of the gratitude he felt to Harriet for bringing him the affection and

companionship denied along his childhood (Gilmour Robin, 1996: 157). Two years after the death of her husband, Harriet got married to John Stuart Mill.

John Stuart Mill and Harriet Mill suffered from tuberculosis in the 1830s and the 1840s. Harriet took frequent trips to Southern parts of France and Italy in search of a warm climate. Mill could only take short visits to see her because of his job. Mill and Harriet wrote each other daily when they were separated, expressing their affection and the news of their health, their family, their friends, and their activities. They often exchanged drafts and articles, each adding, rephrasing, and editing the words of the other and adding new ideas and insights so that the work will progress.

John Stuart Mill confessed that many of his writings were joint productions with his wife. For instance, *On Liberty* was a joint work produced in the last years of Harriet Mill's life, which John had published as soon as he could after her death as a memorial. Mill asserted that:

The "Liberty" was more directly and literally our joint production than anything else which bears my name, for there was not a sentence of it that was not several times gone through by us together, turned over in many ways, and carefully weeded of any faults, either in thought or expression, that we dictated in it (Mill John Stuart, 1975: 112).

He added that:

When two persons have their thoughts and speculations completely in common; when all subjects of intellectual interest are discussed between them in daily life, and probed to much greater depths than are usually or conveniently sounded in writings intended for general readers; when they set out from the same principles, and arrive at their conclusions by processes pursued jointly, it is of little consequence in respect to the question of originality, which of them holds the pen; the one who contributes least to composition may contribute most to the thought; the writings which result are the joint product of both, and it must often be impossible to disentangle their respective parts, and affirm that this belongs to one and that to the other (Ibid., 110).

6- John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*:

Mill sought relief by publishing a series of books on ethics and politics, which he had meditated and partly written in collaboration with his wife. The essay *On Liberty* appeared in 1859 with a touching dedication to her; Mill wrote:

To my beloved and deplored memory of her [Harriet] who was the inspirer, and in part the author, of all that is best in my writings- the friend and wife whose exalted sense of truth and right was my strongest incitement, and whose approbation was my chief reward- I dedicatee this volume. Like all that I have written for many years, it belongs as much to her as to me; but the work as it stands has had, in a very insufficient degree, the inestimable advantage of her revision; some of the most important portions having been reserved for a more careful re-examination, which they are now never destined to receive. Were I but capable of interpreting to the world one half of the great thoughts and noble feelings which are buried in her grave, I should be the medium of a greater benefit to it, than is ever likely to arise from anything that I can write, unprompted and unassisted by her all but unrivalled wisdom (Mill John Stuart, 1975: 2).

Harriet Mill gave importance to the woman question, especially domestic violence and women's subordination. Familiar with the writings of the radical Unitarians on various aspects of the woman question, it is not surprising that both Harriet and her husband were staunch advocates of woman suffrage; they supported the French feminist organizations. John Stuart Mill urged Harriet to finish her essay on feminism; shortly after, Harriet published her well-known essay *The Enfranchisement of Women* in 1851, in the *Westminster Review*. Harriet responded to the first National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, Mass. Her essay was reprinted in the United States and became an important validation for the early women's movement. At the same time, as Harriet was publishing *Enfranchisement of Women*, John Stuart Mill advocated woman suffrage in a letter in the *Leader*.

In her *Enfranchisement of Women*, Harriet Mill discussed the injustice applied by men on women of not having political power; man dominated in the home and he possessed political power. According to Harriet, the existing political system with its lack of political power for women was fundamentally unjust to women. No man would be expected to be tried

in a court of law by any but his peers. Yet, no women were ever tried by their peers; they were always subject to the judgment of male lawyers, male judges, and male jurors. Furthermore, she believed that the unchecked physical, emotional, religious, civil, legal, and social power of men over women leads to tyranny. Male tyranny in the home leads to women's servility and manipulation, which in turn leads to social decay. To put an end to social decay requires the political empowerment of women; suffrage for women, then, is a social necessity to inhibit social decay and civic immorality. Harriet claimed that the unfettered power of men over women in their lives leads both men and women to intellectual laziness. In such a case, women are not motivated to learn. Men dictated their opinions to their wives instead of debating them together and trying to reach a conclusion by an intellectual examination of the issue. The intellectual laziness corrupts men, and this corruption spreads throughout society, eventually corrupting all men and women (Taylor Harriet, quoted in Mill John Stuart, 1975: 117-8).

In 1858, Harriet's condition worsened again and the Mills decided to take a trip to the warm South of France and Italy. On the way, Harriet caught a cold in Avignon, died, and was buried there. John Stuart Mill was devastated by his wife's death; he bought a home in Avignon, and his stepdaughter Helen joined him. They remained there for two years, reworking and finishing a book that would not be published for several years because Mill did not think the time was ripe. The book was entitled *On the Subjection of Women*. Until he died, Mill spent part of the year in England and part of it in Avignon; he was daily visiting his wife's grave (Beuton William, 1970: 461). It is necessary to say that Harriet Mill's influence on John Stuart Mill's work and philosophy did not end with her death. Mill writes of his intellectual state after Harriet's death:

Since then I have sought for such alleviation as my state admitted of, by the mode of life which most enables me to feel her near me. I bought a cottage as close as possible to the place where she is buried, and there her daughter (my fellow-sufferer and now my chief comfort) and I, live constantly during a great portion of the year. My objects in life are

solely those which were hers; my pursuits and occupations those in which she shared, or sympathized, and which are indissolubly associated with her (Mill John Stuart, cited in http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/whm2003ht_mill4html).

It is necessary to say that John Stuart Mill's essay *On Liberty* is considered as one of the most enduring defences of individual freedom ever penned. Mill defended the freedom of thought on several grounds. First, he claimed that the individual should accept the fact that none of us can claim an infallibility of knowledge or a final and definite insight into ultimate truth. Thus, we should value and defend liberty of thought and argument because a dissenter or a critic of conventional and generally accepted views may offer reasons or disagree to correct our own error of knowledge and mistakes in judgment about the truth of things. Second, sometimes, the truth about things exists as half-truths held by different people, and through controversy, the truth in the parts can be made into a great-unified truth of the whole. Third, even if we are certain that we have the truth and a correct understanding of things, we are open to challenging and rethinking that which we take for granted, our ideas and beliefs could easily become atrophied dogmas. People in each generation must be taught to think and reason for themselves. If ideas and beliefs are to remain living and meaningful, people must arrive to their own conclusions through reflection and thought (Mill John Stuart, 1975: 50). Furthermore, Mill was not only the defender of thought but liberty of speech as well; he thought that personal freedom is an end in itself. In his essay *On Liberty*, he claimed that individuality is a valuable feature of human development. According to him, human beings should make their own choices; he supported this idea by asserting that:

Having said that the individuality is the same thing with development, and that it is only the cultivation of individuality which produces, or can produce, well-developed human beings...what more or better can be said of any condition of human affairs than that it brings human beings themselves nearer to the best thing, they can be? (Ibid., 60).

It follows from the quotation that John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor agreed that individuality and self-development are the same thing or intimately connected. In addition to this, they claimed that the idea of freedom as self-development had enormous practical consequences for men, women and children throughout the world. William Raymond thought that the central concern of *On Liberty* was the preservation of the rights of the individuals and minorities, like women, against public opinion and democratic state; Mill asserted that:

For the cultivation of learning, and for diffusing in results among the community... we consider the definitive establishment of this fundamental principle to be one of the permanent benefits which political science owes to the conservative philosopher (Mill John Stuart, cited in 1961:72).

R. F. Khan, a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Singapore, reported that in Mill's words, the subject of his essay *On Liberty* is moral, social and intellectual liberty asserted against the despotism of society whether exercised by governments or the public opinions (F.Khan R., 1994: 62).

7- John Stuart Mill's *On the Subjection of Women*:

It is necessary to mention that among the issues that Mill accompanied most strongly were women's rights, women's suffrage, and equal access to education for women. His essay *On the Subjection of Women* (1869) is an enduring defence of gender equality.

On the Subjection of Women was written to show that the social and legal disabilities suffered by women were unjustified, and that the relations between the two sexes should be governed by a principle of perfect equality. Mill recognized that the disabilities suffered by women, especially their disenfranchisement and exclusion from the political process, their status in the marriage contract, and their denial of the entry to the professions and educational institutions, are unjustified in terms of the principles asserted in *Liberty*. Furthermore, Mill emphasized that women should be given the value of personal independence as an element of

happiness because by subordinating them, they would lose their freedom as individuals, and this, of course, leads to their unhappiness. Again, Mill stressed the fact that women should be given the right to vote; it is a means to protect themselves.

It is important to mention that the 1850s and the 1860s witnessed the emergence of the first women's movement in Britain, with journals and a host of different campaigns aimed at the emancipation of women. Beginning with a petition to reform the laws that oppressed married women and deprived them of any property, the early feminist activists soon turned their attention to expand the range of employment open to women, to improve secondary education and to make higher education accessible to women, and then to the suffrage. Barbara Caine reported that these campaigns were accompanied by the establishment of a number of feminist periodicals, some of which spelled out in graphic detail the full extent of women's economic, sexual, and political oppression (Caine Barbara, 1997, 88).

During the Victorian era, the general public had a picture in their minds of the ideal woman. First, many felt that the maternal love of a woman was the only truly unselfish feeling on earth. So, women had the mission to establish peace, raise her children. Women were considered to be naturally disposed to worship, to reverence and self-sacrifice. They were also predisposed to devotional practices, religious sensibility and even unintelligent obedience. Women must be Christians, Christian wives and Christian mothers. The ideal home in Victorian times was to be a place of peace and shelter from all terror. As far as men were concerned, their duty was to face danger in order to protect their families. A Victorian woman was considered as the "Angel in the house". This idea is developed by John Ruskin who asserted that:

The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest... But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle, - and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision.

