



Engagement entre rébellion et conformité : le cas of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst

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**Amid Rebellion and Conformity: The Case
of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline
Pankhurst**

Soutenue le 11 Octobre 2019 devant le jury composé de

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***“If women understood and exercised their power
they could remake the world”***

Emily Taft Douglas

Entre Rébellion et conformité : le cas de Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline pankhurst

Mary Wollstonecraft et Emmeline Pankhurst ont joué un rôle important dans la lutte pour les droits des femmes. Wollstonecraft a soutenu les droits des femmes à travers ses écritures et Pankhurst a fait du militantisme politique un moyen de lutte contre les injustices subies par les femmes. Néanmoins, les deux féministes avaient des objectifs similaires: améliorer les conditions sociales, économiques, culturelles, légales et politiques des femmes en Angleterre.

Pour défendre les droits des femmes, les deux féministes, Mary Wollstonecraft et Emmeline Pankhurst, se sont rebellées contre le statut quo des femmes dans leurs sociétés à travers plusieurs actions. D'une part, Mary Wollstonecraft a contesté le statut juridique des femmes, leur dépendance financière et leur infériorité intellectuelle. Elle a également critiqué et refusé le mariage sous les conventions du XVIIIe siècle. Durant sa vie, Mary Wollstonecraft s'est rebellée contre l'institution du mariage et s'est engagée à défendre les relations libres dont deux de ses relations en étaient une illustration. .

D'un autre côté, Emmeline Pankhurst a contesté les conditions socio-économique, juridique et politique des femmes bien que son combat se soit limité exclusivement à dénoncer la privation des droits des femmes. Elle était persuadée que gagner le vote sur la même base que les hommes permettront aux femmes d'améliorer plus efficacement leurs conditions générales. Toutefois, l'essence de la rébellion de Mme Pankhurst réside dans ses modes d'action non conventionnels. Pour elle, la violence est le meilleur moyen pour obtenir l'égalité de vote entre hommes et femmes. Les positions de Mary Wollstonecraft et Emmeline Pankhurst sont une réponse à tous les préjugés susmentionnés contre les femmes. Dans son pamphlet politique *Défense des droits des hommes* écrit en 1790 et essai féministe *Défense*

des droits de la femme , publié en 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) a condamné le statut social, éducatif et juridique des femmes au XVIIIe siècle. Elle a également écrit d'autres ouvrages tels que *Pensées sur l'éducation des filles* (1786), *Histoires originales de la vie* (1788), *Le lecteur féminin* (1789), and *Lettres écrites lors d'un court séjour en Suède, en Norvège et au Danemark* (1796).

En outre, Wollstonecraft a critiqué le statut des femmes mariées à travers ses deux romans *Mary*, une fiction (1788) et *Maria ou le malheur d'être femme* (1798). Dans *Mary*, une fiction, Wollstonecraft s'est inspirée de sa vie personnelle de Wollstonecraft ; en particulier, son expérience de la Violence conjugale et discrimination entre frères et sœurs dans la même maison. Le deuxième roman a été publié après la mort de Mary Wollstonecraft et était une protestation courageuse contre l'institution injuste du mariage au XVIIIe siècle.

Mary Wollstonecraft était aussi une historienne, elle a écrit *Une vue historique et morale de l'origine et des progrès de la Révolution française et de ses effets en Europe* (1794), son premier et dernier ouvrage d'histoire dans laquelle elle a rapporté les événements de la Révolution française. Étant à Paris pendant la Révolution française, Mary Wollstonecraft était influencée par les principes et les objectifs de la révolution. En effet, son ouvrage *Défense des droits des hommes* est venu en réponse aux *Réflexions sur la Révolution en France* (1790) d'Edmund Burke. Ce pamphlet politique la distinguait en tant qu'écrivain tandis que son *Défense des droits de la femme* l'a marquée comme un auteur féministe et moral.

Défense des droits de la femme de Wollstonecraft a aussi fait écho au *Rapport sur l'instruction publique* (1791) à l'Assemblée nationale en France de Maurice Talleyrand-Périgord, bien que ce rapport eût accordé le droit à l'éducation aux hommes et aux femmes. Wollstonecraft s'est opposée au plan éducatif que le rapport met en avant. Elle a également

discrédité divers d'autres écrivains qui ont écrit sur le thème de l'éducation des filles en réclamant une éducation plus rationnelle pour les filles. Wollstonecraft a même rejoint les rangs des écrivains radicaux pour défendre les idéaux de la Révolution française, proclamant ainsi qu'un changement politique et social pourrait émerger de cette révolution. Cependant, la célébration de la Révolution française par Mary Wollstonecraft et par d'autres écrivains anglais a été considérée comme une tentative d'importer les idéaux de l'Assemblée nationale en Grande-Bretagne par certains écrivains comme Edmund Burke. Cependant, sa revendication radicale ultime était sa suggestion que les femmes devraient avoir des représentants au Parlement et ainsi prendre part au même titre que les hommes, aux décisions politiques.

Presque un siècle après, Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) vient contester le statut inférieur des femmes en Grande-Bretagne. Son rôle dans le comité exécutif de la Société nationale pour le droit de vote des femmes et dans le comité des propriétés des femmes mariées lui permettait avec son mari de militer en faveur d'une loi sur la propriété des femmes mariées et pour un droit de vote des femmes. Par la suite, elle rejoint diverses sociétés de suffrage telles que La Fabian Society et l'Association libérale des femmes (E. Pankhurst 15-6-19). Au cours de ses premières années d'activisme politique, Emmeline Pankhurst a travaillé sous la bannière du Parti libéral et plus tard au sein du Parti travailliste. Déçue par le manque de motivation politique des partis pour améliorer la situation des femmes elle décide de créer son propre union politique 'Union sociale et politique des femmes' (WSPU) en 1903.

Durant ses premières années, le WSPU adopte des méthodes pacifiques (S. Pankhurst 48). Il visait à obtenir le soutien du public en sensibilisant les gens à la nécessité du droit au vote des femmes pour faire pression sur les parlementaires et obtenir ainsi un soutien. Vers 1905, il s'est avéré que le militantisme pacifique était inefficace et le changement de méthode de combat est devenu nécessaire. Les militants commençaient par harceler les politiciens et

interrompre leurs réunions politiques avant d'avoir à recourir à des méthodes plus radicales. En 1912, les suffragettes, membres de la WSPU, ont brisé les vitres du Parlement. Comme signe de protestation, elle se sont enchaînés aux monuments historiques après avoir détruit des propriétés privées. Le gouvernement a réagi par l'emprisonnement des responsables des actes de vandalisme. Les suffragettes qui avaient entamé une grève de la faim ont subi un gavage forcé. Cependant, la presse ne pouvait plus continuer à ignorer l'activisme féministe. Bien que ces réactions étaient principalement négatives, elle a néanmoins ravivé la cause attirer l'intérêt du public (C.Pankhurst 55).

De nombreux historiens se sont focalisé sur leurs méthodes violentes de militantisme pour en faire d'elles des rebelles. De nombreux historiens tels que Miriam Brody, Eliza Lynn Linton et Paula Bartley ont considéré les deux féministes comme rebelles et même radicaux. Wollstonecraft était considérée comme un auteur radical et révolutionnaire en raison de sa proposition de mettre en place un système éducatif unifié pour les garçons et les filles, de sa défense d'une norme de moralité unique pour les deux sexes et de sa vie privée qui était considérée comme scandaleuse par rapport aux normes du XVIIIe siècle. De son côté, Emmeline Pankhurst était perçue comme une rebelle en raison de ses tactiques militantes violentes. Son militantisme a été longtemps considéré comme une méthode radicale et innovante pour réclamer le droit au vote. Cependant, ses tactiques extrêmes et radicales ont éclipsé son recours à d'autres méthodes dans sa quête du suffrage féminin.

Contrairement à la plupart des historiens qui se sont concentrés sur les revendications révolutionnaires portées par Mary Wollstonecraft et Emmeline Pankhurst, ce travail de recherche a pour dessein d'explorer leurs méthodes de combat et principalement leur utilisation de la « conformité stratégique » pour faire avancer leurs revendications émancipatrices. Il s'agit d'examiner la manière dont les deux féministes se sont conformées de manière stratégique à certaines notions de moralité, de statut matrimonial, de maternité et

de féminité, afin d'atténuer le radicalisme de leurs revendications et de leurs actions, et ainsi discréditer les accusations de leurs critiques. Cette recherche vise par ailleurs à évaluer l'efficacité de la conformité comme moyen de lutte émancipatrice des deux féministes et à démontrer que la conformité stratégique constitue un instrument politique tout aussi important que la rébellion.

Cette recherche vise à étudier la conformité non pas comme une méthode d'acquiescement mais plutôt comme un instrument de changement dans la vie des femmes subordonnées. À cette fin, je me suis largement appuyé sur des études de conformité au Moyen-Orient comme celle de Janice Boddy. Janice Boddy, par exemple, qui a expliqué comment les femmes du nord du Soudan, les femmes Hofriyati, ont réussi à transformer leur rang inférieur dans la société grâce à leur conformité aux normes sociales telles que la circoncision pharaonique, le décorum, l'abstinence et la préservation de la droiture dans ses différents modes ainsi qu'accepter certaines croyances telles que les charmes érotiques qui étaient censés être plus répandus chez les femmes que les hommes.

Ainsi, ils ont négocié leur statut inférieur non pas en se rebellant contre les paradigmes qui les promeuvent, mais en les transcendant. En outre, les femmes Hofriyati ont exploité ce que les universitaires occidentaux appellent « des outils de subordination » comme une méthode pour proclamer leur importance et leur valeur en tant que groupe dans les réunions rituelles qu'elles organisent, en tant qu'individus par le mariage et par leur grande persévérance dans leur relation réciproque active avec les hommes. L'adoption stratégique des normes culturelles qui les opprimaient pour affaiblir l'autorité masculine est un exemple de la résistance des femmes à la domination masculine.

Par conséquent, la conformité aux normes sociales et aux pratiques culturelles peut être un aspect important de résistance des femmes à l'autorité masculine. Ceci dit, l'utilisation

de la conformité telle que l'adoption du voile pour apporter des changements sociaux est une question qui a été largement débattue au Moyen-Orient. L'étude bibliographique a permis de montrer que les femmes auraient négocié le pouvoir et servi leur bien-être par leur comportement conformiste, leur tenue, leur activité sexuelle, leur reproduction, et leur choix du partenaire » (Abu-Rabia-Queder 2011:19). Ces études soulignent que le respect du « voile » comme code vestimentaire par les femmes, par exemple, est une méthode « manipulatrice » de résistance inactive, visant à créer une réforme sociale dans leur vie.

Dans cette recherche, j'ai soutenu que Mary Wollstonecraft, à travers ses écrits et Emmeline Pankhurst, à travers son leadership à l'Union sociale et politique des femmes, ont essayé de résister à l'autorité masculine et même aux critiques féminines. Elles ont accepté le rôle traditionnel des femmes en tant qu'épouses et mères et ont défendu la morale et le respect des idéaux de la féminité. L'objet de cette recherche vise à déterminer leurs motivations et expliquer leur recours à la conformité comme moyen de combat. La réponse se trouve dans la perception du caractère, de la conduite et des rôles des femmes durant le XVIIIe et le XIXe siècle.

Selon divers livres de conduite et revues de presse du XVIIIe siècle, les épouses et les mères idéales étaient des femmes au foyer respectueuses de leurs maris et de leurs enfants. On attendait des femmes qu'elles entretiennent leur progéniture, qu'elles surveillent les femmes de chambre et qu'elles se conforment aux souhaits de leur mari. Elles devaient également être obéissantes, dévouées, de bonnes gestionnaires de l'économie de la maison, réservée, honorables, généreuse et attentives aux privations d'autrui. De plus, les femmes mariées étaient invitées à être obéissantes et agréables envers leurs maris, quelle que soit la colère et l'irritabilité de ces derniers. En outre, elles ont été largement considérées comme responsables de la réussite ou de l'échec de leur mariage.

Cependant, au XIXe siècle et en particulier à l'époque victorienne, les femmes et les mères de famille étaient considérées comme une acquisition vouée êtres femmes au foyer. Ainsi, les livres de conduite les conseillaient de conserver leur sphère sacrée de la «maison». En fait, l'image de femme idéale, en particulier les femmes de classes moyennes et supérieures, étaient étroitement associées à la maison. L'éthique domestique du XIXe siècle a distingué les mères et les épouses en tant que gardiennes de la famille et de la morale de la société.

Sarah Stickney Ellis, célèbre écrivaine de livres de conduite au XIXe siècle, a affirmé que les femmes «présidaient» leur sphère domestique. Cependant, elle a rassuré les hommes que le terme «présider» était destiné à orienter les femmes vers leurs responsabilités familiales afin de devenir «de meilleures épouses, filles et mères plus utiles ; en tant qu' exemples, elles légueront un héritage riche à celles qui allaient suivre leurs pas. »(53). En règle générale, les épouses et les mères idéales aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles étaient des femmes au foyer respectueuses de leurs maris et de leurs enfants. Elles devaient s'occuper de l'éducation morale et religieuse des enfants.

Par ailleurs, les femmes devaient être féminines, en d'autres mots, principalement modestes, douces et affectueuses. Concernant les vêtements féminins, Dr James Fordyce, un écrivain du XVIIIe siècle, a décrit la robe idéale d'une femme comme simple mais incroyablement attrayante et belle. Cette robe doit représenter la solennité de la personne. La solennité est un costume divin dépourvu d'expositions, ample, fait maison et résistant. Il devrait être destiné à préserver les femmes des méfaits du monde et à cacher la nudité de son âme. La robe doit être appropriée pour un usage quotidien, modeste et très belle.

Au XIXe siècle, la féminité était un ensemble de mœurs et de qualités que les femmes étaient censées posséder. Par exemple, être une bonne compatissante et vertueuse femme ou

mère étaient les qualités d'une femme féminine selon les livres de conduite du XIXe siècle. Sarah Stickney Ellis a affirmé que la qualité principale qui couronne le personnage féminin est la délicatesse et particulièrement la délicatesse authentique. Elle rejette ainsi tous types de fausses délicatesses qui visent uniquement à impressionner les hommes en simulant la modestie et la timidité. Néanmoins, lorsqu'une femme ne possède pas naturellement la délicatesse, elle doit l'apprendre. En d'autres termes, Ellis suggérait qu'en l'absence d'une délicatesse authentique et naturelle, les femmes devraient toujours faire semblant et simuler la délicatesse.

En dehors de la délicatesse, la robe féminine était la principale manifestation d'une femme féminine. La robe féminine au XIXe siècle était conçue par la mode, donc elle était en constante évolution. Selon Caroline Goldthorpe, tout au long du XIXe siècle, la mode anglaise s'est considérablement inspirée de la française rendant ainsi la robe à la mode un phénomène internationale. De 1837 à 1877, les femmes à la mode devaient garder une silhouette artificielle façonnée par différents sous-vêtements. Ces sous-vêtements ont été créés pour fournir un volume supplémentaire à une partie du corps ou pour condenser l'amplitude indésirable dans une autre (Goldthorpe 11-23).

Le corset est un exemple des sous-vêtements qui ont permis aux femmes d'obtenir une silhouette à la mode et féminine. Malgré que les lacets serrés étaient accusés d'utiliser le corset pour provoquer des appels sexuels, ne pas utiliser de corset peut rendre une femme suspecte de relâchement sexuel ou de clémence morale (Kortsch 56). En fait, Patricia A. Cunningham a affirmé que cela pourrait même suggérer qu'une femme sans corset était une prostituée qui tente d'attirer de nouveaux clients (23). Néanmoins, une fois attaché à la dimension «appropriée», le corset incarnait le raffinement et la convenance. Cependant, l'utilisation initiale du corset était de décrire et d'exposer «La forme féminine au plus grand avantage» (Kortsch 56).

Cependant, une robe féminine n'était jamais complète sans chapellerie. Au début de l'époque victorienne, toutes les femmes, riches ou pauvres, portaient un chapeau avant de quitter leur Maisons. En fait, la plupart des femmes portaient un bonnet de lin ou de mousseline lisse à la maison. Néanmoins, soirées officielles, les femmes riches préférèrent généralement remplacer les chapeaux par d'autres cheveux accessoires tels que «plumes, fleurs, rubans, peignes décoratifs» (Bix 40). Selon la rédactrice de livres de conduite, Sarah Stickney Ellis, les femmes devaient aspirer à devenir plus attrayantes et agréables et non simplement «visibles et perceptibles» tout en choisissant leur robe. Ellis a affirmé la nécessité de se conformer à la mode dans une certaine mesure. Toutefois, les femmes doivent toujours être sélectives quant au type de robe à la mode qu'elles choisissent afin de ne pas compromettre leur modestie ou leur raffinement (128).

En outre, les femmes devaient avoir des normes de qualités morales supérieures. La moralité des femmes, telle que proposée dans les livres de conduite du XVIIIe siècle, sont classée selon un certain nombre de qualités telles que : la modestie, la maîtrise de soi, la docilité, l'obéissance et la délicatesse et surtout la « chasteté ». En 1746, Dans une lettre d'éloge et de conseils moraux à une jeune femme, Wetenhall Wilkes rappelle que la chasteté est différente des autres vertus car elle a le pouvoir de mettre en valeur toutes les autres vertus de l'être humain et de libérer toutes les nobles dotations. En d'autres mots, la chasteté est étroitement liée à l'honneur d'une femme. Par conséquent, le moindre défaut sur l'honneur d'une femme était impardonnable. C'est cette qualité de la chasteté qui a incité le sexe masculin à considérer le sexe féminin et à l'apprécier. Wilkes expliqué que la chasteté est une sensation rapide et subtils dans l'esprit qui rend une femme ratatinée et la pousse à éviter tout ce qui est immoral ou malveillant (101) .Par ailleurs, la modestie est un autre aspect central de la morale, un critère que les femmes devaient respecter dans leur quête de louanges et d'adoration des hommes.

Au XIXe siècle, les écrivains moraux faisaient clairement confiance à la supériorité morale des femmes et la tenaient pour acquise. Les livres de conduite ne se concentraient plus sur le fait de conseiller les femmes d'être modestes et morales, elles supposaient simplement qu'elles l'étaient. Ils ont cherché à tenir les femmes responsables de la moralité de leur foyer, de leurs maris et de leurs enfants. Ils visaient à associer les femmes à la sphère familiale en raison de leur moralité supérieure. D'une part, le fait de garder les femmes dans le «foyer» leur permettait de protéger la moralité de leur foyer. D'un autre côté, les femmes sont mieux protégées dans leur «sphère privée» du monde extérieur immoral ainsi rien ne pouvait ternir leur réputation.

De plus, les écrivains féminins des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles n'étaient célébrés que lorsqu'elles faisaient preuve de bienséance, de réserve, de modestie et d'estime de soi. Les écrivains qui se sont écartés de ce modèle ont été critiqués et leurs œuvres ont été au mieux ignorées. Les femmes écrivains qui ont ignoré l'attitude moraliste prescrite ont été particulièrement censurées. En outre, les femmes écrivains étaient également plus sujettes à la critique que leurs homologues masculins. Ceci explique en partie pourquoi une femme qui prônait un changement révolutionnaire du statut des femmes comme Mary Wollstonecraft; a tenté de se conformer aux idéaux moraux et au rôle traditionnel des femmes dans ses œuvres. Wollstonecraft se montrait réservée à l'idée d'aliéner complètement ses lecteurs et a essayé d'atténuer toute prétention radicale qu'elle présentait dans ses œuvres grâce à sa conformité.

On peut dire la même chose d'Emmeline Pankhurst qui, avec d'autres suffragettes, ont été accusés de ne pas tenir compte de la domesticité, de la masculinité et du manque de délicatesse et d'élégance. Ces allégations ont été principalement propagées par la presse et les sociétés anti-suffrage. Emmeline et le reste des dirigeantes de l'WSPU ont estimé que leur militantisme était déjà suffisamment extrême. Par conséquent, il n'y avait pas besoin de radicalisme ou de non-conformité inutile. Ainsi, elles ont tenté de se conformer aux

conventions afin de ne pas aliéner un public qui était déjà aliéné par les violents actes militants des suffragettes. En outre, elles souhaitaient discréditer les accusations de la masculinité et de la rébellion contre la domesticité. En conséquence, les deux féministes se conformaient à certaines notions de moralité de maternité et de féminité

Le chapitre «Défendre la morale», je met l'accent sur certaines notions morales de la conformité de Mary Wollstonecraft et Christabel Pankhurst à leurs sociétés. J'explique que Mary Wollstonecraft et la direction de la WSPU dans son ensemble se conformaient à la morale afin de faire avancer leurs revendications émancipatrices. J'ai choisi de comparer les prétentions morales de Wollstonecraft dans son *Défense des droits de la femme* à celles de Christabel Pankhurst dans son *Des faits clairs sur un grand mal* pour tenter d'apporter plus de lumière sur la question de la conformité et le militantisme féminin. Le livre de Pankhurst est un recueil d'articles qui ont été publiés pour la première fois dans le journal de l'WSPU; il fait donc partie de la propagande de la WSPU. Dans un premier temps, je détermine la manière dont Mary Wollstonecraft et Christabel Pankhurst ont utilisé la moralité pour faire avancer leur cause. Dans un second temps, j'examine la réception contemporaine *Des droits de la femme* de Mary Wollstonecraft et de *Des faits clairs* de Christabel Pankhurst.

Bien que la moralité des femmes a été débattue par la part des écrivains moraux du XVIII et dix-neuvième siècles, cette recherche se focalise sur un nouveau angle de recherche. Ce dernier est lié au fait que Mary Wollstonecraft et Christabel Pankhurst ont utilisé stratégiquement certaines notions morales pour faire valoir leurs revendications émancipatrices. J'estime que les deux féministes étaient conformes à la morale afin de soutenir leurs revendications d'émancipation les rendant moins radicaux et plus en conformité avec l'image préexistante des femmes morales. Néanmoins, Je voudrais préciser que dans le cas de Mary Wollstonecraft, la conformité à la morale ne fut affichée dans ses écrits, alors que

sa vie personnelle, révélée après sa mort, a démontré une morale différente dans lequel Wollstonecraft s'est rebellé contre les valeurs morales du XVIIIe siècle.

Pour atteindre leurs objectifs, les deux féministes ont prêché la morale dans leurs écrits. Dans sa justification des droits de la femme, Mary Wollstonecraft a affirmé que la prééminence des hommes sur les animaux était due à la raison tandis que la vertu était la qualité qui élevait un être humain au-dessus d'un autre. Wollstonecraft a également fait valoir que les êtres humains ont partagé des passions afin d'apprendre comment les résister et atteindre un niveau de connaissance que les animaux ne pourraient pas atteindre. Par conséquent, la raison, la vertu et la connaissance étaient les qualités selon lesquelles la perfection humaine et la capacité du bonheur doit être jugé (15-16).

Wollstonecraft remettait en question l'état d'ignorance dont souffraient les femmes sous prétexte de maintenir leur «innocence». Les femmes se sont vu refuser le pouvoir direct et en raison du type d'éducation qu'elles ont reçu, elles ont donc eu recours à des moyens de pouvoir tels que l'obéissance rusée et extérieure. De ce fait, Wollstonecraft a estimé que le maintien des femmes dans un état d'ignorance ne préserverait pas leur 'innocence et leur bonté mais qu'il nuirait certainement à leur morale puisque leur ignorance les inciterait à être rusées et manipulatrices. D'un autre côté, si les femmes n'étaient dotées que de charmes, les hommes chercheraient à trouver leur plaisir avec plusieurs femmes. Finalement, les maris adultères inciteraient leurs femmes à l'adultère. Néanmoins, Wollstonecraft a estimé que ces femmes étaient pardonnables à cause de l'éducation qu'elles ont reçue car elles n'ont pas appris à vénérer l'intérêt public ou les droits civils admis et de ce fait étaient conduit à se faire justice par la vengeance (xi-xii)

Selon Wollstonecraft la modestie, la tempérance et l'abnégation sont les conséquences de la sagesse et de la raison. Cependant, en présence d'une éducation qui fait de la sensibilité

une priorité plutôt que la raison. La vie des femmes modestes est devenue une lutte constante car la modestie a cessé d'être une qualité naturelle chez les femmes. Elle est devenue un comportement incité par des règles de conduite artificielles (181). Toutefois, si les femmes avaient la possibilité d'acquérir des connaissances intellectuelles : «des passions et des motifs plus nobles régiront leurs appétits et leurs sentiments» (Wollstonecraft 182).

En dehors de la sensibilité, Wollstonecraft a critiqué la conduite superficielle qui prônait soi-disant la "bonne réputation" d'une femme. Dans son huitième chapitre "La moralité minée par les notions sexuelles de l'importance d'une bonne réputation", Wollstonecraft déclare que l'instruction donnée aux femmes de se comporter d'une certaine manière dans le but d'être bien réputée était un système de moralité artificiel, qui empoisonnerait la morale et détruirait sa «substance» (298).

Wollstonecraft croyait que la cause initiale de la dégradation morale des femmes était des hommes sensuels qui essayaient de séduire les femmes, et les femmes, apprenant à plaire, devinrent tout aussi sensuelles. En résumé, Wollstonecraft a fait valoir que «les deux sexes se corrompent mutuellement et s'améliorent mutuellement »(318). En outre, Wollstonecraft a exhorté les hommes à défendre les femmes qu'ils ont tentées. Elle a suggéré qu'un moyen sûr d'améliorer la moralité féminine serait de fournir aux femmes déshonorées un substitut à la prostitution pour ainsi se débarrasser d'un vice désastreux tant pour les personnes que pour la moralité (319).

De même, Christabel Pankhurst a affirmé que les femmes étaient plus chastes que les hommes. Elle soutenait que lorsqu'une femme n'était pas chaste, elle était considérée comme une femme «déchue» et rejeté par la société distinguée. Cependant, les hommes impudiques étaient considérés comme soumis à leur «nature humaine» et ils ne devaient pas être considérés comme non chastes en premier lieu. Etant donné la logique masculine, une femme

qui a commis l'adultère se trompait gravement que son mari pourrait la divorcer. Elle ne pouvait pas utiliser le motif de la «nature humaine» pour se défendre. Néanmoins, les hommes qui visitaient fréquemment des prostituées tout au long de leur mariage ne suivaient que leur nature humaine et ne méritaient aucune punition selon leur logique masculine. Par conséquent, Christabel a conclu que, selon la vision que les hommes avaient d'eux-mêmes, « La nature humaine des femmes est quelque chose de beaucoup plus propre, plus fort. »(18-9).

En outre, Mlle Pankhurst a insisté dans son livre *Des faits simples* que les deux maladies sexuelles telles que la gonorrhée et la syphilis, étaient «les premières causes de la dégénérescence physique, mentale et morale et du suicide racial. Comme elles sont très répandues (de 75 à 80% des hommes infectés par la gonorrhée et un pourcentage considérable, difficile à déterminer avec précision, infectés par la syphilis), le problème est d'une ampleur épouvantable » (6). De plus, elle a supposé que dans l'ensemble, les conjoints infectés étaient ignorant de la maladie qu'ils ont contractée. Les hommes, qui ont évité de dire les termes syphilis et gonorrhée devant leurs femmes à cause de leur délicatesse, n'ont pas trouvé indélicat de les contaminer avec les maladies terribles pour portaient ces noms. (6). Bien évidemment, les statistiques avancées par Pankhurst semblent exagérées. Néanmoins, elle avait pour objectif de présenter les femmes comme des épouses innocentes, chastes et pures qui étaient mariées à des hommes vicieux, immoraux et inconsidérés qui n'hésiteraient pas à les infecter avec des maladies aussi horribles.

En outre, Mlle Pankhurst a réfuté les affirmations des hommes selon lesquelles la prostitution était inévitable et a attribué une telle affirmation au manque de connaissances et de sophisme des hommes. Relation dissolue avec les prostituées comme les hommes ont choisi de l'appeler "l'exercice de leurs fonctions naturelles" était la raison que les campagnes contre la prostitution étaient considérées comme des campagnes contre la nature humaine. Par ailleurs, les observateurs qui ont fait valoir que l'immoralité sexuelle était due à des causes

économiques et que lorsque les hommes pouvaient se marier, la prostitution disparaissait se trompaient pour deux raisons. Premièrement, les hommes riches, qui pouvaient facilement se marier, étaient presque aussi corrompus que les hommes pauvres. Deuxièmement, les hommes mariés et les hommes célibataires étaient accompagnés de prostituées (53).

En fin de compte, les deux féministes ont appelé les hommes à être plus vertueux et chastes. Wollstonecraft explique «Que les hommes deviennent plus chastes et modestes, et si les femmes ne deviennent pas plus sages dans le même rapport, il sera clair qu'elles ont une compréhension plus faible» (10). Wollstonecraft est allée plus loin dans sa réflexion en affirmant que si les hommes devenaient plus chastes, les femmes cesseraient d'être « ruses » pour maintenir et gouverner leurs hommes libertins. Cependant, la demande de Mary Wollstonecraft aux hommes d'être chastes a été largement dépassée par la demande radicale de Christabel Pankhurst. Après avoir fait valoir diverses opinions de médecins, opinions qui soutenaient sa prétention que les maladies sexuelles étaient un fléau important, Pankhurst a appelé les femmes à s'abstenir de se marier jusqu'à ce que les hommes deviennent vertueux.

Elle a fait valoir que les statistiques qu'elle a présentées sur la gonorrhée et la syphilis étaient une alerte pour que les hommes s'abstiennent de se prostituer, c'était un « avertissement aux femmes du grave danger du mariage tant que les normes morales des hommes continuent d'être inférieures aux leurs » (52). Apparemment, Pankhurst a utilisé les notions victoriennes de la moralité des femmes comme arme contre les hommes. Puisque les femmes devaient être vertueuses et honorables, les hommes devaient être également vertueux et honorables s'ils voulaient les épouser. Les hommes impudiques sont tout simplement un danger pour la moralité et la santé des femmes.

Après s'être imposées comme professeurs de morale, Mary Wollstonecraft et Christabel Pankhurst ont lancé un appel pour l'émancipation des femmes pour une meilleure

moralité. Pour commencer, Wollstonecraft et Pankhurst ont condamné la double morale qui existait aux seins de leurs sociétés et plaidait pour une morale unique pour les hommes et les femmes. Wollstonecraft a prophétisé qu'une fois qu'une seule morale était partagé par les deux sexes, les femmes se révéleraient soit comme compagnons des hommes, soit comme leurs subordonnées. Wollstonecraft a souhaité que les hommes mettent les femmes à l'épreuve en leur fournissant une éducation logique et rationnelle comme celle des hommes, et ne juger alors que le résultat.

Ceci dit, Mary Wollstonecraft a appelé les hommes à éduquer les femmes et à améliorer leurs capacités de réflexion lorsqu'ils constatent leur rationalité. Les hommes devraient également fournir aux femmes la retenue constructive et édifiante de la raison et leur permettre d'atteindre un respect de soi prémédité en croyant qu'elles comptent uniquement sur Dieu. Les femmes devraient être éduquées avec les hommes à ce qu'elles devraient accéder à des responsabilités, plutôt que de tenter de les rendre plus agréables en «donnant [...] un sexe à la morale» (71). Plus important encore, Wollstonecraft a appelé à une « révolution dans les mœurs des femmes » à travers une reconstruction dans l'éducation des filles. Les femmes devraient apprendre à faire la distinction entre la morale de longue date et la morale fixe et entre les comportements prescrits par la société; c'est-à-dire que les mœurs des femmes devraient être fondées sur une véritable compréhension de la morale fixe et non sur une simple réflexion des protocoles sociaux de comportement. Une telle perspective ne pourrait être réalisée que par une éducation qui ciblerait les facultés de réflexion des femmes plutôt que leurs sensibilités.

Néanmoins, Wollstonecraft est allé encore plus loin en donnant un programme détaillé de sa vision de l'éducation. D'après elle, pour améliorer le caractère des hommes et des femmes, les garçons et les filles doivent être scolarisés ensemble. Elle a fait valoir que les garçons et les filles devraient être autorisés à suivre le même programme. Lorsque cela se

produit, les deux sexes apprennent très tôt la décence gracieuse qui génère la pudeur. De plus, il n'y aurait pas besoin d'instructions sur la politesse et le décorum, car elles seraient remplacées par une conduite habituelle (380-1).

En effet, les suffragettes ont été accusés de chercher la liberté sexuelle. Selon de nombreux critiques, le vote pour les femmes n'était pas destiné à améliorer la moralité des hommes, mais à abaisser la moralité des femmes. A cet argument, Christabel Pankhurst a été fortement opposé. Elle a affirmé que les femmes vont certainement gagner le vote, à ce moment-là, les femmes seront « plus et pas moins opposés que maintenant à faire un jouet de sexe et d'entrer par hasard dans la relation sexuelle » (134-5). Pankhurst a déclaré que les conséquences d'une union sexuelle sont si importantes, si étendues et si durables que les femmes intelligentes et indépendantes n'entreront dans une telle union qu'après mûre réflexion, et seulement en présence d'un grand amour et d'une grande confiance. (134)

Les dirigeants et membres de la suffragette ont promis de combattre les maux moraux avec leur bonne moralité. Cependant, les critiques masculins ont répondu aux affirmations morales des suffragettes en faisant valoir que si les femmes s'engageaient dans la politique, leur moralité serait corrompue à cause du domaine politique corrompu et "nous préférierions que nos femmes restent telles qu'elles sont". À cet argument, les suffragettes ont répondu en affirmant que les principes moraux des femmes dans le commerce et la politique seraient certainement différents de ceux des hommes (F. Pethick-Lawrence 65).

Il faut dire que Mary Wollstonecraft et Emmeline Pankhurst se conformaient au rôle traditionnel des femmes en tant qu'épouse et mère. Dans le chapitre «Être de bonnes épouses et des mères compatissantes», je mets en avant le fait que Mary Wollstonecraft et Emmeline Pankhurst étaient conformes à certaines valeurs de maternité, cependant, dans le cas d'Emmeline Pankhurst; J'ai étendu cet argument pour toute la propagande du WSPU. Pour

soutenir mon argumentation, j'ai expliqué comment les deux féministes défendaient les femmes mariés et les mères dans le cadre de leur conformité stratégique. J'ai également souligné leur promotion de l'émancipation des femmes pour une meilleure relation maritale et une meilleure maternité. Finalement, j'ai démontré comment les deux féministes se sont présentées comme un exemple de bonnes épouses et de mères compatissantes.

Dans la section intitulée «Défendre les épouses et les mères de la nation», j'ai soutenu que Mary Wollstonecraft se conformait au rôle d'épouse et de mère par sa défense des épouses et des mères contre la critique du XVIIIe siècle. Wollstonecraft s'est concentré en grande partie sur la critique des écrivains du dix-huitième siècle. Sa défense ne visait pas à valider et à soutenir les erreurs et les défauts des épouses et des mères de l'époque, mais visait à expliquer, justifier et rationaliser leurs défauts. En particulier, Wollstonecraft a fait valoir que les fautes des épouses et des mères pouvaient toutes être attribuées au type d'éducation qu'elles recevaient et qu'elles pouvaient donc être justifiées et excusées. Wollstonecraft a affirmé que les comportements et les attitudes des femmes démontraient visiblement que leur état d'esprit était défectueux. Un tel état d'esprit était dû au système d'éducation fallacieux qui existait au XVIIIe siècle, conçu selon le point de vue des écrivains. Elle a soutenu que ces derniers écrivains considéraient les femmes comme un sexe, pas comme des êtres humains. Ces écrivains, a-t-elle affirmé, «ont été plus soucieux d'en faire des maîtresses séduisantes que des épouses affectueuses et des mères rationnelles; et la compréhension du sexe a été si bouillonnée par cet hommage spécieux »(2).

Mary Wollstonecraft a également fait valoir que les hommes ne devraient pas anticiper une compassion naturelle de la part des femmes qui pourrait les rendre épouses et mères compatissantes jusqu'à ce que les femmes renoncent à leur dépendance à l'égard des hommes dans une certaine mesure. Tant que les femmes dépendraient complètement de leur conjoint, elles seraient sournoises, astucieuses et égocentriques (213 [1891]). La critique de

Wollstonecraft de la dépendance des femmes à l'égard des hommes faisait partie de son reproche de l'éducation des femmes au XVIIIe siècle qui mettait l'accent sur la dépendance naturelle des femmes à l'égard des hommes. De plus, Wollstonecraft a affirmé que les femmes étant souvent victimes de préjugés, elles ressentaient rarement un amour maternel rationnel. Elles ont même ignoré leur progéniture ou se sont livrés à eux avec une clémence excessive (114-5).

Dans l'ensemble, Mary Wollstonecraft défendait les épouses et les mères contre les critiques des écrivains du XVIIIe siècle sur la non-domestication et la négligence envers leurs maris et leurs enfants; elle attribue les lacunes des femmes à l'éducation déficiente du dix-huitième siècle qui gêne plutôt qu'encourage la bonne épouse et la maternité.

De même, Emmeline Pankhurst en particulier et les suffragettes en général se conformaient au rôle des épouses et des mères par leur défense des épouses et des mères. Au dix-neuvième siècle, les femmes ne possédaient pas beaucoup de droits et encore moins l'égalité des droits avec les hommes, et par conséquent, les suffragettes jugeaient nécessaire de défendre les droits et privilèges que les épouses et les mères de Grande-Bretagne leur avaient été refusés.

Le journal WSPU a propagé que les problèmes graves de la politique britannique ne pouvaient pas être résolus de manière appropriée tant que le point de vue des femmes était ignoré. Ces problèmes comprennent la mortalité infantile, la dissipation de la vie infantile, le travail des femmes mariées, le chômage et l'entretien des personnes âgées. En outre, le journal affirmait que les femmes veulent le vote car tant que la majorité des femmes en Grande-Bretagne resteront en dehors de l'arène politique, elles ne pourront pas enseigner aux enfants de la nation l'importance de la lutte pour la liberté; par conséquent, les enfants de chaque génération ont dû comprendre le même idéal par une dure expérience (1).

De plus, le journal a affirmé que les suffragettes voulaient le vote parce qu'elles étaient particulièrement intéressés par l'enfance. Plus précisément, les suffragettes souhaitaient modifier les réglementations affectant l'emploi des enfants. En outre, la condition des épouses et des mères était très importante pour le mouvement des suffragettes; notamment la situation financière des femmes mariées. Le journal a souligné la nécessité de prendre des mesures pour améliorer la situation financière des femmes de la classe ouvrière ainsi que des femmes de la classe moyenne. Il affirmait que les femmes mariées étaient les seules ouvrières dont le travail extrêmement nécessaire n'était pas rémunéré et elle considérait ce statut comme une sorte de «servage» (48).