... By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation. The man, in his rough work in open world, must encounter all peril and trial: - To him, therefore, the failure, the offence, the inevitable error: often he must be wounded, or subdued, often misled, and *always* hardened. But he guards the woman from all this; within his house, as ruled by her, unless she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offence. This is the true nature of home- it is the place of peace; shelter, not only from injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division (Ruskin John, quoted in Josephine M. Guy, 2004: 506).

The man's duty then was to assist in the maintenance, in the advance and in the defence of the state, while the woman's duty was to insure the ordering, the comfort and the beautiful adornment of the home.

During the Victorian era, the vision of ideal women was shared by most in the society, they were seen as pure and clean. Because of this view, their bodies were seen as temples, which should not be adorned with makeup. Man restricted the role of a woman to have children, and to take care of the home. They could not hold jobs unless it was as teachers nor were they allowed to have their own checking or saving accounts. Women, therefore, were treated as saints; but saints that had no legal rights.

It is necessary to mention that "The Household General" is a term coined in 1861 by Isabelle Beeton in her manual "Duties of the Mistress of the House". She explained that the mistress of a household is comparable to the commander of an army or the leader of an enterprise. In order to run a respectable household, and secure the happiness, comfort and well-being of her family, she must perform her duties intelligently and thoroughly. For example, she had to organize, delegate and instruct her servants, which is not an easy task to do. This idea might be illustrated by a quote from Monica Charlot and Roland Marx :

La tâche essentielle de la femme est de veiller sur ses enfants et de créer en son foyer une atmosphère de calme et de la détente où l'homme puisse se reposer des tracas et des luttes du monde des affaires. La femme gère sa maison, commande et surveille ses domestiques (Charlot Monica and Marx Roland, 1997 :66-7).

During this period, a woman was expected to organise parties and dinners, to bring prestige to her husband, also making it possible for her to meet new people, and establish economically important relationships. At the same time, she must be sure that she devoted enough time to her children and husband, and towards improving her own abilities and faculties. Another duty ascribed by Beeton is that of being a sick-nurse who takes care of sick family members. This required a good temper, compassion for suffering and sympathy with sufferers, love of order and cleanliness. Moreover, a woman during the Victorian period was obliged to take care of her parents in case of illness, and there was a very special relation between sisters and brothers. Sisters had to treat their brothers as their future husbands; they were dependent on their male family members because their brothers might secure them in the future in case their husbands might treat them badly or if they would not get married at all (Beeton Isabelle cited in <http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/women>).

I have already explained that mid Victorian period saw the emergence of the first women's movement in Britain. Instead, women set up a model of female excellence that combined accepted ideas about women's morality, chastity, with an assertion of their intelligence, their independence, and their personal strength. As a result, they did not only ask for simply political rights for women, but they thought that women should be given an opportunity to use and exercise their specific moral qualities in all areas of life. Barbara Caine asserted that Victorian feminists entailed a new sense of the values and virtues of womanhood, it also entailed a particular and somewhat restrictive idea of who the women whose emancipation was being sought were (Caine Barbara, 1997: 89).

The emergence of feminist campaigns was both preceded, and followed by a great expansion in theoretical discussions of women's rights and wrongs, their needs and entailments, and their abilities and weaknesses. The early nineteenth-century discussions about

women's nature, duties and role expanded greatly in the mid-nineteenth century with an enormous increase in the number of periodical articles, pamphlets and novels dealing with the woman question in general.

I have written above that in his *On the Subjection of Women*, John Stuart Mill made clear his feminism, which fed itself from his wife's feminist views and which was also derived from both his utilitarian and liberal philosophies. Mill approached the issue of women from two angles; first, in considering the consequences of the position of women for society as a whole (the utilitarian perspectives), and secondly in estimating the effects on women's individuality, on their potential for growth (the liberal view).

8- John Stuart Mill's ideas on marriage:

John Stuart Mill thought that in a society based on equality and justice, women would achieve self-respect and self-control that are essential conditions of both individual prosperity and social virtue. Besides, Mill argued strongly that women should participate in elections, and were capable of holding professions involving important public responsibilities. His work *the Subjection of Women* was a plea for an end to the legal and political restrictions imposed on women. It was based on his firm belief in equal rights between men and women in education, and in marriage before the law, and in general, in the individual rights, male and female, to achieve one's potential. His belief that women should be active agents of their own emancipation led him to encourage and help the growing women's suffrage movement; his contribution was of vital importance not only for the female feminists of his own time, but also for the next generations of women and men committed to the same cause.

Mill asserted that the oppressive relationship for women was that of marriage, and *On the Subjection of Women* offered one of the most searing and critical pictures of marriage to emerge in the nineteenth century, with its emphasis on the moral and physical degradation marriage entailed both for men and women. Mill sought neither to end nor radically to

transform marriage, but rather to improve and reform it through legal changes and through the granting of political rights to women. Mill claimed that it is necessary to enhance women's status both in society, at large, and within the family. It is important to point out that Mill had almost nothing to say about single women; his entire discussion of the domestic problems of women focused on the situation of wives (Caine Barbara, 1997: 105). John Stuart Mill saw marriage as the key to women's oppression, he thought that society used the marriage contract in order to subjugate women; he asserts that: "Marriage being the destination appointed by society for women" (Mill John Stuart, cited in <http://www.melbiconunimelb.edu.au/het/mill/women.htm>). According to John Stuart Mill, society used harsh and severe means in order to subjugate women, and to render them submissive.

Society... has preferred to attain its object by foul rather than fair means: but this is the only case in which it has substantially persisted in them even to the present day. Originally women were taken by force, or regularly sold by their father to the husband. ... The church, indeed, was so far faithful to a better morality as to acquire a formal "yes" from the women at the marriage ceremony; but there was nothing to show that the consent was other than compulsory; and it was practically impossible for the girl to refuse compliance if the father persevered (Ibid).

Mill emphasized that women during the Victorian period had not the right to choose their husbands, and they had not the right even to disobey their parents. During the nineteenth century, married women were no longer recognized as independent beings; upon marriage, a woman's legal identity was subsumed into that of her husband. William Blackstone outlined this in his book entitled *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765); his ideas were as follows:

By marriage, the very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended, or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection, or cover, she performs everything, and she is therefore called in our law *a femme covert*... under the protection and influence of her husband, her baron, or lord, and her conditions during marriage is called her coverture (Blackstone William, cited in

Caine Barbara, 1997: 66).

According to William Blackstone, a man cannot grant anything to his wife, or enter into covenants with her, for the grant would be to suppose her separate existence, and to covenant with her, would only be a contract with himself. The husband is bound to provide his wife with the necessaries by law. The implication of coverture was that on marriage both the possession and the control of a woman's property and earnings passed over to her husband's control.

John Stuart Mill claimed that under the law of coverture, the man had the power of life and death over his wife; she could invoke no law against him, and he was her sole tribunal and law. John Stuart Mill criticized strongly the Law of coverture; he considered it as a means to oppress women. He asserted that: "By the old laws of England, the husband was called the lord of the wife, he was literary regarded as her sovereign" (Mill John Stuart, cited in <http://www.melbecon.edu.au/het/mill/women.htm>)

The property rights of women during the nineteenth century were dependent upon their marital status; once married, women's property rights were governed by the English Common Law which required that the property women took into a marriage, or acquired subsequently, be legally absorbed by their husbands. Ann Laurence thought that married women could not make a will without their husbands' consent. She asserted that "After marriage, all the will of the wife in judgment of the law is subject to the will of the husband" (Laurence Ann, 1994: 227). Marital separation, whether initiated by the husband or wife, usually left the women economically destitute, as the law offered them no marital property. However, Mill argued that whatever the distribution, the property that women took into marriage, whether in goods, money or land, passed into the ownership of their husbands; he asserted that a woman "can acquire no property but for him; the instant it becomes hers, even if by inheritance, it becomes ipso facto his" (Blackstone William, cited in Caine Barbara, 1997: 228). Ann Laurence shared the idea asserting that: "In English common law, wives could hold no freehold land [real

property] except through their husbands; nor could they alter or dispose of property without their husband's consent, even if it was their own inheritance" (Laurence Ann, 1994: 228).

The rationale of law is that if the husband and his wife are "one body" before God, they are "one person" in the law, and the husband represents that person. In recognition of this law, fathers often provided their daughters with dowries to protect them from unscrupulous husbands. Prenuptial marriage settlements provided a means for separate pin-money to be put in trust for the bride in order to provide her with an income. Pin-money is an estate, which the wife was to possess for her sole and separate use, and was not subject to the control of her husband (Staves Susan, 1990: 133). This dowry is the only separate property that married women could own and control in accordance with the law of coverture. Unfortunately, in practice, men take away from their wives their pin-money. John Stuart Mill asserted that a father generally preferred his own daughter to a son-in-law who is a stranger to him. By the means of settlement, the rich usually contrive to withdraw the whole or part of the inherited property of the wife from the absolute control of the husband. However, they did not succeed in keeping it under her control; they can only prevent the husband from considering it as his own property.

John Stuart Mill claimed that the form of settlements most favourable to the wife only precludes the husband from receiving her property; it must pass through her hands. Nevertheless, if he takes it from her by force or personal violence as soon as she received it, he can neither be punished, nor compelled to restitution (Mill John Stuart, cited in <http://www.melbecon.edu.au/het/mill/women.htm>).

Moreover, the legal status of married women prevented them from unilaterally participating in the civil legal system. Mary Lyndon Shantley explained that from the legal unity of the husband and wife, it followed that a married woman could not sue or be sued unless her husband was also a party to the suit, and she could not sign contracts unless her

husband joined her (Shantley Mary Lyndon, 1989: 8). In addition to this, Ann Laurence reported that the law of coverture also governed women's premarital legal contracts; all covenants made by a woman were annulled by her marriage (Laurence Ann, 1994: 233). It follows from this that under coverture, a wife had no legal existence; she became civilly dead. Her husband controlled any income from property she brought into the marriage, and if she earned wages outside the home, they belonged to him. In addition, a man who killed his wife was guilty of murder and could be punished by death or imprisonment, but a woman who killed her husband was guilty of treason against her lord, and she could be punished by being beaten burnt alive. John Stuart Mill sustained this idea by claiming that:

By the old laws of England, the husband was called the lord of the wife, he was literally regarded as her sovereign, is as much that the murder of a man by his wife was called treason, and was more cruelly avenged than was usually the case with high treason, for the penalty was burning to death (Mill John Stuart, cited in <http://www.melbecon.edu.au/het/mill/women.htm>).

In the light of what has been mentioned above, it is clearly shown that women during the Victorian period were oppressed, and they were considered as their husband's bondservants. John Stuart Mill compared the status of women to that of slaves; they were obliged to obey men. He stressed the fact that under the law of England, the wife's position was worse than that of slaves. Mill compared the Victorian society to that of the Romans; England was referred to as the second Roman Empire; by Roman law, a slave might have his *speculum*, which guaranteed him certain rights for his exclusive use. John Stuart Mill claimed that the condition of married women in England were even worse than that the slaves, because of their submission to their masters; women were required not only to be obedient, but also to appear voluntary to accept, even to desire their subordination. He asserted that men do not only want the obedience of wives but also their feelings and sentiments.

Mill went on to argue that any given slave, except the one immediately attached to the master's person, is a slave at all hours and minutes; in general he has, like a soldier, his fixed task, and when he finished his work, or when he is off duty, he disposes of his own time. This means that a slave has a family life into which the master rarely interferes. Mill justified his assumption by referring to Uncle Tom, arguing that under his first master, he had his own life in his cabin. Nevertheless, it cannot be so with the wife. Above all, a female slave has an admitted right, and is considered under a moral obligations, to refuse to her master the last familiarity, not so the wife (Ibid).

Women who belonged to the upper class were given an analogous advantage with the slaves through special contracts setting aside the law. A father placed any property for his daughter in the hands of male trustees where equity law then governed it; this option usually existed for wealthy women. The purpose of such settlements was to ensure that the property, which went with the daughter on her marriage, was not squandered or wasted by her husband (Ibid).

It can be noted that women and property are one of the central themes in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Dickens wrote his novel during the mid-nineteenth century; it was an era when women's property rights were being intensively debated in England. His depiction of propertied women in the novel reflects Victorian beliefs about women's inability to manage their own property. Miss Havisham is represented as the embodiment of women's failure to properly manage wealth and property. Mr. Havisham's settlement on the bulk of his estate on his daughter, despite the existence of a male heir, is unconventional. Estella's economic tragedy illustrates consequences of disposing property onto a woman who will inevitably marry. She suffers the loss of her property at the hands of an unscrupulous husband who misuses her fortune. Charles Dickens gives attention to wealthy women who own property

and are susceptible to abuse. The social and historical context of the penning of the novel, and the period during which it is set, suggest a criticism of women's property rights.

As an unmarried woman in Victorian England, Miss Havisham enjoys the legal status of *feme sole*, which gives her complete control over her wealth and property. Miss Havisham, now a wealthy young heiress, becomes a target of an opportunist swindler. She falls in love with Compeyson and accepts his marriage proposal. Miss Havisham's love for Compeyson makes her vulnerable to the "systematic way, that he got great sums of money from her" (Dickens Charles, 1996: 177).

Against the advice of Mr. Pocket, Miss Havisham is "induced by Compeyson to buy to her brother out of a share in the brewery [which had been weakly left to him by his father] at an immense Price" (Ibid). In addition to rejecting Mr. Pocket's advice, she does not seek the advice of legal counsel, which may have advised against her investment; she was "too haughty and too much in love, to be advised by anyone" (Ibid).

Furthermore, Miss Havisham exhibits reckless behaviour in not insisting on a marriage settlement to protect her property from a future husband. Compeyson pleads that once he is her husband "he must hold and manage it all" (Ibid). Without a prearranged marriage settlement, Compeyson would have legally absorbed Miss Havisham's estate into the marital property.

Ross Dabney explains, "In the relation of Miss Havisham and Compeyson, Dickens puts together infatuation, romantic disappointment, and cash speculation" (Dabney Ross, 1967: 127). Her decision to squander money on her fiancé and enter into contracts and marriage without legal counsel jeopardizes her estate. This can be viewed as a criticism of Miss Havisham and women's inheritance of property, as her uninformed and emotionally based decisions result in financial devastation. Miss Havisham's fiancé never shows up for the wedding. Instead, he sends a letter, which, upon reading, makes Miss Havisham realize she had

been defrauded. Her relative, Herbert Pocket, suspects that Compeyson did not marry and get all of the property because he may have been already married.

Susan Walsh asserted that the depiction of Miss Havisham's abuse of her estate parallels the belief that women were considered incompetent to exercise control over property or the power that it brings; she justifies this assumption as follows:

Miss Havisham had been bilked, jilted and humiliated by a false fiancé; in response, she had immolated her women's body and the brewery's manufacturing economy in one furious sweep. In so doing, she effectually repudiated the role of women's economic...capital within the family enterprise system, a business model still central to Victorian culture in general (Walsh Susan, 1993: 74).

From this, it follows that the economic consequences of Miss Havisham's investment decisions provide an argument against women acquiring substantial property. Miss Havisham illustrates the perilous capacity of independent, propertied women to waste family fortunes.

According to conventions of Victorian economic practices, Miss Havisham illustrates a significant female failure (Ibid., 90). The novel's ending may reflect Dickens's attitudes about women and property rights. Susan Walsh argued that "For the novel to arrive at some sort of happy conclusion...Miss Havisham must fulfil her proper role" (Ibid., 93). Miss Havisham aids her family in economic recovery and restores the family's patrilineal system; she financially helps Herbert to secure his investment in a profitable business, she also wills Mathew Pocket "a cool four thousands" (Dickens Charles, 1994: ch.57). By investing in her male relatives, Miss Havisham plays a vital role in preserving the patrilineal system. The novels' ending eliminates women as an economic force and repositions them in their proper place in Victorian society.

Many feminists in the late 1830s and 1840s commented on the irony of the Anglican marriage ceremony in which a husband promised to endow his wife with his worldly goods, while after marriage, things would look different. John Stuart Mill asserted that: "Men are not

required, as a preliminary to the marriage ceremony, to prove by testimonials that they are fit to be trusted with the exercise of absolute power. The tie of affection and obligation on the wife and children is very strong” (Mill John Stuart cited in, <http://www.melbecon.edu.au/het/mill/women.htm>).

John Stuart Mill claimed that the family in its best form is, as it is often said to be, a school of sympathy, tenderness, and loving forgetfulness of self. Unfortunately, during the Victorian period, the family was a school of despotism, in which the virtues of despotism, but also its vices are largely nourished (Ibid).

As I have already mentioned, looking at the legal situation of women, one can argue that they were maintained in a condition of near slavery, which was legalised by the marital laws. It means, under the law of coverture, women were considered as their husband’s property; so women were their husband’s possessions, they were as objects. So, the husband could do whatever he wanted to his wife because she was considered as his property.

Financial control led to physical control and unlimited custody rights for men. It was extremely difficult to divorce; so once married it was almost impossible for a woman to gain her freedom, unless she became widowed. Even when a husband deserted his wife, he retained control of her property. To combat the inequalities of common law, a dual system of equity had developed, thus causing considerable inconsistencies concerning women that fuelled the feminist campaign. Feminists believed that marriage became a form of sex slavery or even prostitution; by depriving married women of control over their property, the law, it was argued, deprived them of their legal existence, of the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

William Thompson, who was working with John Stuart Mill in the East India Company, emphasized that married women lived under a contract, which was very similar to that of slaves. He thought that women “became the movable property, and ever obedient

servant to a husband who was their master (Thompson William, cited in Caine Barbara, 1997: 59).

Mill claimed that the legal position of Victorian women was worse than that of the slaves, but he stressed the fact that most husbands treated their wives with courtesy and civility, even love. Mill called this the morality of chivalry. It was a morality that belonged to what he and his wife Harriet called the theory of dependence, and it was a theory that belonged to an age of violence when the weak sought protection from the strong (Mill John Stuart, cited in <http://www.melbecon.edu.au/het/mill/women.htm>).

Harriet Beecher Stowe, the daughter of an eminent New England preacher, wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which became one of the most widely read and deeply penetrating books of its time. It sold hundreds of thousands of copies, and it was translated into many languages. Although Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* before the widespread growth of the women's rights movement of the late nineteenth century, the reader could nevertheless regard the book as a specimen of early feminism. The text portrays women as morally conscious, committed, and courageous as men. Stowe drew an analogy between the oppression of the blacks and the oppression of women. Yet, Stow expressed hope for the oppressed in her presentation of women as effectively influencing their husbands. Throughout the novel, the reader will find many examples of idealized womanhood, of perfect mothers and wives who attempt to find salvation for their morally inferior husbands or sons.