Outre la défense des droits des épouses et des mères, Mary Wollstonecraft et les dirigeants de l'WSPU ont suggéré une solution efficace pour améliorer la condition des femmes : l'émancipation. Plus les femmes étaient émancipées, plus elles seraient meilleures épouses et mères. Certes, Wollstonecraft a largement préconisé l'émancipation des femmes pour une amélioration de la maternité. Elle a affirmé que si la liberté ne favorisait pas l'intellect des femmes, les femmes ne seraient pas en mesure de comprendre leurs responsabilités et de percevoir leur importance. De plus, à moins que les femmes ne soient des patriotes, leur progéniture n'apprendra pas à comprendre la véritable valeur du patriotisme. Plus important encore, aussi longtemps que les femmes ont été privées de leurs droits civiques et juridiques, elles ne seraient pas en mesure d'enseigner à leurs enfants l'amour de l'humanité (ix).

Une femme non émancipée ne pourrait non seulement pas être une bonne épouse, mais aussi elle ne deviendrait pas une bonne mère. En effet, Wollstonecraft a affirmé qu'une femme qui a été instruite pour être agréable aux yeux des hommes ne serait pas une bonne épouse. Une fois cette femme mariée, elle découvrira aussitôt que le charme et l'attraction physique qu'elle aurait eus sur son mari s'estompent rapidement, et qu'elle n'aura plus de rôle à jouer.

Par conséquent, cette femme aura soit suffisamment de force pour considérer son propre bien-être, et promouvoir ces capacités de réflexion qu'elle a négligés, ou bien elle pratiquerait l'art de séduire différents hommes afin d'oublier sa passion et sa vanité qui ont été blessées (60-1).

Aussi, Wollstonecraft a sollicité les hommes à aider les femmes dans leur quête de l'émancipation et à leur permettre d'être leurs camarades et associés (194-5). Elle a ajouté : «

Si les hommes rompaient généreusement nos chaînes et se contentaient d'une communion rationnelle au lieu d'une obéissance servile, ils nous trouveraient des filles plus observatrices, des sœurs plus affectueuses, des épouses plus fidèles, des mères plus raisonnables - en un mot, de meilleures citoyennes. Alors, nous les aimerions avec une grande affection, car nous devons apprendre à nous respecter; et un homme digne ne serait pas dérangé par la vanité oisive de sa femme, ni par ses bébés envoyés se nicher dans un sein étrange, n'ayant jamais trouvé d'abri chez leur mère » (195).

Ainsi, Wollstonecraft a appelé les hommes à contribuer à l'émancipation des femmes.

De même, les dirigeants de la WSPU ont soutenu l'émancipation des femmes pour un meilleur lien maternel et une meilleure vie conjugale. En fait, la WSPU, ayant rassuré les partisans et les opposants, affirme qu'une fois les femmes devenues affranchies, la maternité et la vie conjugale ne seraient pas le moindre menacées. Particulièrement, le journal de la WSPU a souligné que les foyers ne seraient pas négligés ; à vrai dire : «Les femmes ont déjà obtenu des voix municipales, ce qui n'a conduit à aucune négligence de foyers".

En outre, Christabel Pankhurst a sollicité les hommes à fin d'aider les femmes à remporter des suffrages pour plusieurs raisons. Premièrement, les hommes qui sont parents et époux devraient aspirer à de meilleures conditions pour leurs femmes. Deuxièmement, les salaires bas perçus par les femmes compromettaient l'emploi des hommes. Troisièmement, les hommes devraient vouloir que les femmes remportent le vote, si la Grande-Bretagne devait

posséder des hommes solide et intelligent, il doit être évident qu'aucun effort n'est jamais fait pour freiner les progrès des mères. En outre, rendre les femmes politiquement responsables les placeraient dans une meilleure position pour apprendre à leurs enfants à être des citoyens dignes de cette grande nation» (Quelques questions 4).

la WSPU a souvent répété que le mouvement des suffragettes ne voulait pas que les femmes soient égales aux hommes, qu'elles abandonnent leur rôle traditionnel d'épouses et de mères ou qu'elles renoncent à leur féminité. Dans un article publié dans *Votes for Women*, l'écrivain a incité les femmes à rejoindre le mouvement des suffragettes en affirmant qu'elles ne renonceraient point à leur féminité, bien exigée pour les membres de ce mouvement.

L'auteur a ajouté:

Ne laissez pas votre fille, votre sœur ou votre femme derrière vous lorsque vous entrez dans ce mouvement. Ce n'est pas une croisade anti-homme; les femmes qui deviennent membres se battent pour leurs pères, leurs maris et leurs frères, ainsi que pour elles-mêmes, car ce sera bénéfique aussi bien pour les hommes que pour les femmes lorsque leurs points de vue mutuels seront reconnus dans les conseils de l'État (6).

Ainsi, non seulement le mouvement des suffragettes a nié toute affirmation selon laquelle les élections entraîneraient la négligence des femmes de leur rôle traditionnel d'épouses et de mères, mais il a également utilisé ces dernières notions pour justifier la nécessité de vote.

Par conséquent, j'atteste que les deux féministes ont tenté de mettre en avant leur image d'épouses et de mères afin de renforcer leur thèse, la rendant plus convaincante et attrayante. Dans ses lettres écrites en Suède, en Norvège et au Danemark (1796), Mary Wollstonecraft a révélé de près son affection et son dévouement en tant qu'épouse. Pour cette raison, les lettres qu'elle a écrites lors de sa visite en Scandinavie, qui sont les principales lettres du livre, étaient destinées à son mari, Gilbert Imlay. Pour une autre raison, la visite de Wollstonecraft

en Scandinavie visait à sauver l'entreprise de son mari (Brekke et Mee xiv248).

Wollstonecraft a prouvé qu'elle était une épouse très affectueuse. C'était une femme prête à voyager jusqu'en Scandinavie pour régler les problèmes commerciaux de son mari. De plus, Mary Wollstonecraft a démontré son affection plus profondément dans ses lettres. Elle a réussi à convaincre ses lecteurs qu'Imlay était bel et bien son mari. En réalité, Wollstonecraft avait une relation libre avec Imlay et n'était jamais mariée avec lui. Bien qu'Imlay ait demandé sa main, elle a refusé car il avait un statut financier inférieur au sien, et elle ne souhaitait pas qu'il soit exposé à la déconvenue de sa famille. En outre, elle ne souhaitait pas qu'il devienne responsable de l'état financier qu'elle avait à l'époque (Godwin 110).

De même, Wollstonecraft a tenté de transmettre son affection maternelle à ses lecteurs. Dans ses Lettres écrites en Suède, Wollstonecraft a mentionné à plusieurs reprises son attention, son affection et son amour envers sa fille de 13 mois, Fanny. Tout en contemplant la beauté de la Suède, par exemple, Wollstonecraft était fascinée par les pensées sauvages et son esprit immédiatement tournait entre émotions et prémonitions. Pourtant, tout a été interrompu quand elle a vu l'excitation de sa petite fille à la recherche des fraises sauvages.

Wollstonecraft a commenté, «La joie de mon bébé était inégale; indépendamment des présages ou des sentiments, elle a trouvé quelques fraises sauvages plus intéressantes que des fleurs ou des fantaisies » (9). Par conséquent, Wollstonecraft a suggéré que toutes ses fantaisies et pensées d'écrivain étaient suspendues à la vue de cette joie. En d'autres termes, elle a suggéré que son affection maternelle et son identité de mère étaient plus importantes que son identité d'écrivain. Ainsi, ses lecteurs devaient se contenter que leur écrivain était d'abord une femme et une mère, et ensuite un écrivain.

De même, Emmeline Pankhurst était un excellent exemple d'une bonne et affectueuse épouse. Mais contrairement à Wollstonecraft, l'image de l'épouse de Mme Pankhurst était plus vue qu'entendue. Au cours des premières années de son activisme politique, Mme Pankhurst a

largement soutenu son mari 'Richard Pankhurst' dans ses campagnes politiques. De plus, Mme Pankhurst était impatiente d'envoyer un message significatif à ses partisans et à ses détracteurs qu'elle n'était nullement opposée au mariage et à la maternité. En réalité, Mme Pankhurst a ridiculisé l'opinion des critiques selon laquelle les suffragettes utilisaient le militantisme comme canal pour leurs vies misérables et déprimées. Au lieu de cela, elle a soutenu que ce point de vue n'était pas vrai pour la plupart des suffragettes et certainement pas vrai pour elle (13). Dans son *Ma propre histoire* (1914), elle parle de sa vie domestique parfaite proclamant:

Ma vie de famille et mes relations ont été aussi idéales que possibles dans cet imparfait monde. Environ un an après mon mariage, ma fille Christabel est née, et à encore dix-huit mois ma deuxième fille Sylvia est venue au monde. Deux autres enfants rapprochées, et en quelques années, j'étais plutôt profondément impliquée dans ma vie domestique (13).

Ainsi, Emmeline Pankhurst a ouvertement mis au point sa vie domestique idéale et sa capacité d'être une bonne épouse et bonne mère.

Néanmoins, concernant la conformité de Mary Wollstonecraft et Emmeline Pankhurst aux idéaux de la féminité, j'affirme que si Emmeline Pankhurst se conformait largement à l'apparence féminine, Wollstonecraft s'est presque complètement rebellé contre elle. Sur le plan personnel, Wollstonecraft portait des vêtements féminins du XVIIIe siècle. Cependant, elle a critiqué les constructions de la féminité au XVIIIe siècle dans ses *Droits de la femme*. Wollstonecraft croyait que les idéaux de la féminité nuisaient au caractère des femmes et visaient simplement à aggraver la domination des femmes par les hommes. Sa position pouvait être facilement comprise, elle souhaitait simplement que les femmes deviennent plus rationnelles que sensibles et percevait les idéaux de la féminité comme un obstacle à la

réalisation de cet objectif. Au contraire, Emmeline Pankhurst visait à discréditer l'accusation de masculinité lancée par ses détracteurs en montrant sa féminité.

L'habillement, le soin d'apparence, la délicatesse et la sensibilité sont les notions de féminité discutées par Mary Wollstonecraft. Sur le plan personnel, Mary Wollstonecraft se conformait au code vestimentaire du XVIIIe siècle et son style n'était pas différent de celui des femmes de la classe moyenne de l'époque. Malgré ses efforts conformistes, elle n'était pas la moins satisfaite des idéaux de féminité dans sa société. En fait, Wollstonecraft a critiqué les styles vestimentaires de l'époque et espérait un changement de mode. En effet, dans son *Droits de la femme*, Wollstonecraft a condamné l'accent mis par les livres de conduite sur l'habillement et s'est largement opposé à leurs idéaux de féminité. Par conséquent, Wollstonecraft a tenté de réformer les notions de féminité du XVIIIe siècle au lieu de s'y conformer. Cependant, je continuerai d'analyser ses déclarations sur la féminité et de comparer sa position avec celle d'Emmeline Pankhurst.

Selon Wollstonecraft, l'ignorance est la raison ultime de goût « sauvage » des femmes pour les robes. Wollstonecraft souhaitait préserver les jeunes femmes de l'attachement contagieux à la robe. En particulier, les femmes faibles étaient plus susceptibles d'être asservies par leur adoration de la beauté extérieure. Les femmes qui cherchaient à plaire en utilisant uniquement leurs charmes physiques et négligeaient ainsi l'attrait intellectuel, étaient sans aucun doute des femmes faibles. Les femmes devraient posséder « l'art moral de plaire » qui ne pouvait provenir que du rejet de l'ignorance et de la pratique de leur raison et de leurs capacités intellectuelles, a affirmé Wollstonecraft.

De plus, alors que les hommes tentent de mettre l'accent sur leur intelligence et leurs connaissances dans les rassemblements, les femmes tentent de montrer leur féminité et leur beauté. Par conséquent, les hommes considèrent que leur principal atout est leur intelligence

tandis que celui des femmes est la beauté. Par conséquent, les femmes sont plus soucieuses de leur apparence plutôt que de développer leurs capacités intellectuelles (Wollstonecraft 278).

Par conséquent, Wollstonecraft a rejeté toutes les expressions féminines utilisées par les hommes pour atténuer l'état de dépendance des femmes. En outre, elle détestait la faible délicatesse de l'esprit, la sensibilité admirable et la douceur de comportement qui étaient toutes considérées comme des traits féminins ou des «caractéristiques sexuelles du sexe faible». Wollstonecraft a affirmé que la délicatesse était subordonnée aux vertus et que l'ultime et louable aspiration devrait être d'acquérir un «caractère en tant qu'être humain, quelle que soit la distinction de sexe» (34).

En outre, l'un des inconvénients de la soumission des femmes à un faux système de féminité est la tendance de certaines femmes à tyranniser et à devenir rusées. Wollstonecraft a affirmé que l'embellissement des femmes avec de faux charmes les a incitées à devenir des despotes pendant un certain temps. Cela était dû au fait que la place de tous les désirs les plus fins était saisie par l'amour. Le souci particulier des femmes était de paraître belles, d'inspirer des sentiments plutôt que de l'estime et cette tendance ignoble a ruiné leur caractère et l'a affaibli.

Néanmoins, il est important de souligner que Mary Wollstonecraft ne s'oppose pas à l'intérêt naturel des femmes pour la tenue vestimentaire, elle s'oppose simplement à tout excès lié à cette question. En outre, elle déplorait les vêtements pour femmes et leur féminité globale qui avaient plus d'importance que leur faculté de compréhension. Cependant, elle admirait les femmes distinguées qui se plongeaient rarement dans la couture et n'utilisaient que leur goût. Comme ces femmes s'intéressaient moins aux robes, elles passaient moins de temps devant le miroir. De plus, une fois qu'elle avait fini de se préparer, elles s'occupaient d'autres affaires sans trop se soucier de leur apparence (126).

Cependant, dans le cas d'Emmeline Pankhurst, l'apparence féminine était le principal aspect de la féminité auquel les dirigeants de la WSPU dans leur ensemble ont tenté de se conformer. En particulier, Emmeline Pankhurst était la meilleure représentation de la robe et de l'apparence féminines. Le journal de la WSPU était rempli de ses photos et de celles d'autres dirigeants de la WSPU, tels que Christabel Pankhurst et Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, portant des vêtements très raffinés et féminins qui ont accentué leur look, et leur silhouette globalement attirante. De plus, le journal WSPU faisait de grandes publicités de vêtements féminins à la mode. En fait, le journal a annoncé à ses partisans la collection de bijoux suffragette de Mapping & Webb, ainsi que d'autres vêtements élégants qui portaient les couleurs des suffragettes : violet, vert et blanc (263). En outre, des manteaux tendance et élégants ont été commercialisés. Les mannequins sur ces publicités portaient toujours des chapeaux à plumes et semblaient toutes branchées et féminines. Elles ont également mis à la portée du public un type de corsets pratiques, qui avaient sculpté le corps de la femme en une silhouette plus attrayante et féminine, sans ressentir l'inconfort habituel des corsets (Votes pour Femmes).

Par ailleurs, le journal officiel de la WSPU a propagé la féminité de ses dirigeants, en particulier celle d'Emmeline Pankhurst. Dans une édition de Mme Pankhurst, un article publié dans Votes for Women, Emmeline Pankhurst a été décrite comme une «journée d'été» en raison de sa personnalité tendre, passionnée et convaincante. Mme Pankhurst était également admirée par ceux qui l'ont connu de près pour sa grâce et son raffinement. En outre, l'habileté et la rapidité étaient de grands atouts pour Mme Pankhurst. Après un long voyage, elle se préparait rapidement et sortait du train «avec une apparence irréprochable et bien admirable» (601-2). De plus, sa réaction détendue face à des pertes récurrentes d'un colis ou d'un parapluie, son esprit pragmatique et le sang froid avec lequel elle traite des problèmes mineurs, font d'elle une compagne vraiment exceptionnelle.

Pour conclure, l'article affirmait qu'Emmeline Pankhurst «possède la qualité légendaire - c'est-à-dire son magnétisme personnel à l'échelle héroïque - est incontestable» (602). En conséquence, Mme Pankhurst a été présentée par le journal WSPU comme un modèle idéal de féminité. Cela grâce à l'accent mis par le journal sur la préoccupation d'Emmeline Pankhurst a eue pour l'apparence féminine, ses manières raffinées et sa personnalité irrésistible.

Néanmoins, la robe féminine n'était pas exclusive aux dirigeants de la WSPU; elle devait également être partagée par les membres de l'WSPU. Les Pankhursts ont encouragé les suffragettes à s'habiller de manière féminine pour discréditer toute allégation de masculinité. Quant à la réaction de Mme Pankhurst à des styles vestimentaires qui ne correspondaient pas à ses goûts, un membre de l'WSPU, Grace Roe, a décrit comment elle "désapprouvait la façon dont quelqu'un s'habille et elle dit" non, non pas du tout "et elle se retournerait". Interrogé sur le style de vêtements que Mme Pankhurst n'a particulièrement pas aimé. Roe a répondu qu'elle n'aimait pas les pulls, en particulier ceux qui étaient décolletés. De toute évidence, Mme Pankhurst était très conservatrice dans son goût pour la robe. En fait, Roe la décrit comme «extrêmement victorienne», une description que je n'attribuerais pas à sa conformité stratégique. Néanmoins, je dirais toujours que la direction de la WSPU voulait partager son goût conventionnel et féminin pour la robe avec le reste des membres de la WSPU. Ils ont encouragé et inspiré les suffragettes à bien s'habiller et à faire de leur mieux pour discréditer leurs adversaires. Selon Roe: «une suffragette qui sait ce qu'elle fait etc... sera la personne la mieux habillée de toute la pièce, pas forcément dans des vêtements chers mais elle saura bien s'habiller» (00: 18: 10- 00 : 21: 07).

Dans cette investigation, je visais à évaluer le succès de leur stratégie de conformité. Pour y parvenir, j'ai étudié la réception contemporaine de la conformité des deux féministes. Dans le cas de Mary Wollstonecraft, les revues de presse ont été généralement positives sur son œuvre la plus révolutionnaire Défense des droits de la femme. Bien que la plupart des

critiques aient des réserves sur certaines des revendications de Wollstonecraft, elles apprécient toujours le travail dans son ensemble. Le *Critical Review* est le seul magazine qui semblait saisir les insinuations radicales de Wollstonecraft alors que les autres magazines ne semblaient pas reconnaître la radicalité de son travail.

Néanmoins, après la mort de Mary Wollstonecraft le 10 septembre 1797, son mari, William Godwin, publia ses souvenirs dans *Souvenirs de l'auteur de la Défense des droits de la femme*. Ces souvenirs ont révélé les relations non-conventionnelles de Wollstonecraft et l'illégitimité de son enfant. Depuis, ses œuvres ont été lues à la lumière de sa vie personnelle et l'héritage qu'elle a laissé a été condamné par les critiques du XVIII^e siècle. Cependant, il est important de noter que le rejet ultérieur de Wollstonecraft, après que sa vie privée ait été exposée, prouve qu'elle a réussi dans sa conformité. Elle a réussi à masquer ses revendications radicales avec des revendications conformistes pour recevoir des critiques positives pour son travail. Néanmoins, lorsque sa vie amoureuse non-conventionnelle a été révélée, les critiques ont soudainement remarqué ses affirmations radicales. D'un autre côté, Les faits simples de Christabel Pankhurst ont été reçus négativement. Cependant, l'accueil négatif est venu principalement de féministes radicales qui se sont rebellées contre les normes morales du XIX^e siècle telles que Dora Marsden et R. B. Kerr. C'était une indication que son livre était conservateur et conventionnel.

En outre, l'affection maternelle et féminine de Mary Wollstonecraft a été évaluée par la *British Critic* qui a décrit son affection pour Imlay comme «le coup d'affection déplacée infligée par un mari» (qtd in. *Letters* xxiv). Cette revue montre que Wollstonecraft a réussi à tromper ses lecteurs sur la véritable identité de Gilbert Imlay. Toutefois, le dévouement maternel d'Emmeline Pankhurst a été principalement salué par ses filles, ce qui reste subjectif.

Pourtant, Mme Pankhurst était très appréciée pour sa conformité à la féminité. Non seulement Emmeline Pankhurst avait réussi à inciter ses partisans à être féminines mais elle avait également inspiré un certain nombre de femmes à rejoindre son syndicat. Mme Pankhurst a même réussi à impressionner certains de ses adversaires tels que Rebecca West qui a fait savoir «qu'il n'y a eu aucune autre femme comme Emmeline Pankhurst. Elle était belle. Son visage pâle, avec sa délicate mâchoire carrée et ses tempes arrondies; rappelait la pensée par sa forme et une sorte de fleur veloutée sur l'expression ». De plus, Rebecca a avoué que Mme Pankhurst avait réussi à habiller son petit corps avec l'élégance d'une française et la grâce d'une religieuse (243). De même, Teresa Billington-Greig, une ancienne suffragette, a trouvé Emmeline Pankhurst une femme idéale, incroyablement belle, très gentille et influente.

Je crois que cette thèse au sujet de la conformité et la rébellion est plus que la recherche théorique, au contraire, il peut donner un aperçu pratique et dans le monde réel. Pour donner un exemple plus pratique, les mouvements féministes basés sur un modèle occidental d'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes dans le monde arabe sont facilement ignorés en faveur des mouvements islamistes féministes. Bien que leurs objectifs et leurs revendications soient généralement les mêmes, le fait que les mouvements féministes islamiques prétendent tirer leur modèle de justice de la religion rend le mouvement plus attrayant pour les hommes et les femmes. C'est tout simplement parce que le mouvement affirme sa conformité aux valeurs religieuses préexistantes. Il souligne que c'est la culture qui subjugue les femmes dans le monde arabe, et non la religion, par conséquent, les revendications religieuses sont avancées pour éradiquer les pratiques culturelles plus dominantes et oppressives qui entravent l'émancipation des femmes.

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Abbreviations

Rights of Woman: A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

Rights of Men: A Vindication of the Rights of Men

Letters Written in Sweden: Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark

An Historical and Moral View: An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution.

The Education of Daughters: Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct, in the more important Duties of Life.

Reflections: Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceeding of Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event.

Rights of Men: Rights of Men: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution.

Plain Facts: Plain Facts about a Great Evil

WSPU: The Women's Social and Political Union

NUWSS: The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies

WFL: The Women's Freedom League

LNA: The Ladies National Association

ODNB: The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

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Introduction

Both in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women were socially, intellectually, financially, legally and politically inferior to men. Socially, married women were mainly supposed to preserve the home, take good care of their husbands and raise their children properly. Their intellect was considered deficient or at best different from that of men. Consequently, they were to have different intellectual pursuits and their education was adopted to their feminine traits. On the economic level, working-class women did not enjoy equal pay with men while married middle-class women had access to very few careers in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Legally, married women had no legal existence of their own and were dependent on their husbands while unmarried women had no particular privileges in comparison. Politically, women were not represented, could not vote and could not be Members of Parliament.

Enraged by the political inequality and the social, economic and legal prejudices experienced by women in the eighteenth century, Mary Wollstonecraft used her writing to revolt against the degrading status of women. Likewise, Emmeline Pankhurst took a leading role in the fight for women's suffrage in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century through political activism. Mary Wollstonecraft's claims for women's emancipation and Emmeline Pankhurst's campaign for suffrage were often described as revolutionary and radical. Regardless of Wollstonecraft and Pankhurst's distinct modes of expression, different demands and strength of argument, both aimed to enhance the condition of women in their societies.

In their quest for women's rights, the two feminists, Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst, rebelled against the status quo of women in their societies in various ways. On the one hand, Mary Wollstonecraft contested women's legal status, financial dependence and intellectual inferiority. She also criticized marriage under eighteenth century conventions and insinuated her refusal to the latter institution. In real life, Mary Wollstonecraft rebelled against the institution of marriage and engaged in free unions in two of her relationships. On the other hand, Emmeline Pankhurst challenged the social, economic, legal and political status of women. However, instead of campaigning against all the latter conditions, Emmeline Pankhurst preferred to exclusively campaign against the disenfranchisement of women. Mrs. Pankhurst believed that winning the vote on the same basis as men will allow women to more efficiently enhance their overall status. Nonetheless, the essence of Mrs. Pankhurst's rebellion lies in her adoption to violent and unconventional methods to winning the vote.

The rebellious nature of Mary Wollstonecraft's works and Emmeline Pankhurst's actions was largely stressed by historians. However, this paper aims to stress not only the rebellious but also the 'conformist' nature of their works and actions. I would argue that Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst used not only rebellion but also conformity to advance their feminist claims. I would contend that the two feminists attempted to fit some prevailing views about the role of women. In other words, they endeavored to conform to women's traditional roles in their societies. Arguably, Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst used 'strategic conformity' as a measure to disguise or at least alleviate their radical claims and means, and thus indirectly further their revolutionary aims.

From the late eighteenth century until the early twentieth century, the social, financial, intellectual and legal status of women differed according to their class and marital status. For instance, middle-class married women were expected to fulfill their roles as wives by obeying their husbands, bearing children, managing their homes with all the different chores it entailed, and exhibiting their femininity and gentility (Porter 28). In fact, the existence of two separate spheres largely explained the relationships between men and women, especially in the middle-class. Nevertheless, the system was a flexible one since many upper and middle-class women had access to professions such as writing and teaching.

Nevertheless, the situation of working-class women was rather different. These women had to contribute to the family income so they filled many jobs chiefly in domestic service. In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, women started working in factories. There, women endured dreadful conditions, long working hours and low income. In fact, women received half of men workers used to earn (Spielvogel 436). In general, working-class women filled manual jobs that required effort, time, and were badly paid.

Furthermore, women's education was lacking in many aspects. While their brothers usually went to universities, many upper and middle-class girls had at best the privilege to join prominent boarding schools. Besides, these girls received a refined and genteel education, one that prepared them for an effective and gracious management of the home once married (Hill 45). Unfortunately, working-class girls were not usually sent to school due to their parents' inability to pay for their education and the need for the paid work of their children (Porter 165). Moreover, girls' education was different in nature from that of boys since it was believed that women had inferior and distinct intellectual capacities (Hill 45). Therefore, girls' education stressed their sensibilities instead of their logic, considering

women to be more sensitive than rational. Besides, it aimed to make them more suitable for marriage by teaching them homely responsibilities such as cooking and needlework (Hill 45).

In the meantime, women also suffered from an unfair legal system. Once married, women had no property rights because of the law of coverture, a law which made women legally attached to their husbands. The system of coverture almost denied women any legal existence or authority that was not sanctioned by their partners (Blackstone 441). This made separation extremely difficult for women especially as divorce laws were fairly unjust as well (Bristol 92). Moreover, women were denied the right to contribute in the making of their country's legal system (Hill 108).

Furthermore, women possessed few political rights, if any. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women regularly paid their taxes but they were still denied representation. Women could not vote for the candidates they wanted to see in office (Blackstone 445). The question of women's suffrage became vital by the mid-nineteenth century. The movement for women's enfranchisement grew steadily with suffragists¹ demanding representation on the same basis as men. Initially, women's suffrage was largely rejected, essentially on scientific and religious grounds. Scientific claims were founded on the belief that women were physically and mentally inferior to men while religious claims considered women's submission a natural phenomenon planned by God and epitomized by the New Testament (Black et al. 96).

Moreover, women were restricted by notions of morality, marriage, child-bearing and femininity. In the eighteenth century, women were urged to commit to certain moral traits of

¹ Activists who campaigned for women's suffrage peacefully; they were non-militant.

modesty, restraint, compliance, gracefulness and chastity. In the nineteenth century, however, women were believed to have already possessed these moral qualities. Women were celebrated for their exalted morality and were instructed to carefully preserve the home, their holy sphere. Besides, in both centuries, the image of virtuous and good women was directly linked to the home. Women were increasingly expected to be domestic and devoted to their homely responsibilities (Abramovitz 118).

Good wives and mothers were celebrated in both centuries. Yet, eighteenth-century writers seemed to identify two types of wives and mothers. The first was dedicated to her home, husband and children. This was the reasonable and the domestic, one who was affectionate, kind, compliant and pragmatic. The second was inattentive to her home, spouse and offspring. This was the fashionable and the nondomestic, one who was arrogant, extravagant, obsessed by her appearance and by the world outside her home (193-4², 126-7³).

Likewise, in the nineteenth century, dedicated wives and mothers were largely acclaimed. Women were assumed to be caring wives, affectionate mothers and intelligent managers of the household. The example of the moral, innocent and reputable wife and mother was the one that prevailed in conduct books of the period. These wives and mothers were deemed most suitable to help build a virtuous and wise nation (208⁴). In short, nineteenth century women were celebrated for being good wives and mothers who preserved their homes in the best way. Nonetheless, conduct books' counsel for women to uphold their

² "A Reasonable Woman". *The Town and Country Magazine*, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment. British Periodicals, Apr 1786, pp. 193-4.

³ "Character of the Domestic Woman, and Gadder abroad". *Walker's Hibernian magazine, or Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge*, Aug 1790, pp. 126-27.

⁴ *The Western Medical Reformer, Volumes 1 à 3*. Ohio, the Medical Professors of Worthington College, 1837.

domestic paradise revealed their fear about women's possible future divergence from this domestic model.

Notions of femininity were other features that constrained women of that time. Eighteenth and nineteenth century conduct books urged women to be feminine and avoid all aspects of masculine behavior or activity. One example of masculine activity which women were urged to avoid was horse-riding. Seemingly, this activity confused women with men for women abandoned their modest appearance when they started riding horses. Feminine women had to be gentle, sensitive and modest (Richardson 39-40). Women were also advised to preserve their femininity by acquiring true and unaffected delicacy. This meant that women had to avoid any deep study of science so as to uphold their delicacy for instance (Ellis 42). Besides, feminine dress was a very important aspect of a woman's femininity. Women were expected to wear feminine clothes which were charming, pleasing but simple (Fordyce 93-4).

In response to all the previously mentioned prejudices against women, Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst rose to protest. On the one hand, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) condemned the social, educational and legal status of women in the eighteenth century in her two political pamphlets *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). She also wrote many other short works such as *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1786), *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788) *The Female Reader* (1789), and *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796). Moreover, Wollstonecraft questioned the status of married women through her two novels *Mary, A Fiction* (1788) and *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798). Numerous parts of the first novel resembled to a large extent

Wollstonecraft's earliest life; particularly, her experience with domestic violence and discrimination between brothers and sisters in the same house. The second novel was published after Wollstonecraft's death and was a brave protest against the unjust institution of marriage in the eighteenth century.

Moreover, Mary Wollstonecraft was a historian, she wrote *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1794), her first and last work of history in which she reported events of the French Revolution. Being in Paris during the French Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft became largely influenced by the principles and aims of the revolution. In fact, Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Men* was a reaction to Edmund Burke's criticism of the French Revolution. This vindication distinguished her as a political writer while her *Rights of Woman* marked her as a feminist and moral author.

Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* came as a reaction to Maurice Talleyrand-Périgord's report to the National Assembly with regard girls' education. While the report granted the right to education to both men and women, it did advise domestic education for women. This report enraged Wollstonecraft who contested it along with the educational plan that it suggested. She also debunked various writers who wrote on the subject of girls' education and appealed for a more rational education for girls.

Wollstonecraft even joined the ranks of radical writers by defending the ideals of the French Revolution, proclaiming that political and social change could emerge from this revolution and partly justifying its violent nature. Besides, Mary Wollstonecraft and other English writers' celebration of the French Revolution and the doctrine of the National Assembly in France was considered as an attempt to emulate the ideals of the National Assembly in Britain by some writers such as Edmund Burke. Furthermore, Wollstonecraft

argued for a more rational education for women as well as better social and legal status in her *Rights of Woman*. However, her ultimate radical claim was her suggestion that women should have representatives in parliament and, hence, become politically represented.

On the other hand, Emmeline Pankhurst (1858- 1928) challenged the inferior status of women in nineteenth century Britain through her political activism. Her pro-suffrage parents and husband encouraged her to take an active role in the women's suffrage campaign of the nineteenth century. Along with her husband, Dr. Pankhurst, Emmeline worked earnestly in support of the Married Women's Property Act and women's suffrage on equal grounds as men. At first, Emmeline supported the cause through her work on the executive committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage and the married women's property committee. Afterwards, she joined various suffrage societies such as the Fabian society, the Women's Liberal Association, and the Women's Franchise league (E. Pankhurst 15-6-19).

During her earliest years of political activism, Emmeline Pankhurst worked alongside the Liberal and later the Labour Party. However, she soon became disillusioned with political parties and decided to create her own political union: 'the Women's Social and Political Union' (WSPU). Founded in 1903, the WSPU adopted peaceful methods in its earliest years (S. Pankhurst 48). It aimed to secure public support by educating people about the necessity of the vote as well as lobbying MPs to obtain political support for women's suffrage. Gradually, a change of policy became necessary. Peaceful campaigns were neither efficient in promoting women's suffrage nor in propagating and advertising it. Consequently, in 1905, the union started militancy (C. Pankhurst, "Unshackled" 44-50-2).

In the beginning, militancy meant no more than heckling politicians and interrupting political meetings, however, it gradually became more and more extreme. By 1912, the

suffragettes, members of the WSPU, were breaking the windows of parliament, chaining themselves to historical monuments and destroying private property (ibid.97-125-228). The government met such extreme acts with imprisonment and later with force feeding when the suffragettes adopted hunger strikes in prison. The press, however, could no longer ignore the case of women's suffrage and were constantly reacting to the suffragettes' radical acts. Although press reactions were mainly negative, they nevertheless revived the cause by bringing it to public attention (C. Pankhurst 55). Emmeline Pankhurst's adoption of militancy largely positioned her among rebels and radicals in the view of many historians. In fact, Mrs. Pankhurst's extreme and radical measures overshadowed to a large extent her resort to other methods in her quest for women's suffrage.

Historians' viewpoints of the nature of Mary Wollstonecraft's works and Emmeline Pankhurst's actions could be best demonstrated through a literature review of the two feminists' works. In her book *Mary Wollstonecraft: Mother of Women's Rights*, Miriam Brody hailed Mary Wollstonecraft as the first great champion of women's rights in the modern western world. She argued that her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* raised her to fame. This was due to Wollstonecraft's appeal for the rights of women at a time when the revolutions in the United States and France were urging for the rights of men. Wollstonecraft contended that women should receive an equal education and contribute in the critical effort of reforming society as their male counterparts. In general, Wollstonecraft was either greeted by her readers as belonging to a courageous generation of rebels who were terminating kingdoms and constructing republics, or was ridiculed for expressing absurd and despicable viewpoints, which her readers could not take earnestly (7). Thus, Miriam Brody deemed Mary Wollstonecraft's appeal for women's rights during the revolution in France, when the

rights of men were the main concern of the American and French Revolution, as the essence of her notoriety.

In her *The Rebel of the Family* (1854), Eliza Lynn Linton described Wollstonecraft as a woman of “fair proportions and unmutilated nature, a woman of strength, will, intellect, and courage, practically asserting by her own life the truth of her equality with man, and boldly claiming as her right also an equal share in the privileges hitherto reserved for himself alone” (19). Linton proclaimed that no one equaled Wollstonecraft in strength, autonomy and nobility. She was among the pioneers as she was among the brightest champions of women’s rights (19).

Similarly, Claudia Johnson⁵ emphasized Wollstonecraft’s role in defending the rights of men and particularly that of women. Johnson considered Wollstonecraft as “a revolutionary figure in a revolutionary time” since she did not merely hold the liberal claim of equal standards of education and morality for both men and women, she also dealt with other issues of the 1790s. This included the doctrines of political authority, despotism, freedom, class system, gender, matrimony, childcare, property, partiality, logic, sensibility, capacities, etc. (Johnson 1). Thus, Wollstonecraft was perceived to have had a different revolutionary view, which she expressed boldly, about vital questions of her time.

Thus, Mary Wollstonecraft’s claims with regards education were often seen as revolutionary and radical. Maria J. Falco⁶, for instance, argued that Mary Wollstonecraft’s proposal of a unified system of education for male and female students with identical

⁵ Johnson, Claudia L. *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

⁶ Falco, Maria J.. *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* . University Park, Pennsylvania, 2010.

educational program was “radical”. Nowhere in Europe existed such a national system of education for both girls and boys. The very idea of a female learning a subject such as Botany was deemed “indecent” at the time (Falco 3).

Furthermore, Maria J. Falco asserted that starting from the renaissance, women were at the center of every revolutionary exertion. For instance, the Italian Victoria Colonna and the French Marguerite Navarre were representative of the women who fostered and participated in the remarkable intellectual, artistic, and spiritual disruptions which took place in Europe during the sixteenth century. However “they did so as part of the revolutionary mainstream, not as advocates for their gender or for “womankind”. What Wollstonecraft did in the eighteenth century was to absorb the ethic of humanism and individualism launched by the renaissance and expanded by the enlightenment and ask, what about me?”(Falco 6). Accordingly, the significance of Mary Wollstonecraft’s claims, according to Falco, lied in her taking advantage of a revolutionary period to demand equality for her own sex.

Besides, Mary Wollstonecraft’s writing was also linked to a tradition of liberalism. Penny A. Weiss⁷ argued that the works of Wollstonecraft presented a constructive and authoritative contribution which defied contemporary answers to fundamental questions in political theory and which stressed the importance of other questions in a radical way. Wollstonecraft challenged the liberal political theory of her much-celebrated predecessors, Hobbes and Locke. Weiss further suggested that Wollstonecraft ought to be considered as a “founding theorist of liberalism”. She ought to be viewed as a competing political theorist

⁷ Weiss, Penny A. *Canon Fodder: Historical Women Political Thinkers*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009.

and not as a rebel against the rather “more accurate” liberalism of Hobbes and other political theorists, Weiss argued (88-90).

Certainly, Wollstonecraft was celebrated for being a philosopher and an original scholar as “any of her more prominent male contemporaries” (Falco 7). However, Weiss argued that Wollstonecraft was rather invisible in the history of political theorists. She contended that Wollstonecraft shared the destiny of almost all women theorists, whether feminist or not. Weiss found that gender was decisive in the field of political theory according to a careful examination that she conducted. She compared Wollstonecraft’s scope of writing with that of Rousseau and found that “What women have written had done little to tear away at the notion that the “real” philosophers of “our” tradition are male. And yet that is not because of what women have written. More often, it is because of what has been written and what has not been written by men about what women have written.”(29). In short, Weiss contended that Wollstonecraft’s fate, such as many female philosophers, could be apprehended as a “political phenomenon” rather than as a common result of the nature of her writing (29).

Apart from the liberal tradition, Mary Wollstonecraft’s works were linked to other traditions as well. The writer of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was a fervent supporter of enlightenment radicalism, a precursor of nineteenth century socialist criticism of property and class system, and an inspiring writer in the primary stage of Romanticism. According to Weiss, Mary Wollstonecraft’s works have possibly had profound and permanent consequences on the social, intellectual, political, and literary field (26).

Nevertheless, despite the fact that Mary Wollstonecraft may have been presented as a pioneer in political writing, this was not completely true. According to Barbara Taylor⁸, there were many female political writers who expressed their political thoughts through their works. The prominent female historian Catherine Macaulay was one example. Wollstonecraft herself admitted that Macaulay had enriched her scholarly knowledge. Nevertheless, perhaps Wollstonecraft's leading personality was due to her determination to achieve an authentic mode of expression. In her novel *Mary: a Fiction* which she published in 1788, Wollstonecraft seemed to reveal her intellectual abilities which could only be truly unfolded in fiction (ODNB). According to Wollstonecraft, "in a fiction, such a being may be allowed to exist; whose grandeur is derived from the operations of its own faculties, not subjugated to opinion; but drawn by the individual from the original source" ('advertisement').

In addition, Wollstonecraft founded her values of justice and human rights on moral grounds. Similar to Rational Dissenters, she was conducting a moral battle against a corrupt country which obstructed individuals' liberty to make genuine moral choices and to contribute to the betterment of society. However, Rational Dissenters, such as Richard Price, did not challenge property laws or the social hierarchy that existed (qtd.in Franklin 96⁹) whereas Wollstonecraft did. Caroline Franklin considered Wollstonecraft's stand on property more radical than that of Richard Price since she contended that property was more protected than freedom in England (96).

⁸ Taylor, Barbara. "Wollstonecraft [married name Godwin], Mary (1759–1797), author and advocate of women's rights." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. September 01, 2007. Oxford University Press,. Date of access 12 Nov. 2018.

⁹ Franklin, Caroline. *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Literary Life*. Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Likewise, Henry Rosher James¹⁰ stressed the importance of Wollstonecraft's demand of unbiased educational and moral standards. Besides, he argued that Wollstonecraft ridiculed the conceived character of women, their fragility, their overall vulnerability and need for defense, and regretted that women's basic concern in life was to supposedly be feminine and attractive. However, James emphasized her particular concern with morality. He specified that Wollstonecraft's claim of an equal moral code between men and women was "what gave the greatest shock to the accepted conventions of the day". Moreover, he found Wollstonecraft's simple and forward discourse about various social problems resulting from the unfair sexual standards which prevailed at the time, astounding (1-2).

On the other hand, Wollstonecraft's private life, especially her love life with Imlay, was perceived as a failure on her part to implement the ideals that she expressed in her works. Wollstonecraft's advocated values of friendship and amicable affection were thought to have been sacrificed to her "sexual desire". Caroline Franklin, for instance, claimed that:

[Wollstonecraft's] determination to work out her principles of conduct anew, without recourse to patriarchal conventions would bring her much suffering. But her bravery and refusal to compromise would also develop her feminist thought beyond that expressed in *Rights of Woman*, and far beyond the ken of most of her contemporaries (110-1).

In fact, the passionate love that Wollstonecraft experienced with Imlay was seen as an experience that changed her vision of "rational" love into that of unbound and fervent love (Franklin 110-1).

¹⁰ James, H. R. *Mary Wollstonecraft: a Sketch*. Haskell House, 1971.

In short, various historians perceived Wollstonecraft as a radical and revolutionary writer. This is due to Wollstonecraft's proposals of a unified educational scheme for both sexes, her advocacy of equal rights for women at a time when all the attention was focused on the rights of men, her stand on property and her claim of a unified moral code between genders.

As for Emmeline Pankhurst, historians largely recounted her story as that of the Women's Social and Political Union. Their account of Emmeline Pankhurst's life was almost always accompanied by an account of the history of the WSPU, its leaders, followers, agenda and methods. Particularly, the militant techniques of the WSPU received particular attention from historians. Paula Bartley, for instance, considered the suffragettes' militant techniques of property destruction as acts of terrorism. Furthermore, she stressed Mrs. Pankhurst willingness to hold responsibility for such terrorist acts. She also deemed Emmeline Pankhurst among "the most controversial figures of all times in British political history" (1). David Horspool, however, regarded Mrs. Pankhurst as one of the "militant campaigners [who] positively embraced their roles as rebels" (352). He considered her as one of the rebels who, instead of introducing a strange tradition of rebellion, merely grasped the spirit of rebellion that already existed in the Victorian age but was somehow concealed by the Victorian welfare of the time (354).

Furthermore, Emmeline Pankhurst was considered as a pioneer in the field of women's suffrage for she moved away from traditional methods to claim the vote, such as political campaigning, and used more innovative ones such as property destruction (Mullen

116¹¹). Similarly, Patricia Bernstein¹² emphasized Mrs. Pankhurst's decision to attract more publicity by encouraging "public actions that were much more dramatic than the traditional pamphleteering and polite lobbying of politicians" (65).

Nonetheless, Jane Marcus believed that the genius of the suffragettes' methods did not lie in violent acts but in the suffragettes' disruption of political meetings. The method was initially started by Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney who heckled Edward Grey's speech in Manchester, 1905, and were, as a result, imprisoned and brought to public notice. Marcus saw the suffragettes' strategy of interrupting political meetings as a brave defiance of the constraints upon the female role both by actual and figurative standards (9). She argued that the most significant element of militant suffrage was that it provided women with a "political voice". Women brought up to remain silent and have an appropriate conduct so as to fit the expectation of men, whose speeches were always superior to that of women, were taught by Christabel Pankhurst to express their cause in their personal voice. Most importantly, they learned to defy male-controlled cultural supremacy through their disruption of men shared conversations, which was the ultimate violence of militancy, "the assumption of verbal power". In summary, the suffragettes' militancy was perceived by Marcus as not only an attack on property but as an attack on patriarchy and traditional notions of propriety that were prescribed to women at the time.

However, in George Dangerfield's book *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (1935), one of the earliest historical accounts of the suffragette movement, the women's suffrage movement was considered as women's rebellion against femininity and as an

¹¹ Mullen, John. *The Show Must Go On! Popular Song in Britain during the First World War*. Routledge, 2016.

¹² Bernstein, Patricia. *The First Waco Horror: The Lynching of Jesse Washington and the Rise of the NAACP*. Texas A&M University Press, 2005.

attempt to embrace masculine traits and appearance. Dangerfield found the WSPU movement, in particular, “outrageous”. According to George Dangerfield, through the suffragettes’ fresh consciousness of the potentials of a theoretical objective in life, they became knowledgeable with their “long-neglected masculinity” (125). The suffragettes’ intrusion into the sphere of politics was the first manifestation of their masculinity. Besides, he attributed the rise of the suffragette movement to women’s loss of “feminine security” (Dangerfield 125).

Furthermore, George Dangerfield argued that suffrage associations of conservative women and Mrs. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, the leader of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS)¹³, thought of politics as an extension of the house, a place in which the tender hand of women could prevent men from mishandling matters they did not comprehend. This included social services, solutions to prostitution and single mothers’ problems. However, they should leave every issue of national significance to men. Nonetheless, he contended that Mrs. Pankhurst was not satisfied with such prospects. She was aware that whenever men were appealed to in a feminine and modest way, they would not grant women their demands. Instead, they would continually delay their response (131). Thus, one of the first history books which discussed the suffragettes’ movement described Emmeline Pankhurst as an impatient female activist who wanted to campaign violently to achieve her aims. Moreover, Dangerfield implied that Mrs. Pankhurst did not share the same

¹³ For more details about the different suffrage organizations that existed in the nineteenth century, see the chapter “Emmeline Pankhurst’s Struggle for the Vote”.

modest and limited demands which suffrage associations of conservative women¹⁴ and Mrs. Fawcett urged for, demands which still left the responsibility of national issues to men.

Additionally, George Dangerfield believed that the suffragettes' feminine clothes combined with their violent acts only stimulated laughter, he claimed that:

when a scene as ordinary as English politics is suddenly disturbed with the swish of long skirts, the violent assault of feathered hats, the impenetrable, advancing phalanx of corseted bosoms- when around the smoking ruins of some house or church, there is discovered the dread evidence of a few hairpins or a feminine galosh- then the amazing, the ludicrous appearance of the whole thing is almost irresistible (133).

Surely, for George Dangerfield, the feminine and violent suffragette was a horrible blend. In fact, he found this blend laughable and ridiculous. Nonetheless, this research considers this blend of femininity and violence as suffragettes' intelligent attempt to merge conformity and rebellion, conformity to feminine ideals and rebellion against women's declined status.

Moreover, Andrew Rosen believed that the WSPU overrated the impact of the political influence of martyrdom, especially once the suffragettes' martyrdom was perceived as self-inflicted (244). George Dangerfield, however, described both Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst as self-centered women and occasionally exhibitionists. Their union followers were criticized for their choice to become martyrs for "the world has never loved a

¹⁴ Cf. the chapter "Emmeline Pankhurst's Struggle for the Vote" for more details about suffrage associations of conservative women.

martyr” (133). Nevertheless, Dangerfield admitted that despite the excesses of Mrs. Pankhurst and her followers, they were significant contributors in the making of history. Despite the fact that their techniques were appalling and wrong, their aims were of fine essence for they certainly “assisted woman no little way towards the re-discovery of the place which was really hers in the world” (134).

Literary critic Les Garner¹⁵ asserted that militancy was the main reason why the WSPU became the most famous suffrage union. She even argued that the importance which was given to the Pankhursts’ union had taken focus from other important suffrage associations such as the NUWSS¹⁶ and WFL¹⁷. However, she attributed the union’s uniqueness to two main reasons: its realignment away from its labour and social origins and to the rising autocracy of Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter (44). Indeed, the autocracy of Mrs. Pankhurst was another important aspect about the leadership of the WSPU. While it is unclear whether Emmeline Pankhurst’s autocracy was efficient, Carolyn Christensen Nelson¹⁸ argued that the autocracy of Mrs. Pankhurst’s leadership and her union’s growing violence estranged a number of her followers despite her success in attracting a good number of dedicated and ardent supporters (Nelson xxxv).

Interestingly, Les Garner indicated that the WSPU conformed to women’s traditional role. In fact, she argued that the leaders of the WSPU approved of the conventional tasks of women and even utilized them to validate their claim for the vote. Garner supported his

¹⁵ Garner, Les. *Stepping Stones to Women's Liberty: Feminist Ideas in the Women's Suffrage*. Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984.

¹⁶ NUWSS stands for The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

¹⁷ WFL stands for Women’s Freedom League.

¹⁸ Nelson, Carolyn Christensen. *Literature of the Womens Suffrage Campaign in England*. Broadview Press, 2004.

claims with quotes from Christabel Pankhurst and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence in which they agreed on women's responsibility in nurturing children and taking care of the sick. In his opinion, the leaders of the WSPU agreed with the prescribed role of women without any questioning (50).

In this research, I claim that Emmeline Pankhurst conformed to certain aspects of women perceived role in the Victorian age so as to better promote her emancipatory efforts. This claim was well articulated by Les Garner's analysis of the WSPU's arguments and methods. However, I intend to extend his argument even further by taking the case of Mary Wollstonecraft as a second example. Moreover, my research will attempt to emphasize this idea and offer a more extended analysis of the WSPU methods. Moreover, this research will endeavor to sustain the latter idea by a larger amount of data as evidence.

Furthermore, June Purvis¹⁹ believed that Mrs. Pankhurst helped in generating a confusing vision of the conventional roles of the two sexes when women filled the jobs of men fighting at war. Still, simultaneously, she helped in strengthening the conventional division of roles between men and women as she urged men to join in the war effort in several gatherings. Emmeline Pankhurst's stress upon war service as a male job reflected a shared nineteenth century belief of the gender division of roles. Women did not have to be soldiers by necessity, men did (269). Accordingly, June Purvis stressed Emmeline Pankhurst's bewildering view of gender roles. On the one hand, Mrs. Pankhurst held a progressive view of the role of women when she encouraged them to join the work force and

¹⁹ Purvis, June. *Emmeline Pankhurst: A Biography*. London, Taylor & Francis Group, 2002.

fill the vacant jobs of men at war. On the other hand, her appeal for men to fight in the war emphasized men's traditional role of defending the country.

In short, Emmeline Pankhurst was a controversial figure in history who was both admired and criticized by numerous observers. In general, she was seen as a charismatic, intelligent, autocratic, self-centered and rebellious leader. Furthermore, historians largely focused on the militant techniques of the Women's Social and Political Union as the genius of the suffragettes' movement. Mrs. Pankhurst was mostly ascribed for making the shift from the old means of political campaigning for women's suffrage to new and innovative ones such as property destruction, arson and hunger strikes in prison. However, historians such as Jane Marcus argued that the power of militancy did not reside in its violence but in its verbal command, in women's disruption of political meetings and interference in men's sphere. Nevertheless, earlier accounts of the WSPU movement, such as that of George Dangerfield, ridiculed the suffragettes' militancy and saw it as a manifestation of women's growing masculinity. Yet, some historians believed that Mrs. Pankhurst validated certain conventional gender roles to support her claim for the vote. This latter argument will be the focus of this research.

Thus, while some historians emphasized Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's acts of rebellion and uprising, others stressed aspects of their conventionalism, regarding their claims or methods. Consequently, in this research, I aim to examine the conventional methods that Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst used to convey their feminist claims focusing on one method in particular that of 'strategic conformity'. I would argue that despite their rebellion against the position and status of women in society and their controversial views and lives, both Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst

attempted strategic conformity to certain social norms prevailing at the time as far as women's traditional role in English society was concerned.

The purpose of this study is to highlight aspects of conformity in the lives and activities of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst and discuss possible reasons and motives for such conformity. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that this research does not claim in any way that Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst were absolute conformists to women's traditional roles in their societies. Instead, it argues that both rebellion and conformity were essential in their struggle for women's emancipation. In particular, I would argue that while both feminists rebelled against certain social values of their societies in their quest for women's rights, they also conformed to certain ideals of morality, motherhood, wifehood and femininity in order to better promote their overall political and moral objectives.

Examining the various techniques and modes of expressions which Wollstonecraft and Pankhurst used in their struggle for women's rights enables us to consider the many strategies that could be used to promote women's emancipation. It also allows us to study 'conformity' or more precisely 'intended and strategic conformity' as an equally important method for advancing feminist claims along with rebellion. Moreover, I would argue that 'strategic conformity' was intelligently used by various women's rights campaigners as a political instrument and should therefore be considered in this light. Certainly, the two feminists rebelled against the regressive perceptions on the place of women in their society; however, their compliance with some other perceptions and expectations was equally helpful to their cause. Rebellion and conformity were no longer contradictory as soon as they began serving the same objective.

The first ideal that Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst arguably conformed to in order to advance their emancipatory ideals was morality. Both in the Georgian and Victorian age, women were perceived as guardians of morality. Realizing this, the two feminists used moral claims to plead for equal rights between men and women. They contended that human beings could only enjoy a moral world when men were subjected to the same moral code as women. In the chapter “Defending Morality”, I should further extend this claim. For more precision, however, I will compare Mary Wollstonecraft’s moral claims in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* to those of Christabel Pankhurst in her *Plain Fact about a Great Evil*. The chapter will also include a section in which I discuss the moral claims of the WSPU propaganda as a whole. I should specify that this research does not merely deal with Emmeline Pankhurst’s conformity but also with the rest of the WSPU organizers and the union’s propaganda as a whole.

The second ideal that this research will examine is wifehood and motherhood. I would argue that both Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst conformed to the prevailing ideals of wifehood and motherhood so as to advance their feminist agenda. I would contend that the two feminists attempted to exhibit their wifely and motherly nature to their readers, or audience in the case of Mrs. Pankhurst, in two ways. First, they achieved this through their rhetoric about wifehood and motherhood and second, through their endeavor to set themselves as good examples of wives and mothers. This argument will be developed in the chapter, “Being Good Wives and Compassionate Mothers”.

Lastly, the chapter “Dressed in Conformity” examines Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst’s conformity to femininity. In this chapter, I will discuss Mary Wollstonecraft’s perception of femininity and how she exhibited her own femininity. As for

Emmeline Pankhurst, I will first demonstrate how she attempted to discredit accusations of suffragettes' masculinity through advertising feminine and fashionable clothes in her *Votes for Women*, the WSPU newspaper. Second, I will bring evidence of her encouragement to suffragettes to be feminine and 'ladylike'. Third, I will demonstrate how Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel drew a feminine image of the suffragettes through their appearance.

As far as methodology is concerned, I will use a historical approach to analyze Mary Wollstonecraft's writing and Emmeline Pankhurst's speeches, autobiography, interviews and articles. This includes a historical study of feminine ideals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly, morality, wifehood, motherhood and femininity. This will help us identify and highlight the importance of the ideals that the two feminists tried to conform to. Subsequently, I will proceed to analyze primary sources by Mary Wollstonecraft focusing on her two political pamphlets: *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). The latter vindication will receive particular attention since it was through her *Rights of Woman* that Wollstonecraft established herself as a feminist.

In fact, chapters which discuss Wollstonecraft's conformity will be based almost exclusively on her *Rights of Woman*. For one main reason, this latter vindication was arguably her most revolutionary work, therefore, presenting instances of conformity from this work will best support my argument. This should stress the fact that Wollstonecraft's rebellious ideas and arguments were softened by other conformist views and ideals within the same work. Moreover, my use of this *Vindication* should prove that her conformity was part of her ideology as a rebel. In other words, her earliest works were a better proof of her conformity but bringing evidence of conformity from these works will definitely jeopardize

my argument; it could be easily dismissed under the argument of a ‘change of ideology’ or a ‘later political maturity’. However, selecting instances of conformity from her supposedly most revolutionary work *Rights of Woman* will support my argument that she used conformist claims alongside radical ones within the same work to better advance her feminist claims.

Moreover, I will also use other primary sources such as William Godwin’s *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798) and letters to her first lover, Imlay, which were collected in *Posthumous Works of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1781). These two sources will serve to highlight the dichotomy between Wollstonecraft’s lifestyle, and the principles she advocated in her works. In the case of Emmeline Pankhurst, however, conformity will be dealt with as a political instrument that was used by Mrs. Pankhurst as well as the rest of the WSPU’s organizers such as Miss Christabel Pankhurst, Mrs. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, Miss Teresa Billington, and Miss Annie Kenny²⁰. Therefore, speeches of the WSPU organizers as well as articles of the union’s official newspaper and correspondences will be studied.

Furthermore, I will depend on various eighteenth and nineteenth centuries primary sources to emphasize the values and conduct that women were urged to comply with. This will include conduct books that were destined to teach women how to be moral and feminine, and how to fulfill their duties as wives and mothers. Besides, the efficiency of Wollstonecraft and Mrs. Pankhurst’s conformity as a method will be assessed through an analysis of the contemporary reception of Wollstonecraft’s writing and Pankhurst’s rhetoric and actions. In

²⁰ In reality, the WSPU was mainly led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst.

the case of Emmeline Pankhurst, I will largely use the oral evidence of suffragettes which is found in the Brian Harrison interviews²¹. In these interviews, a number of suffragettes testified to Mrs. Pankhurst's special instructions on conformity.

Additionally, my choice to compare Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst could be justified by the fact that I perceived the two feminists as rebels who attempted to advance the ideals of women's emancipation through both rebellion and conformity. The initial purpose of this research was to study feminists' use of conformity in promoting women's liberation. Therefore, studying conformity as an instrumental tool in the hands of feminists was the basic objective of this research. In order to better explore this subject, I sought to illustrate it with at least two examples. The criteria upon which I chose Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst were four. First, the two had to be women's rights campaigners since my research targeted the struggle for women's emancipation. Second, they both must conformed in a certain way to women perceived role and images. Third, both had to be known as rebels and radicals. This was a particularly important criterion because shedding light on two radical feminists' conformity will hopefully allow for more originality.

Fourth and last point, they had to be very distinct from each other in the way they campaigned for women's rights. This was important because I wanted to compare methods of conformity of two completely different feminists. Certainly, they both advocated women's rights but the two feminists did so in a very different manner. Here, Wollstonecraft and Pankhurst fitted the criterion since one of them was a writer who advocated women's rights through her writing and the other was a political activist who advocated them through her

²¹ The Brian Harrison interviews are a collection of 205 interviews with Edwardian women who were involved in the suffrage movement. For more information about this collection, its access and use, cf. the website https://aim25.com/cgi-bin/vcdf/detail?coll_id=10496&inst_id=65&nv1=search&nv2=

speeches and political activism. Besides, I wanted to go even further and compare two feminists who did not even share the same historical context. This is particularly useful for my research since it enables me to argue that being a women's rights campaigner whether in the eighteenth or in the nineteenth century, being a writer or a political activist seems to prompt conformity in one way or another. Nonetheless, the time gap between the two feminists does not change much about the historical context since perceptions about women's rights and women's role and status in society were virtually the same throughout the centuries.

Concerning the organization of this research, I sought to divide it into four parts, each part consists of two chapters. The first part is devoted to the historical context and theoretical framework of this research. It is entitled "Historical and Theoretical Perspectives of the Research". The first chapter of this part "Women in English Society from 1780 to 1928" explores the historical context of the late eighteenth century until the early twentieth century. The aim of this chapter is to provide a brief background of the general historical context of the period in which the two feminists lived. It also specifically aims to outline the social, economic, intellectual, legal and political status of women that eventually led the two feminists to protest. The second chapter "Theoretical Framework" deals with important notions in this research such as feminism, its history and movements. Besides, the chapter examines a number of studies on conformity; particularly middle-eastern studies which discussed conformity to social and religious norms as a tool used by middle-eastern women to enhance their social status.

The second part of this research is entitled "Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst in their Own Times", it presents the biographical account of the lives of Mary

Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst. The first chapter of this part “Mary Wollstonecraft: A Life of a Rebel” provides biographical and historical notes about the life of Mary Wollstonecraft. It focuses on the rebellious nature of her life and works. It also aims to explain the image of Mary Wollstonecraft ‘the Rebel’. The second chapter “Emmeline Pankhurst’s Struggle for the Vote” stresses Pankhurst’s protest against the legal status of women, her adoption of militant techniques and her reasons for such a decision.

The third part of this research is entitled “Conforming to Women’s Traditional Image”. This part is first introduced by a section, “Criticism of Women’s Rights Campaigners”. This section aims to answer one important question: why did Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst attempt conformity? The section presents the chief allegations that feminists were exposed to in the Georgian and Victorian age, allegations that arguably prompted Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst to attempt strategic conformity. The first chapter of this part “Being Good Wives and Compassionate Mothers” aims to demonstrate how the two feminists conformed to notions of wifhood and motherhood. The second chapter “Dressed in Conformity,” discusses Mary Wollstonecraft’s perception and viewpoint of femininity and Emmeline Pankhurst’s conformity to feminine notions of clothing.

The fourth part of this research holds the title “Conformity in Rhetoric and Practice, a Precarious Balance?” The first chapter of this part “Defending Morality”, argues that Mary Wollstonecraft and the leadership of the WSPU conformed to certain moral values in order to advance their emancipatory claims. The second chapter “Rebellion or Conformity” aims to investigate whether Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst’s conformity was practiced in their own private lives or was merely a strategic and political instrument that was

used to advance their feminist claims in public. Besides, this chapter presents opinions of various recent historians concerning the two feminists' attempts of conformity.

Part I: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives of the Research

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women experienced discrimination on various levels, socially, financially, intellectually and legally. Despite the fact that the condition of women depended largely on their social class and marital status, British women of all classes, married or unmarried, suffered an inferior status in both centuries. The chapter “Women in English society from 1780 to 1928” initially presents the historical background of the late eighteenth century until the early twentieth century. It also stresses the inferior condition of women and the different reforms that aimed to enhance their situation throughout the period. Nevertheless, the second chapter “Theoretical Framework” presents the different feminist waves and movements that emerged as a response to women’s subjection. These movements are classified according to their history, demands and methods. Nonetheless, they all share a simple and unique objective, ‘women’s full emancipation’.

Furthermore, the chapter “Theoretical Framework” attempts to define the concept of radicalism and investigates the reasons why Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst were perceived as ‘radicals’. Moreover, it discusses the concept of conformity and the studies related to it. Since I argue in this research that Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst conformed to certain notions of morality, wifehood, motherhood and femininity, it is important to study the concept of conformity more closely. In this chapter, conformity is first defined as a social behavior. However, the chapter goes further introducing conformity as a strategic tool of both resistance and struggle in the hands of subjected women.

Chapter 1: Women in English Society from 1780 to 1928

From the late eighteenth century until the early twentieth century, England went through major transformations. It was a period when numerous reforms and much change in the social, economic and political sphere took place. Moreover, this period covered the years of activism of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) and this was the main reason why it was chosen. Furthermore, in order to emphasize the historical setting that preceded Mary Wollstonecraft's publication of her two political pamphlets *Rights of Men* (1790) and *Rights of Woman* (1792), the period starts with the year 1780. The period ends with the year 1928 which marks the full enfranchisement of women as well as the death of Emmeline Pankhurst.

Essentially, this chapter aims to examine the historical context of the period with a special focus on the social, economic and legal status of English women during the period. First, the evolution of the English class system over nearly 150 years will be closely examined. This section will highlight the different lifestyles that English people experienced according to their class, particularly, the difference in education and social standing between a middle-class woman and a working-class woman will be emphasized. Second, major changes that were prompted by the Industrial Revolution will be examined particularly women's employment and conditions of work. Last but not least, the legal status of women as well as debates over representation, which gradually paved the way for more democratic England, will be discussed. The study of the latter aspects should provide a brief framework of the social, economic, legal and political context of the period with an emphasis on the changes that more specifically affected the situation of women.

1. Class System, Social and Intellectual Status of Women

Enraged by the lack of freedom of expression and a corrupt system of monarchy in France, the much-celebrated French philosopher Voltaire found in Britain an inspiring model of a tolerant country²². In the eighteenth century, Britain was indeed highly regarded by foreigners for what they deemed as tolerance, liberty and political resilience, although comments were usually made about England as representing the whole of Britain. Eighteenth century England could be said to have avoided the evils of extremism. Foreign visitors were deeply impressed by the pragmatism and stability of English society rather than by its strains and stiffness (Langford 50²³).

Numerous visitors from France, including Voltaire and Abbé Grosley, emphasized in their writings the absence of ‘caste’ in England and the rather uncomplicated process of climbing the social ladder for Britons. They also admired what they considered as the lack of upper-class privileges in comparison with other European countries. For instance, in the case of criminal offenses, it is true that peers were judged by the House of Lords, but once they were convicted, they agonized in public similar to any conventional offender (Langford 50). In 1760, Laurence Shirley known as “Lord Ferrers” murdered his steward, and despite his claims to temporary lunacy, he was detained, tried, sentenced and executed when found guilty (Davenport-Hines ODNB²⁴). To European observers, this was clear evidence that no one was above the law in England.

²² Voltaire. *Letters Concerning the English Nation*. London, J and R. Tonson, 1778

²³ Langford, Paul. *Eighteenth-century Britain: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford university press, 1984

²⁴ Davenport-Hines, Richard. “Shirley, Laurence, fourth Earl Ferrers (1720–1760).” Richard Davenport-Hines *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford, OUP, 2004. Online ed. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Jan. 2008. 6 Dec. 2015 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25432>>

In fact, the class system in Britain was unique and very different from that of most European countries at the time. A separate social cast of aristocracy that entitled itself to broad-ranging and particular legal rights compared to the general public did not exist in Britain. According to Professor Habakkuk “the nearest British analogy to the European structure of the aristocracy was the class of families entitled to armorial bearings” (qtd. in Christie 56²⁵). These could be the landowners, a category that comprised the peers. Nevertheless, while this category earned social esteem and professions privileges, and peers were able to demand trial for their legal offenses before the House of Lords, they still did not possess any particular advantages when it came to law, taxation and land acquisition or public services. Besides, none of them was distinguished in any way from other members of society involved in commerce or industry (Christie 56).

Most historians agree that eighteenth century English society consisted of three classes: the upper class, the middling sort and the working-class. The upper class was labeled by historians as ‘the ruling class’, ‘the landed class’, ‘the aristocracy’ and of course ‘the upper-class’. These multiple names reflected historians’ difficulties to define the upper-class. Nevertheless, the aristocracy which was composed of 500 peers at most or by extension about 2,000 families endowed with a title was closer to being a cast than a class. Hence,

definitions of the upper class include the broader ‘squirearchy’ whose income derived from substantial landed estates, and the wider group of younger sons and their offspring, inserted, because of the restrictions of the inheritance of estates

²⁵ Christie, Ian Ralph. *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-century Britain*. Oxford, Clarendon press, 1984.

and titles to the eldest male, into positions of profit and authority in the state system, the army, the church and the financial institutions (Hewitt 307-8²⁶).

This extremely complicated cycle of relationships, connections and privileges, in which kinsfolk, position and upbringing were more crucial than money or profession was largely criticized at the beginning of the nineteenth century as the ‘Old Corruption’ (Hewitt 307-8). Accordingly, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the upper class possessed great political power due to their land property which entitled them to vote.

Right below the upper class extended the large and vague terrain of the “middling sort”. This class comprised traders, storekeepers, financiers, small affluent agrarians, assistants, lawyers, professors, manufacturers, hoteliers, engineers, curates, and architects. The latter group comprised individuals who were generally recommended by their education, commercial ingenuity or particular skill. Through an income classification, the middling sorts’ income extended from around 300 or £400 down to 40 or £50 per year. Nevertheless, even well-off manufacturers may possibly be regarded as middle instead of upper class since their wealth rested on commerce instead of land property. Based on the particular features chosen to categorize the class, the “middling sort” might have comprised around 16 to 42 percent of English families (Olsen 15²⁷).

The working-class was the section of society that was paid for their employment in manual or industrial jobs. Similar to the upper and middle-class, the working-class could be defined in terms of different divisions, chiefly between artisan and industrial workers, skillful

²⁶Hewitt, Martin. “Class and the Classes.” *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Edited by Chris Williams, Malden, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004, pp. 305–320.

²⁷ Olsen, Kirstin. *Daily Life in 18th-century England*. Westport, Greenwood Press, 1999.

and unskillful, urban and rural, respectable and harsh. It was evident that there were differences among the working-class between those who received high wages, a division who benefited from regular and steady employment and those who depended on irregular employment, charity and inadequate social aid, through the poor laws for instance. Nevertheless, working-class individuals could make an upward or downward transition to some other divisions according to the fluctuations of economy (Williams 308²⁸).

No matter how much the English class system was praised by some foreigners, individuals coming from different social classes did not certainly live the same way. In eighteenth century English society, class governed nearly every aspect of individuals' daily life nutrition, clothes, waking and sleeping hours, profession and schooling. Persons recognized their status on the social ladder and, seemingly at least, they were indifferent to those superior to them, sympathized with those less fortunate than them and probably challenged the incredible odds to climb one or two steps upward in the social ladder. The endeavor to upward social mobility, if prosperous, would possibly drain their entire adulthood (Olsen 13). Thus, while social mobility was probably difficult, it was still possible.

In eighteenth century England, social class was a significant criterion of the type of life that people lived. As for women, marital status was another important criterion that determined the status role and position of women at the time. Therefore, a distinction between married and single women is essential. The historian Roy Porter argued that in eighteenth century Britain, for instance, a married woman had four essential roles. The first role was obedience to her husband, the second was bearing children, and the third was house

²⁸ Williams, Chris. *A Companion to Nineteenth Century Britain*. London, Routledge, 2005.

management such as cooking, supervising the maids and arranging social gatherings. Her fourth role was the display of femininity and grace. This was done mainly through the graceful way in which they dressed, talked pleasantly about general topics that had nothing to do with religion or politics, sung or played a musical instrument (Porter 28²⁹). Nonetheless, it is important to stress that this was the role of women married to well-off men, a woman married to a poor man could in no way have the same role. According to Porter, women and children were greatly needed for factory labor (96). Hence, unlike middle-class women who were neither obliged to work nor supposed to, poor women, along with their children, had to join their husbands and work in factories to support their families.

Furthermore, individuals in eighteenth century England were given value according to their influential connections particularly with people of authority, “fathers, masters, husbands, parsons and patrons” (Porter 21). Since men were supposed to be superior to women, upper-class and middle-class women were kept at home as virtuous daughters or childbearing mothers. The notion of men’s superiority led women to literally live under the protection of the men in their lives. This meant that women acquired their status from that of their husbands or fathers. Therefore, if her husband or father was rich and influential, a woman was going to be a respectful upper or middle-class woman. However, if her husband or father was poor, then she would hold no status at all; this was even worse for women who were single or orphans, or both (Porter 21).

Historians such as Roy Porter, Richard Price, Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus claimed that women’s social role could be best explained by the concept of the separate

²⁹ Porter, Roy. *English Society in the 18 th Century*. London, Penguin Group, 1982.

spheres, the public and the private spheres. The concept simply implied that men were supposed to be outside in their public realm and women at home in their domestic realm. The concept of the separate spheres was articulated by public opinion mostly composed of men and supported by conformist women who believed in their role within their domestic realm. Women were mothers, wives, servants and subordinate workers. This separation of spheres was justified by biological differences, men were deemed to be superior because of their supposed thinking and trading abilities. Women, on the other hand, were destined to be obedient, virtuous, domestic and childbearing (Porter 22-3). According to the ideology of the separate spheres, however, women were intended for childbearing primarily while men were financially responsible for child support.

The clearest boundary that could be identified between the private and the public sphere was between household and society. Gender was a crucial feature in the line of this boundary. In their plainest forms, the public and private spheres were a dual structure; the public domain was masculine and the private one was feminine. Surely, the sex ability of both divisions was perceived in this light. The belief system of domesticity supported the logic behind the division of the public and private sphere. The male characteristics were fit for the public territory whereas the female characteristics were fit for the home territory. The principle of the separate spheres illustrated the belief system, the prevailing social thinking and the gender relations of the time. The system of the separate spheres did not restrain women by necessity; however, they were still supposed to abide by it. Similarly, it is

significant to acknowledge that domesticity and the separate spheres were by no means a fixed system (Price 205³⁰). In fact, the historian Richard Price argued that:

The tensions and ambiguities within the arrangement of the separate spheres created a profound instability to the public-private division in civil society. The demise of the social constructions that constituted civil society in this period owed a lot to tensions and instabilities that ran along this gendered boundary (205).

According to the accounts of the latter historians, the system of the separate spheres was supposedly a significant feature in the English society; yet, the system was far from fixed and unchallenged.

The system of the separate spheres was sometimes abridged to describing the social order of the eighteenth century as a society that had men and women inhabit fully separate worlds, one in which women were dependent on men and just slightly above the position of mere submissive victims. Besides, it was one in which men ruled over private affairs, social order and the institutional sphere (Barker and Chalus 20³¹). Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus argued that: “while most interpretations are somewhat more subtle, the routine acceptance of a simplistic separation of spheres still plays an important structural role in the majority of arguments about women and gender” (20-1).

³⁰ Richard Price. *British Society 1680-1880: Dynamism, Containment and Change* (1999).

³¹ Barker, Hannah and Elaine Chalus. Introduction. *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*. by Barker and Chalus. London, Addison Wesley Longman, 1997. 20-21

Certainly, the assertions of some historians that women were expected to be obedient and inferior does not necessarily mean that they were. In fact, the concept of the separate spheres does not correctly describe men's and women's relationship at the time. Women coming from rich and cultured families had access to education similar to their male counterparts, or almost, and this helped in the emergence of female scholars and writers who were greatly admired. According to Christopher Hibbert³²: "there were increasing numbers of women who were becoming recognized as conversationalists more than able to hold their ground with men and as writers and scholars whose works commanded respect" (389). In fact, there were a good number of schools for girls in the eighteenth century, as the one established by Mary Wollstonecraft at Newington Green. Nevertheless, the school had a limited educational scope, with a program that mainly included reading, drawing and sewing. Jane Austen, one of the most brilliant novelists of her time, studied in three boarding schools but acquired most of her learning from her father (Porter 165). Essentially, most women writers of the eighteenth century came from upper or middle-class families and had received at least a basic, or sometimes even a thorough, education.

Early in the eighteenth century, the supposedly 'appropriate' schooling of middle and upper-class women relied chiefly on practical activities such as cooking, stitching, needlework, spinning and housework, skills that would allow a woman, once a wife and mother, to manage her house economically and efficiently, and to pleasingly accommodate her guests (Hill 45³³). Such an example could be understood in the light of women's private sphere which stressed women's role in the household. Nonetheless, according to Bridget Hill,

³² Hibbert, Christopher. *The English: A Social History, 1066-1945*. London, Harper Collins Publishers, 1987.

³³ Hill, Bridget. *Eighteenth-century Women: An Anthology*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1984.

such a focus on domestic chores as important topics of girls' education raises a substantial question concerning women's intellectual abilities: to what extent were women perceived to have the same intellectual abilities as men? In the eighteenth century, various writers who discussed middle and upper-class girls' education believed that women had distinct and "inferior" intellectual capacities compared to men. Unfortunately, this opinion was not solely shared by male writers but by female writers as well. Though disapproving of the state of girls' education, various women writers believed that an education distinct in nature was more suitable for girls (Hill 45).

Hannah More was one of eighteenth century women writers who believed in a distinct logic for the male and female. In her book *Essays on Various Subjects; Principally Designed for Young Ladies* (1778), More explained the different intellectual abilities that men and women possessed claiming that:

Women have generally quicker perceptions; men have juster sentiments.- women consider how things may be prettily said; -In women, (young ones at least) speaking accompanies, and sometimes precedes reflection; in men, reflection is the antecedent- women speak to shine or to please; men, to convince or to confute-women admire what is brilliant; men what is solid (9).

In the previous passage, Hannah More attempted to highlight women's intellectual abilities by stressing the difference between the female logic and the male logic. In other words, there was no admission of women's inferior logic on More's side. In fact, she probably tried to refute claims of inferiority by arguing that the female mind functioned differently and not inferiorly. Nonetheless, her analysis made the case for a firm, practical,

logical and sound male intellect as opposed to an emotional, superficial, shallow and unrestrained female intellect.

However, some female writers attributed women's distinctive and deficient intellectual abilities to the distinct and deficient education they received. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, argued that, after examining different books on education and on parents' behavior and schools' administration, she came to the conclusion that the way society disregarded the education of girls was at the root of their problem; they were rendered feeble and pitiful by several factors that originated from this neglect. Wollstonecraft maintained:

The conduct and manners of women ... prove that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk to viewers, fade on the stalk, disregarded, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity. One cause of this barren blooming I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books on the subject by men (2).

According to Mary Wollstonecraft, male writers aimed to provide women with a feminine education instead of a rational one. They emphasized women's charms rather than their intellect. As a result, refined women of the eighteenth century became eager to acquire love instead of esteem for their intellectual capacities and merits.