The analogy drawn between the legal position of women and slavery was of particular significance to the nineteenth century feminists because of the popular campaign for the abolition of the slave trade. So, feminists related the debasement and enslavement of women to the capitalist practice of private property. An example of this analogy can be illustrated through the work of Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Elaine Showalter, a lecturer at Princeton University, points out that *The Mayor of Casterbridge* begins with a scene that

dramatizes the analysis of female subjugation as a function of capitalism (Showalter Elaine, 1977: 53-68). In the opening chapter of Thomas Hardy's *the Mayor of Casterbridge*, Michael Henchard sells his wife, and many critics such as St John Butler Lance, reported that in rural districts, this was a mutually-agreeable way among the peasantry of dissolving dysfunctional marriages (St John Butler Lance, 1990: 75). Hardy justifies his use of the plot early in chapter four:

It may seem strange to sophisticated minds that a sane young matron could believe in the seriousness of such a transfer; and were there not a numerous other instances of the same belief the thing might scarcely be credited. But she was by no means the first or last peasant woman who had religiously adhered to her purchaser, as too many rural records show (Hardy Thomas, 1986: chap. 4).

In addition to this, Keith Wilson points out that Thomas Hardy had heard of such a case in Portland, not far from Dorchester, that a grinder named Calton sold his wife publicly in the market place, Stockport, on Monday week. She was purchased by shop-mate of the husband for a gallon of beer. He adds that another man called Charles Pearce sold his wife to a shoemaker named Elton for five pounds (Wilson Keith cited in <http://www.victorianweb.org.authors/hardy/dal1.html>).

Thomas Hardy attempted to make Victorian society more aware of its treatments and attitudes towards women. This is clearly shown in his selection of characters; Mrs. Goodenough, Nance Mockridge, Mother Cuxton, and Mrs. Stannidge, were presented as minor figures. So, whether of high or low estate, women are consistently revealed either as insignificant workers or as pawns in male power games.

Some of the injustices in the existing law came to the fore in a dramatic way during the 1830s through the case of Caroline Norton. Her life story gave evidence of the legal disabilities that unjust marriage laws placed upon a married woman, and it was her own experience that

drove her to ask for legal reforms; being a well-known figure in the literary circle of London, she was in a social position, like other feminists of her time, to make her claims known.

Caroline Norton was born in 1808. She was the granddaughter of the great dramatist Richard Sheridan, and she herself became a successful poet and novelist. In 1827, she married the honourable George Norton but her marriage failed. The details of this unhappy marriage began to be known to the public in 1835 when her husband accused her of adultery with Lord Melbourne. After many years of marital misery, characterized by violent scenes and by partial reconciliation, Norton returned home from a short trip to find that her husband had not only ended the marriage, but had also removed their three sons; the youngest was two years old, and had barred the house to her (Barret-Ducrocq Françoise, 2000: 65). He initiated divorce proceedings by bringing a case of criminal conversation against Lord Melbourne, one of Caroline's old friends. The case was dismissed, as George Norton was unable to demonstrate that his wife had been adulterous. However, the failure to obtain divorce did not bring reconciliation and the couple remained separated. George kept the children away from his wife, sending them to live with distant relatives for some of the time and keeping them on his Yorkshire state.

During the nineteenth century, women could not file suit against their husbands even if they were unjust; they had not the right to get divorce, and in case of divorce, a woman had not the right to keep her children. John Stuart Mill illustrated this idea as follows:

...So the wife: however brutal a tyrant she may unfortunately be chained to-though she may know that he hates her, though it may be his daily pleasure to torture her, and though she may feel it impossible not to loathe him-he can claim from her and enforce the lowest degradation of a human being, that of being made the instrument of an animal function contrary to her inclinations. While she is held in this worst description of slavery as to her own person, what is her position in regard to the children in whom she and her master have a joint interest? They are by law his children (Mill John Stuart, cited in <http://www.melbecon.edu.au/het/mill/women.htm>).

Caroline Norton managed to see her children very occasionally, but she was never permitted either to spend a night with them nor to care for them, even when they were ill. According to Dorothy M. Stetson, Mrs. Norton “suffered from all of the worst fates of a femme coverte as a result of her separation... [meaning by this] her husband exercised his legal right to deny her visit to her children” (M. Stetson Dorothy, 1982: 31). Instead, Norton waited in anguish, knowing them to be neglected and fearing that the drunkenness, violence and moodiness of her husband would result in the brutal treatment of their children. Her fears were too well justified; in 1842, six years after the children had been removed from her, the youngest died after a riding accident. Caroline felt that this would not have happened if the children had been under proper supervision. After this, she was allowed access to her older sons, but was never able to make a home for them. Caroline Norton began her individual campaign in protest against the laws relating to child and divorce. In 1837, she published at her own expense a pamphlet entitled: “The Natural claim of a mother to the custody of her children as affected by the common Law Right of the Father” (Op. cit., 62). Caroline Norton worked with a young Whig barrister, Serjeant -at-law Talfourd, who was specialized in infant custody cases, and was himself aware of the need for legal reform.

Barbara Caine reported that Caroline Norton used her considerable literary skills to produce pamphlets on the woman question. Eventually, in 1839, an Infant Custody Act was passed, according to which children of separated parents under the age of seven were allowed to reside with their mother (Caine Barbara, 1997: 68).

Caroline Norton’s pamphlet serves not only to demonstrate her importance for feminism, but also to question her own disclaiming of feminist intent. Her book *English Law for Women* serves, as it was intended, to generalize her complaint and to point to the legal and structural injustices suffered by women. She stressed the fact that she was not merely concerned to prove that her husband has been unjust, and her fate a hard one, but her aim was

to give women some rights so that they would acquire the opportunity of defending themselves; she declared:

I aspire to a different object. I desire to prove, not my suffering or his injustice but that the present law England cannot prevent any such suffering, or control any such injustice. I write in the hope that the law may be amended; and that those who are at present so ill-provided as to have only Truth and Justice on their side, may hereafter have the benefit of law and Lawyers (Norton Caroline, cited in Caine Barbara, 1997: 69).

It follows that a divorce was extremely rare and expensive to acquire in England during the nineteenth century; John Stuart Mill suffered from the hardness of the divorce law, since he could not marry Harriet Taylor that became possible only after the death of her husband in 1850. Mill considered the wife as the actual bondservant of her husband under the common law of England.

Before 1857, if a couple wanted a divorce, they had to secure a Private Act of Parliament, but in order to achieve this, a husband had to go to an ecclesiastical court to secure a separation from his wife. He had to prove a case of adultery against his wife, and against her alleged lover. The charge was called the criminal conversation; the underlying assumption was that the wife was the property of her husband and the defendant had damaged her value. It was even more difficult for a woman to get grounds for divorce; women could not divorce their husbands for adultery alone, they had also to prove gross cruelty, incest or bigamy. This idea might be illustrated by a quote from Monica Charlot and Roland Marx:

Le divorce est cependant plus libéralement accordé aux hommes qu'aux femmes selon le double code de moralité en vigueur à l'époque ; la preuve de l'adultère suffit pour libérer le mari d'une épouse infidèle, tandis que la femme, pour mettre fin à son mariage, doit non seulement prouver l'infidélité de son mari mais y ajouter des circonstances aggravantes telles que « l'abandon du foyer conjugal, la cruauté, l'inceste, le viol, la sodomie ou la bestialité » (Charlot Monica and Marx Roland, 1997: 68-9).

There was a strong opposition to the issue of divorce in nineteenth-century England; the most strenuous opposition came from the church; marriage was considered a sacrament that was indissoluble. If legislation were introduced, this would widen access to divorce, then the whole fabric of society that was based on marriage and family would be in danger. Proponents claimed that it would be unjust to keep unhappy couples together. These debates around divorce also opened discussions about who should be allowed to divorce (Barret-Ducrocq Françoise, 2000: 65-79).

A Divorce Bill was presented to parliament in 1856, and in 1857 The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act was passed, establishing new laws; it secured some property rights for married women. The Act was not intended to change the financial status of married women, but only to grant property rights to wives who were separated from their husbands (Ibid).

9- John Stuart Mill on religion:

It is worth noting that the British elite during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries produced a deal of writings concerning the religious view of women. Those writers were greatly influenced by St Paul's ideas; they conceived women as weaker vessels. St Paul claimed that wives should be under the aegis of their husbands because they were weak creatures. He sustained his arguments by referring to the Bible: "you husband must live with your wives with the proper understanding that they are the weaker sex. Treat them with respect, because they also will receive, together with you God's gift of life" (this verse is quoted in A. Holbrook Ralph, 1984). This verse had a profound influence on the elite's thoughts, hence, they appealed for a better treatment and greater consideration towards women.

Many subsequent writers thought that Eve had been made of Adam's rib, not of his foot to be his thrall, nor of his head to be his master; they used this argument in order to claim the equality between the sexes. One of the outstanding figures who developed this point is

Ralph Holbrook; he wrote a book entitled *the English Family*. Holbrook thought that women were often capable of giving better advice than men give, and they were even trusted to take care of their husband's place and fulfil the role of religious education to their children.

Despite these trustful and sympathetic writings, and the effort made by authors to support women's position by portraying them as being perfect educators, good and reasonable advisers, and the equals of men, the Victorian people considered women as inferior human beings; they asserted that Christian religion was the first to have claimed that, and it convinced the whole society that women were naturally inferior.

Men referred to the Bible to show that women were inferior to men. In Genesis, one can read Adam saying: "This is a bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh: She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man" (this verse is quoted in A. Holbrook Ralph, 1984: 97).

The conviction of women's inferiority reached and affected even the rationalists who thought that women had been divinely ordained the mental and physical inferiority to men. Thus, they were under the total submission and the blind obedience to all that is male; father, brother, and especially husband who got the lion's share of women's submission (Ibid., 111).