Nonetheless, some girls from upper and middle-class families were educated in very prestigious boarding schools. However, boys from the same class were sent to universities.

Education among rich British gentlemen was closer to a fashion whereby prestige and wealth could be displayed, a fashion that a farmer or a poor laborer would not be interested in pursuing for two reasons: the lack of money to educate his children and the lack of desire for false appearances, a desire that the middle and upper-classes seemed to enjoy particularly (Porter 70).

Concerning poor girls' education, lack of funding was another reason why poor laborers or farmers were less likely to send their children to school. Not only that parents could not afford to pay school fees, but they also were in great need for their children's labor (Porter 165). Thus, workers down the social rank used to send their children to work at a very early age in order to help them with the family expenses. However, this was not particular to girls as their male counterparts experienced the same treatment. Instead of spending money on their children's education, parents expected their children to earn money for the family.

During the early nineteenth century, some children were schooled in various ways while others were not schooled in the first place. This depended largely on their gender, their parents' economic situation, social class, faith and principles. In England, there was no consensus over the educational curriculum, school fees or the category of students who were supposed to go to school. Disagreements regarding spiritual education and the belief that fathers were entitled to decide about their children's upbringing slowed the process of mandatory education. Though no generalizations could be safely made concerning education in nineteenth-century England, broadly adopted requisites were scarce (Mitchell 165³⁴).

³⁴ Mitchell, Sally. *Daily life in Victorian England*. Greenwood Press, 1996.

Elementary schools offered inexpensive schooling for the offspring of the working-class and lower middle-class. Based on the form of their structure and finance, elementary schools were given different labels: “board school, district school, parish school, village school, voluntary school, national school” (Mitchell 165). A small number of elementary schools were completely free of charge prior to 1890, a fee of one to four-penny weekly was common. Offspring of more wealthy parents were given their primary and secondary education, if any, in their family home or in schools labeled as public or private. Private schools had one individual proprietor and offered different sorts of education. A widow who taught a few pupils in her house was regarded as a private school owner. Public schools, however, had a corporate proprietor or a panel of directors who administered the school. Thus, compared to private schools, public schools were better supervised and had a level of steadiness and tradition (Mitchell 165-6).

Concerning girls’ education, social conventions as well as “practical circumstances” signified that girls had fewer opportunities of going to school than boys. Girls’ training for the public domain was not required. Moreover, a girl who was to marry and become a mother in the future could take her “vocational training” in her parents’ house. Working-class girls started their ‘training’ at a very early age; they took care of babies and aided their mothers with embroidery and laundry which contributed to the family revenue. Families with better financial status invested in their sons’ schooling, which would help them immensely throughout their adulthood. Although not intentionally, the schooling of daughters was disregarded since it was considered of lesser significance. Besides, it was believed that girls required extra social and moral protection compared to boys. Parents were not comfortable with the thought of sending their daughters to study outside the parental house or in large schools. Small districts’ private schools which were managed by women from their houses

were deemed more suitable. According to Mitchell, “It was more important for a girl to have personal attention than intellectual training” (182). However, the finest choice for parents, who could afford it, of course, was to provide a personal governess to school their daughter under the roof of their house (Mitchell 182).

By the late nineteenth century, some women were able to have a higher education. At Cambridge, Girton College was established in 1873 and another college for women in Newnham opened in 1875. Although they were not formally a body of the university, some teachers and professors, of which the political scientist Henry Fawcett, the economist Neville Keynes, and the logician John Venn, assisted with the schooling and political endorsement. Certain professors permitted female students to attend their usual courses in Cambridge; however, the majority of them demanded that they would be accompanied by a chaperone in order to prevent male students from misbehaving. Starting from 1872, women were able to take exams. The university did not grant them degrees, although it did give them a certificate asserting their exam-passing of “such-and-such a degree”. By the late nineteenth century, small numbers of women received their education at one of the women’s colleges in Oxford or Cambridge. It was a progressive and unconventional decision to make. Occasionally, even daughters of professors found it difficult to convince their fathers of the serious pursuits of their higher education (Mitchell 182).

However, during the twentieth century, girls steadily attained equal entry to secondary education, despite the fact that the system of education in Britain had negatively distinguished girls until at least the mid-twentieth century. However, attempts to challenge discrimination against girls became crucial in the educational system starting from 1980s. Likewise, women’s attendance to universities grew gradually and in the late twentieth

century, women stood for a great number, if not the majority, of medicine students, laws and commerce (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 9³⁵).

2. Industrial Britain and Women's Employment

In Britain, the nineteenth century was characterized by the reign of Queen Victoria and was even labeled after her as “the Victorian age”. Indeed, the dawn of 20 June 1837 had some significant news for Princess Victoria, ‘she was to become the Queen of Britain’. The young queen would rule for over sixty years- longer than all the previous sovereigns. Although it was evident that her reign was triumphant in multiple respects, those triumphs could not solely be attributed to the monarch’s achievements. Rather, they could be accredited mostly to the fast social, economic and political transformation that England underwent during her reign. Despite the fact that the period known as ‘the Victorian age’ usually meant the particular period of Queen Victoria’s reign, various historians maintained that the Victorian age started prior to the beginning of her reign. Certain historians stressed the Reform Act of 1832 as the birth of the age whereas others trusted that the age started in 1824, when railroads were constructed for the first time. Regardless of the precise year, no one could question the fact that Queen Victoria’s reign overlapped with transformations on various levels and at a historically unprecedented speed. As a matter of fact, the major part of those transformations ensued as a result of previous events that started awhile before Victoria became Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (Stewart 10-2-5³⁶).

A significant economic and social transformation that took place during Queen Victoria’s reign was ‘the Industrial Revolution’. Although there is neither a definite

³⁵ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Ina. *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain: Social, Cultural and Political Change*. London, Routledge, 2001.

³⁶ Stewart, Gail B. *Victorian England*. ReferencePoint Press, 2014.

definition of the Industrial Revolution nor a consensus on its causes or precise chronological boundaries, historians such as Anthony Wood for example, attempted to define it by putting the emphasis on its main consequence: the shift from an agricultural society to an industrial one (10³⁷). Others such as Pauline Gregg focused on the development of large-scale industry that occurred in late eighteenth century and that was so speedy that it was dubbed “revolutionary” (46³⁸). Hence, since the Industrial Revolution stimulated the expansion of industry at the expense of agriculture, it could be expected that industrialists were the prime beneficiaries from this process of industrialization at the expense of landowners, a change that could eventually alter the balance of power in England.

Some historians traced the start of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-eighteenth century (Langford 32), but there is no consensus on the exact date or on the concept of the ‘revolution’. According to Patrick O’Brien and Ronald Quinault, many historians recently dismissed the term ‘Industrial Revolution’ as no more than a myth. They also questioned the importance that might be conferred to any particular phase in the long term progression of a specific national economy. A number of them are absolutely willing to challenge various images applied to describe and demonstrate the rate and form of the economic transformation of Britain that went on over many decades after 1750 (1³⁹). Yet, the concept remains substantial when we acknowledge that what is considered as “revolutionary was not an initial cataclysm but rather the magnitude of the consequences”, provided that we do not perceive it

³⁷ Wood, Anthony. *Nineteenth Century Britain 1815-1914*. London, Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1960.

³⁸ Gregg, Pauline. *A Social and Economic History of Britain 1760-1950*. London, George G.Harrap & Co.Ltd, 1950.

³⁹ O’Brien, Patrick and Ronald Quinault. *Industrial Revolution and British Society*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

as an industrialists' scheme but instead as the accumulative aftermath of loads of singular acts within the structure (Porter 311-2).

Regarding the causes of the Industrial Revolution, almost all historians maintain that arguing that there was a single cause for the 'Industrial Revolution' is an unwarranted oversimplification. Instead, it was the result of multiple causes that paved the way for the rapid change that took place, particularly, the increase in the population that stimulated the demand for production. The development of transport, the building of canals and improved roads facilitated the transportation of finished goods to market places and raw materials to production centers. Besides, there were the countless machine-driven inventions and enhanced chemical methods which accelerated and lowered the price of the production process (46). Anthony Wood attributed the stimulus for inventions that led to the growth of production to the commercial competition for markets in France and England that was not met with sufficient supply. Since necessity is the mother of invention, he suggested that: "the need for inventions followed naturally from that" (10).

Furthermore, the historian Peter N. Stearns argued that various elements which prompted the Industrial Revolution hastened by the eighteenth century. The outcomes of modern science started to influence a broader culture; the Enlightenment, being a scholarly movement, spurred a fresh concern for technical development and further debate around the most efficient economic strategies; and the evolution of the anticipation of customers promoted new market places⁴⁰. Along with the latter progresses, a considerable increase in population was perhaps the eventual drive to the Industrial Revolution. This significant

⁴⁰ Stearns Peter N. *The Industrial Revolution in World History*. Westview Press, 2013.

population growth was due to a reliable food supply through an advance in agriculture, thus, “With more food came more people” (Stearns 47).

Despite the fact that the process of industrialization brought forth various impressive labor-saving machines in a number of economic activities, particularly cotton-spinning, it also generated a demand for a larger number of workers in others, such as weaving, stocking-knitting, steel industries, transportation, construction, and the whole managing, distributing and service trades demanded further labor. New work prospects upheld the rapid increase of the population which had gone from 5.7 million in 1750 to 8.6 million in 1800. It even reached 11.5 million in 1820. Migration towards industrial regions fastened, such as the movement from the Pennines and the Lake District into lowland Lancashire, however, Irish and Scots moved towards cotton regions (Porter 315). Therefore, contrary to what could be expected, the Industrial Revolution did supply the work force with new work opportunities and did not entirely replace human labor with machines, at least in some fields.

Nevertheless, while the process of rapid industrialization served workers’ interests in some domains, there existed other fields in which the process was disadvantageous. The Industrial Revolution prompted labor agitation especially among textile workers. Perhaps the most famous of these rioters were the Luddites who appeared between 1811 and 1816. These were hand-loom laborers who became jobless when the textile factories they worked in were capable of manufacturing clothes at a considerably low cost. Although some individuals were wounded and few even died as a result of the Luddites’ riots, the latter targeted primarily the destruction of machinery. Numerous offenders were imprisoned and a minority was put to

death (Hendrickson 519⁴¹). From a progressive and logical political economy perspective, such violent protesters were frequently seen as ignorant and underdeveloped. However, the reaction of these workers was no extraordinary one. The most precious asset of a laborer was his work and his practical proficiency; therefore, whatever deflated his significance systematically denied him a share of his proper possession. Since the basic benefit of machinery and the main reason behind its invention was to save labor, a “workman may justifiably regard this saving as made at his expense” (Mantoux 400⁴²).

The transformation that the Industrial Revolution brought forth went beyond work opportunities and altered laborers’ working conditions as well. Working conditions in the recent manufacturing factories were appalling and laborers underwent a lot of discomfort as a result. In the first years of the Industrial Revolution, the daily working hours extended from twelve to sixteen hours, out of which they had half an hour for lunch and dinner. They also worked the whole week except for one day off. Workers did not benefit from any work security and had no fixed minimal wage. The most dreadful conditions were endured by workers in the cotton mills who bore extreme temperature in the workplace (Spielvogel 495⁴³).

Likewise, circumstances in the coal mines were absolutely dreadful. Jackson J. Spielvogel described their conditions stating:

The introduction of steam power in the coal mines meant only that steam-powered engine mechanically lifted coal to the top. Inside the mines, men still

⁴¹ Hendrickson, E. Kenneth III, *The Encyclopedia of the Industrial Revolution in World History*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

⁴² Mantoux, Paul. *The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century*. Oxen, Routledge, 1961.

⁴³ Spielvogel, Jackson J. *Western Civilization: A Brief History*. Australia, Cengage Learning, 2014.

bore the burden of digging the coal out while horses, mules, women, and children hauled coal carts on rails to the lift. Dangers abounded in coal mines; cave-ins, explosions, and gas fumes (called “bad air”) were a way of life. The cramped conditions tunnels often did not exceed 3 or 4 feet in height-and constant dampness in the mines resulted in deformed bodies and ruined lungs (495).

Indeed, the mass employment of children and women in factories and mines was very common in the first decades of the Industrial Revolution. Children had already played a significant role in the household economy before the Industrial Revolution. They toiled in the fields or straightened and spun wool in their homes as cottage industry developed. Nevertheless, in industrial England, children were used more excessively and in a much more efficient way. Cotton factories’ proprietors treasured children work for many reasons. Children possessed a special gentle handle in spinning cotton. Their tiny body allowed them to collect loose cotton by creeping under machinery more smoothly. And they could be paid extremely low wages (Spielvogel 495).

Moreover, work in factories undermined conventional work pace that workers took from skilled or agrarian backgrounds. Machinery operated rapidly and factory owners assumed, or allegedly assumed that intense work was the natural course of life. Modern labor guidelines endeavored to introduce a different rhythm of work to factory workers. Employees had to be in the factory on time. In case they were delayed, they were confined, deprived of half of their daily salary and were eventually charged with the same amount as well. Besides, factory workers were not allowed to talk or sing. In short, Peter N. Stearns contended that “work was meant to be steady as well as fast, with no whimsical interruptions, for if one worker stopped, a whole machine might shut down. Rules, fines, and layers of supervisors

were devices aimed at imposing an unfamiliar sense of time and coordination on the factory hands” (70). Accordingly, workers in the factory had to cope with extremely different and harder conditions of work compared to their previous skilled or unskilled occupations. Factory work required rapidity, toughness and endurance. However, it is clear that employers imposed unnecessary harsh rules such as preventing workers from conversing while working. Gradually, these rigid guidelines could be well expected to have been disrespected or even questioned and defied by factory workers.

In the midst of the extensive hours of work and bad working conditions that the Industrial Revolution produced, attempts to improve conditions were wielded by workers through trade unions (Gregg 67). Additionally, towards the year 1830, a strong will to improve factory circumstances emerged in Parliament. Promoters of factory regulation were prepared to associate the conditions of mill laborers, including children, to that of slaves. Likewise, these campaigners were supported by some mill proprietors who spoke in favor of a better working environment. The fervent humanitarian campaign that developed was waged by the MPs Anthony Ashley-Cooper and Michael Sadler, in addition to industrialists in the textile region of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Ashley-Cooper conducted the ‘Ten-Hour Movement’ with the purpose of diminishing working hours for children below sixteen. A different act in 1831 restricted the working hours to 12 hours per day for workers younger than 18. However, there were no practical measures taken to enforce these factory regulations (The 1833 Factory Act, Parliament.uk⁴⁴).

⁴⁴ “The 1833 Factory Act.” *UK Parliament*, www.parliament.uk/about/livingheritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/19thcentury/overview/factoryact/.

Working-class women were also severely affected by the appalling working conditions in industrial factories. In 1830, two thirds of the cotton industry workforce was made of women and children. Yet, since the Factory Act of 1833 resulted in the reduction of child labor, vacancies were filled by women. Prior to 1870, women accounted for half of the textile workforce in factories. The majority of women were unskilled workers who received wages at least 50 percent lower than their male counterparts. It was not until 1844 that intensive working hours became illegal, though merely in textile factories and mines; and only in 1867 did they become illegal in craft workshops as well (Spielvogel 495).

Furthermore, factory girls risked being seen as masculine and manly because of the nature of their work. According to Sally Mitchell: “Society at large often saw factory girls as rough and disreputable, probably because of their independence and their relatively high wages (56-7⁴⁵)”. As opposed to domestic servants or store employees, factory workers were not constantly administered by their employers. Their working hours were long but specified. Moreover, their spare time was at their own disposal. Additionally, factory work was very alluring for some employees because of the group spirit which evolved once a big bulk of individuals were working together in the same workplace (Mitchell 57). Thus, on the one hand, factory girls had long working hours and harder work compared to their fellow women in the domestic service; on the other hand, they were more independent since they did not have to live under the roof of their employers.

Nonetheless, the large recruitment of women in factories did not have the crucial impact on the nature of female employment as it could be expected. Reports on urban

⁴⁵ Op.cit.

families in Britain showed that during the nineteenth century, conventional forms of women's employment still commanded the labor market of the time. In 1851, 40 percent of women workers were hired as domestic servants whereas only 20 percent were employed in factories, of which most were not married (Spielvogel 437). Thus, the impact of the Industrial Revolution over the status of working-class women was not significant since most of them continued working as domestic servants. Nevertheless, women had to endure excessive working hours and dreadful conditions in the factories.

In addition to domestic service, working-class women were employed in laundries, stores, fabric mills and further industrial units. While machinery provided the power, the expertise of women rendered them the ideal labor for needlecraft and various other mechanized procedures that necessitated rapidity and tidy labor practices. On the whole, women constituted around a third of regular salaried labor. Impoverished and working-class women performed different jobs which were difficult, filthy and risky. Despite the fact that the Mines and Collieries Act of 1842 banned the employment of women underground to drag luges of coal, women carried on working over the ground in assorting and filling coal. They labored in brick and chain production as well as waste collection from city roads. Interestingly, it was common for women who undertook burdensome and muddy labor to put on trousers and look nearly undifferentiated from male workers in the same industry (Mitchell 45). Clearly, the concept of the separate spheres did not apply much on working-class women who, similar to men, had to work in factories and even dress as their male counterparts at times. Certainly, in workplaces, the line between the private and public sphere was not fixed.

The acts that restricted the working hours of children and women had likewise the effect of disrupting the conventional family arrangement of employment and resulted in the emergence of a new arrangement that was centered on the division of labor and home. Men were supposed to bear the chief labor responsibilities whereas women shouldered the everyday management of the household and executed low-salary occupations such as 'laundry' which was possible to perform domestically. Working in the home allowed women to carry on their assistance to the family "survival" (Spielvogel 437). Thus, the Industrial Revolution furthered the division of gender roles in the British society. Men became the chief wage earners while women became responsible for the management of the home.

In fact, the Industrial Revolution led to a significant decrease in women's employment roles. They did obtain other household duties, such as their duty as moral arbiters in middle-class families, however, their economic significance declined. The introduction of technology in the industry affected women's labor early. It also dislocated domestic spinning. Since men ran more trained manufacturing works prior to the industrial revolution, their labor was rather protected from the contest of power-driven machines. Moreover, since production was shifted outside the home, various families wondered about how they could handle children, shopping and housekeeping. Usually, the solution was to stress a fresh and acute type of work division between genders. Consequently, men labored and received wages whereas women managed the household responsibilities (Stearns 76-77).

Of course, this is not to say that women did not work outside at all. In fact, a considerable number of middle-class women contributed to the success of their husbands in commerce, retail stores or medical career. For instance, apart from highly distinguished doctors in society, a physician's wife was frequently requested to work as his associate or

provide counsel to patients coming to the office in the absence of her husband. As for a scientist, his wife could stand as a “note taker” and laboratory associate. The spouse of a peasant was in charge of the dairy. Besides, she directed the indoor farm attendants, those responsible for the making of butter and cheese, an occupation that usually supplied a fair amount of cash revenue. In commerce and minor trades, the spouse could manage the store while her husband was in charge of the manufacture, packaging, sorting and trading with suppliers. However, as soon as they become sufficiently wealthy the service of the wife as a shopkeeper was not needed any longer, but she was still usually responsible for letters and accounting (Mitchell 46). Contrary to working-class women who helped the home economy with their work in factories, domestic service, etc., middle-class women supported their husbands financially by saving them paid labor.

On the whole, women from the middling sorts occupied non-manual, even ‘intellectual’ jobs. Middle-class women performed different occupations such as “teaching, journalism, lecturing, editing, publishing, reviewing and translating” (Porter 84). The profession of a governess was also one of the suitable careers of a middle-class woman. Despite the fact that the label ‘governess’ could be given to every woman teacher of middle or upper-class girls, counting school teachers, the name was usually referred to tutors who schooled girls in their domestic. Governesses schooled boys for prep school or public school. However, they taught girls from their childhood until their youth (Mitchell 182).

But perhaps the best education that a Victorian woman could receive was provided by her parents. An affluent father who enjoyed teaching his daughter, a mother who was interested in intellectual issues and a rich library at home offered a substantial level of learning opportunities and encouraged a taste for self-education. Educated women pursued

fresh intellectual quests in their adult life. Learning languages was very popular. Numerous women succeeded in becoming adept translators, devoting an hour or two daily to translating foreign books into English. Nonetheless, mothers who neither had the time nor the intellectual ability or self-confidence to school their daughters employed a governess (Mitchell 182).

Similar to a nanny, the governess was regarded as a child's alternative mother. Her competences were not chiefly academic. She was supposed to present daughters with an example of suitable morals and manners. Furthermore, the social class of a governess was of great significance. The perfect governess was a daughter of a deceased cleric, a widow of an official or other well-bred women who were compelled to seek a source of income but had some former 'respectable' position in society. In their search for a governess, mothers were usually more concerned with the governess's propriety than her educational capacities. They wanted their daughters to acquire some general knowledge essentially in order to be capable of engaging, as women, into an agreeable social dialogue when they grew older. Therefore, conduct, discourse, behavior, refinement and "personal presentation" were regarded of greater significance than geometry or philosophy. Aside from schooling, governesses offered company and guardianship for girls and teenagers. Such a task was particularly significant in the case of mothers with a disability or an eventful social life (Mitchell 183).

One of the professions that both working and middle-class women came to occupy was 'teaching'. In fact, working as an elementary teacher was a very popular means of upward social mobility (to middle-class). In 1840, a licensed teacher received an income of £30–£40 annually. Moreover, she enjoyed a free of charge rented lodging in a school house, along with firewood. In 1890, the initial salary of a female teacher in a London Board school

was £85 annually. Male teachers, however, had an initial income of £95. Besides, teachers benefited from a yearly rise of £5 for male teachers compared to £3 for female teachers. Apart from working-class female teachers, a high number of middle-class women were also joining the profession particularly after access to training college became direct, through passing an admission test, rather than fulfilling an apprenticeship as a pupil teacher. In summary, the teaching profession was on demand from many working-class women who aspired to fill a rather intellectual work as well as making the transition to a middle-class status. However, regarding the annual payment that was provided for male and female teachers, it was clear that there were no grounds for an equal wage for men and women who undertook the same profession (Mitchell 176).

Concerning the process of industrialization by the twentieth century, Britain was no longer the leading industrial country. Nonetheless, a year before the First World War Britain was the chief foreign investor in the world, possessed most of the shipping worldwide, supplied more than 25% of the world's commerce in manufactured products, and led the biggest empire in the world. From 1860 to 1914, the economy in Britain expanded steadily with some minor wavering. Most importantly, the economic historian R. C. Floud argued that British people were averagely wealthier during this period than people of other European countries. His conclusion was based on various surveys that measured the growth of the British economy, its resources and efficiency and compared it to other European countries such as Germany (1⁴⁶).

⁴⁶ Floud, Roderick, and Donald N. MacCloskey. *The Economic History of Britain since 1700: Volume 2: 1860-1939*. Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Moreover, early twentieth century also witnessed a significant technological development which in turn led to an expansion of mechanization. Nearly every kind of labor benefited from mechanization including housework which was transformed by the invention of vacuum cleaners for instance. This technological advance was joined with another fundamental feature of the Industrial Revolution: the developing scope and intricacy of organizational structure. Prominent industrial organizations openly started to finance enquiries and development in search of further advantages in mechanization, better labor productivity and divergences in goods. The latter progresses, expanding gradually after 1880, sustained the swift change of economic structure and working experience. Evidently, the Industrial Revolution did not witness any phase of stillness. A large number of workers claimed that the transformations that they experienced were more significant than those faced by early factory workers. Thus, grievances about severe fatigue were increased (Stearns 161-5).

Prior to 1880, the expansion of the factory workforce supported the greatest dynamic shift in social structure. Statistically, the group of urban labors and mineworkers grew more rapidly compared to any other occupation group. This tendency was to change after the 1880s. Although the factory workforce kept growing, its expansion rate was exceeded by a fresh service sector. The service sector was stimulated by the development of trade and the expansion of commerce and government bureaucracy; it reacted to increasing levels of organization. The acceleration of industrial production required fresh sales vents, and the department store was the solution. According to Stearns, "Larger stores needed larger sales forces, and sales clerks began to come into their own. Growing banks needed tellers. Hotels for business travelers or vacationers needed staff. A growing white-collar workforce serviced a variety of commercial establishments and leisure facilities" (166). Thus, with the expansion

of the Industrial Revolution, the need for a new employment group ‘the service sector’ was created to administer this growth.

Large corporations required secretaries, clerks and executives. Besides, technology prompted new occupations such as the telephone operative⁴⁷. The constant development of government occupations created an overflow of assistants, schoolteachers, factory superintendents and even policemen. The social status of these occupations differed to some extent, however, holders of these occupations and other lower-middle-class laborers shared a dependency on salaries, a determination to evade direct manual work and an absence of distinguished professional credentials. The increasing number of hospitals, both public and private, engendered a further rising service workers along with practiced doctors, nurses and health specialists. The emergence of the latter occupations led to a growth in the lower middle-class in Britain. In 1900, the class covered 20% of the British population; it doubled in size compared to three decades before (Stearns 166-7).

Certainly, the expansion of the service sector demonstrated significant developments in industrial labor. Nevertheless, it complicated the working life of labors even further. The service work was more appealing to women compared to work in the factory (Stearns 167). Women competed for office work. The Post Office started recruiting vast numbers of women in 1876. Moreover, the government instituted a fresh civil service set of female clerks, coupled with a distinct admission test and a reduced salary rate in 1881. About 60,000 women were performing office work when the census of 1901 was held (Mitchell 68). Gradually, more women joined the workforce. In fact, Mitchell argued that:

⁴⁷ This occupation became on the list of existing employments in the late nineteenth century.

Families were beginning to realize that middle-class as well as working-class girls should have a means of earning a living. New semi-professions emerged, with schools that offered a year or two of training: librarianship, pharmacy, photography, bookkeeping, physical training (also known as medical and educational gymnastics) (70).

Nevertheless, women did not receive the same salary as men for doing the same type of work. In the Post Office, for instance, a first-rate female telegraphist received fewer than £100 annually by the late nineteenth century whereas a male worker with identical qualifications and competence earned £160 (Mitchell 70).

Certainly, the growth of the service sector provided women, especially middle-class women, with new opportunities to fill a non-manual work and perhaps a more appropriate occupation for their social class. According to Peter N. Stearns, however, even by the twentieth century, “The basic life course of most women remained about the same: only a minority of women worked after marriage, and only a handful of women worked instead of marrying” (168). Nevertheless, Stearns contended that the propriety of work was steadily growing. Single middle-class women, similar to their working-class counterparts, worked for a period before they married. Moreover, men holding jobs in the service sector were more familiar with women working on their side than were their counterparts in the factory work. Stearns also argued that “the stage was being set for some larger redefinitions of women’s roles in the labor force after their substantial withdrawal during the initial industrialization” (168). Accordingly, by the twentieth century middle-class women had access to a wider set of employment in the service sector. This employment resembled in part the intellectual occupations that women were allowed to perform in the eighteenth century such as teaching

and translation. Thus, middle-class women could work in the service sector without jeopardizing their social status. Likewise, employment in the service sector was an opportunity for working-class women to climb the social ladder to lower middle-class rank.

Additionally, men and women working in the service sector did not view themselves as a division of a bigger industrial workforce. They deemed themselves different and unattached to factory workers. They advertised their capacity to wear ‘middle-class’ outfits in their work instead of the unclean clothes of factory workers. They also believed in the possibility of social mobility more than their counterparts in the factory, although their expectations were often unrealistic. Employers, however, intentionally dealt with their white-collar workers in a different way. They gave them monthly wages instead of hourly salaries and offered them distinct benefit packages (Stearns 168).

Indeed, the majority of white-collar workers confidently pronounced their affiliation to the middle-class rather than the working-class. They even avoided trade unions or at best united independently. In fact, a large number of industrial labors approved that becoming a white-collar worker was in itself a promotion and a move upward. Therefore, the expansion of work in the service sector, regardless of its actual restraints, appeared to further the possibility of social mobility. Indeed, one of the social consequences of the development of industrial economy was upward social mobility (ibid. 168).

The initial phase of the Industrial Revolution may have emphasized the ideology of the separate spheres, a tendency that was to persist throughout the twentieth century according to historian Peter N. Stearns. With the development of industrial society, however, succeeding changes regarding the employment of women annulled most of the discrepancies introduced in the 1800s. Stearns argued that “The man/provider–woman/homemaker

distinction lingered to an extent, but the constraints it imposed lessened in the late twentieth century” (80). Thus, while the industrial revolution initially heightened the division of gender roles by shifting production from the home to the factory, it eventually created more work opportunities for women in the public sphere after the development of technology and the growth of the service sector. In particular, middle-class women were the prime beneficiaries from these new employment that was engendered by technological advances and the expansion of the service sector. Socially, these occupations seemed appropriate for middle-class women since they were non-manual professions. As for working-class women, these occupations meant a greater likelihood of enhancing their social status.

3. Legal Status of Women

Concerning the legal status of women, women had no great role in the making of law in eighteenth century England, regardless of whether they were upper, middle or working-class. In fact, historians such as Bridget Hill for instance, argued that they had no role at all in a world of man-made laws that excluded them from numerous careers, denied them basic political rights, and subjected them to male authority before and after marriage (108). In the opinion of an eighteenth century historian, William Alexander, women were maintained in a position of dependency by the constraints of a rigid law, one which controlled their ownership of property worsening thereby their chances of empowerment. Women were also extremely defamed and condemned without any chance of forgiveness when they transgressed moral conventions. On the other hand, similar transgressions by men were rarely seen as more serious than “acts of gallantry” (Alexander 319-320⁴⁸). The previous example

⁴⁸ Alexander, William. *The History of Women, from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time; Volume 1*. London, C. Dilly and R. Christopher, 1782.

provided but a small sample of the unjust legal measures that women endured in the eighteenth century. In this section, I will particularly focus on certain aspects of women's legal status such as marriage, divorce, property, spinsterhood and political representation.

Legally, the marriage of a man and a woman made them one single and unique entity, or, in other words, in the state of matrimony women's legal status was suspended or at best fused and merged into that of their partners. The husband was expected to be his wife's protector. The wife did everything "under the protection and influence of her husband, her baron, or lord; and her condition during her marriage is called her coverture" (Blackstone et al. 441⁴⁹). Accordingly, a husband could neither confer funding to his spouse nor contract with her, since the funding would suggest that they were not a united body and to contract with her would mean to contract with one's self. Hence, it was largely accurate that pacts conferred between couples, before they were married, were annulled by their marriage (Blackstone 441).

Moreover, if a wife suffered physical or material damage, she was in no position to claim amends without her spouse's agreement, providing a signature on his behalf and another on behalf of his wife. Besides, she could not be prosecuted if she did not delegate her spouse as a defendant. A woman's property was also transmitted completely to her husband once married, "which at his death he may leave entirely away from her" (Blackstone 445). But when the husband did not leave a will, she was eligible to a third of his wealth when he had offspring. However, when he was childless, she was able to take a half. Through marriage, the husband was also the collector of his wife's land benefits throughout their

⁴⁹ Blackstone, William and et al. *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. New York, Harper & Brothers, 1852

married life. Even worse, women had to pay taxes while they could not choose their representatives (Blackstone 445). Although there is no evidence of significant female resentment over the unjust system of ‘taxation without representation’ in the eighteenth century, the system was definitely the root of many feminists’ campaigns against the English law in the nineteenth century.

Protesting against women’s political status and the injustices they suffered, a contemporary, William Alexander, criticized the English law:

By law and custom we debar her from every other government but that of her own family, as if there were not a public employment between that of a superintending the kingdom, and the affairs of her own kitchen, which could be managed by the genius and capacity of women. We neither allow women to officiate at our altars, to debate in our councils, nor to fight for us in the field; we suffer them not to be members of our senate, to practise any of the learned professions, nor to concern themselves much with our trades and occupations, we exercise nearly a perpetual guardianship over them, both in their virgin and their married state (Alexander 505⁵⁰).

Indeed, women were barred from active contribution in the English political life of the eighteenth century through both law and custom which attempted to confine them within the walls of their parental or marital domestic sphere.

Since marriage was a legal union that bonded husbands and wives as one entity, separation and divorce was evidently a difficult process. In fact, divorce was more

⁵⁰ Op.cit.

complicated for women than for men. The chief reason for divorce between married couples was adultery. Both a husband and a wife could obtain divorce if they could prove infidelity. However, when the wife was the sinning partner, the husband had the privilege to obtain an annulment of the marriage contract and to remarry. But women were prevented from marrying their illegal companions. Thus, no amends were allowed for an adulterous wife, she was obliged to live with her illicit partner without marriage or choose to live a life of decency away from her lover (Bristol 92⁵¹). Examining the legal status of married women in the eighteenth century, we could infer that women were the weakest element of this institution. When the marriage was successful, women did not have much to lose, although they did not seem to gain anything either. Nonetheless, when the marriage was dreadful, married women suffered immensely for they had very few laws to protect them.

The previous account of the rights of married women under the English law may have suggested that spinsterhood was a better status. However, both socially and economically, spinsters were not to be envied. The change of the signification of the word 'spinster', which initially referred to a woman who spins, to a derogatory word, indicated that the change took place once women were denied prospects of "productive work". After a decrease in domestic spinning as well as other home industries, unmarried women's opportunities of supporting themselves declined. They were frequently unable to provide any financial support to their household. Therefore, they gradually turned into a financial liability for their parents, brothers, friends, or the parish when they had no one to support them (Hill 124).

⁵¹ Bristol, Elizabeth Chudleigh. "Of the Ecclesiastical or Spiritual Courts." *The Laws Respecting Women: As They Regard Their Natural Rights or Their Connections and Conduct*. London, Paul's Church Yard, 1777.

Socially, spinsters suffered from the effects of preconceived ideas and misconceptions. According to Hill, spinsters endured acute cruelty on the part of their relatives. There was certainly a link between the central significance of virginity and the commercial agreement that numerous marriages relied upon. In other words, spinsters' virginity "was seen as a frozen asset, unconvertible into any market value. So the spinster becomes a freak, an unnatural woman" (Hill 124). While some observers had sympathized with spinsters for a status they did not choose, since they assumed that no woman preferred to stay single, others believed that spinsters received many marriage proposals but were too ambitious or arrogant to accept (Goldsmith 80). For an eighteenth century English society, in which marriage and childbearing were considered as women's sacred responsibilities, the status of a spinster must have been more difficult than that of a married woman. Despite the fact that married women were deprived of a just legal system, they still enjoyed social respect and esteem. Nevertheless, spinsters were persecuted both socially and legally. Whether they were met with sympathy or hostility, none of the two prospects seemed appealing.

Nonetheless, the nineteenth century was home to many reforms that enhanced women's political and economic status, perhaps the most notable of which was the Married Woman's Property Act of 1882. The act crowned three decades of ordered campaigning, going back to pamphlets on divorce act of Caroline Norton and Leigh Smith Bodichon's petition of Married Women's Property in 1856. The act allowed married women to legally stand as autonomous agents. Most importantly, married women were not merely granted the

ability to become independent economic individuals, the whole concept of coverture and the essential subjection of women's resolution to that of her spouse was attacked (Shanley 103⁵²).

One of the first legislation that was aimed at enhancing women's legal status in the nineteenth century was the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857. This act enabled married couples to acquire final divorce in the civil courts. Divorce became, however, more about the financial capability of the person demanding divorce because it surely was not affordable by everyone. Moreover, people who did not live in London where the court was established found it difficult to acquire divorce. The act allowed British middle-class and few working-class couples to divorce utterly. Nevertheless, the act was a double standard one, it allowed men to ground their demand of divorce on adultery and denied women this right. Women were allowed divorce in case they suffered severe domestic violence (Hammerton 271⁵³). The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 helped middle-class and some working-class women to have access to divorce. Nevertheless, the law was gender-biased, it revealed the belief that adultery was legitimate for men but not for women who were supposed to be guardians of morality. It also implied that women should tolerate their husbands' dissolute habits more than their husbands were supposed to tolerate theirs. Hence, The Matrimonial Causes Act was another law that discriminated between men and women on the basis of their gender and so-called proper role in society.

⁵² Shanley, Mary Lyndon. *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England*. Princeton University Press, 1993.

⁵³ Hammerton, A. James. "Victorian Marriage and the Law of Matrimonial Cruelty." *Victorian Studies*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1990, pp. 269–292. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3828359.

3.1 The Road to Democracy: Political Activism and Electoral Reform

Perhaps Britain's earliest sign of democracy was its 'Constitutional monarchy'; a model of monarchy that earned Britain the appreciation of many European intellectuals. While in 1788, the French monarch Louis XVI was acquiring all sorts of privileges, the British King George III was being shoved into a straitjacket, and tied down on his bedstead through an iron belt and a cord by a madman's keeper after believing that he went insane. Battered, degraded and most likely not even insane for real, George III screamed out that no sovereign beside the British monarch was liable to such sheer imprisonment (qtd in. Colley 195⁵⁴). More surprisingly, the health condition of the king was "freely discussed in private, in public, in Parliament, in the press, by doctors, laymen, and indeed by the king himself" (qtd in. Colley 196). It is unlikely that in the eighteenth century, Europeans wished to see their king humiliated in such a manner, let alone to envy the British people for it. Yet, the case of George III must have been a good example of the restrained power of the British monarch and the sense of justice and liberty that dominated the political atmosphere.

Contrary to what the case of George III might suggest, the monarch in Britain did possess various political and constitutional powers and was not utterly defenseless. Both the Bill of Rights of 1689 and the Act of Settlement of 1701 allowed the king to start war or arrange peace, to assemble or adjourn Parliament, to hire any competent Protestant Britons as cabinet ministers, peers, military and marine officers, clerics, magistrates and diplomats. Besides, he was capable of issuing his pardon to any felon he chose to forgive. Thus, "Great Britain remained, or so it seemed in paper, a strong monarchy in a Europe where strong monarchies were the norm- Venice, or the Dutch Republic, or Poland- were in evident

⁵⁴ Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*. Pimlico, 1992.

decline” (Colley 196). However, in reality, monarchs in Britain experienced grander restraints compared to their European counterparts, restraints that were not merely inflicted by legal agreement but by their specific context and nature as well (Colley 196).

However, from the early nineteenth century to early twentieth century multiple reforms paved the way for a more democratic England. In the nineteenth century, some members of the English society sought to change their legal status, a quest that was difficult to achieve without the right to vote. Change was to be achieved gradually and women were perhaps the last to benefit from. Yet, every reform and change was to give women more determination and encouragement to demand their rights as fully fledged members of the English society. Perhaps the first of these reforms revolved around the Catholic Question. Roman Catholics comprised three quarters of the inhabitants of Ireland; although up until 1793, Catholics were restricted by the law and excluded from holding posts of administration or Parliamentary seats. Therefore, it was Anglican land owners who represented the Irish (Wood 31-32⁵⁵).

Consequently, in 1823, Daniel O’Connell, an Irish Catholic attorney initiated the Catholic association which was sponsored by its peasantry members. The main aims of this association were the re-establishment of an Irish Parliament granting seats to Catholics, and to dissolve the Anglican Church in Ireland (McCord 40). After a long heated parliamentary debate, Home Secretary Robert Peel introduced the bill in 1829 which eventually became a law. Catholics were finally able to sit in Westminster (Wood 74-6). The Catholic

⁵⁵ Wood, Anthony. *Nineteenth Century Britain 1815-1914*. London, Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1960.

Emancipation Act represented the first measure through which a minority acquired its rights, a reform that would prompt further reforms.

Outraged by the Catholic Emancipation Act, the right-wing Tories held the view that if public opinion was fairly represented in the House of Commons, the Catholic Emancipation Bill would have never become a law. They claimed that it was due to the bulk of the rotten and pocket boroughs that the government of Wellington was able to defy public opinion in 1829 (McCord 129⁵⁶). In fact, there was a serious misrepresentation of public wishes at the time because of the electoral system, according to Gregg:

Until 1832 there was no electoral law which applied to the whole country, but nearly everywhere it was preponderantly on the side of the landowner. In the counties every forty-shilling freeholder had the vote. In counties like Shropshire where there were a number of small and medium-sized estates, this made possible some expression of middle-class opinion, but in most cases the counties were dominated by a single land-owner or a few powerful families. On the forty county constituencies only seven could be counted as independent (148).

In the nineteenth century, old boroughs lost their significance while new ones gained great significance because of their population and industrial activity. However, while the economic and demographic situation had changed, the electoral system remained the same. Counties such as Lancashire, Nottinghamshire and Durham were eligible to more members than Cornwall, a county with a relatively small population (Gregg 150⁵⁷). As this placed political power in the hands of the landlords, industrialists from the middle-class were not at

⁵⁶ McCord, Norman, *British History 1815-1906*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1991.

⁵⁷ Op.cit.

all satisfied. At a time when the industrial middle classes prospered largely and retained an impressive amount of wealth, they still lacked political power. The landlords controlled the legislative, judicial and executive system of government. Thus, industrialists were determined to eliminate the old-fashioned electoral system that was costly, unjust and lacked consistency, a system that was susceptible to abuse and was strongly opposed to reform (Gregg 148).

When the Whig government introduced the reform bill, it seemed extremely radical that no Tory member could agree to it, and the battle began. The Whigs were eventually obliged to make some amendments and after some serious crisis in Parliament, the bill became law after passing its third reading. Although the crisis over the Great Reform Act gave the impression of an impressive reform, in reality, the outcome was not very impressive. In fact, there was no upsurge in the 658 original seats of the House of Commons, they were merely redistributed. After passing separate bills for Scotland and Ireland, the total electorate of Britain had only increased from 478,000 to 814,000 (Wood 82-85). Industrial middle classes made the reform bill become a necessity. Along with the working classes, middle classes protested and revolted (Wood 82-4). Although the reform did not bring significant change, English nationals and politicians realized that the reform was to pave the way for more significant and radical change in the electoral system.

While The Great Reform Act did not enfranchise a great number of British men, women were not enfranchised at all. In fact, the reform barred women from the franchise since for the first time in the English history the term ‘male’ was utilized. Jane Marcus⁵⁸ argued that:

⁵⁸ Marcus, Jane. *Suffrage and the Pankhursts*. Routledge, 2001.

The word 'male' ... made it impossible for the woman to be registered, and women maintained that while it was enfranchisement for men it was disenfranchisement for women. That is to say that until that Act was passed women had the right to vote, and to a certain extent exercised that right to vote for Members of Parliament (132).

Thus, while the Reform Act of 1832 offered an initial step towards a more extended franchise for men, it ultimately deprived women from any chance of enfranchisement with the use of the word 'male'.

Meanwhile, the working-class realized that they did not slightly benefit from the Reform Act of 1832 despite their considerable support for the reform bill. This labor unrest found its way in the Chartist movement which was initiated by the London Working Men's Association in 1836 of which William Lovell was secretary. On the whole, the movement was not quite organized and was composed of three sections with different agendas and work strategies. The first section was that of William Lovell and the London Working Men's Association. They sought social change via constitutional means, mainly through the charter (Gregg 205-6). But Lovell soon realized that the movement could not work without support from the middle-class. An alliance with the middle-class led to a further division under the leadership of Feargus O'Connor. The group under O'Connor's leadership was more ready to use violence and immensely alienated that of Lovell and the middle-class (Wood 128).

The O'Connor division emerged as a reaction to machinery. It strived for the restoration of handicraft system and the repeal of the Poor Law Amendment Act. It was composed of handloom weavers, stockingers, some angry factory workers, and momentary jobless workers. The charter was destined to Parliament and was hoped to become a law. Its

main demands were universal manhood suffrage, annual Parliament, secret ballot, equal electoral districts, abolition of property qualification for Member of Parliament and payment of MPs. Since Chartism had an economic stimulus, it naturally intensified at times of economic crisis and weakened at times of economic prosperity (Gregg 206-5). In fact, the Chartists launched three charters in 1839, 1842 and 1848 and all of them were at a time of economic crisis. Nevertheless, out of the three charters, the third turned out to be the weakest for it contained fake signatures and became a mere joke and the movement eventually faded away (Wood 129).

In spite of the uncertainties that surrounded the Chartists' plans regarding women, the movement enjoyed a considerable number of women supporters. However, similar to the overall supporters of Chartism, the precise number of female members remained difficult to determine. Since the Chartist movement was slightly structured, it was liable to significant instability in the size of its membership. Only a small number of women appeared in the Chartist press. Yet, women accounted for a substantial segment of the masses gathering to hear the Chartist leaders. And there was probably an even greater number of women who adhered to the ideas of Chartism from their homes and were thus "anonymous" (Schwarzkopf 78⁵⁹).

The dreadful conditions that women endured in the wake of the Industrial Revolution were the focus of their public speeches as women Chartists. According to Chartists from the Nottingham female political union, women were supporting Chartists' demands that "their husbands, fathers, brothers, and children [were] now so actively and zealously engaged in"

⁵⁹ Schwarzkopf, Jutta. "The Political Pose of Wornen Chartists." *Women in the Chartist Movement*. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1991.

(qtd. in Schwarzkopf). In fact, most women Chartists repeated during the movement's active years that they were supporting Chartism as "the female kin folk of men who were already busy fighting for the Charter" (qtd in. Schwarzkopf 89). Such a stand immensely hindered the political self-portrayal of women. It efficiently barred women from presenting themselves as "political agents" who were protesting on their behalf with demands and objectives of their own. Facilitating their intrusion into the public sphere through stressing their kinship with men Chartists, women expanded their familial rank of males' subordinates into the political sphere. Concerning their political status, their stand suggested that women were pleased in advocating a cause, of which the chief demand, 'universal suffrage for men', was seemingly of no benefit to them (Schwarzkopf 89- 90).

Women were led to believe that their situation would improve due to the representation of working men in parliament. A shared social class, notwithstanding sex, was to guarantee that the suffering of working-class women would be met with support on the part of men. This self-expression and the extremely systemized language in which it was embedded suggest Chartist females' consciousness that their presence in the public political sphere was an incursion into a male-controlled domain. According to Schwarzkopf: "Both are traces of the women's adjustment to the fact that they were performing in a male theater to a male audience. Hence also the justification of their political commitment by the elaborate description of the effects of economic privation and political oppression on the family" (99). Accordingly, one of the first political movements in which working-class women took part were based on economic grievances and paradoxically championed male suffrage as a tool to enhance their own working conditions.

Various causes which led to the failure of the Chartist movement could be retraced. Perhaps the first one was the movement's lack of organization and unity, a movement with no fixed agenda or policy was deemed to fail. Moreover, the O'Connor division and its willingness to use violence most probably disaffected people from Chartism rather than attracted them to it. However, according to Wood, Chartism failed for the following reasons:

It lacked effective support in the commons and effective leaders among its organizers, but there were deeper reasons than these. It had been essentially a working-class movement and had never succeeded in making that alliance between sections of the middle and lower classes which characterized the more successful efforts of the anti-corn law league and the factory reformers. Friendship with the anti-corn law league itself might have given it a better chance, but the league had met its most violent opposition from the Chartists (129).

The fact that the Chartists alienated the middle-class with their violent rioting was not in the Chartists' best interest. The middle-class was always a crucial part of any social revolution in Europe and without them people could not hope for any change (Wood 129). Another aspect that weakened the Chartists was that they failed to attract important representative bodies of the working-class such as trade unions, and leaders such as Robert Owen for instance (Gregg 208). The government also made good use of the railways and the electric telegraphs to fight the Chartists (Wood 130). Thus, despite the great support that the Chartists had from the working-class, their movement was doomed to fail. This was simply because they could neither obtain support from influential bodies of the working classes nor from middle and upper-classes. They had no fixed policy or even a single organization as

they were divided into three sections. In spite of the impact that the Chartists had on British politics at the time, they were nevertheless unable to achieve any of their aims, it was only after their movement had faded that their aims were achieved. This was mostly due to moderate political action and gradual reform instead of revolutionary endeavors.

Apart from the Chartist movement, the legal status of women was greatly challenged during the nineteenth century in general and the Victorian age in particular. Campaigns of women's suffrage started around 1850s. It intensified the controversy over women's particular status in society. Suffragists' dissatisfaction over women's denial of representation was heightened after the enactment of various reform acts that granted the vote to a larger section of men, who were not formerly qualified, while women were deliberately left voteless. Various reasons were put forth to substantiate women's political subservience to men based, for instance, on scientific and moral arguments. Scientific contentions were based on the assumption that women were bodily and intellectually subordinate to their male counterparts. There was also the religious argument that rendered women's subordination an element of the course of life ordained by God in the Bible (Black et al. 96⁶⁰)

Additionally, Harriet Taylor Mill presented in her book *The Enfranchisement of Women*⁶¹ (1868) further contentions against women's emancipation such as 'conventions', the claim that women were always legally inferior to men. Mill opposed such a claim. She argued that modern Europeans and their fellow Americans pride themselves of change, specifically their ability to act differently from their predecessors (7). Another contention against women's political emancipation was the ideology of the separate spheres. Mill argued

⁶⁰ Black, Joseph et al. "The Place of Women in Society". *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature Volume 5*. Broadview Press, 2012.

⁶¹ Taylor, Harriet Hardy. *The Enfranchisement of Women*, Trubner and Co, 1868.

that “many persons think they have sufficiently justified the restrictions on women’s field of action, when they say that the pursuits from which women are excluded are unfeminine; and that the proper sphere of women is not politics or publicity, but private and domestic life” (8). Accordingly, even in the nineteenth century the ideology of the separate spheres had much validity and was still used as an argument against the enfranchisement of women.

The construction of a distinct division amid the private sphere which is home-based and the public sphere which had trade, profession and political affairs as its foundation largely influenced how women were recognized during the early nineteenth century. During this period, it was common to describe the private and public worlds as “separate spheres”. Both spheres were believed to be intricately linked to each of the two sexes, men or women. The public sphere of commerce, politics and careers was classified as the sphere of men. The female sphere, however, was one of affection, sentiments and home life. According to Deborah Gorham, “The public sphere was the male’s exclusive domain, whereas the private sphere was seen as presided over by females for the express purpose of providing a place of renewal for men, after their rigorous activities in the harsh, competitive public sphere” (4⁶²). Hence, giving the fact that a greater proportion of women were working in factories, in office work or in governmental employment such as teaching, to mention few, it is difficult to suppose that the division between the two spheres was sharp to such an extent particularly in business and professional life. Nevertheless, it could be argued that this division was clearer in the political domain. Women had no rights to representation and were met with severe opposition when they demanded to be enfranchised. Besides, accusations of masculinity and

⁶² Gorham, Deborah. "Women and Girls in the Middle-class Family: Images and Reality." *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*. Oxen, Routledge, 1982.

lack of feminine traits that women's rights campaigners were met with proved that women were not welcomed in the public sphere of politics.

In 1867, recurrent strains over representation resulted in the Second Reform Act. The latter act extended the franchise to householders. This conceded the vote to the town artisan but did not change the franchise of the county. Thus, farmers remained voteless. The act was a political game from Disraeli who wanted to obtain working classes' support against the Whigs (Gregg 346-347). The distribution of seats that the act was responsible for had some intricate and substantial consequences as political parties attempted to establish links with new voters and develop methods to attract them; they were driven to locally rearrange their parties. The reform did not bring about a radical constitutional development, however, it proved a lengthy growth and a widespread conviction that the great Reform Act of 1832 was unlikely to stay static and inflexible. Nevertheless, the act was not passed in sensational conditions (Walton 1-2⁶³). In fact, John K. Walton argued that "despite the vehement language of some campaigners for reform, and the Hyde Park meetings which arose transitory fears of revolution in some influential quarters, the reform campaign could not match the revolutionary overtones of 1832" (2).

The Second Reform Act granted the vote to a large part of the working classes but women were once again not included in this reform act. This led middle-class feminist activists to demand the right to be treated as a class rather than a gender. According to Philippa Levine: "Conservative women leapt upon the contrast between the exclusion of middle-class women and the gradual extension of voting rights to working men" (60-1). The

⁶³ Walton, John K. *The Second Reform Act*. London, Routledge, 1983.

fact that women could not vote meant that their interests were not represented and that their troubles and concerns would most probably be neglected (Levine 62⁶⁴). After the Reform Act of 1867, women started to realize that they were dealt with as a sex rather than a class. This became discernible when men from the working-class acquired the right to vote while women from the middle-class did not.

Nonetheless, according to the Married Women's Property Acts in 1870 and 1882, women who could acquire complete access to their property became included by the franchise and could vote according to the Reform Act of 1867. These acts "extended separated wives' control over their earnings and property, though these measures, of course, benefited middle- more than working-class women. Working-class wives and some husbands with difficult marriages generally resorted to the magistrates' courts" (Williams 268). The magistrates' courts were to act against assaulting partners and starting from 1878, women who were severely beaten were able to ask for maintenance and separation from their partners. Since 1886, magistrates were able to react against men who left their families; constant cruelty and severe abuse were accepted as the basis for separation and maintenance starting from 1895 (Williams 268).

The third reform bill of 1880 had probably made the dream of manhood suffrage very close. The electoral system became fair, just, regular and large that it conceded voting rights to agricultural workers and out of every three male adults, two were given the right to vote. The reform bill of 1881 was preceded by the Secret Ballot Act in 1872, through which the government of Gladstone guaranteed transparency of elections, prevented voters' dishonesty,

⁶⁴ Levine, Philippa. *Victorian Feminism, 1850-1900*. Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1994.

avoided the paying off of voters and the pressures of elites, landlords, trade unions, local parties and other means of pressure. Nevertheless, the reform neither achieved universal suffrage nor manhood suffrage. Instead, over 30 percent of male adults were not allowed to vote, and women ratepayers had to wait until 1918 to benefit from the franchise. But even then, they had to be 30 years of age or more (Williams 168-170).

The fourth reform act, also known as the Representation of the People Act of 1918 signaled, according to Janice Ho, “Britain’s legal and electoral transition from a nation-state governed through limited representation to one governed through mass democracy” (25⁶⁵). The act exempted male voters from property qualification and granted universal suffrage to male adults over 21 (Ho 25). On the whole, the act raised the number of voters from eight million in the period that preceded the war to 21 million (Haigh 295). Women, however, were enfranchised at the age of thirty. Besides, they had either be householders themselves or wives of householders. The reason behind such a bias was that parliament did not wish female voters to be more numerous than male voters. Moreover, there was a sense of distrust in women’s maturity compared to men. Hence, women voters had to be older and more accountable so that they could be enfranchised. In total, out of 13 million women 6 million won the vote in 1918. Women were finally enfranchised on the same basis with men in 1928. Despite the fact that the political arena was still male-controlled, women were able to vote and participate in the political field (Chandler 26-7⁶⁶).

In conclusion, the status of women changed dramatically from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. In the eighteenth century, upper and middle-class

⁶⁵ Ho, Janice. *Nation and Citizenship in the Twentieth-Century British Novel*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

⁶⁶ Chandler, Malcolm. *Votes for Women, C.1900-28*. Oxford, Heinemann Educational Publishers, 2001.

women received genteel education that emphasized propriety and behavior more than scholarly education. When they worked, they usually occupied intellectual professions such as teaching, writing and translating. However, working-class women received little education and worked mainly in domestic service to contribute to their families' income. The concept of the separate spheres that implied a public sphere for men and a private one for women seemed to be accurate in the case of middle and upper-class women. Nevertheless, the concept did not apply much to the conditions of working-class women who occupied the public sphere as part of the work force in England.

Additionally, women in the eighteenth century, whatever their social position, enjoyed few legal rights. Yet, women's economic, legal and social status was to change gradually during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The Industrial Revolution prompted the employment of working-class women in factories. The emergence of new semi-professions such as librarianship and bookkeeping provided middle-class women with new work opportunities. Women from all classes started receiving better education and some had even access to university. Legally, women benefited from numerous laws that improved their legal status such as the Married Women's Property Act and Matrimonial Causes Act. As for political representation, the process was long and laborious but women were finally able to vote on the same terms as men in 1928.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

While the previous chapter introduced the historical context of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst, this chapter aims to introduce the main theoretical framework of this research. Particularly, this chapter will discuss the concept of feminism, its definition, waves and some of its theories. Since this study focuses on two feminists, Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst, a brief study of feminism and its main theories is deemed necessary. Second, this chapter stresses the concept of radicalism and attempts to examine why the two feminists were perceived as radicals. Third, it explores conformity both as a social behavior and as a tool of emancipation. In this section, I will particularly rely on middle-eastern studies to illustrate how women's conformity to social norms could in itself become a tool for negotiating their subordinate status.

1. **Feminism: Definitions, History and Theories**

Prior to any discussion of feminist theories and ideologies, a definition of the term 'feminism' is necessary. In order to have a more thorough definition of feminism, an attempt to present various and different definitions of the term seems more accurate. The American author and feminist Bell Hooks, for instance, defined feminism as "a political struggle to end sexist oppression" (34⁶⁷). This oppression, she argued, is not solely a male one. The more feminism advanced, the more feminists discovered that men were by no means the only group who backed sexist ideas and conduct, some women held sexist views as well. Thus,

⁶⁷ Hooks, Bell. *Feminist Theory: from Margin to Center*. New York, Routledge, 2015.

male antagonism “no longer shaped the movement's consciousness”. Feminists’ attention was then altered to a thorough-going struggle to achieve gender equality (3⁶⁸).

Moreover, historian Karen M. Offen proclaimed that feminist demands are mainly political rather than philosophical. These demands, “never arise in-or respond to- a sociopolitical vacuum. They are put forward in concrete settings, and they pose explicit political demands for change” (xv). Hence, Offen argued that the European history of feminist movements and ideologies should be comprehended as essentially part of a widely reformulated political history. Meanwhile, feminist apprehensions are chiefly interdisciplinary; they appeal for the rearrangement of the sexual equilibrium of power in nearly all aspects of human existence (xv⁶⁹).

A feminist, on the other hand, is described as a person, male or female, who attempts to generate social, economic and political equality among women and men in a certain society. This feminist work is prompted by the belief that women and their work are degraded compared to men, which is both erroneous and unfair. Accordingly, feminist work targets the conditions of women and their basic needs (Carr and Leeuwen 33-4⁷⁰). Nonetheless, Alison Stone maintained that the outlooks, ideas and agendas of feminists are so distinct that outlining shared opinions that every feminist embrace is difficult. As a result, a feminist could be identified as one who considers that women are subjected to male hegemony and that such condition could and must be altered. However, most feminists have distinct

⁶⁸ Hooks, Bell. *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. New York, Taylor and Francis Group, 2015.

⁶⁹Offen, Karen. *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000.

⁷⁰ Carr, Anne, and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen. *Religion, Feminism, and the Family*. Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

understanding of this belief (192⁷¹). In fact, different feminists have different perceptions and practices of feminism. Hence, there are numerous feminist movements, theories and ideologies.

Another more thorough definition of feminism is one presented in the *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* (2000). In this encyclopedia, it is suggested that feminism can be comprehended in various ways. It can be perceived as a theory, a scheme of notions, plans and studies which portray and illustrate women's conditions and capabilities along with providing suggestions to enhance them. Feminist thinking is characterized by its overall deference to the standpoint and command of women and its constant interest in the mechanisms of power constructs that favorably distinguish men. Moreover, feminism can be perceived as a social movement. This movement could be both spurred and sustained by theory. Women's development, women's acquirement of sufficient funds of every sort, women's overall ability to conduct a decent life are the main concerns of feminist theories and movements alike (Frye 195-6⁷²).

One of the stipulations and norms of a particular type of feminism is the belief that social power and the command of means are possessed by men. In fact, while men feel enabled to have a proprietor/possession relationship with one or multiple women, the majority of women do not feel enabled to have the same relationship with one or various men particularly with men from the same social class, race or ethnicity. Although this belief might be shared by all feminism, its designation and interpretation may differ largely from one feminism to another. This belief can be recognized as gender discrimination, sexism, male

⁷¹ Stone, Alison. *An Introduction to Feminist Philosophy*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007.

⁷² Frye, Marilyn. "Feminism." *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*, Edited by Lorraine Code, Routledge, 2000.

supremacy, patriarchy, women's domination, the subordination of women, systematic misogyny and so on. Although we are tempted to classify all these terms under the same belief and use them simultaneously, such "Differences of terminology are important, for different terms are embedded in different ways of grasping what is going on and different experiences of living in such systems" (Frye 196).

Chronologically, the feminist movement was categorized into three waves by commentators. The first wave has arguably begun around 1880 and lasted until 1920 (McPherson 208⁷³). According to Bhaskar A. Shukla, the period represents a phase of feminist movement whose main aim was winning women the vote. The term first-wave came to use only after the term 'second wave' came to portray a second feminist activity. The start of first-wave feminism is characterized by Mary Wollstonecraft's publication of "the first feminist treatise" *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* appealed for social and moral justice between men and women (7). In fact, Shukla reckoned Wollstonecraft as the "grandmother of British feminism", one whose beliefs influenced the suffragettes' ideas. The suffragettes (as well as some other suffrage organizations) demanded suffrage for women, this demand was granted to a number of women in 1918 and to every woman in 1928 (Shukla 7⁷⁴).

Nevertheless, after winning the vote for women, the first wave of feminism ended and the second began. This latter wave started around 1960s and aimed to liberate women from the social and cultural constraints which still sustained women's subjection. Largely stirred by feminist texts such as *The Second Sex* (1949) by Simone de Beauvoir and her influential

⁷³ McPherson, Kathryn. "First-wave/second-wave feminism". *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*, Edited by Lorraine Code, Routledge, 2000.

⁷⁴ Bhaska, Shukla A. *Women on Women: a Feminist Study*. New Delhi, Sarup & Sons, 2006.

argument that “one is not born a woman, one becomes one” (Mcpherson 209). A significant belief for second-wave feminism is that ‘what is personal is political’; that is what seemed discrete, personal issues which women had to deal with in solitude became the shared concerns of every woman. In other words, “Whereas other forms of politics had often distinguished between the ‘public’ realm of politics and the private realm of the family, feminists came to see the family as a key source of their oppression and, therefore, political”, Hollows argued (4⁷⁵).

Moreover, appeals for increased sexual liberty for women beyond traditional heterosexual affairs and within lesbian relationships proliferated during second-wave feminism. Other feminists’ claims that aimed to regain women’s authority over their bodies included: the right to contraception and abortion, the right to legal reform for abused women, the right to enhanced divorce laws, the right to better medical facilities particularly in gynecology and obstetrics. Feminists also struggled for lesbian mothers’ rights and stood against sexual abuse and rape. As for women’s employment, the same salary for the same employment between men and women was demanded along with women’s admission into unconventional work spheres. Besides, second-wave feminists campaigned for “Wages for housework” and stressed that housework and child management responsibilities should be allocated to both men and women, thus, women’s conventional work in the household was to be reconsidered (Mcpherson 209).

Starting from the 1990s, however, a third-wave feminism started. While second-wave feminism challenged the exclusion of women from spheres conventionally dominated by

⁷⁵ Hollows, Joanne. *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000.

men, third-wave feminism aimed to question and develop widespread designations of sexuality and gender. Some of the features of the latter feminism encompass queer theory, colored woman awareness, critical theory, post-colonialism and post-structuralism. Moreover, the period was characterized by feminists' emphasis on justice between men and women rather than on patriarchal subjection (Bhaskar 11).

On the whole, third-wave feminism emerged from the conviction that second-wave feminism overlooked the notion of "intersectionality and falsely attempted to treat the experience of white, middle-class, heterosexual women in western countries (particularly the United States) as representative of a universal women's experience" (Bhaskar 11). In summary, third-wave feminism appealed for equality between the sexes since the latter quest was not attained by second-wave feminists. However, equality should not be comprehended as a limitation to sexuality and sexual expression. Both male and female genders are equal in worth, and justice for women involves regaining female options and preferences in all fields. *Colonize this!* is an anthology of texts written by young women about topics of gender, racism, queer identity and nationalism which presents an inclusive example of third-wave feminism (Bhaskar 11).

Another type of feminism is the liberal feminism. It is the effect of a liberal philosophy which developed with the expansion of capitalism. The liberal philosophy fostered claims for democracy and political rights that frequently voiced moral beliefs about the essentialism of men's equality; these claims also voiced the protest of the rising businessmen and subsequently the manufacturing capitalist class against the restraints on the voyage, investment and production through which feudalism hindered the expansion of industry and commerce. The opposition of the feudal and capitalist system reached its zenith

at multiple occasions. In England, it culminated with the civil war around the mid-seventeenth century. Obviously, the fluctuating conditions that affected men's lives had the same impact on the lives of women. These latter conditions as well as women's conviction of the new liberal ideals was to induce women to claim an extension of the new sense of egalitarianism to them (Jaggar 27⁷⁶).

In the 300-year history of liberal political theory, liberal feminism was always expressed, however, its expression was not usually noticed. Persistently throughout the centuries, feminists claimed the right to enjoy the predominant liberal principles. In the eighteenth century, feminists advocated natural rights for men and women alike. In the nineteenth century, they advocated utilitarian principles in order to advance women's legal rights. In the twentieth century, feminists appealed for state social reforms so as to secure equality of opportunities for women, this was during the expansion of the liberal philosophy of welfare state (Jaggar 28).

In fact, the initial objective of liberal feminism is the enactment of liberal ideals to women and men alike. Evidently, this signifies that men should not have access to more legal rights than women, liberal feminists persistently challenged such male-biased laws (Jaggar 35). Liberal feminists' basic demands are equal rights, privileges and opportunities "without discrimination on the basis of sex" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 55⁷⁷). According to Rosemarie

⁷⁶ Jaggar, Alison M. *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. Rowman & Littlefield, 1983.

⁷⁷ Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy., and Patricia Leavy. *Handbook of Emergent Methods*. New York, the Guilford Press, 2008.

Tong, liberal feminism acquired its standard articulation in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and in John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1⁷⁸).

In the nineteenth century, this kind of feminism found its expression in the suffrage movement (Tong 1); this included suffrage organizations and unions such as the National Society for Women's Suffrage (NSWS) and the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). The chief stimulus for such organizations was that women's subservience was engrained in a corpus of conventional and legal restraints which impeded their entry to and triumph in the so-called public sphere. Such restraints could be even perceived in a society which bore the fallacious conviction that women had essentially inferior intelligence and physical ability compared to men, and women could be discriminated against in the "academy, the forum, and the marketplace" (Tong 2). The two feminists studied in this research, Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst, adopted a liberal perspective to feminism and thus both can be recognized as 'liberal feminists'.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was probably the most serious attempt to extend liberal ideals to women in the eighteenth century, especially regarding her appeal for women's legal rights. Certainly, Wollstonecraft was one of the pioneers of the liberal and first-wave feminism. Emmeline Pankhurst, however, belonged to first-wave feminists of the nineteenth century; those who expressed their feminist ideals through their campaigns for the vote. Despite the obvious differences between Mary

⁷⁸ Tong, Rosemarie. *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. Westview Press, 2009

Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst, such as their modes of expression of their feminist ideals⁷⁹, they both theoretically belonged to first-wave liberal feminists.

Nevertheless, liberal feminism was soon to be challenged. One criticism against this feminism is that it does not question gender-based discrepancies; instead, it concentrates on overcoming legal inequality and the compensation of women through law. Indeed, a chief criticism to liberal feminism is its inability to effectively defy the fundamental social inequities between men and women such as inequalities of work prospects, salary and child care duties. Another claim is that liberal feminism overlooks women's natural vocation as mothers and wives. In fact, it is believed that liberal feminism "ignored the private sphere in exchange for advocating the movement of women into the public domain of the paid labor market, which, in turn, has devalued women's participation in the private sphere". Moreover, the latter kind of feminism is criticized for taking men as a criterion through which women are evaluated (DeKeseredy and Perry 48⁸⁰). The fact that liberal feminists ignored women's traditional role of wifehood and motherhood will be refuted in this research; at least for the case of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst. The two feminists, who could be both considered as liberal feminists based on their demands and principles, largely stressed the role of women as wives and mothers. This argument will be more extended in the chapter "Being Good Wives and Compassionate Mothers".

Nonetheless, liberal feminists' agenda was not sufficiently far-reaching to fully eradicate women's subordination, at least this is what radical feminists believed (Tong 2). Radical feminism is an approach to feminist thought and practice which takes the gender/sex

⁷⁹ The former was a writer while the latter was a political activist.

⁸⁰ DeKeseredy, Walter S., and Barbara Perry. *Advancing Critical Criminology: Theory and Application*. Lanhan, Lexington Books, 2006.

structure as the basic source of women's subordination. Ellen Willis, a former radical feminist, argued that radical feminism started as "a political movement to end male supremacy in all areas of social and economic life [that] rejected the whole idea of opposing male and female natures and values as a sexist idea, a basic part of what we were fighting" (91). Clearly, the radical aspect of this feminism is its embrace of sexist ideas and principles, ideas that it was supposed to combat.

Radical feminists were not to remain united for long, they were soon to split into two groups: radical-libertarian feminists and radical cultural feminists. Radical-libertarian feminists usually advocated 1960s and 1970s radical feminists' ideas suggesting that the ideal of femininity, women's procreative and sexual functions and duties generally restricted women's progress as human beings (Tong 48). In the United States, these feminists campaigned for the legalization of abortion, pushed for Equal Rights Amendment through congress and in a majority of states. Moreover, they claimed that men should share with them the responsibilities of the domestic sphere such as housekeeping and child management. In fact, Ellen Willis asserted that the massive conversion in the awareness of women in the past decades was stirred by the concerns that radical feminists struggled for (92⁸¹).

Concerning their perception of sexuality, libertarian feminists believe that all sexual relationships whether heterosexual or not are more often distinguished by oppression. The values of patriarchal conservative sexuality suppress the sexual needs and choices of all persons through a denunciation of sexual minorities, hence, the liberty of everyone becomes constrained. Ann Ferguson suggested that a theory of social power could be deduced from the

⁸¹ Willis, Ellen. "Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism." *Social Text*, no. 9/10, 1984, pp. 91–118. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/466537.

latter principle. This theory requires that social establishments, networks, and discussions differentiate the standard, appropriate and regular from the non-standard, inappropriate and irregular in sexual relationships and favor particular “sexual expressions over others, thereby institutionalizing sexual repression and creating a hierarchy of social power and sexual identities” (Ferguson 109⁸²). Libertarian feminists refuse any repression practiced against their sexuality, they maintain that the ultimate sexual relationship is one that encompasses all partners who consent to have a sexual relationship which would extend their sexual desire and gratification in every way they deem convenient.

On the other hand, radical cultural feminists perceive the essence of feminism in liberating women from the restriction of allegedly “male values” and generating a substitute culture founded on “female values”. Furthermore, while radical libertarian feminism is a political movement, cultural feminism is a moral one. It is a “countercultural movement aimed at redeeming its participants” (Willis 91). Its approach to sexuality, power and liberty is one which argues that sexual relationships between men and women is a kind of “sexual objectification”. It is one between an owner (man) and its property (woman) and this kind of relation encourages men’s domination over women. In terms of theory, this approach suggests a theory of social power. The theory implies that sexuality is a means of male oppression over women via sexual objectification in patriarchal communities. Such a social instrument functions through the establishment of a different male and female character in a patriarchal household. The system that emerges from sexual objectification is

⁸² Ferguson, Ann. “Sex War: The Debate between Radical and Libertarian Feminists.” *Signs*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1984, pp. 106–112. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3174240.

sadomasochism; masculinity as a violent power against women and femininity as a compliant entity to the male command (Ferguson 108).

Moreover, for cultural feminists sexual liberty necessitates a sexual correspondence of companions and a mutual esteem for one another as “subject and as body”. Cultural feminists believe that a fundamental step in the emancipation of women is to eradicate patriarchal bodies (such as pornography, patriarchal household, prostitution, and enforced heterosexuality) and sexual acts (such as sadomasochism, pedophilia and butch and femme relationships) that allow for sexual objectification to take place (Ferguson 108-9). Apart from issues of sexual freedom, libertarian and cultural feminists have also conflicting views about sexuality’s impact on the lives of women. Particularly, the two camps disagree about the extent to which women’s capacity of procreation impact their lives. This topic, however, will be discussed in a later chapter⁸³.

Nevertheless, while radical feminism considers patriarchy as the chief source of women’s subjection, Marxist feminism considers it to be ‘capitalism’. Following the conventional Marxist perspective that society is arranged in terms of ‘class’, certain Marxist feminists deem women as a “sex class”. Nonetheless, there is a controversy within the tradition concerning the actual status of women. Since not all women share the same economic and social class, it is argued that the representation of women as a class is mistaken and that women ought to be considered as a subjugated sex instead. Moreover, conventional Marxists connect the subordination of women with capitalism, growing mechanization and the increase of private property. Similar to radical feminists, Marxist feminists believe that

⁸³ Cf. the chapter “Rebellion or Conformity”.

women are kept in an inferior status compared to men. However, they ascribe their inferiority to “the capitalist system of private property, rather than to the sex/gender system itself” (McLaren 9⁸⁴).

Marxist feminism prevailed in the United States in the 1960s. Marxist feminists held that long-established foundations had to be fundamentally transformed and economy, they believed, was the first foundation that had to be changed. Apart from the aim of reconstructing the economy as a whole, Marxist feminists led the “housework for wages” campaign through which they stressed that the economy rests upon the voluntary domestic work of women (9). In general, Marxist feminism considers issues about women and sexual subjugation “under a critique of capitalism and economic oppression” (McLaren 10). Nonetheless, the amplified dependence on economic class towards the close elimination of gender relations, so as to describe the domination of women, is deemed as Marxist feminism’s chief limitation. Besides, it is critiqued for its inability to explain patriarchal relations between men and women in the household (DeKeseredy and Perry 49)⁸⁵.

Apart from Marxist feminism, Poststructuralist/Postmodernist feminism is another approach to feminism that helped feminists redefine and reinterpret a number of concepts. Initially, poststructuralism and postmodernism are two different terminologies, however, they are still interconnected. Post-structuralism represents a bulk of various theories such as those of Derrida, Foucault, Lacan. The main reference of these theories is the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist. Poststructuralists reconstructed the theory of meaning as well as notions regarding subjectivity in structural linguistics. This eventually led

⁸⁴ McLaren, Margaret A. “The Feminism and Foucault Debate.” *Feminism, Foucault, and Embedded Subjectivity*. State University of New York Press, 2002

⁸⁵ Op.cit.

them to contest major beliefs concerning knowledge, subjectivity and power in western thought (Weedon 397⁸⁶).

Postmodernism originally stood for innovations that architects affected and through which they challenged standards of international modernism. Afterwards, the term was used in different respects in humanities and social sciences. Frequently, ‘postmodernism’ and ‘postmodernity’, the term associated with it, are applied to label the pattern and structure adopted by certain cultural phenomena or to portray the present-day era of universal late capitalism. The main characteristics of postmodernism that are associated with post-structuralism are interdisciplinary. Similar to post-structuralism, postmodernism challenges a number of the crucial beliefs of western tradition of enlightenment. These comprise assumptions about rational human development, global conventions and principles, and foundational truth (Weedon 397).

Indeed, postmodernism rejects the belief of singular truths or essence in support of an acknowledgment that meaning/truth is neither everlasting nor objective. It is nonetheless structured by means of sanctions and repression. It is difficult to accurately identify postmodernism for postmodernists themselves tend to defy efforts to illustrate theories based on the notion of a single, cohesive signification or reason. For example, postmodernism contests the Marxist approach that suggests a description of society as constructed by a governing norm. In fact, Chris Beasley asserts that “any unity or common ground that can be identified in relation to the term, postmodernism, lies precisely in this antagonism to singular

⁸⁶ Weedon, Chris. “Poststructuralism/ postmodernism”. *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*, Edited by Lorraine Code, Routledge, 2000.

structural (underlying) explanation and the attraction to considering multiple determinants, to diversity, plurality and indeterminacy” (85⁸⁷).

Certainly, a key aspect of both poststructuralism and postmodernism is a non-foundational epistemology. This epistemology refuses foundational truths found in disciplinary knowledge and refuses the “unitary rationalist subject as foundational to all knowledge” (Luke and Gore 5⁸⁸). One of the objectives of poststructuralist theory is to break down accurate and definite historical constructs of social and cultural institutions within which different accounts of the “individual” were introduced. Moreover, poststructuralism concentrates on the language and theoretical constructs through which the individual and the social are interpreted. On the whole, the main shared element between poststructuralism and postmodernism is their concern with the “centuries-long rule of enlightenment epistemology and the fictions of the individual that it spawned. Both reject the self-certain subject, the truth of science and fixity of language, and the functionalist order imputed to the social and to theories of the social” (Luke and Gore 5).

Similarly, feminist theories refuse the universal subject, theories and social constructs which include notions of a masculine or feminine subject. Being a product of a politic of represented individualities, dissimilarities and historical setting, these theories concede their grounds in an effort to transform the gender scheme. The historical prospect of subjectivity for women is fundamental to feminist theories, therefore, any rejection of identity cannot be embraced by feminist conceptual or political schemes (Luke and Gore 5-6). Likewise, Alison M. Jaggar and Paula S. Rothenberg assert that postmodernism/poststructuralism’s rejection of

⁸⁷ Beasley, Chris. *What is Feminism? An Introduction to Feminist Theory*. London, Sage Publications, 1999.