It follows from Christian theology's claim that women, being considered as weaker and softer, were naturally unfitted either for heavy work or for public life; their property was under the strict control of their husband. On their own farms, they had to take care of the house, children, garden, to feed pigs, to spin and to make butter while their husbands enjoyed the privilege of possessing everything.

John Stuart Mill claimed that religion condemned women. He stressed the fact that St Paul made clear his idea when he said: "Wives, obey your husbands". Once again, Mill stressed that women's condition as analogous to that of the slaves; he asserted that St Paul also

instructed slaves to obey their masters; “Slaves, obey your masters” (Mill John Stuart, cited in <http://melbecon.unimelb.edu.au/het:mill/women.html>).

John Stuart Mill argued that Christianity reduced the status of women by considering them as the bondservants of their husbands. He thought that Christianity was intended to stereotype the existing forms of government and society, and to protect them against change in order to reduce it to the level of Islamism or Brahmanism. He explained that those Christians who wanted to reduce the status of women behaved like the Muslims; they were reactionary and not progressive people (Ibid).

10- John Stuart Mill’s ideas on politics:

John Stuart Mill’s general thesis in his essay *On the Subjection of Women* is that the existing relations between the sexes were unequal and incompatible with a liberal humanist theory of equality. He saw a contradiction between the liberal humanist ideal of equality for humankind and the contemporary situation of women. A central tenet of post Enlightenment thought is the rejection of rule through aristocratic tyranny, that is to say, rule through birthright or other “divine right of kings”. Mill claimed that through formation of particular forms of government, there still exists a form of divine rule with regard to men’s rule over women. Since the law of the strongest is no longer operative in Mill’s liberal society as a condition of civilization, this should not govern relations between the sexes. John Stuart Mill argued that the principle, which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes and the legal subordination of one sex to another, is wrong in itself. In addition, he thought that one of the chief hindrances to human improvement is the principle of subordination and despotism. Therefore, the latter must be replaced by that of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one hand, nor disability on the other hand (Mill John Stuart, quoted in Josephine M. Guy, 2004: 520). John Stuart Mill asserted that:

The true virtue of human beings is fitness to live together as equals claiming nothing

for themselves but that they as freely concede to everyone else... The family, justly constituted, would be the real school of the virtues of freedom (Mill John Stuart Mill cited in Op.Cit).

John Locke was one of the most noted liberal philosophers in western history; his ideas may be compared to and used to support John Stuart Mill's vindication of equal rights of women. By studying Mill's ideas of the state of equality, liberty of man, and freedom of nature, it can be concluded that he used Locke's arguments for equality between the sexes. The first of Locke's ideas, state of equality, is included in his general construct of the state of nature. Locke asserted that: "all men are naturally in... a state of perfect freedom (Locke John cited in, <http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm>). He promoted a state of equality where all people should "be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection (Ibid). By reading Locke's writings, we feel that he included women in the state of equality. So, women should not be socially subjected to men.

Mill's ideal of marriage as a union of two persons between whom exists that kind of equality, is clearly shown in his work *On Liberty* when he declared Harriet, his wife, as his equal:

When two persons have their own thoughts and speculations in common; when all subjects of intellectual or moral interest are discussed between them in daily life, and probed to much greater depths than are usually or conveniently sounded in the writings intended for general readers; when they set out from the same principles, and arrive at their conclusions by processes pursued jointly, it is of little consequence in respect to the question of originality; which of them holds the pen; the one who contributes least to the composition may contribute most to the thought; the writings which result are a joint product of both, and it must often be impossible to disentangle the respective parts, and affirm that this belongs to one and that to the other (Mill John Stuart, 1975: 110).

He added that:

The equality of married persons before the law, is not only the sole mode in which that particular relation can be made consistent with justice to both sides, and conducive to the happiness of both, but it is the only means of rendering the daily life of mankind, in any high sense, a school of moral cultivation. Though the truth may not be felt or generally acknowledged for generations to come, the only school of genuine moral sentiment is society between equals (Mill John Stuart, cited in <http://melbecon.unimelb.edu.au/het/mill/women.htm>).

Mill asserted that men and women are complimentary; therefore, they should work together. Many writers and novelists such as Charlotte Bronte (1816-1854) shared this idea. Bronte portrays the image of women during the Victorian era, her work entitled *Jane Eyre*, is about one woman's desperate struggle to attain her identity. Though Jane possesses a strong soul, she must fight not only the forces of passion and reason within herself, but others' wills constantly imposed on her.

Bronte's choice of a strong independent heroine depicted her feminist ideals that would later lead to the overhaul of Victorian culture. By making Jane an educated woman, Bronte gives her strength in a patriarchal society that denied women's education. However, Jane becomes a woman who demands a say in her own destiny. During her courtship, she refutes Rochester's need to clasp bracelets on her wrists, and fasten a diamond Chain on her neck (Bronte Charlotte, 1987). Because these become the symbols of enslavement within a male dominated world, Jane's power and integrity prevent her from succumbing to Rochester and becoming just another of his possessions; for if she cannot preserve her individuality, she "shall not be... Jane Eyre any longer, but an ape in a harlequins jacket" (Ibid). With her refusal to become Rochester's mistress, she demonstrates her inner strength. The latter will enable her to face the possibility of hunger, poverty, and even death. It is in her decision not to marry St. John that Jane finally liberates herself from male supremacy. Jane claims that she is able to care for herself alone; even in her ultimate marriage to Rochester, she is in no way surrendering to convention, for she has entered their union not only with independence, but

also with emotional equality. Through this novel, Jane Eyre gained a loving marriage, in which she reached equality with Rochester. Jane asserted that: “We stood at God’s feet, equals as we are” (Bronte Charlotte, 1987).

Jane Eyre spread a message of the new emerging role of woman; Charlotte Bronte implies the importance of women having a useful and creative existence, to no longer be forced into the servitude of one man, nor enslaved to the social constrictions of the time. Jane declared that: “Women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer (Ibid., 96).

John Stuart Mill asserted that women were relegated to marginal spaces; they were deprived of political rights. He assumed that the legal, cultural and political limitations of women were part of a bygone era characterized by command and obedience. For this reason, men and women should work hand in hand for the evolution of society.

Mill asserted that women were enslaved all along their lives, and it is time to change the laws that relegated them to marginal spaces. In his essay *On the Subjection of Women*, Mill asked many questions on the condition of women, and on the factors that contributed in their enslavement. He concluded that marriage is the source of obedience and subjection. This idea might be illustrated by Mill’s words as follows:

It is Hardly to be expected that this question will be asked in respect to the change proposed in the conditions of women in marriage. The sufferings, immoralities, evils of all sorts, produced in innumerable cases by the subjection of individual women to individual men, are far too terrible to be overlooked(Mill John Stuart, cited in <http://mel.beconuimelb.edu.au/het/millwomen.htm>).

Mill emphasized that the conditions of women were worse than that of the slaves; he called marriage a law of servitude, he explained that although the public sphere of politics has

cast off this tyranny through formation of particular forms of government, there still exists a form of divine rule with regard to men's rule over women. Since the law of the strongest is no longer operative in this liberal society as a condition of civilization, this should not govern relations between the sexes.

The law of servitude in marriage is a monstrous contradiction to all the principles of the modern world, and to all the experience through which those principles have been slowly and painfully worked out. It is the sole case, now that negro slavery has been abolished, in which human being in the plenitude of every faculty is delivered up the tender mercies of another human being, in the hope forsooth that this other will use the power solely for the good of the person subjected to it. Marriage is the only bondage known to our law (Ibid).

Mill used the concept of democracy to illustrate his argument, stating that all human beings should have equal opportunities in order to achieve their goals. Contrary to much of public opinion of his time, Mill rejected the notion that women's subordination is natural, as well as the notion that such a natural order should be enforced by natural law. He argued that what is called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing, the production of men's thoughts.

In addition, Mill answered the anatomists who asserted the anatomical evidence of the superior mental capacity of men compared to women; men have a larger brain. In one of his replies, Mill argued that it is obvious that a man's brain will be larger than that of a woman because a woman's bodily frame is of less dimensions than that of a man. He said ironically that a tall and large-boned man must be, on this showing, wonderfully superior in intelligence to a small man, and an elephant or a whale must prodigiously excel humankind.

Once again, John Stuart Mill argued that the differences between men and women are artificial. Mill asserted that women's disabilities and male privileges are seen to be natural; he pointed out that what is taken to be natural in this case could easily be shown to be the product

of historical and social circumstances. He assigned that the education given to women is that of the sentiment rather than of the understanding. He tried, once again, to show how women *become the product of the system*, which oppressed them (F.Khan R., 1994: 85).

Locke's idea of the freedom of nature also parallels Mill's beliefs that women should no longer be oppressed; "to be under no other restraint but the law of nature" (Locke John, cited in <http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm>). This would imply the opposition of the traditional idea that women should be under the control of man. This referred to the preservation of life, which Locke saw very important and emphasized throughout his writings.

Mill argued that if the interests of the family are to be served, then gender equality will be required. He added that changing the social relation between men and women, to the one in which they play equal roles, will require each to curb their self-interests and to broaden their social sympathies to include those of the other and of the whole. Mill felt this in his own life; through his relationship with Harriet Taylor, he came to the strong conviction that women's suffrage is an essential step toward the moral improvement of humankind.

Moreover, Mill used one of Locke's principles on natural liberty of man that is "to be free from any superior power on earth and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man" (Op.cit). Mill developed the same idea suggesting that no person should have the right to be the superior power over another; he appealed for the extension of rights to women.