⁸⁸ Luke, Carmen, and Jennifer Gore. *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*. Routledge, 1992.

conventional notions of subjectivity and knowledge “has surfaced at precisely that moment in history when women are asserting ourselves as subjects and claiming to establish new truths” (77⁸⁹).

The work of Michael Foucault stressed the individual’s historical contingency and knowledge structures, more than other works of postmodernist philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard (Luke and Gore 6). Besides, feminist social and political theorists were more drawn to Foucault’s critical philosophy than to other renowned poststructuralists⁹⁰. Foucault’s work presented different intermediations as far as repressed individuals’ strife is concerned. Before any further discussion of feminists’ influence, reception and even critique of Michael Foucault’s theories, a brief explanation of his work is indispensable.

Initially, Foucault enquired about the concept of power, or more particularly, the workings of power and its different mechanisms. Foucault posed the question of whether power as practiced in society is a mere type of repressive power. Concerning sexuality, for instance, Foucault argues that the common belief about power over sex is that it is one exercised from the highest ranks to the lowest ones, in all its resolutions, vehicles and the structures upon which it depends, it always proceeds in a constant and inclusive method. Foucault explained:

it operates according to the simple and endlessly reproduced mechanisms of law, taboo, and censorship: from state to family, from prince to father, from the

⁸⁹ Jaggar, Alison M., and Paula S. Rothenberg. *Feminist Frameworks Alternative Theoretical Accounts of the Relations between Women and Men*. McGraw-Hill, 1993.

⁹⁰ Such as: Derrida, Lacan and Deleuze.

tribunal to the small change of everyday punishments, from the agencies of social domination to the structures that constitute the subject himself, one finds a general form of power, varying in scale alone (84-5 *hstry sxlty vol1*⁹¹).

Consequently, Foucault defines power in modern society in terms of jurisdiction and its outcome in terms of compliance. According to the latter definition, power has deficient means, limited scope of approaches, repetitive techniques and it is lacking in creativity. Hence, power is a negative potency, one that is merely able to obstruct and hinder, never able to create and construct, it is essentially “anti-energy”. The efficiency of power is thus contradictory, it is capable of achieving nothing apart from leaving its subjects capable of achieving nothing as well, excluding achievements allowed to them by this power. In summary, it is a power that is primarily juridical and specifically fixed on the proclamation of laws and the management of taboos. Meanwhile, different forms of supremacy, compliance and suppression are eventually “reduced to an effect of obedience” (*ibid.* 85).

This juridical power has its origins in western monarchies. These monarchies functioned as law structures, they proclaimed themselves in terms of law and allowed their power techniques to proceed by means of law (*ibid.* 87). Although Foucault admits that the juridical power-type still exists today, it has been steadily breached by fresh power mechanisms. These mechanisms allow for a functioning of power which is established by technique instead of right and by normalization instead of law. It is also established by command instead of punishment and by approaches which operate on every level and in ways that exceed the state and its machinery.

⁹¹ Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality, Vol 1: An Introduction*. Vintage Books, 1990.

Foucault recognizes two types of power which he labels bio-power. The first type that forms focused on the body as a machine; its discipline, the development of its proficiency, the coercion of its energies, the parallel growth of its utility and compliance and its corporation into structures of effective and economic hegemonies “this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human body” (ibid.139). A second type, which forms subsequently, centered on the “species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary” (ibid. 139). The administration of the latter elements is conducted via an all-inclusive set of intercessions and supervisory checks: a population’s biopolitics.

To summarize, Foucault asserted that body disciplining and population management are the two ideas upon which the structure of power over life was utilized (ibid. 139). One of the effects of the expansion of bio-power was the increasing significance attributed to norms at the expense of laws. Indeed, norms emerge as a soft⁹² measure through which the human life is structured and contained. This is not to say that the authority of the law is overshadowed by that of the norm, instead, the law itself start functioning as a norm. Juridical establishments are progressively merged into a range of devices (health, administration ... etc.) which usually has a supervisory function most of the time. Thus, a society governed by normalization is the historical consequence of a power technology focused on the human life (ibid. 144).

⁹² Soft compared to the authority of law which is usually associated with punishment and violence.

Another significant aspect about power in Michel Foucault's account is that power is not possessed by one individual against another powerless individual. Power circulates and operates through different vehicles. Power is not a thing that can be owned. Instead, it is something that is used and practiced through a chain-like arrangement and individuals are not the mere circulating strands of this power, they are also the undertaking and practicing agents of this power. Particularly, Foucault asserts that "individuals are the vehicles of power"⁹³, not its point of application", he then adds:

The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals (98).

Accordingly, the individual is both an effect and a vehicle of power. Moreover, Foucault's analysis of power brought forth a discussion of the interaction of knowledge and power. He argued that the practice of power continually generates knowledge and knowledge regularly prompts effects of power (ibid. 52). Hence, truth belongs to this world. It is merely generated owing to various kinds of restraint and it stimulates steady effects of power. In fact, every society has its own system of truth. A "general politics" kind of truth reflects discourses which are agreed upon and thus allowed to operate as true, the apparatus which aid in differentiating true from false declarations and so on (ibid. 131). Consequently, truth is not

⁹³ Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Edited by Colin Gordon. New York, Pantheon Books, 1977.

an objective reality, it is rather a device that is oriented and manipulated by the techniques of power.

Literary critic Sandra Bartky supports Michel Foucault's account of disciplinary power as one that does include gender. Through disciplinary discourses, women are induced to have a certain weight⁹⁴ and physical conduct such as posture, gate, and pose and so on. In fact, women are exceedingly more limited in their behaviors and maneuver compared to men. Besides, women have to pay great attention to their skin, hair and face. For instance, unlike men, women are supposed to wear make-up. Some of these discourses are held by medicine; procured by the cosmetic business to support its appeals. Bartky argued that the latter disciplinary routines are elements of the system through which the perfect "body of femininity –and hence the feminine body-subject- is constructed; in doing this, they produce a "practiced and subjected" body, i.e., a body on which an inferior status has been inscribed" (71⁹⁵).

Sandra Bartky's ultimate claim, at least with regards Michel Foucault's account of subjectivity, is that appeals to emancipate women from male patriarchy cannot be entirely efficient for the problem does not merely rest on male domination. A female subjectivity that is constituted in the process of normalization and disciplinary efforts that build the feminine body cannot be freed unless from within. Bartky's admitted that women are frequently subjected to male violence. However, she challenged the radical feminist belief that male oppression is at the root of women's subordination. Instead, she argued that an ample comprehension of women's domination will necessitate a recognition of how "not only

⁹⁴ While both men and women may exercise at the gym, their motives are generally not the same (Bartky)

⁹⁵ Bartky, Sandra Lee. *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. New York, Routledge, 1990

women's lives but their very subjectivities are structured within an ensemble of systematically duplicitous practices" (76).

However, Michel Foucault's analysis of power relations was questioned by various critics. Nancy Fraser, for instance, argued that Foucault refuses to identify "who is dominating or subjugating whom and who is resisting or submitting to whom" (29⁹⁶). The fact that Foucault considers power to be a complicated, changing domain of relations in which every person takes part makes it difficult to comprehend why power should be resisted and how. If individuals are themselves constituents and effects of power, then why should they resist domination? Why don't they submit to domination instead of struggle against it? Moreover, Fraser suggested that the institution of normative norms could be the starting point in answering the latter questions and in identifying the problem with the power/knowledge system and for what reasons it should be contested (29). Since resistance is a major theme in feminist studies, the ambiguity surrounding the concept in Foucault's work may pose numerous difficulties in feminists' way of exploring the theme.

Another criticism with regards Foucauldian thought utilities to feminism is advanced by Monique Deveaux. The latter critic argued that Foucault's mechanisms of power and the study of subjectivity are insufficient for feminist theory that holds the subjection of women and tangible social transformation as its initial objectives. Despite Deveaux's recognition of the particular empirical import that Foucault's analysis of power has for feminists, she still believed it contained two chief drawbacks. The first was "the tendency of a Foucauldian conceptualization of the subject to erase women's specific experiences with power; and the

⁹⁶ Fraser, Nancy. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

inability of the agonistic model of power to account for, much less articulate, processes of empowerment” (223-4⁹⁷).

One of the gender theorists who not only supported Foucault’s analysis but even adopted it to advance her claims about gender is Judith Butler. Butler extended Foucault’s argument that juridical systems constitute the very subject they claim to represent to argue that the feminist subject is in itself a product of the political structure that aims to enable its liberation. Therefore, feminist critique should comprehend the fact that the class of “women”, feminism subject, is constituted and constricted by the same power structures across which liberation is pursued. Moreover, another problem with the subject of feminism is that it confronts the supposition that the category of ‘women’ represents a shared identity. Since gender cannot be formed comprehensibly and steadily in various historical contexts and since it also interconnects with ethnic, cultural, social division, sexual and local approaches of broadly structured identities, it “becomes impossible to separate out “gender” from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained” (6⁹⁸).

Most significantly, Judith Butler is mostly known for her ‘gender performativity’ theory. Through this theory, Butler argues that gender is performative; constructing the identity it is supposed to be. Particularly, Butler claims that “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results” (33). Besides, she asserts that gender is neither a fixed identity nor the agency point from which numerous deeds develop. Instead, it is an identity slightly constructed in time, construed through a “stylized repetition of acts.” Gender

⁹⁷ Deveaux, Monique. “Feminism and Empowerment: A Critical Reading of Foucault.” *Feminist Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1994, pp. 223–247. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3178151.

⁹⁸ Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, Routledge 1999.

effect is generated by a willingness to conform to a particular body styling. Therefore, it should be comprehended as the ordinary mode in which physical language, motions and qualities of diverse sorts construct the impression of a fixed and permanent gendered self (179).

2. Radicalism: Notions and Contexts

Both Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst were deemed as radical English feminists by various critics⁹⁹. But what does radicalism actually signify and from which perspective some English writers and political activists are labeled as such, including Wollstonecraft and Pankhurst? One simple definition of radicalism is that it is the belief that significant change is indispensable with regards to society, politics, economy or other aspects. What marks this change is that it usually breaks off from the traditional system of a specific environment bringing new fresh ideas about how government or society should function (Macmillan 1161-2¹⁰⁰). This explanation is supported by Glenn Burgess's and Matthew Festenstein's basic description of radicalism which is understood as:

Radicalism involves the capacity to envisage and justify the structural transformation of social, economic, religious or political institutions.

'Radicalism' here labels an attitude to the status quo, and it must remain a matter for historical inquiry to decide whether those who do demand the structural

⁹⁹ Cf. the literature review in the "Introduction".

¹⁰⁰ *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2002

transformation of an existing order actually have anything more substantial in common with one another (67¹⁰¹).

Certainly, the concept of radicalism is much more sophisticated than the one suggested by this basic definition. It seems that the meaning of radicalism varies according to the context and perspective of the writer. According to Paul McLaughlin, the concept of radicalism has been largely misused to provide different connotations, and invokes negative or positive images. The first of which is extremism. In numerous contexts, radicalism is associated with extremism and the two words are at times used as synonyms. Such association suggests a negative perspective of radicalism that people would want to distance themselves from regarding both culture and politics. Extremism conjures up the use of violence and in certain contexts it could even be linked to terrorism! (8-9¹⁰²) McLaughlin does not seem to agree with associations of terrorism and preserves that ‘it is not clear that such an association is justified’ (9).

The second negative connotation of radicalism is one which links the term to revolution. Essentially, extremists and revolutionaries are relatively the same. The only feature that probably differentiates one from another is that, arguably, extremism is a modern synonym for revolutionary which is considered as an old-fashioned form of the former. Nevertheless, the two terms are not completely synonymous since one can be revolutionary without being an extremist. Radicalism is still conceived negatively due to its particular insinuation to revolutionism (McLaughlin 9-10).

¹⁰¹ Burgess, Glenn, and Matthew Festenstein. *English Radicalism, 1550-1850*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

¹⁰² McLaughlin, Paul . *Radicalism: a Philosophical Study*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Utopianism is the third negative connotation of radicalism. Radical aims are frequently perceived as ‘utopian’. This implies the unfeasibility of a social perspective and ‘dangerousness’ of the endeavor to attain it (McLaughlin 22). Thus, radicalism becomes illusive and hazardous; susceptible to both eccentric visions and aggressive acts that could definitely account for its connotations of extremism and revolution. However, even if utopianism had no suggestions of revolution, not to mention violent revolution, it nevertheless remains negatively conceived due to its particularly utopian associations (McLaughlin 10).

Perhaps the only positive association of ‘radicalism’ is with progress. The term suggests a positive and gradual change politically, socially and in other fields. For instance, the gradual progress of freedom and reason. McLaughlin believes that ‘in this positive sense, the term “radicalism” is endonymic: that is to say, it is ascribed by “progressives”, for example, to themselves as well as to those with whom they identify in some way (the “like-minded”)’ (10).

From a political perspective, radicalism is a desire to bring about ‘extreme change of part or all of the social order’. The term radicalism was initially introduced in the English political spectrum through Charles James Fox (Britannica¹⁰³). In 1780, Fox became a member of parliament for the Westminster constituency. As a politician, he was dedicated to political reforms. Fox’s character and schooling made him a fervent supporter of the rights of slaves and religious nonconformists. Gradually, however, he took greater interest in parliamentary

¹⁰³ “Radical.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 20 July 1998, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/radical-ideologist>.

reform issues. He was increasingly in favor of drastic expansion of the franchise (Mitchell ODNB¹⁰⁴).

In 1797, particularly, Charles James Fox advocated a reform bill that called for a dramatic extension of the parliamentary franchise to the extent of universal suffrage to all men. Subsequently, the word radical came to label all advocates of reforming the parliamentary franchise. Since the Great Reform Act of 1832 enfranchised but a section of middle-class people, a faction of radicals who associated themselves with the Whig faction still appealed for an expansion of the franchise to comprise the working-class. After the passage of the Reform Act of 1867, the number of voters increased tremendously and radicals, particularly in London and Birmingham, were there to arrange the new electorates, thus, contributing to the eventual conversion of the Whig faction to the Liberal party in the mid-nineteenth century. The radicals gained the trust of trade unions due to their support of the working-class franchise. In fact, trade unionists who were elected to parliament from the years 1874 to 1892 considered themselves as radicals (Britannica).

Historically, radicalism as a nineteenth-century term stands for a belief system of radical individuality. The term in English was usually an abbreviation of *philosophic radical*, a label that was attributed to the adherents of Jeremy Bentham's ideas and to radicals in the early nineteenth century who were influenced by his principles. Its Latin etymology suggests a return to the origins of the matter and radicals are thus assumed to tackle the root of the issue. The Benthamite line of thinking that the social policy ought to seek the growth of social contentment or usefulness was a strong weapon against conventional patterns and

¹⁰⁴ Mitchell, Leslie. "Fox, Charles James (1749–1806), politician." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. October 04, 2007. Oxford University Press,. Date of access 24 Nov.2018, www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10024.

practices and particularly against authoritarian monarchs or democrats. Radicals were usually nonconformists who advocated meritocracy ¹⁰⁵(Hodge 583¹⁰⁶). Moreover, since the principles of philosophical radicals influence Marxist notions of social change, the term radical in the nineteenth century was associated with Marxists and supporters of violent social reform. Hence, the term was no longer applicable to adherents of gradual reform (Britannica).

In the mid-nineteenth century, four radical factions could be identified. The first faction was the philosophic radicals, adherents of Jeremy Bentham such as J. A. Roebuck and Joseph Hume¹⁰⁷. The ‘Manchester School’ represented the second faction of radicals. The school was primarily managed by Richard Cobden and John Bright. These radicals were closely associated with the growing financial hegemony of the provincial middle-class and stood against the influence of the aristocracy. The ‘Manchester school’ gradually combined a third faction of radicals who campaigned for moral causes. These radicals were usually influenced by their fervent religious beliefs. They stood for a number of reforms such as: the abolition of slavery, worldwide peace, temperance, standard education and laissez-faire policy. Popular radicals, however, represented the fourth faction. These radicals ‘constituted a loose alliance of extra-parliamentary agitators who campaigned for popular rights’. Contrary to the philosophic radicals who worked for bureaucratic reform and to the Manchester school radicals and ‘moral’ radicals who campaigned for moral and industrial reforms after the Great Reform Act, popular radicals worked almost utterly for wide-ranging legislative and social reforms (Roberts 28¹⁰⁸).

¹⁰⁵ Meritocracy is a structure in which leadership is given to the most competent and endowed individuals.

¹⁰⁶ Hodge, Carl Cavanagh. *Encyclopedia of the Age of Imperialism, 1800-1914*. Greenwood Press, 2008

¹⁰⁷ The claims and doctrines of utilitarian radicals were discussed in the previous paragraphs.

¹⁰⁸ Roberts, Matthew. *Political Movements in Urban England, 1832-1914*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

In the twentieth century, the term radicalism came to be closely linked to extremism. In fact, late nineteenth century radicals were thought on the left by numerous types of socialists and even by some anarchists in certain countries. Throughout the century, radicals were ‘on the extreme left of the British parliamentary political spectrum’. In general, radicals were against the aristocracy and in certain Catholic countries in particular, they were against the clergy. In Britain, radicals were against the military for its association with the aristocracy. In reality, however, radicals were not widely against the military service which they considered as a meritocratic and defensive establishment (Hodge 583).

Furthermore, radicals supported private property; British radicals in particular were great advocates of free trade. Radicals were usually supportive of individual freedoms and disapproving of governmental measures, since the government was considered as a means in the hands of the aristocracy. In fact, radicals’ reverence of individual freedoms prompted some of them to contest socialism as much as they contested the aristocracy. However, other radical figures such as H. M Hyndman, the creator of the Social Democratic Federation, one of the earliest Marxist parties in Britain, and Joseph Chamberlain were prompted by their radical egalitarianism to believe that “meaningful personal equality required that free market individualism would have to be supplemented or supplanted by a more positive kind of state action”. Besides, radicals were significant elements in the coalition that constituted the Liberal Party (Hodge 583).

By the twentieth century, most of the initial radical agenda had been accomplished. Moreover, claims which were inspired by utilitarianism and social happiness started to be conceived in socialist terms instead of radical ones. In fact, the initial implication of the word “radical” was lost to a great extent by the start of the century, the word nevertheless

maintained its antimilitarist implication. In imperial matters, the philosophic radicals, influenced by Jeremy Bentham, contested commercial colonies and espoused home rule in settlement colonies. By the end of the century, radicals' promotion of individualism, free trade and their inherent aversion to aristocratic army prompted the majority among them to contest imperialism, thus, they came to represent the Liberal Party's anti-imperialist faction (Hodge 583).

In France, French radicals were influenced by the spirit of the French Revolution and were characterized by their republicanism and opposition to monarchical systems. Nevertheless, the latter stance lost its radical nature after the initiation of the Third Republic in the late nineteenth century. Unlike British radicals who were more or less entirely pacifist, French radicals were inspired by the uprising of 1792 and were consequently less pacifist (Hodge 583). In fact, the French Revolution influenced radicalism in England in the late eighteenth century. There was great controversy¹⁰⁹ during the time of the French revolution about the extent to which French doctrines and maneuvers ought to be employed in an English democracy. According to J. R. Dinwiddy, the French Revolution stirred an English radicalism that was already developing. Certain reformers such as Maurice Margarot, Henry Redhead Yorke and John Thelwall were closely associated, in many instances, with the radical Jacobins (207).

Nevertheless, English radicalism in the late eighteenth century was greatly “variegated”, therefore, it is unlikely that French doctrines prevailed. In fact, “much [of English radicalism] was carried over from the ‘real Whig’ and ‘country’ traditions of the

¹⁰⁹ Cf. the chapter “Mary Wollstonecraft: The Life of a Rebel” for an extensive account of the ‘Revolution controversy’.

eighteenth century, and the myth of an Anglo-Saxon phase of truly popular government, which enabled the reform movement to be represented as a campaign for the recovery of ‘lost rights’, was a powerful source of legitimation” (Dinwiddy 207¹¹⁰). Certainly, Thomas Paine’s defense of the French Revolution had a great influence. Nevertheless, according to J. R. Dinwiddy, in spite of his defense against the arguments of Edmund Burke, it is still arguable that the main doctrines of Thomas Paine’s republican claims were inspired by the American rather than the French Revolution. Following the reign of terror, the American Revolution became a model for English republicans desiring to stress the merits of republican states (207).

In the United States, the term radicalism is usually used to describe any type of political extremity whether of the right or left. One example of the political radicalism of the right is communism. Fascism, however, is an example of the left. While the word radicalism is usually used to represent the left, the “radical right” expression is frequently used in the United States as well. Numerous movements which are commonly categorized as radical in the United States are closely identified with the condemnation of established social and political standards (Britannica).

According to the different definitions that explained the concept of radicalism, a possible reason why some English writers were deemed as radical from a political point of view was due to their revolutionary and utopian ideals. Writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft believed that social and political reform could emerge from the French Revolution. Consequently, they partially justified the violence that the revolution has spurred. Moreover,

¹¹⁰Dinwiddy, John R. *Radicalism and Reform in Britain: 1780-1850*. Hambledon Press, 1992.

these writers' celebration of the French Revolution and the principles of the National Assembly in France was perceived by some writers such as Edmund Burke as an attempt to imitate the values of the National assembly in Britain. Mary Wollstonecraft was also considered as a revolutionary figure by contemporary critics due to her unconventional love life, her criticism to the institution of marriage in her writing and her implicit justification of free love. All the latter arguments will be developed in the chapter, "Mary Wollstonecraft: The Life of a Rebel". This chapter will explain the reason why Mary Wollstonecraft was labeled as a radical.

As for Emmeline Pankhurst, she was probably deemed as a radical due to the extremity of her militant methods, methods which jeopardized public and private property and sometimes even jeopardized the life of her own followers¹¹¹ such as hunger strikes¹¹². Her appeal for the enfranchisement of women, however, was not particularly radical for a twentieth-century context. There were other suffrage organizations that urged for the enfranchisement of women prior to the initiation of the Women's Social and Political Union such as the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). This argument will be more thoroughly discussed in the chapter, "Emmeline Pankhurst's Struggle for the Vote".

3. Conformity: Concepts and Studies

Arguing that Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst attempted conformity for strategic reasons requires a detailed discussion of the concept of 'conformity' and the studies related to it. Besides, an essential question about the efficiency of conformity as a means of change will be answered in the light of studies on conformity.

¹¹¹ Emily Davison was a suffragette who died after she threw herself in front of King George V's horse.

¹¹² Hunger-strikes weakened the health of suffragettes tremendously and risked their lives.

One definition of the word ‘conformity’ is that it is a behavior that people embrace to be more acceptable, a certain mannerism that usually goes in line with certain rules and norms of society (Macmillan 290¹¹³). Fathali M. Moghaddam perceives the notion as an adjustment of conduct that emerges from actual or anticipated group pressure. Multiple examples prove that conformity to the standards of the group is an undeniable feature of our daily life. In fact, “group norms decrease the degrees of freedom in a situation, so that people have a smaller range of behavioral options” (230¹¹⁴). Thus, conformity is a behavior which is stimulated by individuals’ desire to be well- accepted, one that goes in accordance with social standards and beliefs.

Conformity is regarded as a vital behavior in our daily reality and this is due to its numerous pragmatic benefits. Since the majority of people have an ‘appropriate’ conduct nearly all the time and usually “do the right thing”, our anticipation about each other’s behavior becomes reasonably clear to us. In other words, our conduct usually matches people’s expectancy of us. As a result, we are in no need to constantly exert effort to comprehend and forecast individuals’ upcoming actions. For instance, when we are expecting first-time visitors to our home, we are usually confident that they will not access any section of the home which is generally closed to visitors. Therefore, we generally assume that the visitors would not access the bedrooms without an invitation. Conformity eases comprehension and transmission between members of society and gives room for people to intermingle and efficiently work in a team, similar to the talk exchange of hosts and invitees in a celebration. Conformity is useful in clarifying the ways in which different persons having

¹¹³ Op.cit

¹¹⁴ Moghaddam, Fathali M. *Great Ideas in Psychology: A Cultural and Historical Introduction*. Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2005.

personal judgments and skills manage to adjust to consistent and to some degree expectable forms of transmissions in the grander community (Moghaddam 230-1).

Nevertheless, conformity holds some negative associations as well, especially in the United States' popular culture. The protagonist in popular films, dramas, melodies is likely to be a nonconformist rebel. The label "conformist" in nearly all the frameworks in Western culture is no word for praise while the label "non-conformist" is positively conceived. We tend to reflect upon singers, authors, rebellious leaders, pioneers and further inspiring personalities as non-conformists instead of conformists. They are "those who "blaze trails" and show the way ahead. They are hailed because they took the path less taken rather than the common road travelled by most others. They are non-conformists; they reject restrictions on the degrees of freedom in any situation" (Moghaddam 231).

Conformity could be generated by two different kinds of stimuli: informational stimulus and normative stimulus (Sanderson 256). Normative influence is one that leads a person to conform with the "positive expectations of another". Nevertheless, it is likely that certain individuals would conform socially to others' anticipation and express a view that they disapprove of but which matched others' opinions. Informational influence, however, is one that leads a person to consent information acquired from another person as "evidence about reality". Still, it is likely that a person would admit the views of his adversary despite the fact that he lacks the incentive (Deutsch and Gerard 629¹¹⁵).

In general, individuals conform to social norms which are the "unspoken but shared rules of conduct within a particular formal or informal group (e.g., norms of dress, norms of

¹¹⁵ Deutsch, Morton, and Harold B. Gerard. "A Study of Normative and Informational Social Influences upon Individual Judgment". *Research Center for Human Relations*, New York University

greeting, norms of personal space, norms of eating)” (Sanderson 250). Frequently, norms act as useful standards to evaluate demeanor, for example to stop at a red light, to queue up respecting your place in line at the post office, and to ask for permission before posing a question during a psychology class. These are instances of norms that standardize our conduct in “socially acceptable ways” (Sanderson 250¹¹⁶).

Social norms, to which people generally conform, could be seen haphazard and subjective. This belief is founded on the absence of objective principles for the majority of norms, counting those which are perceived as holy in certain communities. Take for instance norms in conservative Muslim communities that instruct that women must cover their bodies, excluding the face and hands, once in public. Covering the hair is a matter of a special significance. However, we may ask questions such as: why is it a norm that is strictly related to women? Why don't men follow the same norm and cover their heads as well? The answer could be: men are specifically charmed by women's long hair; however, we do not possess any unbiased proof that women are not as well charmed by men's hair. Nevertheless, the arbitrary nature of social norms is very visible in western communities as well. For instance, for what reason do women wear skirts while men don't? In certain communities, there existed in the past a norm that approved of men wearing kilts like the ones worn by Scottish men¹¹⁷. Nevertheless, fashion today demands that men ought to wear trousers instead of kilts. The same could be said about the fact that women of the twenty-first century tend to have long hair unlike men who usually keep it short, but in the 1960s, for example, fashion was with

¹¹⁶ Sanderson, Catherine A. *Social Psychology*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

¹¹⁷ Even today, men in Burma still wear the traditional longyi instead of regular trousers.

men wearing long hair. Instances of such random social norms are countless (Moghaddam 232).

Since social norms could be haphazard, random and even erroneous at times, an important question that raises itself is why do people attempt conformity? Why are individuals tempted to conform to such norms? “A possible answer is that the more intelligent we are, the less we conform” (ibid. 235). However, this latter answer is rather plain and simple. The study of Irving Janis and others asserts a truth which is observed on a daily basis: even extremely smart people such as leading presidential counselors can conform to erroneous social norms in certain circumstances (ibid. 236).

Beside the fact that social norms are arbitrary, they are also independent of people and do not rely on a single individual. Norms have a mutual and joint quality which makes them exist prior to our being in society and survive after our departure. Nevertheless, regardless of whether they are short or long-lived “norms are in the collective culture and are taught to individuals as they are socialized to become part of the larger society” (ibid. 236). Moreover, norms serve as indicators of proper demeanor, conducting people to the way they should behave so that they would be approved of and positively perceived by the community. Although we may disagree with certain norms, we still worry about breaching them when we reflect about the classically negative responses from other members of the community (for example, we can be discarded, refused or categorized as “unwise”). A second possible reason for non-conformists’ celebration as heroes in Hollywood films, and at times even in daily life, is people’s consciousness of social norms’ great influence and the weighty risks of breaking them (ibid. 236).

Various feminist scholars considered women's conformity to social norms and practices as an act of resistance to male authority. Janice Boddy, for instance, discussed how women in northern Sudan, Hofriyati women, managed to transform their inferior rank in society through their conformity to social norms such as Pharaonic circumcision, decorum, abstinence and the preservation of uprightness in its different modes as well as agreeing to certain beliefs such as the erotic charms that are supposedly more prevalent in women than men. Thus, they negotiated their inferior status not through rebelling against the paradigms that promote it, but through transcending them. Furthermore, Hofriyati women exploited what is perceived by western scholars as 'tools to their subordination' as a method to proclaim their importance and worth as a group; through the ritual gatherings that they arrange, and as individuals through marriage and their great perseverance in their active reciprocal relation with men (Boddy 345¹¹⁸).

Whether women in northern Sudan utilize such methods tactically or instinctively, this does not deny the fact that they are setting an example of resistance and establishing restrictions to male supremacy. Janice Boddy emphasized "this in itself is a means of resisting and setting limits to domination: Women publicly demand that their value be socially recognized not by competing with men in a common arena, but by artfully emphasizing their difference from men and using this as a positive source of self-worth" (345). Indeed, it could be argued that the key to Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's conformity is their emphasis on their difference from men; for instance, they both enjoyed the gift of being mothers. However, their capacity as mothers and their

¹¹⁸Boddy, Janice Patricia. *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zār Cult in Northern Sudan*. Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1989

particular maternal instincts were not to deprive them of citizenship, on the contrary, it was to support their claim for citizenship. In simple words, women were different from men, therefore, their representation and their political contribution would bring different values and ideals¹¹⁹.

Janice Boddy went even further considering Hofriyati women's promotion of girls' circumcision, their personal endeavors to decide their place of residence or the person that their daughters and sons should marry, their fertility's administration as a demonstration of their attempts to reconstruct "ideological imperatives and have political ends". For as long as women are devoted to the prevailing culture around them, they are strategically knowledgeable that it subjugates them (346). Hofriyati women's tactical embrace to cultural norms that oppress them as a way to weaken male authority is one good example of women's agency and resistance to male domination. In my research, I would argue that Mary Wollstonecraft, through her writing and Emmeline Pankhurst, through her leadership to the Women's Social and Political Union, tried to resist male authority and even female criticism through their acquiescence with women's traditional role of wifehood and motherhood, their defense of morality and their compliance with ideals of femininity.

Conformity to social norms and cultural practices can thus be a significant aspect of women's resistance to male authority. A frequent subject of scholarship in the Middle East is how women make use of conformist conduct such as "the veil", for example, to generate social change. According to this literature, women are believed to have negotiated power and served their welfare through their conformist "behavior, dress, sexual activity, reproduction,

¹¹⁹ This idea will be developed in the third part of this thesis.

and choice of partner” (Abu-Rabia-Queder 209¹²⁰). Such studies emphasize that women’s compliance to the ‘veil’ as a dress code for instance, is one “manipulative” method of inactive resistance, aimed at creating social reform in their lives and “power relations”.

Furthermore, such discussions of conformity usually bring about discussions of agency, therefore, a basic definition of the term is required. According to Laura M. Ahearn’s “provisional” meaning of the term, agency denotes the socioculturally negotiated ability to make an action. Referring to this basic description of the concept, every action is socioculturally negotiated whether in its making or in its understanding (112¹²¹). As for the definition of an agent, William H. Sewell¹²² argues that an agent is capable of exercising a certain level of command over the social relationships in which he is involved, a fact that suggests the capacity of the agent to reconstruct those social relationships to a certain extent. Agents are empowered to take action alongside and against other individuals through structures: they understand the outlines that instruct social practices and have an entry to certain measure of human and nonhuman means. Agency emerges from the actor’s familiarity with the outlines; this signifies the capacity to use them on fresh environments. In other words, agency emerge from the actor’s command of means, which denotes the ability to organize a range of means “in terms of schemas other than those that constituted the array. Agency is implied by the existence of structures” (20).

¹²⁰ Rabia-Queder, Sarab. “Politics of Conformity: Power for Creating Change.” *Ethnology: An International Journal of Cultural and Social Anthropology*, vol. 47, no. 4, Sept. 2008, ethnology.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/Ethnology/article/viewArticle/6036.

¹²¹ Ahearn, Laura M. “Language and Agency.” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 30, 2001, pp. 109–137. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3069211

¹²² Sewell, William H. “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation.” *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 98, no. 1, 1992, pp. 1–29. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2781191

As for the definition of a social structure, William H. Sewell argues that, “Whatever aspect of social life we designate as structure is posited as "structuring" some other aspect of social existence-whether it is class that structures politics, gender that structures employment opportunities [...] or modes of production that structure social formations” (2). Another definition by Mary Ann Maslak indicates that agency is the action which impels measured undertaking via a structure, by a person or a group, to fulfill a purpose or an anticipated result. It presumes acknowledgment and reaction from the rest (xv¹²³). Moreover, Maslak emphasized two kinds of agency, Oppositional and Allegiant agency. Oppositional agency is the undertaking of the rebellion in which a person, individually or collectively, proceeds and aims to proceed against the conventional norms in a structure. Allegiant agency is the shared and cooperative movement of a person or community that supports current beliefs with the intention to fulfill an aim (qtd. in Maslak). The latter type of agency is the one that better explain Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst’s strategic conformity.

Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder, on the other hand, maintained that there exist various modes to the agency of women in transforming power relations in a male-dominated community, both in the private and public domains. The private sphere agency is women’s employment of womanly tasks, feminine connections, and the household as means, whereas the public sphere’s agency is women’s employment of means such as the political field and the market. In the case of the first generation of Palestinian Bedouin women who registered at the university, Abu-Rabia-Queder maintains that social change was a process of active resistance instead of passive one. It stressed the fact that it is a progression of substitutes and

¹²³ Maslak, Mary Ann. *The Structure and Agency of Women's Education*. State of New York Press, 2008.

options, of providing the chance of altering a single social norm for the sake of pursuing and generating another (209).

Saba Mahmoud, on the other hand, conducted an equally important study on the mosque movement of urban women in Egypt. The mosque movement was one example of the grander Islamic revival in Cairo. The study, which was ran from 1995-1997, included women from various social and economic environments. These women, once gathered at the mosque, would give each other lectures that concentrated on the tutoring and learning of Islamic sacred books, social manners, and practices of physical behavior deemed relevant to the refinement of the ideal supreme righteous soul. The expansion of this movement signaled the starting point in the history of Egypt that a similar number of women arranged public gatherings in mosques to educate each other about Islamic guideline, thus “altering the historically male-centered character of mosques as well as Islamic pedagogy” (2¹²⁴).

In her commentary on women’s support of the mosque movement in Egypt, Saba Mahmoud acknowledges the problem that this situation creates for feminist scholars. While women are perceived to proclaim their existence in formerly male-identified realms, the rhetoric they utilize to intrude over such spheres are founded in dialogues that ensured their subservience to men’s authority historically. More precisely, “women’s subordination to feminine virtues, such as shyness, modesty, and humility, appears to be the necessary condition for their enhanced public role in religious and political life” (6). Although it could be expected to justify women’s contribution in a similar movement in the 1960s as a “false consciousness or the internalization of patriarchal norms through socialization”, there has

¹²⁴ Mahmood, Saba. "The Subject of Freedom." *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005.

been a growing uneasiness with accounts of this sort. Based on studies in the human and social sciences since the 1970s which concentrated on the functioning of the human agency within construction of subservience, feminist scholars tried to comprehend the way women contest the prevalent male command by undermining the hegemonic implications of cultural systems and divert them for “own interests and agendas” (Mahmoud 6).

To conclude, this chapter attempted to define feminism, present it chronologically and shed light on some of its theories such as liberal, radical, Marxist and poststructuralist feminism. I also attempted to define the concept of radicalism, conceptualize conformity and stress some of the middle-eastern studies that deal with women who used conformity as a tool to negotiate power relations and alleviate their subordination. Besides, I briefly presented Michael Foucault’s analysis of power relations and Judith Butler’s conception of agency, which I found enriching to the theoretical framework of this research. Nonetheless, their works do not directly serve my research hypothesis while middle-eastern studies on conformity seem to better explain my purpose for studying the conformity of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst.

Part II: Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst in their Own

Times

Since Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst are the focus of this research, it is important to introduce them along with their contexts and works. Hence, this part aims to first present some biographical notes about the life of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst. Second, it stresses the evolution and the circumstances that prompted the two feminists' rebellion. Third and last, it emphasizes the radical nature of Mary Wollstonecraft's writing and Emmeline Pankhurst's policies. On the whole, this part aims to highlight the two feminists' rebellion so as to better value their endeavors of conformity.

In the chapter "Mary Wollstonecraft: The Life of a Rebel" I attempt to demonstrate the reasons why Mary Wollstonecraft was deemed as a rebel. To achieve this, the French Revolution and its impact on British writers in general and Mary Wollstonecraft in particular will be studied. The emergence of Wollstonecraft as a revolutionary writer in the 'Revolution controversy' will be stressed. Lastly, this chapter will highlight Wollstonecraft's feminist ideas and her appeal for women's emancipation.

Likewise, the chapter "Emmeline Pankhurst's Struggle for the Vote" aims to investigate the reasons for Mrs. Pankhurst's rebellion. This will be achieved through examining the personal and professional circumstances that provided for Mrs. Pankhurst's rebellion. Moreover, the militant campaign of Emmeline Pankhurst will be presented as an example of her rebellious views and actions.

Chapter 1: Mary Wollstonecraft: The Life of a Rebel

If Mary Wollstonecraft's life could be described in a single word, 'rebellion' could be the word. Rebellion was indeed always present in Wollstonecraft's life. In this chapter, I will stress the different circumstances that provided for Mary Wollstonecraft's rebellious nature and works. To achieve this, this chapter will first stress events of the French Revolution, their impact on Britain and the 'Revolution Controversy' which emerged amid British writers as a result. Second, Wollstonecraft's emergence as a revolutionary writer in this controversy will be highlighted. Third, Wollstonecraft's appeal for women's rights and her efforts as a champion of women's rights will be emphasized. Fourth and last, this chapter will stress Wollstonecraft's unconventional love life as part of her rebellion. The aim of this chapter is to present, explain and justify Mary Wollstonecraft's legacy of rebellion. In this research, it is particularly important to accentuate Mary Wollstonecraft's rebellious nature and ideas in order to better appreciate her efforts of conformity.