As far as man's social dominance is concerned, Locke stated that we are "all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions" (Ibid). Mill agreed on Locke's idea of the natural liberty of humans, he thought that there was no valid proof or reason that women should be considered inferior to men; therefore, women should be granted the same opportunities as men.

Women's suffrage is not at any time in the nineteenth century an obtrusive or even a prominent issue in public affairs. It could not be until there was a sufficient number of women

able to conduct a political movement. Nevertheless, those who were able had already tested their strength, and shown that it would be formidable. Encouraged by Mill and guided by Fawcett, a group of educated women started to ask for the enfranchisement of women. At the beginning, they failed, but after many attempts and the foundations of many organizations, they gained the right to vote in 1928 (M. Young G., 1966: 155).

11- John Stuart Mill's ideas on education:

The attitudes towards women and education during the nineteenth century were that the education of women should not be the same as that of men. Women were supposed to know the things necessary to bring up their children and to keep the house. That is why subjects as history, geography and general literature were of extreme importance; but Latin and Greek were of little importance. Women who wanted to study something like law, physics, engineering, science and art were satirized and dismissed. People thought that it was unnecessary that a woman goes to university, it was even said that it could make her ill. Women should stay more or less an ornament of society, and be subordinate to their husbands; obedience was the only requirement.

John Ruskin asserted that the education of a girl should be the same as that of a boy, but quite differently directed:

A woman, in any rank of life, ought to know whatever her husband is likely to know, but to know it in a different way. His command of it should be foundational and progressive, hers, general and accomplished for daily and helpful use. Not but that it would be wiser in men to learn things in a womanly sort of way, for present use, and to seek for the discipline and training of their mental powers in such branches of study as will be afterwards fittest for social service; but, speaking broadly, a man ought to know any language or science he learns, thoroughly- while a woman ought to know the same language, or science, only so far as may enable her to sympathise in her husband's pleasures, and in those of his best friends (Ruskin John, quoted Josephine M. Guy, 2004: 510).

John Stuart Mill thought that the differences that existed between men and women were but the natural effect in their education and circumstances. He claimed that women were brought up to believe that their minds are very different from those of men and that they are unfit for any role except a submissive one. This serves the purposes of men who not only want a slave, but desire a willing one:

At present, in the more improved countries, the disabilities of women are the only case, save one, in which laws and institutions take persons at their birth, and ordain that they shall never in all their lives be allowed to complete certain things (<http://melbecon.unimelb.edu.au/het/mill/women.htm>).

Mill adds:

There is no reason to believe that men and women differ in intelligence. Studies indicate that differences in achievement between men and women are the result of social conditioning. Women in our society are taught from the cradle that they are different from and inferior to men, that their chief value will be as sex partners and child bearers(Ibid).

For Mill, the basic framework for women's oppression rested in custom, the long continuing tradition whereby the natural position of women was that dependent wife, with no source of independent income and no independent legal or political rights; Mill declared:

They have therefore put everything in practice to enslave their minds... All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character in the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others(Ibid).

The position of women, at the current time, still bore all the signs of its origin in a primitive form of slavery and bondage, and women were still the main group in society whose opportunities and whole life framework was determined by birth. They were assumed inferior to men, and designed for wifhood and maternity by nature to choose some other path. Every aspect of women's education, Mill stressed, directed them towards the acceptance of their

submission; for men sought in their wives not only slaves but also willing ones (Mill John Stuart, 1997: 104).

Gayle Green and Coppélia Kahn agreed that the inequality between the sexes is neither a biological given nor a divine mandate, but it is a cultural construct; they asserted that:

The oppression of women is both a material morality, originating in maternal conditions, and a psychological phenomenon, a function of the way women and men perceive one another and themselves. But it is generally true that gender is constructed to serve the interests of male supremacy (Green Gayle and Kahn Coppélia, 1985: 3).

The idea that women should serve their family and society in terms of rising moral standards becomes necessarily the basis for demanding education, a wider sphere of employment, and independence from men.

A woman's education during the nineteenth century was very limited and, therefore, her job opportunities were limited too. Society could not conceive a woman entering a profession such as medicine or the law because it did not offer her a chance to do so. In fact, middle and upper class women had few avenues open to them for a secure future. There were some options available to a gently bred young woman who needed to support herself; she could take a position as a governess or a Lady's companion. Both jobs allowed a woman to earn a living without sacrificing her social position. However, the working conditions were often unpleasant and degrading. The man in the family might prey upon governesses, while Ladies' companions might be treated poorly by their employers and given many tasks to perform. Any other form of employment a woman could take was considered unacceptable and would harm her social standing.

The educational attainments, which were exclusively devised for men were the classical languages as Greek and Latin. This kind of education was not needful for women because they were not involved in politics. Besides, most writers on the subject of female education thought

that women should be contended to receive a practical training for the domestic roles, which were the ability to draw, sing, play music or speak modern language (French and Latin) that would help them to attract rich husband (Porter Roy, 1982: 30).

The necessity of such accomplishments is mentioned in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) in several discussions and dialogues. For instance, Lady Catherine de Bourgh praised Mary at the Meryton Assembly when she played the piano well. So, women were idealised and even chosen according to the mastery and their knowledge about accomplishments. A dialogue that had taken place between Bingley and Elizabeth and Netherfield, concerning women's accomplishments might illustrate another example:

Bingley: It is amazing to me, how young ladies can have patience to be very accomplished as they are all.

Elizabeth: Then, you must comprehend a great deal in your ideas of an accomplished woman, no one can be really esteemed accomplished who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with this. A woman must have kenn about music, singing, drawing, dancing and the modern languages, to deserve the word and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, on the tone of her voice, her addresses and expressions, or the world will be but half deserved(Austen Jane, 1813).

It follows from the dialogue, Mr. Bingley was surprised and astonished about the accomplishment of the women of his surrounding. Nevertheless, Elizabeth, in an ironic tone, claimed that a woman should not only submit herself to the traditional tasks or playing music, dancing and singing, but also she had to possess, in her addressing people, an exaggerated politeness and should have grace while walking or prancing around.

The first campaign in which the issue of gender difference, especially in terms of the intellectual differences between men and women, came to the fore was that over higher

education. All mid-Victorian feminists agreed that educational deprivation was an essential cause of women's oppression.

Emily Davis, a Victorian feminist, thought that any education designed specifically for girls entailed the arbitrary imposition of a particular view of their nature and capacities. So, the only way to grant women the opportunity to develop their full potential was to offer them the best education; similar to that offered to boys. Hence, Emily sought the raising of the standard of girls' secondary schooling to that of boys, and the admission of women to universities and colleges, where they would be able to have an education similar to that already offered to boys (Davis Emily, quoted in Caine Barbara, 1997: 115-6).

Moreover, Harriet Martineau, a radical feminist, wrote constantly about women's oppression and about the woman question throughout her life. Her first published article was about women's contribution in religion. However, over the decades, she wrote about almost every aspect of women's oppression in regard to education, political rights, marriage laws and social custom, health.

Like Caroline Norton who wrote about her own personal misfortunes, Martineau simultaneously exposed the private and the familial sufferings of an intelligent middle class woman; her autobiography offered a moving story of her own personal unhappiness as the little understood and often neglected daughter of an insensitive and unloving mother. In addition to this, Martineau faced many problems all along her life; like many women of her time, she was not granted the same education offered to her brothers, and her father did not let her choose her own career path, even when she had shown herself quite capable of doing so. These factors offered an extreme version of the miseries common among intelligent nineteenth century women (Caine Barbara, 1997: 70-1).

Martineau's early work was published in the *Monthly Repository*; her first article on women's education illustrated the moderation and limitations of Martineau's early views. She

claimed that women required a better system of schooling and improved private education, not because *great stores of information are necessary to women as men*, but because their own appropriate duties and peculiar employments would be better performed. She asserted that: “If the whole mind be exercised and strengthened, it will bring vigour to the performance of its own duties in any particular province” (Martineau Harriet, quoted in Caine Barbara, 1997: 72).

It follows from the quotation that Martineau wanted to prepare women for their household duties. She claimed that as boys were encouraged in studies and business, girls should be given an educational opportunity to improve their minds in order to be better wives and mothers.

Many critics agreed that during the nineteenth century, women imitated men in their writings, despite the differences between them in terms of experiences, ideas and opportunities.

The advent of female literature promises woman’s view of life, woman’s experience: in other words, a new element. Make what distinctions you please in the social world, it still remains true that men and women have different organizations, consequently, different experiences... But hitherto... the literature of women has fallen short of its functions owing to a very natural and a very explicable weakness it has been too much a literature of imitation. To write as men write is the aim and besetting sin of women; to write as women is the real task they have to perform” (G.H. Lewes, 1977: 3).

Writing about female creativity, in *On the Subjection of Women*, John Stuart Mill felt that like the Romans in the shadow of Greece, women were deeply influenced by male’s mode of writing using the same techniques. Mill asserted that women would have a hard struggle to overcome the influence of male literary tradition, in order to create an original, primary, and independent art. He claimed that: “If women lived in a different country from men, and had never read any of their writings, they would have a literature of their own” (Mill John Stuart, quoted in Elaine Showalter, 1977: 3). John Stuart Mill explained that women were **overshadowed** by male cultural imperialism: he emphasized this statement by writing that:

If women's literature is destined to have a different collective character from that of men, much longer time is necessary than has yet elapsed before it can emancipate itself from the influence of accepted models, and guide itself by its own impulses (Ibid.,4).

John Stuart Mill was very much in favour of the education of women that allowed them to have access to occupations other than those of a mother or a wife. In his essay *On the Subjection of Women*, he praised women's mental abilities by writing that:

When consequently, they chance to be as well provided as men are with the results of other people's experience, by reading an education. They are better furnished than men in general with the essential requisites of skilful and successful practice (Mill John Stuart, cited in <http://melbecon.unimelb.edu.au/het/mill/women.htm>).

John Stuart Mill thought that women should not be dependent on men for their livelihoods. He stressed the fact that women's financial freedom was very important, for without it, a wife will remain under her husband's wings all along her life. Mill believed that women would never be what they should be, nor could they get their place in society until they reached equality with men. In order to realize this, their parents should provide them with independent means of subsistence, or grant them an education similar to that of men (Ibid).

It is important to say that John Stuart Mill claimed that the position of authority held by men is not the result of the comparison of several kinds of systems being tried and having been found to be the best system, but that it is the only system that has ever been tried. As a result, one cannot use past experience to say that women are incapable of being in positions of authority. In his pamphlet, Mill stated that:

In the first place, the opinion in favour of the present system, which entirely subordinates the weaker sex to the stronger, rests upon theory only, for there never has been trial made of any other: so that experience, in the sense in which it is vulgarly opposed to theory, cannot be pretended to have pronounced any verdict (Mill John Stuart, cited in Ibid).

It follows from Mill's quotation that it is the law of force, which has ruled humankind until very recent times, for this reason it is difficult for women to protest this rule because they were prevented from birth to oppose it; they were taught from their infancy to be submissive.

Conclusion:

The demand for the Rights of Woman in the late eighteenth century was closely bound up with the range of social and economic changes brought by industrialization and urbanization, the expansion in wealth and power of the middle class, and the new emphasis on individualism, and economic independence that accompanied it. However, the political upheaval of the French Revolution awakened the consciousness of women. The French Revolution brought a general acceptance of the need for women's rights or representation.

During this period, women both in France and in England actively demanded citizenship and direct involvement in political life, but these rights were not granted. On the contrary, feminism arose out of the tensions created by the fact that the political and economic freedom demanded and gained by men was actively denied to women. Therefore, the most significant feminist statements of the period were direct responses to new legislation granting men rights, which were not being extended to women. Nonetheless, despite the ultimate denial to them of political rights or civic status, the intense debates about the meaning of women's citizenship during the French Revolution meant that women and their situation became a central issue in the political debate of the 1790s. So, during this era, the term women's right was widely used to refer to what would be called later called feminism.

Although the term feminism did not appear until the late eighteenth century in France and later on in Great Britain, it is used to describe earlier women's rights activists. These early feminists included both men and women who advocated greater equality for women in public institutions such as the government, the family, and the equality of the sexes in general.

Feminists claimed that women's rights were God-given; human customs or laws should not curtail them, and they strongly criticized traditional obstacles to women's abilities to control their own lives and destinies. It is worth noting that among the British advocates of

greater equality of women were Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill who agreed that men and women are equal, therefore, they should have the same rights.

• Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) started to ask for women's rights when most people believed that women were intellectually inferior to men. She advocated that the inequalities that marked women's lives could be erased by equal access to education. Her pamphlet *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* became a cornerstone upon which many subsequent feminist writers constructed arguments that advocated the equality of the sexes. Arguing by analogy to the Rights of Man expressed in the French and American Revolution, Wollstonecraft stressed the fact that women were born equal to men; their inequality was a social construction. She asserted that it could be reversed by providing girls with education and training equal to boys and women with employment equal to men.

Wollstonecraft's views were drawn from her own experience as a daughter and a teacher; her father wasted his inheritance in drink and ill-fated schemes, growing more abusive as he aged. Mary left home at the age of nineteen to become the paid companion of the wealthy widow in Bath, where she learned to disdain the emptiness of upper class women's Newington Green, North London. There, she lived among Dissenting Intellectuals, and was strongly influenced by them, especially Richard Price, who supported the French Revolution. Through them, Wollstonecraft came to discover the limitations in her own life, especially her inability to find meaningful work, as part of the systematic inequality of the sexes.

• Wollstonecraft used Lockean ideas to argue that human understanding was shaped by information derived from the senses, and that moral and ethical views were shaped by that understanding. In her *Vindication*, she argued that these human qualities did not differ by sex.

Through Price and his group, Wollstonecraft established herself in an intellectual community and came to understand her own struggle for personal freedom. In 1790, she

wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, framed as a letter to the influential conservative critic of the French Revolution, Edmund Burke, arguing for a society based on principles of freedom and equality. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* extended those principles to women, and she criticized those who denied women's rights and reduced them to marginal status such as Jean Jacques Rousseau whose views of women were quite conservative.

Wollstonecraft established herself as a political writer on the large questions of the day, in her defence of women's rights; Wollstonecraft asserted that greater equality for women would lead to greater tranquillity in families and in society.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was another advocator of women's rights; he was the eldest son of the philosopher James Mill; the young Mill was educated by his father at home. Like Wollstonecraft, Mill's life influenced greatly his writings and ideas. In 1833, he became a close friend of Harriet Taylor; the two worked closely together, and only after the death of John Taylor did Mill and Harriet marry.

John Stuart Mill thought that women needed a larger ethical framework to change laws that denied their rights because they were deeply imbedded in contemporary ethical beliefs pertaining to marriage and family life. It follows that during the nineteenth century, feminists aimed to change the laws pertaining to women, including married women's property rights, access to divorce, and child custody.

The work written by John Stuart Mill *On the Subjection of Women* was considered as the best example for women's demands; Mill described the status of women in Britain as being marginalized. He asserted that the legal, political and cultural limitations on women were part of a bygone era characterized by command and obedience. So, women have the right to be educated as men, therefore, to work hand in hand with men in order to contribute in the evolution of society.

I have already explained in the introduction that Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) was an appeal to men to change the status of women, and later in 1869, John Stuart Mill wrote a book entitled *On the Subjection of Women*; it was a kind of response to Wollstonecraft's essay. That is to say, by reading Mill's work, one can feel that he is responding to Wollstonecraft because he developed most of her ideas.

To begin, it is worth mentioning that Wollstonecraft's focus was on education; she asked for an education based on rational principles, which combined intellectual training with useful skills. Besides, she claimed that it is important to improve women's education, to cultivate their minds and souls rather than their bodies. She maintained that it is necessary to redirect that education away from accomplishments towards the training of intellect along rational lines in order to improve women's situation.

In addition to this, she stressed the fact that the characteristics ascribed to women are not natural but constructed; they are the result of limited education. She thought that the conduct and manner of women prove that their minds are not in a healthy state, and the cause of this should be attributed to a false system of education, gathered from books, written in order to stress their inferiority.

By reading her pamphlet, one can deduce that Wollstonecraft criticized Rousseau and other writers who considered women as mere children. She believed that those writers favoured the arts of coquetry and ornamental accomplishments, which tend to make women the creatures of sensation instead of reason, and these features have contributed to render women artificial, weak characters and consequently useless members of society. Furthermore, Wollstonecraft argued that women were taught from their infancy that they are different from men, to be submissive and to be under the authority of men. .

Wollstonecraft believed that women should have equal education, intellectual development, physical exercise, legal and moral responsibility, political representation and economic opportunities to men (Wollstonecraft Mary, quoted in Adriana Cracium, 2002: 98).

John Stuart Mill developed almost the same ideas; he asserted that women should be granted the same education provided to men. He stressed the fact that the differences that exist between men and women are but artificial and not natural; they are the result of their education and circumstances. He claimed that women were brought up to believe that their minds are very different from those of men, and they are unfit to any role except a submissive one; all these serve the purposes of men, in order to enslave women.

Mill thought that women should be independent from men; he emphasized that women's financial freedom was very important. He asserted that women should reach equality with men; they should achieve the same positions in society as men. To achieve this, their parents should provide them with independent means of subsistence, or grant them an education based on rational principles similar to those of men.

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft asserted that women were told from their infancy, by the examples of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of property will obtain for them the protection of men. For this reason, they should be beautiful and everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives.

In addition, Wollstonecraft thought that men used some arguments in order to convince women that they are superior, so they should be submissive to their orders. Mary criticized those who considered women inferior creatures, and those who believed that they were created for the sake of pleasing men.

Wollstonecraft argued that marriage reduced the status of women; she called it a lawless kind of power resembling the authority exercised by the absolute monarchs. She

asserted that the minds of married women were naturally weakened by their submission to their husbands, and this rendered them weak and indolent mothers.

It is necessary to mention that the status of married women was legally defined by the law of coverture, which stated that after marriage a man and a woman are one person before the law, and that person is the husband; so a woman became her husband's property. For this reason, Wollstonecraft rejected the institution of marriage considering it as an oppressive one; women under this law were treated like slaves. Wollstonecraft believed that relationships based on friendship and love would strengthen the relations between the husband and his wife.

Similarly, John Stuart Mill thought that the oppressive relationship for women was that of marriage, and *On the Subjection of Women*, offers one of the most searing pictures of marriage during the nineteenth century-England.

Mill reported that during the Victorian era, on marriage, women were no longer recognized as independent beings; upon marriage, a woman's legal identity was subsumed into that of her husband. William Blackstone outlines this in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* where he stressed the fact that under the law of coverture, women were their husband's property.

It follows that during this period, women were oppressed; they were considered as inferior creatures. John Stuart Mill called marriage the law of servitude; he compared the status of women to that of slaves; he described them as their husband's bondservant because they were obliged to obey them.

John Stuart Mill argued that marriage is a union of two persons between whom exists that kind of quality, he emphasized that the family should be a school of sympathy, love, tenderness, instead of being a school of despotism and absolute authority.