In the year 1756, Edward Wollstonecraft of Spitafields, a seventy-six-year-old major silk weaver, was interred amid a fair service in the refined church of St Botolph, Bishopsgate. The introduction of his seven-page will commanded an extravagant burial suitable of a man whose wealth rendered him a 'gentleman'. However, a fair part of the will was dedicated to Edward John, Edward Wollstonecraft's son and a parent of the young Ned and Mary. Being his father's chief inheritor, Edward John was entitled to receive revenues from rents of thirty distinct tenures. Mary Wollstonecraft was the eldest daughter and second child of Edward John and Elizabeth Dickson. She was born in April 1759 in Primrose Street, Spitafields, a

comparatively shabby and stuffed place in London known for its immigrant population and its weavers, among whom her grandfather was fortunate enough to turn wealthy (Todd 4¹²⁵).

Edward John inherited his father's weaving business and became a rather rich middle-class gentleman. Edward was never passionate about weaving handkerchiefs and the fact that the industry was collapsing and workers were constantly protesting made him even more determined to leave the business. Edward had his mind fixed on farming, and though he had no experience in the field, he nevertheless bought an estate in Essex. His lack of experience cost him the loss of his investment in a period of four years. For a man known for his ill temper, his loss of money caused his anger to go unleashed, a fact that was to affect his whole family and particularly his eldest daughter. Mary realized through her father's failure to preserve his inherited money that what comes easily expires easily. Therefore, she was determined to build her own social status and ridiculed those who acquired their status through business (Todd 8).

Early in her life, Mary felt her parents' disregard, and at best indifference, towards her. Her attachment to her mother was a rather fragile one. Unlike her first baby 'Ned' whom Elizabeth breastfed herself, Mary's mother hired a wet nurse for her, a common practice among middle-class people who were able to spare some shillings for the cause. Despite the fact that English doctors emphasized the importance of motherly breastfeeding by the end of the 1600s, English women remained dubious and refused to be emotionally attached to their infants. At times, wet nurses breastfed and cared for the children at their homes or, in most cases in fact, cared for them in their own homes. Mary belonged to the second category. This

¹²⁵ Todd, Janet. *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life*. Great Britain, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000.

meant that Elizabeth missed Mary's early steps and failed to establish a strong relationship with her eldest daughter right from the beginning (Todd 4). Mary despised this practice and, in her *Rights of Woman* (1792), criticized mothers who abstained from breastfeeding their children saying "[mothers] parental affection, indeed, scarcely deserves the name, when it does not lead [them] to suckle [their] children, because the discharge of this duty is equally calculated to inspire maternal and filial affection" (197-8¹²⁶).

Indeed, Mary's early home life was far from ideal. Her father, Edward, was an incredibly moody man who quickly switched from affection to hostility and from benevolence to violence. However, Mary's mother, Elizabeth, was the ultimate sufferer from Edward's cruel behavior. As for Mary, her husband and first biographer, William Godwin claimed that she received little tenderness from her parents and was neither her mother nor her father's dearest child. Furthermore, Mary endured a harsh domestic regime and had to abide by strict rules that were enforced upon her solely. Her eldest brother, Ned, was her mother's favorite child while her younger siblings were left with no restraints. In contrast, Mary was forced to endure the meaningless etiquette of sitting for hours' long silently in the presence of her critical parents (Godwin 7-8¹²⁷).

Mary's parents were unsuitable for each other; their views were divergent and conflicting except for their mutual "indifference" towards Mary. Her father's fluctuation in the mood engendered a sense of unsteadiness in her earlier life (Todd 5). When her father's rage was unleashed, Mary used to receive his strikes with outrage rather than submission. In such instances, Mary experienced moments of supremacy and had the courage to demonstrate

¹²⁶ Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. Dublin, James Moore, 1793.

¹²⁷ Godwin, William. *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. London, J. Johnson, 1798.

her resentment. Her father's passionate temperament drove him to show the same cruelty towards his spouse (Godwin 9). According to Godwin:

When that was the case, Mary would often throw herself between the despot and his victim, with the purpose to receive upon her own person the blows that might be directed against her mother. She has even laid whole nights upon the landing-place near their chamber door, when, mistakenly, or with reason, she apprehended that her father might break out into paroxysms of violence (9-10).

Edward John's demeanor towards his family was similar to his behavior towards animals. He was good to them for the larger part, however, once upset, which was very common, his rage soon became unrestrained (Godwin 10). Clearly, Mary's first experience with women's subjection and male's despotism started at home. Likewise, signs of her eventual rebellion and willingness to stand for the cause of women begun under her parental roof. Through her mother's experience of domestic violence, Mary did not only learn to defend her mother, but developed a desire to defend all women and stand against the roots of their subordination.

Although the account of Mary Wollstonecraft's personal life may be subjective since it was entirely reported by her husband William Godwin, there is still reason to assume the reliability of his account. In her novel *Mary: A Fiction*, Wollstonecraft seemed to reflect many details about her early personal life in the person of her heroine 'Mary'. Mary, the protagonist of this work of fiction was the daughter of Edward and Eliza, these were the same names of her real parents. However, the figure of Eliza seems to be based on the character of both her mother and Lady Kingsborough. Wollstonecraft worked as a governess in the house of Lord Kingsborough and was mostly disturbed by the character of his wife. In her novel,

she emphasized the fashionable and slavish lifestyle that Eliza conducted, most probably reflecting Lady Kingsborough's routine (Wollstonecraft 77-8¹²⁸).

Shortly, Eliza became a mother to a son and later to a daughter named 'Mary'. Eliza was very inclined towards her son whom she favored greatly over the withdrawn and timid daughter Mary. Indeed, Mary was reserved and even "awkward" but that was only because she was lonely most of the time and had no useful employment to fill her time. Meanwhile, her brother went to school and enjoyed the benefits of education (Wollstonecraft 82). All these details resemble to a large extent Wollstonecraft's earlier life according to her husband's account. Her mother Eliza favored her brother over her and he was the only child in the Wollstonecraft family to be sent to school.

Indeed, only the eldest son, Ned, was to receive a proper education. With regards to Mary, she was taught reading and writing in a day school that she attended for a few years in Beverley, Yorkshire, in the course of her family's six moves across the country. Apart from basic schooling, most of Mary's knowledge, culture and acquisition of many foreign languages were self-taught, generally with a lot of struggles. Mary's ensuing resentment to the inequality of opportunities between men and women's education was derived from her own fury and childhood experience (Taylor ODNB¹²⁹). Mary's husband, William Godwin, asserted:

¹²⁸ Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Mary, A Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*. Ed. Michelle Fauber Broadview, 2012

¹²⁹ Taylor, Barbara. "Wollstonecraft [married name Godwin], Mary (1759–1797), author and advocate of women's rights." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. September 01, 2017. Oxford University Press,. Date of access 12 Nov. 2018, www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10893.

The rustic situation in which Mary spent her infancy, no doubt contributed to confirming the stamina of her constitution. She sported in the open air, and amidst the picturesque and refreshing scenes of nature, for which she always retained the most exquisite relish. Dolls and the other toys usually appropriate to the amusement of female children, she held in contempt; and felt a much greater propensity to join in the active and hardy sports of her brothers, than to confine herself to those of her own sex (12-3).

Clearly, Mary resented the feminine education that girls received and even the kind of amusement and sports thought suitable for them, a practice that was to render them weaker than their fellow male human beings. Hence, it was no surprise that she rebelled against the feminine delight of playing with dolls that could have neither developed nor strengthened her body. In contrast, her preference to engage in more masculine sports was to render her tougher and stronger physically, and possibly, even psychologically¹³⁰. In her *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft urged women to become stronger and acquire bodily strength if they wish to become less dependent on men (6).

Finally, Mary's indignation towards her family life was to be expressed in her desire for independence. Around 1777, and upon the Wollstonecraft family's return to London after spending about a year in Wales, Mary set her mind on leaving her parents' house, a desire that she expressed beforehand. Nevertheless, she was convinced to abandon the thought after a flat in her parents' roof was put at her proper disposal in addition to her acquirement of further provisions of learning. But even then Mary did not believe she was justly regarded.

¹³⁰ For more information on how Wollstonecraft dealt with the subject of femininity, see the chapter "Dressed in Conformity".

Once again, therefore, Mary decided to find her own house as well as a source of financial means. She found a suitable house and prepared the necessary provisions for her departure. However, she resigned her decision because of her mother's pleas and tears against her resolution (Godwin 23-5). Mary's decision to leave her parental roof before marriage demonstrated early signs of independence, boldness but above all rebellion, a refusal of the insecure and abusive life that Edward forced upon his family.

In 1778, Mary's wish of leaving her parental house and becoming financially independent was realized when she received an offer to work as a companion to Mrs. Dawson, a widow from Bath. Mary, who was then nineteen years old, lived for two years with Mrs. Dawson. Upon hearing about her mother's deteriorating health condition, Mary rushed to take care of her sick mother. Unfortunately, Elizabeth's disease caused her eventual death. Mary was then to leave her parental house without return (Godwin 25-8).

During Mr. Wollstonecraft's stay in Hoxton, Mary became friends with her neighbor Mr. Clare, a man who possibly helped in the initial development of her literature. Mr. Clare was a cleric who admired poetry and possessed great taste in literature. Mary repeatedly stayed for days in Mr. Clare's house. Lastly, Mr. Clare's wife introduced Mary to a person that was to become her best friend 'Frances Blood'. Mary was two years younger than 'Fanny', as she used to call her, and very quickly a close friendship developed between the two. Similar to her friendship with Mr. Clare, Fanny helped in the cultivation of Mary's developing faculties. Mary's early sentiments towards Fanny were that of inadequacy and admiration. Later, however, in the course of many years of companionship, her sentiments altered incredibly. Mary started appreciating her own brilliance and perceiving the deficiencies of her friend (Godwin 17-21-38-9).

While autonomy was Mary's objective at the age of nineteen, social utility was her new goal at the age of twenty-four. The scheme that she eventually embraced was starting a day school which she, Fanny Blood and both of her sisters were to manage. Thus, they started the school in 1783 at Newington Green (Godwin 31-33). Pedagogically, Mary was not fully qualified for the opening of an educational institution despite the fact that she acquired some preparation from her first best friend Jane Arden's scholarly father. Wollstonecraft's school at Newington Green was very limited with regards to its educational program that included: reading, drawing and sewing (Porter 165¹³¹). Nonetheless, Mary's decision to open a school proved her determination to become financially independent. Besides, the fact that she chose to open a school in particular not only demonstrate her desire to pursue a career suitable for a middle-class woman but also her wish to offer a useful institution that could improve the education of her sex.

Nevertheless, the health of her dear friend, Fanny, was deteriorating and Mary was doing her best to find her a treatment. Fanny suffered from pulmonary consumption and her doctors recommended her to seek the healing properties of a southern weather. Therefore, in 1785, Fanny traveled to Lisbon. Unfortunately, the treatment was not very beneficial. In these instances, Mary was afraid that she would lose her friend so she decided to join her in Lisbon. Despite the opposition of her acquaintance and her lack of the necessary money, Mary was determined to travel leaving behind her the school of which she was the chief director. Mary's financial problems were solved with a loan that was given to her from Mrs. Burgh, a friend that she met in Newington Green. Nevertheless, upon Mary's arrival to Lisbon, Fanny had a premature delivery which caused her death. Mary's affection and sorrow for her friend

¹³¹ Porter, Roy. *English Society in the 18 th Century*. London, Penguin Group, 1982.

Fanny was to inspire her later writings such as *Letters Written in Sweden* which Mary wrote a decade after her friend's departure (Godwin 36-7-42-3-6-7).

Nonetheless, Mary's trip to Lisbon was still of great benefit. It broadened her perception. She noted various insightful remarks on the personality of the inhabitants and the menacing consequences of superstition. On her way back home on board an English ship, an interesting incident took place. They came across a French vessel that was short of supplies and was severely afflicted. The French sailors requested help from the captain of the English vessel. To Mary's great surprise, the English captain refused to provide them with any assistance claiming that his vessel did not dispose of adequate provisions for any additional people (Godwin 49-50). There, Mary "took up the cause of the sufferers, and threatened the captain to have him called to a severe account, when he arrived in England. She finally prevailed, and had the satisfaction to reflect, that the persons in question possibly owed their lives to her interposition" (Godwin 50-1). This incident was a good example of Wollstonecraft's political maturity. The fact that she threatened the captain that she would use the law against him stressed her awareness of her legal rights and her belief in law as a tool of change. Moreover, the incident demonstrated another example of her willingness to stand for the cause of the distressed and defend them. Mary Wollstonecraft could not remain silent in the midst of transgressions.

When Mary finally returned to England, she realized the various deficiencies which her school suffered during her absence. There could be no great complaint about Mary's sisters for they were unable to fill her place. Mary was incredibly talented with children in addition to her gentleness and responsibility towards their parents. In the meantime, Mary was about to start her literary experience. Mr. John Hewlet, a director of a boarding school

that Mary met in Newington Green, tried to convince her on multiple occasions that writing could be a guaranteed source of income for her. Mary seriously considered his idea when she wanted to help Fanny's parents financially in their desire to travel to Ireland. To achieve this, Mary started writing *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, a pamphlet of one hundred and sixty pages (ibid.50-1).

Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct, in the more important Duties of Life (1787) was a conduct pamphlet that discussed the female education. The pamphlet provided mothers with advice on how to educate their daughters. The main themes discussed in this pamphlet was the nursery, moral discipline, exterior accomplishments, dress, the fine arts, artificial manners, reading, boarding school, temper and the theater. Moreover, the pamphlet included themes about women's social condition such as matrimony and "unfortunate situation of females, fashionably educated, and left without a fortune" (Wollstonecraft 1787¹³²). *The Education of Daughters* was published by Mr. Johnson in St. Paul's Church Yard and earned Mary ten guineas. As planned, Mary used this money to pay for Fanny's parents' journey to Ireland (Godwin 51).

Unfortunately for Wollstonecraft, the school that she founded was not doing well. Besides, living with her two sisters in the same house did not seem to bring much comfort to her independent spirit. Consequently, when she received a work offer as a governess for Lord Viscount Kingsborough's daughters, she agreed immediately. It was the best decision for the moment, she believed. Moreover, she intended to do the job for a limited period of time. Wollstonecraft craved for autonomy and was wondering if she could seek it through literary

¹³² Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female conduct, in the more Important Duties of Life*. London, J. Johnson, 1787.

vocation. Nevertheless, she first wanted to attain financial self-sufficiency that would allow her to pursue, in her spare time, various literary employment (ibid.54-3).

1. The Outbreak of the French Revolution

As an eighteenth-century writer, Mary Wollstonecraft was largely influenced by the events of the French Revolution that she witnessed. She was a close observer of the revolution and the transformation that it brought. Her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1794) were all reactions to the French Revolution. Her views on the French Revolution, which started in 1789, could be a useful example of her political ideas and moral perspectives. Nevertheless, the history of the French Revolution in itself needs an extensive account for a better understanding of the events that seemed to trigger Wollstonecraft's sense of justice, exercise of reason and promotion of women's rights.

Before 1789, France was very poorly organized. Divided into three levels, which were in turn divided into several classes, the nation offered a great example of despotism and endured all the evils of inequity (Mignet 8¹³³). The highest of the three orders were the nobility. They were divided into courtiers, who lived on the prince's favor, which is to say on the hard work and misery of the people. The second order consisted of the clergy. The third order was the least privileged of the three divisions; squeezed by the court and humiliated by the nobility. They had barely a third of the land on which they had to pay fees to the feudal

¹³³ Mignet, François Auguste Marie. *History of the French Revolution from 1789-1814*. New York, G.&C. Carvill, 1827.

lords, tithes to the clergy and taxes to the king. In compensation for so many sacrifices, they enjoyed no right and had no part in the administration (Mignet 8).

The clergy and nobility escaped the payment of the majority of taxes and fiscal drains that the popular classes endured, only to worsen their wretchedness. As a whole, privileged classes, especially of the nobility, had a right to most of the state functions. Therefore, an essential prerogative that the third estate demanded in 1789 was the right of all classes of society to participate in the entirety of responsibilities and roles of the state (See 6¹³⁴). The Versailles centered administration that was instituted by Richelieu, Mazarin and Louis XIV, ruled France and the monarch had almost absolute power over most significant features of foreign, financial and spiritual policy. Around 1789, almost all ministers became aristocrats (Hampson 2¹³⁵). The aristocrats' control of the government signaled the first actual step to corruption and monopoly of power by the nobility. This fact would exacerbate problems of finance and stand as a barrier to mutual agreement of the matter in the future.

Furthermore, the French monarch inability to manage emerging social problems was intensified by particular difficulties in the 1780s such as poor harvests in 1787 and redundancy in the rates of the unemployed in cities. The estimate of the poor was assessed at about one third of the populace, attained “crisis proportions on the eve of the Revolution” (Duiker and Spielvogel 521¹³⁶). In 1787, the French monarch realized the state of bankruptcy

¹³⁴ Henri, *Economic and Social Conditions in France during the Eighteenth Century*, Trans. Edwin H. Zeydel, Kitchener, Batoche Books, 2004.

¹³⁵ Hampson, Norman. *A Social History of the French Revolution*. Taylor & Francis, 2007.

¹³⁶ Duiker, J. William, and Jackson J. Spielvogel. “The West on the Eve of a New World Order”. *World History, Volume I: To 1800*. 6th ed. Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2010.

that the country fell into and was compelled to request a delegates' meeting of various classes of the kingdom to discuss the crisis of low revenue and high expenditure (Wells 349¹³⁷).

In August 1788, the king delegated Necker again as a finance minister, a move that was intended to soothe the aristocrats, depositors, and holders of the bonds of government, who not once opposed uncontrolled demands of loans. Nevertheless, Louis XVI's request to send for the Estates General turned the people against him. The fact that the aristocrats compelled the king to send for the Estates General came to be the first turn of the revolution in France. However, the majority of the public assumed that the Estates General would stand in for their welfare and guard against the tyranny of the crown (Merriman 441-2¹³⁸).

In 1789, the Estates General was summoned at Versailles. After 1610, it had never gathered. Throughout that time, France had been under the absolutism of monarchy (Wells 349). Since the third estate comprised 97 percent of the populace, the government decreed that it must acquire double delegation. Therefore, whereas each of the clergy (the first estate) and the aristocracy (the second estate) owned about three hundred representatives, the commons (the third estate) owned about six hundred delegates. One of the long-lasting difficulties of the Estates General was whether representation should be by the estate or by delegates¹³⁹. When the clergy confessed their inclination towards voting by the estate, the commons were outraged (Duiker and Spielvogel 532).

At this time, popular authors on politics started acknowledging the third estate as the sole spokesmen of freedom and of the people against the crown's tyranny. (Merriman 442).

¹³⁷ Wells, H.G. *A Short History of the World*. Kypros Press, 2016.

¹³⁸ Merriman, John. *The French Revolution: A history of modern Europe*. New York, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010.

¹³⁹ One vote for each representative.

The conflict eventually led to the fall of the Bastille in 1789. The National Assembly was confronted with the obligation of generating new political and social order for a fresh era in the history of France. The assembly cleared out the main prejudices of the ancient regime; it eliminated tax indemnities, serfdom, noble titles and treats and aimed at instituting a constitutional monarchy in Paris. Louis XVI left Versailles and its grandeur, and retained a declined condition in the Tuileries palace in Paris (Wells 349).

The various dictates of the assembly brought absolute monarchy to an end after it reformed the connection between the monarch and his dependents. It was also decreed that the king's powers would be limited by the constitution. Subsequently, the National Assembly started the establishment of a new system of government. This was commenced by the propagation of *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, a significant text that suggested worldwide values of human rights. Then, it proceeded to restructure the correlation between the state and the church by founding a national church and obliged the clergy to promise loyalty to France. Lastly, it proceeded to draft a constitution for the new system of government (Merriman 447).

In France, on the twentieth of September 1792, a National Convention was established which declared itself as a “de facto government of France”. A day later, the convention brought monarchy to an end and proclaimed France a republic. Subsequently, Louis XVI was tried and found guilty of “conspiracy against the public liberty and the general safety”. He was executed in January while Marie Antoinette was to meet the same fate in October 1793 (Ackermann et al. 144-6¹⁴⁰). Moreover, the different competing ideas about particular terms

¹⁴⁰ Ackermann, E, Marsha et al. *Encyclopedia of World History Volume 1*. New York, Facts On File, Inc., 2008

of the new constitution led to the emergence of various political divisions (Neely 88¹⁴¹). The main radical groups which opposed granting the king power and authority were adherents of the Jacobin Club who were exceedingly radical in their views, and the Girondins who were less radical. After the execution of the French monarch, a radical Jacobin 'Maximilien Robespierre' took control of the Committee of Public Safety, a body that was formed by the convention, and was responsible for the period known as 'the Reign of Terror'.

Maximilien Robespierre started the Reign of Terror that caused the execution of about 18,000 individuals, chiefly through the guillotine, over charges of anti-revolutionary undertakings. A large number of those executed were individuals who initially espoused the revolution efforts but opposed the eventual extremity of Robespierre's actions. Numerous French citizens attempted to flee to England, Spain, Switzerland, or Germany. Ultimately, Robespierre became intolerably extreme and caused the killing of various moderate Jacobins (Ackermann et al. 146-7). The Terror was sustained by Robespierre's obsession with cleansing the political sphere from any corruption. Nevertheless, several representatives in the National Convention became afraid of his extremity and feared for their lives under his leadership. Thus, they assembled sufficient votes to convict him and in July 1794, Robespierre was put to death by the guillotine (Duiker and Spielvogel 538).

2. The Impact of the French Revolution on Britain

The fall of the Bastille in 1789 represented a scaring alarm of what was taking place in France. From 1784 until 1785, Wollstonecraft resided in Newington Green, it was there when she found her inspiration in the person of Dr. Richard Price, who was one of the

¹⁴¹ Neely, Sylvia. *A Concise History of the French Revolution*. Lanhan, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2008.

prominent radical thinkers of the time. Dr. Price was a theorist, demographer, radical political and nonconformist priest. In theology, his initial publication *Four Dissertations* was issued in 1767. Four years later, Dr. Price became friends with William Petty, Second Earl of Shelburne and shortly joined the Bowood Group, an informal assembly of intellectuals and experts whose meetings were often held in Shelburne's property at Bowood in Wiltshire. The group counseled Dr. Price on various topics. In certain aspects, the group was a sort of "think tank" of the eighteenth century that allowed Shelburne to stay well informed of progress in businesses, the army and the church as well as current views on economy and finance. This circle was joined by intellectuals such as Joseph Priestley, Jeremy Bentham and Isaac Barré (Thomas ODNB¹⁴²).

Richard Price rose to political eminence after he published *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (1776), a pamphlet in which he supported American rebels. While this pamphlet earned him criticism in some areas of Britain and even caused his spouse's apprehension for his security, American patriots admired him. The American congress invited Dr. Price to America in order to work as a financial counselor, the offer was delivered to him by Benjamin Franklin, Arthur Lee, and John Adams but he nevertheless refused. Furthermore, Dr. Price was committed to political reform at home. He was active in the campaigns against the Test and Corporation Acts and supported the prospect of parliamentary reform, particularly, the franchise extension, the ending of corrupt practices and constituencies' rearrangement to ensure a fairer representation (Thomas ODNB).

¹⁴² Thomas, D. O. "Price, Richard (1723–1791), philosopher, demographer, and political radical." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. May 26, 2005. Oxford University Press,. Date of access 17 Nov.

The French Revolution was a lengthy progression instead of a solitary episode. Nonetheless, the intense happenings of the primary phase of the French Revolution triggered a significant dispute in the history of Britain. The “Revolution Controversy” of 1789-95 was not as much a result of the consequences of the revolution as it was about its impact on Britain. This thought was expressed clearly through a lecture that was communicated by Richard Price on 4 November 1789, which was published subsequently along with a homage address to the National Assembly in Paris. Edmund Burke, for instance, was rather indifferent to the happenings of the French Revolution until he heard of Dr. Price’s proposal that a similar action should be advocated in Britain (Furniss 59-60¹⁴³).

Edmund Burke (1729–1797) was an Irish politician, writer, philosopher and historian. In 1766, he was elected as a member of parliament to the House of Commons for the borough of Wendover. As a politician, Burke was against taxing the Americans and contended for a return to the Whig government’s benevolent management of the settlements. His policy about the American colonies was captured in his two speeches “Taxation” and “Conciliation”¹⁴⁴. Burke considered the Americans as traditional Englishmen and wished partnership to be the basis of the Anglo-American imperial relations instead of authority. Nevertheless, Edmund Burke was perhaps the first MP to “appeal to an extra-parliamentary audience in this way, and thereby the first politician to acquire not only a British but a European audience”. Moreover, Edmund Burke advocated the emancipation of Roman Catholics and greatly contributed in the campaigns that resulted in the passage of the Papists Act in 1778¹⁴⁵. As a

¹⁴³ Furniss, Tom. “Wollstonecraft and the French Revolution”. *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, Edited by Claudia L. Johnson, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 59–81.

¹⁴⁴ These two American speeches were published around the years 1774-75.

¹⁴⁵ These laws granted Roman Catholics some of their legal and religious rights.

historian, Burke deemed historical accounts that were transmitted by the ancients, deficient and lacking in certain aspects compared to modern historical findings (Langford ODNB¹⁴⁶).

Edmund Burke was particularly enraged by a sermon that was delivered by Richard Price. Dr. Price was one of the initiators of the Society for Constitutional Reform (1780). When the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain, labeled as the Revolution Society, restored its undertakings, Dr. Price became a key member in its activities. He was requested to deliver a discourse to the Revolution society in a gathering that was convened on the fourth of November 1789 (Thomas ODNB). In this discourse which was entitled *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, Dr. Price stressed that the love of one's country was scarcely related to one's land of birth or its landscape; instead, it was about that "community of which we are members, or that body of companions and friends and kindred who are associated with us under the same constitution of government" (3¹⁴⁷). However, Dr. Price believed that in the nation's quest for the benefit of their country, their beliefs should go beyond the borders of their territory. Although nationals ought to pursue the interest of their country, they should still regard themselves as "citizens of the world" and be mindful to uphold a fair esteem to the rights of other nations (10).

Furthermore, Dr. Price celebrated the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and summarized its principles in three doctrines: "First, the right to liberty of conscience in religious matters. Secondly, the right to resist power when abused. And thirdly, the right to chuse our own governors, to cashier them for misconduct, and to frame a government for ourselves" (34). In

¹⁴⁶ Langford, Paul. "Burke, Edmund (1729/30–1797), politician and author." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. October 04, 2012. Oxford University Press,. Date of access 18 Oct. 2018, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-4019>.

¹⁴⁷ Price, Richard. *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country: Delivered on Nov. 4, 1789*. London, George Stafford, 1790.

particular, the third doctrine, Price believed, was the pillar of the revolution. However, if there was no freedom of conscience, freedom to resist oppression nor was the political government the public's representative, the revolution would have been a mere rebellion. Besides, his pride in the Glorious Revolution in Britain was compared to his satisfaction with the American and the French Revolution, which were "both glorious". His satisfaction stemmed from his belief that the aforementioned revolutions were both spreading and propagating freedom, causing an overall transformation in public affairs, changing kings' authority to that of the law and the influence of ministers to that of logic and intelligence (Price 49-50). Subsequently, Price proceeded to threaten all oppressive regimes and their supporters to "Restore to mankind their rights and consent to the correction of abuses, before they and you are destroyed together" (51).

Edmund Burke responded to Richard Price's claims with his *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceeding of Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event* (1790). In his book, Burke asserted that some of the revolutionary books that had been flowing in France were never of use in Britain. Moreover, he confessed that he was fully aware of the fact that many French people had been inspired by books dispatched from Britain. He wondered whether the books had improved in their quality on their way to France because as far as he was aware of, no man of good reason or even with some knowledge applauded any of the majority of books supported by that society (3¹⁴⁸). Burke was specifically talking about the Constitutional Society and the Revolution Society. Burke's criticism of the Revolution Society was a direct criticism of Dr. Price's principles and circle.

¹⁴⁸ Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the proceeding in certain societies in London relative to that event*. London, J. Dodsley, 1790.

Nevertheless, his assertions on the value of radical books and their anonymity in Britain were hard to believe for no absurd books were capable of enraging a writer and politician in the weight of Edmund Burke. His bitter attack on radicals revealed his great concern that their publications may find an attentive audience in Britain.

Furthermore, Burke confessed that he thought of the National Assembly the same way he did of radical societies in Britain. According to him, the French people gave the lion's share of their respected knowledge to the Revolution Society while supporters of the constitution were entirely denied their cut. Members of the Revolution Society were given excessive value after they were embraced by the National Assembly, and they tried to show their gratitude by proceeding as a commission for spreading the doctrines of the National Assembly in England. Therefore, Burke stated ironically that members of the Revolution Society should be regarded as significant people and not mere unimportant fellow in the diplomatic organization (4).

Although Dr. Price celebrated the Glorious Revolution of Britain and set it as an example of liberty for the rest of the world, Burke believed his claims suggested a deviant plan. Specifically, Burke was commenting on Dr. Price's argument in which he asserted his respect for the British sovereign as the sole legal king in the universe, "because the only one who owes his crown to the choice of his people" (Price 25). Plainly, Dr. Price's doctrines had no insinuations of rebellion; rather, he emphasized the lawfulness of the British king. Nevertheless, Burke believed that Dr. Price subtly raised the question of the king's illegitimacy. He argued that when Dr. Price's qualifications of a legal king were tested to the British sovereign, they even become meaningless or assert an "unfounded, dangerous, illegal, and unconstitutional position" (17). Following Dr. Price's line of reasoning, a king who was

not chosen by the public is an illegal sovereign. Hence, the sovereign of Great Britain is not legitimate since he was not selected by the public (Burke 17).

Moreover, Burke accused Dr. Price of spreading the spirit of rebellion through the reiteration of his “abstract” principle, the doctrine which stipulated that public support was essential to the legitimate presence of the king. As long as the British king was in no way concerned with this doctrine, since Dr. Price was criticizing other kings of the world and not the British sovereign in particular, his principles would be ignored (Burke 18). However, Burke argued:

In the meantime, the ears of their congregations would be gradually habituated to it, as if it were a first principle admitted without dispute. For the present it would only operate as a theory, pickled in the preserving juices of pulpit eloquence, and laid by for future use....By this policy, whilst our government is soothed with a reservation in its favor, to which it has no claim, the security, which it has in common with all governments, so far as opinion is security, is taken away (18).

Hence, Dr. Price’s celebration of the Glorious Revolution, its presumable doctrines and the legitimacy of the British sovereign were all seen as subtle insinuations to a future rebellion against a king whose legitimacy did not match Dr. Price’s principles of popular support.

Besides, Burke suggested that the question of electing the British crown would be soon raised. He argued that the authority of the British sovereign was derived from the static decree of succession that conformed to the British law. Besides, whereas the legitimate orders of the sovereignty contract were acted by his person, he maintained his sovereignty regardless

of the election of the Revolution Society. Moreover, Burke believed that the Revolution Society “would soon erect themselves into an electoral college if things were ripe to give effect to their claim” (19). In summary, Burke was exceedingly distrustful of the claims of Dr. Price in particular and the Revolution Society in general. Burke believed that behind their plain doctrines of freedom and the right of the public to choose their king, an incitement to rebel against a British king whose rule derived from a law of succession instead of public elections.

As for the French Revolution, Burke was even more doubtful of its proceedings. He refused to celebrate the French Revolution before he became knowledgeable with “how it had been combined with government, with public force, with the discipline and obedience of armies, with the collection of effective and well-distributed revenue, with morality and religion, with the solidity of property, with peace and order, with civil and social manners” (9). Although Burke’s accusations to the Revolution Society were difficult to ascertain, his suspicions of the French Revolution were certainly justified. Furthermore, the very fact that Dr. Price linked the English Revolution with the French Revolution was perceived as a call for the British to copy the actions of the National Assembly, a situation that “gave [Burke] a considerable degree of uneasiness” (Burke 10).

Additionally, Burke put forward a lengthy defense of the old establishment, monarchy, the clergy and nobility. He argued that the old establishment needed gradual reform instead of “abolition and total destruction” (248-49). He condemned the treatment that both King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette suffered at the hands of the public and the National Assembly during the French Revolution (100-4-112). Moreover, he defended the property of the aristocrats that was confiscated by the National assembly arguing that

“Nothing is due and adequate representation of a state that does not represent its ability as well as its property” (74-75). He also emphasized that the nobility and the clergy were not as privileged as it was made to appear. They were indeed exempted from taxes but they had various monetary impositions such as custom fees and land tax (178). On the whole, Edmund Burke condemned the French Revolution, the National Assembly and the state of violence and chaos that prevailed in France at the time. Nevertheless, he defended the old establishment, the French monarch, the clergy, the nobility and their property that were reduced during the French Revolution.

Edmund Burke’s *Reflections* did not appeal much to Thomas Paine who published his *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke’s Attack on the French Revolution* a few months later as a response. Thomas Paine (1737–1809) was an author and revolutionary who first rose to eminence in the New World. In 1774, he landed in Philadelphia where his emerging literary standing acquainted him with political groups in Philadelphia. In April 1775, strains between the British government and the American colonies eventually led to military clashes between the British and American troops. After the failure of many efforts at conciliation, the American settlements started overtly rejecting any British authority to directly govern them. In the same year, Thomas Paine published his pamphlet *Common Sense Addressed to the Inhabitants of America* in support of American colonies’ independence from Britain. The pamphlet was very successful. It was “the most widely distributed pamphlet of

the American War of Independence, and has the strongest claim to have made independence seem both desirable and attainable to the wavering colonists” (Philp ODNB¹⁴⁹).

Subsequently, Thomas Paine became interested in scientific experimentations and determined to design a single-span bridge. When Paine could not find financial funding for his project in America, he traveled to France in 1787. In France, Paine was introduced to French political circles that eventually commended him to deliver the Bastille’s key to President George Washington. This was a representation of the role of the American Revolution in inspiring the spirit of change in Europe. In 1790, Paine started writing a report about the events of the French Revolution. Moreover, he was consistently exchanging letters with different British connections such as Edmund Burke informing them of the situation in France. Nevertheless, when Edmund Burke decided to write an account condemning the French Revolution, Paine was determined to respond to it (Philp ODNB).

Thomas Paine started his *Rights of Men* with a tribute to President George Washington for the doctrines of liberty that he immensely helped to inaugurate. He then lamented all the attacks that Mr. Burke launched against the French Revolution and the National assembly especially when neither English affairs nor the English parliament were involved. Moreover, Paine greatly lamented Burke’s criticism to Dr. Price, the Revolution and the Constitutional Societies. Most importantly, Paine mocked Burke’s assertions that the Revolution of 1688 in England did not grant to English people the right to select their rulers, dismiss them for corruption or establish a government of their choice. He was even more

¹⁴⁹ Philp, Mark. "Paine, Thomas (1737–1809), author and revolutionary." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. May 24, 2008. Oxford University Press,. Date of access 18 Oct. 2018, www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-21133.

enraged by Burke's claim that the English people refuse such a right and will repudiate it "with their lives and fortunes" (Paine 5-7¹⁵⁰).

In fact, Paine argued that the English parliament of 1688 granted itself the right to make laws by commission and by assumption. While Parliament had still the right by commission, the right by assumption to rule and govern future generations forever could not be granted, Paine contended,

there never did, there never will, and there never can exist a parliament, or any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding and controlling posterity to the "end of time," or of commanding forever how the world shall be governed, or who shall govern it: and therefore all such clauses, acts or declarations, by which the makers of them attempt to do what they have neither the right nor the power to do [...] are in themselves null and void (9).

Paine explained that there is no parliament that could not be changed by future generations as Burke indicated. "Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself, in all cases, as the ages and generations which preceded it" (Paine 9). In short, the Parliament of 1688 should not control the people of the eighteenth century if they choose to change it. Likewise, any new parliament established in the eighteenth century should not bind future generations against their will.

Concerning Edmund Burke's denunciation of the French rebellion against a moderate and lawful king, Paine argued that French revolutionaries rebelled against an autocratic

¹⁵⁰ Paine, Thomas. *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*. London, J.S. Jordan, 1791

system of monarchy and not against the monarch himself. Paine explained that the doctrines upon which the French system of government was founded were despotic and unfair. Gradually, these doctrines became so engrained in the French government that they were neither changeable nor removable. Therefore, despite the moderate nature of Louis XVI, he still did not change any of the authoritarian principles of the French monarchy. However, Paine insisted that unlike English people who revolted against the person of Charles I. and James II, the French revolted against the “hereditary despotism of the established government” (17-18).

3. A Revolutionary Writer

In 1787, Wollstonecraft started her work in writing and translation for Joseph Johnson. As a radical dissenter, Johnson’s house and bookshop at the Churchyard of St. Paul became a meeting point for radicals and dissenters in London. Wollstonecraft’s interaction with her publisher allowed her to belong to one of the leading intellectual groups of her country. Adherents to Johnson’s circle rushed to Paris in the summer of 1789 and came back with passionate reports, anticipating that a comparable revolution may emerge in Britain. The delight prompted by the initial stage of the French Revolution fused the circle and united it (Furniss 59). Wollstonecraft’s professional career in writing and translating helped her to interact with radical intellectuals of her time and become influenced by them. Her work for Dr. Johnson certainly shaped her revolutionary thinking and prepared her to adopt a more radical stand in her works the moment she found encouragement.

Wollstonecraft joined British radical writers and expressed her ideas about the French Revolution freely. Particularly, she found in the French crisis over the vote a means to express her stand in the injustices of the French system of the time. She considered the

aristocrats and the clergy as two bodies that were prepared to fight for their privileges even if this resulted in the destruction of France as a whole. She emphasized that the two estates were very loyal to “their insulated interest, that all the committees into which the notables were divided, excepting that of which Monsieur was president, determined against allowing the tiers état that increase of power necessary to enable them to be useful (Wollstonecraft 66¹⁵¹).

Furthermore, Mary Wollstonecraft’s interaction with the intellectual circle of Dr. Johnson encouraged her to respond to Edmund Burke within the same year of the publication of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Wollstonecraft found Edmund Burke’s *Reflections* particularly provoking (Taylor ODNB). Consequently, she responded by publishing her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* in 1790. Burke’s justification of the practices of the old regime in France was found outrageous and illogical by Wollstonecraft who commented:

Mr. Burke’s *Reflections* on the French Revolution first engaged my attention as the transient topic of the day; and reading it more for amusement than information, my indignation was roused by the sophistical arguments that every moment crossed me, in the questionable shape of natural feelings and common sense (Advert¹⁵²).

¹⁵¹ Wollstonecraft, Mary. *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the Effect it has produced in Europe*. London, J. Johnson, 1794.