Wollstonecraft believed that religion reduced the status of women, and relegated them to marginal spaces. According to her, men used the principle of religion, in order to stress women's inferiority. She maintained that true religion is not a mere matter of sentiments, but rather a governing principle of conduct, drawn from self-knowledge, and rational opinion respecting the attributes of God.

Similarly, John Stuart Mill asserted that women had been divinely considered as inferior creatures. Thus, they were under a total submission and blind obedience to all that is male, father, brother, and especially the husband who got the lion's share of women's submission. In addition to this, Mill claimed that religion condemned women, he stressed the fact that St Paul made clear his ideas when he said: "Wives, obey your husbands", adding: "Slaves, obey you masters". John Stuart Mill believed that Christianity was intended to stereotype the existing forms of government and society, and protect them against change in order to reduce it to the level of Islamism and Brahmanism.

It is worth noting that Wollstonecraft is a strong believer of the natural rights, she believed that there are some rights that people inherited from birth, as rational creatures, who were raised above the brute creation by their improvable faculties, and they had received these rights, not from their ancestors but from God. Besides, she thought that society and social institutions should be founded on reason; men reduced the status of women by considering them mere children. She asserted that those writers, such as Rousseau and others, who based their reasoning on the female over-sensibility, excluded women from a participation in the natural rights of humankind.

Wollstonecraft claimed that women needed to be educated through the exercise of reason and understanding in order to reach equality with men. Besides, such kind of education would enable them to control their feelings and passions, to develop their power and to secure

their independence. She added that women's influence, when ill directed, could be more harmful than beneficial to society.

These ideas are similar to those of John Stuart Mill who argued that men and women are similar; therefore, they should have equal rights. Mill's general thesis in his essay *On the Subjection of Women* is that the existing relations between the sexes were unequal and incompatible with a liberal humanist theory of equality. He saw a contradiction between the liberal humanist ideal of equality for all and the contemporary situation of women.

John Stuart Mill appealed for the equality of the sexes, he believed that men and women are complementary; therefore, they should work together. He stressed the fact that changing the social relations between men and women, to one in which they play equal roles, will require each to curb their self-interests and broaden their social sympathies to include those of the other and those of the whole. He felt this in his own life; through his relationship with Harriet Taylor, he came to the strong conviction that women's suffrage is an essential step toward the moral improvement of humankind.

It is worth noting that England during the nineteenth century witnessed some major reforms in the subordinate legal status of women; the women's movement waged a long-term campaign to create more equity within the English laws that included rights to education and suffrage as well as property rights.

Great changes in the situation of women took place in the nineteenth century, especially concerning marriage laws and the legal status of women. The situation that fathers always received custody of their children, leaving the mother completely without any rights, slowly started to change. The Custody of Infant Act in 1839 gave mothers of unblemished character access to their children in the event of separation and divorce, and the Matrimonial Causes Act in 1857 gave women limited access to divorce. However, while the husband only had to prove his wife's adultery, a woman had not only to prove her husband's adultery, but

also incest, bigamy, cruelty or desertion. In 1873, the Custody Infant Act extended access to children to all women in the event of separation or divorce. In 1878, after an amendment to the Matrimonial Causes Act, women could ensure a separation on the grounds of cruelty and claim custody of their children. Magistrates even authorized protection orders to wives whose husbands have been convicted or of aggravated assault. An important change was caused by an amendment to the Married Women's Property's Act in 1884 that made women no longer a chattel but an independent and separate person. Through the Guardianship of Infant Act in 1884, women could be made the sole guardian of their children if their husband died.

In addition to this, there were some reforms made concerning the education of women; three medical professions were opened to women during the Victorian era; nursing, midwifery and doctoring. Nevertheless, it was only in nursing that women were widely accepted. Victorians thought the doctor's profession characteristically belonged to the male sex and a woman should not intrude upon this area but stay with the conventions the will of God has assigned her. In conclusion, Englishmen would not have women surgeons or physicians; they confined them to their role as nurses. Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) was an important figure in renewing the traditional image of the nurse as a self-sacrificing angel. She succeeded in modernizing the nursing profession, promoting training for women and teaching them courage, confidence and self-assertion.

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Résumé

Ce travail de recherche a pour objet d'analyser les discours féministes de deux écrivains anglais qui ont l'objectif de conquérir une mesure d'égalité dans la société anglaise entre les deux sexes. Mary Wollstonecraft a écrit *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, et *On the Subjection of Women* est écrit par John Stuart Mill. En outre, avant d'entamer l'analyse de ces deux œuvres, j'ai fait référence aux causes qui ont motivé les femmes de revendiquer leurs droits ; les idées du Siècle des Lumières, la Révolution Française et la Révolution Industrielle.

A travers l'histoire, on constate que les causes mentionnées ci-dessus avaient influencé les femmes et les motivaient afin de revoir leur statut social. C'est dans ce contexte politique et culturel que Mary Wollstonecraft avait écrit son œuvre *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Elle fut soudain convaincue qu'il était possible d'envisager une société où les privilèges héréditaires de rang et de fortune seraient abolis.

Wollstonecraft pense qu'il est nécessaire de procurer aux femmes une éducation qui puisse enrichir leur savoir, et développer leurs facultés et leurs potentiels. En réalisant cet objectif, les femmes auront l'opportunité de contribuer à l'évolution de la société. Elle rajoute qu'il est nécessaire de réformer les lois liées au mariage. On peut dire, que le travail de Mary Wollstonecraft est vital car elle demande l'égalité des deux sexes en prenant en considération les conditions des femmes dans la société.

John Stuart Mill est un autre féministe qui a pour but d'améliorer les conditions des femmes dans la société anglaise. Son livre *On the Subjection of Women* peut être considéré comme un bon exemple de revendication des femmes. Mill pense que les femmes sont soumises à respecter leurs père, frère et mari dès leur enfance.

Le dix-neuvième siècle a témoigné que les féministes se sont concentrés sur l'infériorité des femmes. Mill argumente qu'il est important de procurer aux femmes tous les

moyens pour qu'elles puissent contribuer dans le développement de la société. In insiste que les femmes doivent avoir accès à la vie professionnelle ; politique et culturelle. Il rajoute que les hommes sont tyranniques envers les femmes et la tyrannie fit parti de l'antiquité ; c'est un signe de primitivité.

A travers l'histoire, on constate que les femmes ont faites un pas géant, elles ont gagné beaucoup de droits dans tous les domaines, l'éducation, au sein de la famille, et dans la vie professionnelle.

ملخص

مكانة المرأة في الأدب الإنكليزي عند أهم أعلامه هي المحرك وراء هذا العمل، ويتمحور بشكل خاص على عمليين رئيسيين:

الأول لي: ماري ولستون كرفت (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*) والثاني جون ستيوارت مل (*The Subjection of Woman*). لكن للشروع في هذا التحلي، يجب أن يسبق بشرح أهم العوامل التي ساهمت في إيقاظ وعي المرأة من بين ذلك- مختلف الأفكار التي تولدت عن عصر الأنوار، الثورة الفرنسية والثورة الصناعية.

وقد تبين عبر التاريخ أن العوامل المشار إليها أعلاه قد أثرت في المرأة وحفزتها على مراجعة مكانتها الاجتماعية والمطالبة بحقوقها. وفي وسط هذه الظروف وقفت ماري ويسلتون كرفت لحماية حقوق المرأة والمطالبة بها عبر مقالها المعنون: (المطالبة بحقوق المرأة) أين أظهرت أهم أفكارها.

المطالب التي جاءت بها ماري ولستون كرفت اعتبرت دائما كمرجع رئيسي للحركة النسائية الإنكليزية وحتى الأنجلو-أمريكية في نهاية القرن 18م.

يقدم هذا المرجع نقدا صريحا لتربية المرأة- لظروف وشروط حياتها المنزلية وحتى زواجها. والمهم أيضا في هذا العمل هو تطرقه إلى الاختلاف الجنسين بين المرأة والرجل كعامل مهم في اعتبار المرأة كمجرد متعة جنسية. كما تظهر أهمية هذا العمل في تقديمه للحلول المناسبة التي تتمثل في إلغاء الفارق الجنسي كعامل مبرر للوضع المدروسة.

كما أشرنا إليه من قبل فقد ظهرت مطالب أخرى بحقوق المرأة وهو جون ستيوارت ميل في كتابه (*The subjection*) في هذا الأخير مل يؤكد أن النساء تحتنج إلى إعادة اعتبار القوانين الرديعية التي حالت دون تحدي و منحهن كامل الحقوق.

ولهذا خلال القرن 19 عشر، مدافعو حقوق المرأة سعوا إلى تغيير القوانين التي تهدف إلى استعباد المرأة، وهذا بأخذ بعين الاعتبار القوانين المعنية بحقوق المرأة المتزوجة، مطالبة الطلاق، والحضانة، علاوة على هذا مل يصر على أن الانتخاب ضروري للمرأة، لأن بفضله تتمكن من مواكبة تطورات الإنسانية.

هذا المقال الذي كشف من طرف جون سورت مل يعتبر من أهم المراجع التي تتادي بحقوق المرأة، من خلاله Mill أكد أن المرأة اعتبرت مهمشة أو مجردة من كل الحقوق.

من خلال دفاعه على المرأة، مل أصر أن الرجال مسيطرون، والسيطرة دليل على الجهل والتخلف ولهذا النساء يجب أن تتمتع بنفس التربية التي منحت للرجال، ليتسن لها العمل إلى جانب الرجل للمساهمة في تطور المجتمع.

وأخيرا، في ظل ما ذكر أعلاه، نستنتج أن كلا الكاتبتين ناديا إلى المساواة بين الجنسين بفضلهما، تطورات كثيرة شهدت في مجال المرأة في كل الميادين: التربية، قوانين الزواج والسياسة.