¹⁵² Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men in a Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke Occasioned by His Reflections on the Revolution in France*. London, J. Johnson, 1790.

Wollstonecraft had probably found it necessary to explain her stand clearly especially as she had Johnson's encouragement to challenge Burke's *Reflections*. She was successful in her refutation although this did not come without some anxiety on her part. Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Men* was an instant achievement that announced the dawn of a new literary genius. Her name was cited along that of Thomas Paine whose *Rights of Man* (1791) was more successful. According to Taylor: "As a leading revolutionist; she was commended in France and fêted by fellow radicals in England. It was a truly splendid time, and Mary Wollstonecraft was in the middle of it" (ODNB). Hence, the French Revolution positioned Wollstonecraft among English radicals and allowed her to express her views and principles about justice, society, class system and most importantly women's emancipation.

For Wollstonecraft, the French Revolution was a major key to her eminence as a historian, feminist and political writer. It was through her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) that she first established herself as a political writer and only after her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) that she was crowned as a women's rights campaigner and a moral writer. Lastly, *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*, published in 1795 was her major and only work as a historian. Therefore, it was important to clearly highlight Wollstonecraft's stand of the French Revolution and illustrate how her views on the revolution placed her name among that of English radicals in the eighteenth century.

Wollstonecraft started her *Vindication* stressing the point that enjoyment rather than data was what led her to read Burke's *Reflections* since it was the fleeting subject of the moment (3). In this way, Wollstonecraft responded to Burke's claims to obliviousness of the existence of radical societies in Britain. As for his ridicule of their scholarly capacity and his

assertions of their anonymity among the circle of intellectuals, Wollstonecraft asserted that his book was of no intellectual value and that it was at best read for the sake of “amusement”! Meanwhile, the objective of Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication* was to rebuke Burke’s arguments against both Dr. Price and the French Revolution (Advert¹⁵³).

However, not desiring to refute all of Burke’s arguments because of her lack of time and endurance, Wollstonecraft restricted her repudiation to the main doctrines advanced in his work that were most erroneous in her opinion (3). Wollstonecraft commented on Burke’s defense for hereditary honors arguing that various legal offenses were committed for the sake of “interesting desire of perpetuating a name”. Many younger offspring were exiled or kept in convents in order to secure the estate of the family to the oldest son, according to the law of primogeniture. Wollstonecraft posed the question of how these hereditary laws which favored one child over another could be considered virtuous or logical as Burke argued (43-4). Her criticism to hereditary honors was coupled with a critique of the manners of the people of rank, specifically, people from the upper class. She also believed that so much immorality and wretchedness were derived from middle-class people attempting to copy the lifestyle of the upper class, “All are aiming to procure respect on account of their property... The grand concern of three parts out of four is to contrive to live above their equals, and to appear to be richer than they are” (47).

Moreover, Wollstonecraft despised Burke’s sympathy with the king and queen of France. Although she believed that the heart of the queen of Great Britain “may not be enlarged by generosity” (56), she still did not deserve to be compared to the queen of France.

¹⁵³ Op.cit.

She asserted that had Louis XVI and his spouse deserved the respect and dignity that Burke wanted for them, they would not have had the wrath of heaven and the humiliation that they received (56). Besides, Wollstonecraft objected to Burke's admiration for the religious establishment and the clergy in England. Burke argued that the constitution of the church and state of England was founded progressively with the support of various factions and in accordance with the norms of religion and piety. Wollstonecraft disagreed with Burke and insisted that the establishment of the English church and state was a result of private interest which prompted public benefit. As for the clerical body, she admitted that there existed a good number of clergymen who were worthy of respect. However, she asserted that she did not have reverence for the entire ecclesiastical establishment (76). She posed the question: "was not the separation of religion from morality the work of the priests, and partly achieved in those honorable days which you so piously deplore?"(89). Clearly, Wollstonecraft did not think highly of the clerical body as Burke did. In fact, she accused them of being bad representatives of religion, one who caused religion and morality to be perceived as separate set of norms.

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft accused Burke of supporting the interests of the rich and noble, what she called the "interest of a large body of [his] fellow-citizens" (83). Nevertheless, most of Wollstonecraft's criticism to Burke revolved around his inconsistencies, conduct and emotional insincerity (40-1). According to Jones, Wollstonecraft could be rightly criticized for not challenging Burke's arguments on his own political and historical level (48¹⁵⁴). Indeed, Wollstonecraft's response to Burke was rather moral and

¹⁵⁴ Jones, Chris. "Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindications* and their political tradition". *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, Edited by Claudia L. Johnson, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 42-58.

philosophic. On the historical and political level, however, she did not seem to extend any profound counterarguments.

Besides, Wollstonecraft's indignation was roused by Burke's attack on radical intellectuals similar to Dr. Richard Price, a personality for which she held the deepest sentiments of esteem. She exclaimed about the legitimacy of Burke's assault on Dr. Price and found it completely unjustifiable. Nevertheless, she did think that Dr. Price's enthusiasm was probably overrated and carried him far from what reason might guarantee. She also agreed with Burke on the fact that certain things might look repulsive at a certain phase; it is only when a person could see the eventual outcome of current tragedies that he might see the full picture (32¹⁵⁵). Wollstonecraft was alluding to the fact that in spite of the ugly reality and the horrors that were being committed in France, the future might hold in its arm a better life. A life in which the French would be equal and justice between men and women would prevail.

The great reverence that Wollstonecraft had for Richard Price became clearer as she carried on expressing her resentment to Edmund Burke. She accused Burke of not having respect for virtue and wisdom as all his respect was dedicated to "distinction of rank" (ibid. 33). Otherwise, he would not have "treated with such indecent familiarity and supercilious contempt, a member of the community whose talents and modest virtues place him high in the scale of moral excellence" (33). For Wollstonecraft, Dr. Price was a pious and rational man whose merits were fused into kindness and who, as a result, deserved all respect. Nevertheless, she did think that his political values were "utopian reveries, and that the world is not yet sufficiently civilized to adopt such a sublime system of morality; they could,

¹⁵⁵ *Rights of Men*.

however, only be the reveries of a benevolent mind” (33-4.). Interestingly, Mary Wollstonecraft’s reservations on Dr. Price’s ideas were not due to their radicalism, but to the world’s ineptitude for similar enlightened ideas.

Mary Wollstonecraft supported Dr. Price’s radical ideas and respected his logic and his sincere devotion to the extent of considering him the champion of modesty and authenticity, a man who had neither strove for rank nor wealth (33). According to Jones, Wollstonecraft’s defense for Dr. Richard Price in her *Rights of Men* (1790) was one for a man who helped shape her ideals. Still, the image she had of him that of a priest godfather, did not exactly exempt him from her tender criticism. Her depiction of dissenters as having women’s fragilities in her *Rights of Woman* (1792) could be regarded as a criticism of Dr. Price’s political exertions to bring together the different views of dissenters and through numerous concessions bring about few improvements to their ineptness (44).

Wollstonecraft’s notoriety for being a revolutionary writer was not, in fact, unjustified. Her defense for Dr. Richard Price was one indication among many others. In her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), Wollstonecraft commenced by linking herself to a belief of radical British texts, reflecting *Second Treatise of Government* (1690) of John Locke (Furniss 60). This was partly shown through her understanding of the natural rights of people which she defined as “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 the continued existence of that compact” (7). Liberty as understood by Locke, however, is quite similar. It is the human being’s natural right to freedom, equality and self-determination. It is his right of complying only with the rules that they approved of, and that was formed after acquiring the consent of other fellow men, to combine and fuse into a community for the sake of their

happiness, security and peace of mind. This freedom should guarantee their rights to property and ensure its safety (Locke 117¹⁵⁶).

Moreover, Since Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Men* was her first political and revolutionary work, she needed immense courage and encouragement to write it. Wollstonecraft confided to her husband, William Godwin, that while she was writing her *Vindication* "she was seized with a temporary fit of torpor and indolence, and began to repent of her undertaking" (77). She then thought of calling her publisher Joseph Johnson for a brief discussion. Instantly, Mr. Johnson "intreated her not to put any constraint upon her inclination [...] Mary had wanted stimulus. She had not expected to be encouraged, in what she well knew to be an unreasonable access of idleness" (Godwin 78). Despite the fact that Godwin attributed his wife's reluctance to finish writing her pamphlet to 'momentary idleness', this seemed highly unlikely. Literary critic David Bromwich suggested that Mr. Johnson's attempt to convince Wollstonecraft "not to put any constraint upon her inclination" was rather ambiguous. Perhaps the constraint she felt was due to propriety, regard and reverence instead of mere laziness (618¹⁵⁷). Arguably, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Men* was her first political pamphlet. Besides, the pamphlet was a response and criticism to a celebrated writer in the wake of Edmund Burke. Therefore, it could be expected that she was intimidated by the possible negative reaction that her pamphlet might receive. She realized how revolutionary her pamphlet was for a woman and for a writer who could be considered as a beginner in the field of political writing compared to Edmund Burke. This

¹⁵⁶ Locke, John. *Two Treatises on Government: A Translation Into Modern English. Industrial Systems Research*, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ Bromwich, David. "Wollstonecraft as a Critic of Burke." *Political Theory*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1995, pp. 617–634. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/191903.

argument could be supported by the fact that Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* was initially published anonymously.

Two years before the Reign of Terror, Wollstonecraft traveled to Paris. She planned on staying there for six weeks roughly. Her aim was to provide English readers with a report on the revolution. Nevertheless, the city that she revealed was unlike the one she imagined. The spirit of ecstasy that was described by Helen Maria Williams had vanished as a consequence of the massacres (Furniss 64). In a letter to Mr. Johnson, Wollstonecraft described the king's carriage to jail:

About nine o'clock this morning, the king passed by my window, moving silently along [...] I can scarcely tell you why, but an association of ideas made the tears flow insensibly from my eyes, when I saw Louis sitting, with more dignity than I expected from his character, in a hackney coach going to meet death, where so many of his race have triumphed. My fancy instantly brought Louis XIV before me, entering the capital with all his pomp, after one of the victories most flattering to his pride, only to see the sunshine of prosperity overshadowed by the sublime gloom of misery [...] I wish I had even kept the cat with me! –I want to see something alive; death in so many frightful shapes has taken hold of my fancy. –I am going to bed–and, for the first time in my life, I cannot put out the candle (Wollstonecraft 93-5).

Clearly, Wollstonecraft was shocked to see a French country different than the one she imagined. She perceived the fear and witnessed the horror, the fact that led her to sympathize with the French king whom she scorned earlier in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790). Despite the fact that Wollstonecraft largely advocated the French Revolution

and believed in its legitimacy, witnessing the Reign of Terror and the chaos that followed the revolution seemed to have spurred her doubts about the merit and validity of this revolution.

Furthermore, the French Revolution prompted Wollstonecraft to write her first book of history *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution and the Effect it Has Produced in Europe* in 1795. This was supposed to be the first volume of two or three others that were to follow (iii). Nevertheless, this was the only volume that Wollstonecraft was able to write about the history of the French Revolution. According to Franklin, *An Historical and Moral View* is Wollstonecraft's greatly aspiring and least appreciated one. On the one hand, she advertised that she would write further volumes and did not. On the other hand, she felt obliged to investigate and find the causes of chaos in France. This was not an easy task for a person who was authoring clandestinely during the horror. Therefore, she devoted her time to recording feeble incidents taking place until 1790. However, these events were still subtly commented on under the influence of the horror in 1794 (Franklin 130-1¹⁵⁸).

The fact that Wollstonecraft commented on early minor events of the French Revolution at a time when major events had already taken place in France, particularly the terror of the 1793, made her historical account lacking in terms of objectivity. Although Wollstonecraft considered herself as the right person to analyze the events of the revolution and described herself as "a mind, not only unsophisticated by old prejudices, and the inveterate habits of degeneracy; but an amelioration of temper, produced by the exercise of the most enlarged principles of humanity" (V), it was not obvious that she was. In fact,

¹⁵⁸ Franklin, Caroline. *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Literary Life*. Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004

Wollstonecraft's book of history was full of philosophical and moral arguments instead of historical ones.

Thus, Mary Wollstonecraft was able to engage in the revolution controversy and interact with British radical intellectuals in the weight of Richard Price and Thomas Paine. According to Franklin, "A reviewer in the most prestigious oppositional periodical of the day, *The Analytical Review*, Wollstonecraft became politicized by the French Revolution and one of the most prominent contributors to the most important pamphlet war since the civil war period" (IX). The French Revolution was certainly the initial trigger that invigorated Wollstonecraft to express her political and revolutionary ideas clearly and boldly.

4. A Woman's Rights Campaigner

In 1787, Joseph Johnson, the formal publisher of rational dissenters, came to publish Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Education of Daughters*. Johnson was an enlightened man who acknowledged writers' talents with no consideration for their gender and who readily agreed to publish Wollstonecraft's work (Taylor ODNB). Johnson appointed her as a writer for his literary review, the *Analytical Review* (Godwin 66). Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft's role in increasing Johnson's publishing interests should be emphasized. For an author who by the late eighteenth century came to be known as the most famous political woman writer throughout the European continent, Wollstonecraft was certainly a great choice (Taylor ODNB). Being a radical publisher himself, Johnson did not only influence Wollstonecraft's radical career but in fact, he provided an actual and powerful support for her ideas.

Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist writing started with her first novel *Mary, a Fiction*¹⁵⁹. This small book of fiction told the story of an unhappy wife named Mary. The novel began by narrating the shallow and superficial marriage of Mary's parents Eliza and Edward and the deteriorating health of Eliza. The novel then proceeded to emphasize Eliza's preference to her son, Ned, over her daughter Mary. Mary was later to have an arranged middle-class marriage, one that settled an old dispute of land property between her father and her future father-in-law. As could be expected in such a marriage, Mary was never happy. To Mary, real love and affection were found in her best friend Ann¹⁶⁰.

The novel ensued to demonstrate Mary's affection for her best friend, Ann, after she fell sick. Mary traveled with her friend to Lisbon where she hoped that a change of air might be beneficial to her health. Unfortunately, Ann's health condition worsened leading to her demise. There, Mary found comfort in the person of Henry, a middle-class man who was seeking treatment in Lisbon as well and fell in love with him. Although Mary returned to England, she nevertheless rushed to nurse Henry at his death bed. Mary was then to resume her marital life with much disgust and dissatisfaction. To overcome her miserable marriage, she dedicated herself to different acts of charity. However, Wollstonecraft alluded to Mary's imminent demise as her health was worsening (ibid.).

William Godwin appraised Wollstonecraft's *Mary: a Fiction* as her most distinguished work stating:

¹⁵⁹ The novel was published in 1788.

¹⁶⁰ Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Mary, A Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*. Ed. Michelle Fauber Broadview, 2012.

If Mary had never produced anything else would serve, with persons of true taste and sensibility, to establish the eminence of her genius. The story is nothing. He that looks into the book only for the incident will probably lay it down with disgust. But the feelings are of the truest and most exquisite class; every circumstance is adorned with that species of imagination, which enlists itself under the banners of delicacy and sentiment (59-60).

In spite of Godwin's seemingly positive review, he did dismiss Wollstonecraft's novel as a mere work of sensibility. Nonetheless, the novel showed early signs of rebellion against the social condition of women under marriage and on the whole presented a powerful critic to the status of middle-class women.

Subsequently, Wollstonecraft wrote *Original Stories* in 1788, a collection of moral stories for girls. In 1789, however, she wrote *The Female Reader* that presented a practical guide to qualify the female sex to use their thinking faculties. This work stood as an alteration and innovation from her previous writings. It emphasized her attitude towards the dreadful condition of girls' education (Ferguson 945¹⁶¹). Nevertheless, none of Wollstonecraft works that were published before 1789 was of an exceptional nature compared to the works of other female writers in the eighteenth century such as Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth, and Mary Hays. Her work on various books for the Analytical Review enhanced her knowledge in languages so that, eventually, her level was good enough to allow her to become a translator and write many narratives and anthologies targeting a wide range of audiences. All of these works were expected from a woman author (Taylor ODNB). The turning point in

¹⁶¹ Ferguson, Moira. "The Discovery of Mary Wollstonecraft's "the Female Reader"". *Signs* 3. 4 (1978): 945-957. Web. 22. Nov.2014.

Wollstonecraft's career as a feminist writer, however, was her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

In September 1791, Maurice Talleyrand-Périgord, former Bishop of Autun, published his report on public instruction in the name of the constitution committee of the National Assembly. In his report, Talleyrand-Périgord outlined various principles of education that granted education as a right to everyone, even those with small amounts of property and made it universal, it included both sexes and all ages. Women's education, however, was to have different guidelines that were perceived to be more suitable for their role in life (210-12¹⁶²). According to Talleyrand-Périgord, women were destined to fulfill domestic tranquility and duties of the inner life. Consequently, women's education was restricted by many terms such as:

- Girls were not to be accepted in primary schools before the age of eight.
- After they undertake their primary education or parental one, certain establishments will be provided for them to instruct them to the employment most suitable for their sex.
- All the instructions destined to girls in public schools should prepare them primarily to the virtues of domestic life and useful talents for the administration of their families (210-2).

On the whole, Talleyrand-Périgord's *Rapport sur l'Instruction Publique* (1791) emphasized girls' domestic role and aimed at preparing them to be housewives instead of public members of society. It deprived them of the opportunity to explore their thinking

¹⁶² De Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice. *Rapport sur l'instruction publique: fait au nom du Comité de Constitution à l'assemblée nationale*. Paris, Baudouin, 1791.

faculties and constrained them within a prescribed private sphere that would destroy any ambition to contribute in the ‘manly’ public sphere (210-2).

This report did not go unnoticed by Mary Wollstonecraft who was urged to write what became her most remarkable political and feminist work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), a book-length essay that was dedicated to M. Talleyrand-Périgord and had women’s rights and education as its main topic. Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* discussed various topics such as: human rights, national education, gender roles, modesty, morality, rights and duties of parents and the degraded status of women. She described existing practices, misconceptions and malpractices that dominated the French and English society and suggested a body of intellectual, social, and political reforms. But mostly, her *Rights of Woman* revolved around one significant demand, ‘complete equality between the sexes’.

In her fight for women’s rights, Wollstonecraft established her claim on a simple belief “If [a woman] be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge, for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice” (vi¹⁶³). She wondered whether the problem lied within nature that distinguished greatly between human beings or in full civilization that is yet to be attained. Her long research on education and her observation of parents’ demeanor and schools’ administration led her to the conviction that the existing disregard for girls’ education was the chief reason for the misery of her sex. Women were made feeble and inferior through the lack of education or its inadequacy (1).

¹⁶³ Op.cit.

Wollstonecraft considered women's behavior and manners as a good evidence of their intellectual inferiority that could mainly be ascribed to a "false system of education" inspired by books of male writers on the matter. These writers perceived the female sex as women instead of human beings. Hence, they were eager to make them attractive lovers instead of compassionate spouses and sound mothers. Unfortunately, this made women more anxious to stir affection instead of respect for their capacities and intellectual faculties. Wollstonecraft criticized the education which is destined for women and considered it a great fault (1). This was mainly because girls' education stressed their domestic role which in turn emphasized their homely duties instead of their rational and logical intellectual abilities.

Patriarchy and men's assertions that their decisions serve the best interest of women were further concerns of Wollstonecraft. She questioned men's authority when women shared with them the same access to reason and logic. She believed that men embraced the same argument of tyrants of different ranks, from the vulnerable monarch to the vulnerable head of the family "they are all eager to crush reason; yet always assert that they usurp its throne only to be useful" (viii¹⁶⁴). Wollstonecraft accused Talleyrand-Périgord of tyranny as he compelled half the human race to become confined in their homes in unbearable ignorance when he deprived them of their civil and political rights.

Rights to property and financial independence were other important demands of Wollstonecraft who believed that women should not rely on their husbands' money for living. She questioned:

¹⁶⁴ "Dedication". *Rights of Woman* .

How can a being be generous who has nothing of its own? Or virtuous, who is not free? The wife, in the present state of things, who is faithful to her husband, and neither suckles nor educates her children, scarcely deserves the name of a wife, and has no right to that of a citizen. But take away natural rights, and duties become null (190).

On the whole, Wollstonecraft founded all her arguments on reason. She emphasized that the only way women could become worthy of respect was through the employment of their intellect; this was the only means through which women could have a distinct personality. Women should submit to reason instead of other men's views (190).

Wollstonecraft went even further in making the earliest quest for women's suffrage when she suggested that women should have representative bodies that would grant them a share in the administration of their government. She believed that this could be the only way to eliminate the random rules that govern women. Nevertheless, she was realistic enough to suggest that her demand to direct political representation could reduce her to ridicule (191). Wollstonecraft was the first English woman writer who suggested that women should have access to representation and this was one of the main reasons that earned her the title of the 'first feminist' and the 'mother of feminism' (Shukla 2¹⁶⁵).

Nevertheless, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* was preceded by another significant French pamphlet written by Olympe de Gouges in 1791 about the rights of women. Olympe was a French writer who was born in 1748 under the name of Marie Gouze. Marie received little education that unfortunately did not allow her to read and write

¹⁶⁵ Shukla, Bhaskar A. *Feminism: from Mary Wollstonecraft to Betty Friedan*. New Delhi, Sarup & Sons, 2007.

perfectly. She also employed great efforts in learning French for she spoke Occitan as her mother language. She became Mrs. Aubry after her marriage and only after the death of her husband that she became Olympe de Gouges (Mousset 5- 10-1-25¹⁶⁶). In 1788, Olympe came to publish her first political pamphlet entitled *Letter to the People, Project for a Patriotic People's Treasury by a Female Citizen*¹⁶⁷. In this Pamphlet, Olympe defended Louis XVI and blamed his predecessors for the financial crisis that France was going through (Mousset 43).

Moreover, Olympe de Gouges wrote about slavery in her *l'esclavage des nègres, ou, l'heureux naufrage*. However, her most distinguished feminist work was her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*¹⁶⁸ (1791). In this pamphlet, De Gouges urged men to be just towards women, grant them equal rights and privileges, end their tyranny over women and consider them as their fellow citizens, establish a single law that binds both men and women equally and eventually grant women freedom of expression and equal property rights (5-10¹⁶⁹).

Additionally, Olympe de Gouges urged women to be reasonable and be conscious of their rights. Since men had obtained their rights, they were willing to deny women the same rights. Therefore, women had to be careful and attentive since their rights were once again in jeopardy. Besides, Olympe appealed for the rights of single mothers and their children (11-3). Most interestingly, she suggested a form of social convention between men and women in which she argued that women's property should essentially be the right of their children

¹⁶⁶ Mousset, Sophie. *Women's Rights and the French Revolution: A Biography of Olympe de Gouges*. New Brunswick, Transaction publishers, 2007.

¹⁶⁷ Lettre au peuple, un projet d'une caisse patriotique par une citoyenne.

¹⁶⁸ *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*.

¹⁶⁹ De Gouges, Olympe . *Les Droits de la femme. A la Reine*, 1792.

whether legitimate or not and that men should be held accountable for any woman that they misled with their deceitful vows among other arguments (De Gouges 17).

It is unclear whether Mary Wollstonecraft had read Olympe de Gouges's *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*. Nonetheless, the two writers seem to have seized the spirit of revolution and reform of the French Revolution to claim the rights of their own sex. Both writers founded their arguments on reason believing women to have the same rational abilities as their fellow men. They also urged for equal rights and privileges between men and women, defended women's property rights and emphasized the significance of women as citizens. Most importantly, they both held men accountable for the state of dependence and subjection that women experienced and urged them to fully liberate and emancipate women.

Moreover, while Olympe de Gouges was considered as a significant figure in French feminism¹⁷⁰, Wollstonecraft was considered as the first English feminist (Shukla 1). Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft was not, by any means, the first English writer to have ever written about women's subjection. Yet, she was the first to demand political reforms with regards to women's status. Her *Rights of Woman* did more than simply describe women's inferior condition; it went beyond this reality to demand change and reform. Wollstonecraft celebrated the French Revolution believing that it would establish equality between human beings, all human beings. Her *Vindication* symbolized the start of a new era of feminism. According to Barbara Caine, modern English feminism started in the late eighteenth century. Up until Wollstonecraft's political pamphlet strains of women's emancipation emphasized

¹⁷⁰ See for instance Joan Woolfrey. "Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793)" *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Joan Wallach Scott. "French Feminists and the Rights of 'Man': Olympe de Gouges's Declarations" (Jstor).

their “exclusion from education and from religious and civic authority” (4¹⁷¹) as the ultimate obstruction. It was the acknowledgment that these problems could be solved through reforms in law, politics and society that marked a new dawn of feminism. Caine commented: “The demand for women’s rights thus seems to me to be the core of modern feminism, connecting it closely, albeit in complex ways, with the enlightenment, and the revolutionary demands of the Rights of Man” (4).

The French Revolution undoubtedly stirred English feminism as much as radical politics among enlightenment thinkers. For enlightenment writers, the French Revolution suggested an egalitarian model of government that could be copied in Britain. For women writers, it suggested a new system of government that was based on reason and equality between all members of society. At a time when the rights of man essentially and automatically brought the issue of women’s rights to the enlightenment dialog, exactly when the notion of natural rights was being emphasized, some very dedicated men to the quest of legal and political rights for men started reasoning that the variation of the male sex from the female one rendered these rights exclusive to men. Although modern feminism was regarded as a natural development of the enlightenment and the French Revolution, it was more exactly a result of the new type of prejudices that stirred feminist claims in Britain, France and America. Therefore, modern feminism was not engendered by any reforms that the French Revolution brought “but rather a response to a changing political and economic framework which affected women in many complex and contradictory way” (Caine 5).

¹⁷¹ Caine, Barbara. *English Feminism, 1780-1980*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

5. A Rebel in Love

Apart from her rebellion against the subordinate status of women in her works, Mary Wollstonecraft also rebelled against the standard of marriage in her society. According to her husband, William Godwin, Wollstonecraft had two love affairs outside marriage. Revelations about her love life are found primarily in William Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Godwin's memoirs were the first published biography of her life. Married to Wollstonecraft in 1797, Godwin arguably provided first-hand facts about his wife's personal and even intimate life. In this research, therefore, William Godwin's memoirs are a chief reference regarding Wollstonecraft's love life. Historian Mitzi Myers¹⁷² asserted that although the "controversial" life of Wollstonecraft has appealed to various biographers, Godwin's short biography of Wollstonecraft "remains the substratum on which even the newest lives erect their varying portrayals" (299).

Particularly, Myers claimed that Godwin's memoirs represented "the standard source for Wollstonecraft's life immediately upon publication" (299). Mary Hays, for instance, was a close friend of Mary Wollstonecraft, but even she referred to Godwin's biography. This was due to the fact that Godwin was Wollstonecraft's closest friend, the guardian of her unpleasant recollections and a rigorous reader of her "self-revelatory works" (Myers 299). In his memoirs, Godwin repeatedly claimed that Wollstonecraft was the source of his biographical account asserting that "The facts detailed [in his memoirs] are principally taken from the mouth of the person to whom they relate" (3). Consequently, this research will depend primarily on William Godwin's memoirs for three reasons. First, William Godwin

¹⁷² In her article, "Godwin's Memoirs of Wollstonecraft: The Shaping of Self and Subject", Myers cited a large number of biographers who also referred to Godwin's memoirs (299).

was Wollstonecraft's husband and eventual love and she most probably confided him with secrets about her personal life as he asserted. Second, Godwin's memoirs are the earliest and most detailed, first-hand biography of Wollstonecraft's private life. Third, Godwin's memoirs documented his own love affair with Mary Wollstonecraft and how they came to the decision of marriage, details which are of particular importance to this research.

In his memoirs, Godwin spoke of Mary Wollstonecraft's first love affair with Mr. Fuseli, a famous painter. This relationship started in late 1787 and ended in late 1790. Mr. Fuseli, a Swiss citizen¹⁷³, was a friend of Mr. Johnson, Wollstonecraft's publisher, who used to visit him frequently. Wollstonecraft was greatly impressed by Mr. Fuseli's genius and artistic talent. For Wollstonecraft, Mr. Fuseli was a source of inspiration, delight and guidance. The enjoyment she felt in his company was soon to develop into love. Nevertheless, Mr. Fuseli was married and his spouse was one of the acquaintances of Wollstonecraft. Yet, according to Godwin, neither the age gap between Wollstonecraft and Mr. Fuseli nor his marriage seemed to impede her affection for him in anyway. However, Wollstonecraft's affection for Mr. Fuseli was not mutual, there was no indication in Godwin's memoirs that he had any affection for her in return. Finally, Wollstonecraft came to realize the futility of her love to Mr. Fuseli and sought to elevate her spirit by traveling to France (86-101).

During her residence in France from 1792 to 1794, Wollstonecraft had a new love affair. This time it was with Gilbert Imlay, an American citizen residing in France. Wollstonecraft quickly fell in love with Mr. Imlay, and thus resolved to live in France to be

¹⁷³ He nevertheless spent most of his life in Britain.

closer to him; she was about to move to Switzerland beforehand. Wollstonecraft and Imlay started their relationship in April 1793 and for four months their relationship was kept a secret. After this period, the unsettled relations between France and Britain culminated in a decree that English citizens residing in France were to be taken to prison until peace presided. The latter decree compelled Wollstonecraft to announce her love affair with Gilbert Imlay since she had to officially marry him. For safety purposes, Wollstonecraft procured a certificate from the American embassy as the spouse of an American citizen (Godwin 103-111).

Although Imlay proposed to Wollstonecraft earlier, she refused since he suffered financially and she did not wish him to confront any embarrassment with her family. Besides, she did not wish to make him accountable for any financial liability that she had at the time. Godwin asserted that despite Wollstonecraft's refusal to marry Imlay, she nevertheless regarded their affair "as of the most inviolable nature". Nonetheless, when Wollstonecraft became officially Mrs. Imlay, she moved along with him to Paris so that the two may share the same house (110-1). According to Godwin, Wollstonecraft's love for Imlay was unrestrained for she could not "nourish affection by halves" and that "for the first time in her life, she gave a loose to all the sensibilities of her nature" (116).

Wollstonecraft's passionate love for Gilbert Imlay was swiftly crowned by the birth of their daughter 'Frances'. Mary's wifely and motherly sentiments were thus deepened. Yet, such sentiments were not shared by Imlay. Imlay's endless business trips distressed Mary's spirit immensely (Godwin 121-3). In a letter which she wrote to Imlay, collected in *Posthumous Works of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by William Godwin, Wollstonecraft exclaimed "Why do you not attach those tender emotions round the

idea of home, which even now dim my eyes? —This alone is affection--everything else is only humanity, electrified by sympathy” (Wollstonecraft 124¹⁷⁴). Clearly, Wollstonecraft was greatly in love with Gilbert Imlay and wished to establish a family with him, a wish that was evidently not shared by him.

Indeed, Imlay repeatedly proved to Wollstonecraft that he had no commitment to the idea of the home. Imlay’s perpetual absence eventually culminated in complete abandonment. Moreover, Wollstonecraft’s grief and sorrow were even exacerbated upon hearing the news of Imlay’s new love affair with a young actress. When Wollstonecraft met Imlay again in England, she hoped for a warm and affectionate reception from his part. However, Imlay’s cold reception prompted her to consider suicide but he managed to stop her. She afterwards resolved upon helping him in his trade, thus, making the trip all the way to Norway¹⁷⁵ (Godwin 127-32).

Upon returning from Norway to England, Wollstonecraft met Imlay again and this time she ascertained the impossibility of their relationship. Wollstonecraft could not tolerate Imlay’s growing unfriendliness and she consequently decided to commit suicide again. She attempted to drown herself, therefore, she jumped from a bridge down to the Thames. Fortunately, Wollstonecraft was saved by locals. Imlay reacted to her suicide attempt by comforting her and giving her false hope. Nevertheless, this time Wollstonecraft was determined to arrive at the core of the matter, she made Imlay choose between living with her at the present moment or end their relationship permanently. Imlay was having an affair with

¹⁷⁴ Wollstonecraft, Mary. “Letters”. *Posthumous Works of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Ed. William Godwin. London, J. Johnson, 1798.

¹⁷⁵ The details of this journey are fully developed in the chapter “Being Good Wives and Compassionate Mothers”.

another woman. However, he admitted to Wollstonecraft that it was no more than a sexual and physical relationship and that they could live together as soon as he could end the relationship (ibid.133-43).

Surprisingly, Wollstonecraft agreed to live with him knowing that he was still having another relationship. Wollstonecraft expressed in a letter she sent to Imlay,

I am determined to come to a decision. I consent then, for the present, to live with you, and the woman to whom you have associated yourself. I think it important that you should learn habitually to feel for your child the affection of a father. But, if you reject this proposal, here we end (ibid. 143).

Wollstonecraft's approval to live with Imlay despite the fact that he was having another affair at the time is particularly interesting. On the one hand, her approval demonstrated the passion Wollstonecraft had for Imlay and the concessions she was willing to make for their relationship. On the other hand, it demonstrated her indifference to the idea of marriage and her agreement with the prospect of a free union.

William Godwin asserted that as "extraordinary and injudicious" as this suggestion may have been, Imlay consented but only to change his mind again after a period of time. Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft was still reluctant to completely end the relationship for she contacted him repeatedly wishing to restore their relationship. Nonetheless, Imlay conveyed to her his wish of separation refusing her requests of meeting him. Although his wish was extremely disturbing to Wollstonecraft, she still believed in a better future for their relationship. Once again, Wollstonecraft intentionally attended a social gathering in which Imlay was a guest, "Her child was with her. She entered; and, in a firm manner, immediately

led up the child, now near two years of age, to the knees of its father”, Godwin recounted. Imlay was then compelled to speak with Wollstonecraft privately. He attempted to fuel her hope and although she wished to believe him, she finally realized that their relationship had no future (ibid.143- 9).

Accordingly, William Godwin’s memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft’s private life reveal her attempt to have a free love with a married man, Mr. Fuseli, her free union with Mr. Gilbert Imlay and the birth of her daughter, Frances, outside marriage. The memoirs also expose her two attempts to commit suicide. Concerning her two love affairs, Godwin’s memoirs suggest Wollstonecraft’s indifference and probably even her disregard to the institution of marriage. For one reason, Wollstonecraft wished to have a relationship with Mr. Fuseli knowing that he was married, therefore, there could be no marriage between them. For another reason, she refused to marry Gilbert Imlay and preferred a free union instead. In fact, Mary Wollstonecraft’s earliest works such as *Mary: a Fiction* emphasized her dissatisfaction and even contempt to the institution of marriage in eighteenth century Britain. In her novel, Wollstonecraft recounted the story of a married woman who had a miserable marriage. Mary, the heroine of the novel, agreed to a prearranged marriage to the son of her father’s friend, Charles, in order that her sick mother could attend her marriage before she dies (94-5)¹⁷⁶.

On the same day of their wedding, Charles traveled to a foreign country where he pursued his studies. Mary was thus left alone if not for the presence of her dear friend, Ann. Mary adored Ann and largely enjoyed her friendship. However, the financial standing of Ann’s family was difficult and Mary was determined to help them. Unfortunately, Mary was

¹⁷⁶ Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Mary, a Fiction and the Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*. Ed. Michelle Fauber Broadview, 2012.

financially dependent on her father who refused to provide her with the necessary money to start a business (Wollstonecraft 94-5).

Afterwards, Ann fell sick and had to travel either to Portugal or to France since a change of air was recommended for her health. In order to be “removed from the only person she wished not to see”, Mary decided to go to Lisbon instead of France. In Lisbon, Mary and Ann stayed in a hotel where they met Henry, an English man who also came to Lisbon for health purposes. Mary was impressed by Henry’s character and intellect and she soon fell in love with him (Wollstonecraft 100-1).

Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Mary: a Fiction* stressed various problems within eighteenth-century marriage such as arranged marriage between middle-class families for property purposes. Wollstonecraft criticized this type of marriage for being based on property and fortune instead of love and considered it as a bargain between the fathers of the concerned couples. Moreover, Wollstonecraft contested the financial dependence of women under this marriage. In *Mary: a Fiction*, Mary was unable to support her friend financially due to her financial dependence on her father.

Most importantly, Mary Wollstonecraft partially justified the adultery of some wives who could not find love in their marriages. In *Mary: a Fiction*, Wollstonecraft largely justified Mary’s love for Henry and her hatred for her husband. She expressed Mary’s loneliness and her wish to find the love of her life recounting, “her heart longed to receive a new guest; there was a void in it: accustomed to have some one to love, she was alone, and comfortless, if not engrossed by a particular affection” (117). Certainly, Mary was faithful to her husband and never contemplated to physically betray him. However, she was unfaithful to Charles emotionally for she loved Henry and despised him.

In fact, Mary confessed to Henry that she did not love her husband saying, “I cannot see him; he is not the man formed for me to love!” Wollstonecraft further added that had Ann’s health been in a better condition, Mary “would have flown with her to some remote corner to have escaped from him” (120). Thus, Wollstonecraft suggested that love was the essence of a happy marriage and that a woman who suffered a loveless marriage could attempt to escape this marriage by evading her husband or by seeking love in the arms of another man. Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft stressed affection which was based on reflection instead of passion. Wollstonecraft’s heroine, Mary, did not love Henry for his good looks, she was rather interested in his intellect and the way he perceived and considered various issues.

After the death of Ann, Mary had no reason to remain in Lisbon. She thus determined to return to England alone. When she returned, Mary lived with Ann’s family instead of returning home and reuniting with her husband. Gradually, Ann’s family started questioning about when she intended to leave for her home. To their surprise, Mary responded that she was no longer willing to live with her husband “not live with him! How will you live then!” they exclaimed. Mary did not have an answer to this question “I will work, she cried, do anything rather than be a slave” (Wollstonecraft 131). Accordingly, the heroine of Mary Wollstonecraft rebelled against a loveless marriage and against a husband whom she did not choose to marry. Through Mary, Wollstonecraft clearly revealed her opposition to fortune marriages, one in which property was considered first. Most importantly, she revealed an unconventional reaction to such a marriage ‘escaping from one’s husband’. While various middle-class women could have accepted their loveless marriages in the eighteenth century, Wollstonecraft suggested that Mary would seek financial independence and escape from her miserable marriage, a rather radical prospect for eighteenth-century Britain.

Moreover, Henry promised Mary that he would follow her to England as soon as he could. Mary impatiently waited for his coming. She also wished to receive any letters from him that would give her some comfort. Finally, Henry returned to England but his health was significantly reduced. Mary rushed to his aid. Since her husband was still in Europe, Mary decided to live with Henry and his mother to be able to take care of him. Unfortunately, Henry's health kept deteriorating and he confessed to Mary that death may bring some comfort to his soul. Mary asserted to him that comfort "will be in heaven with thee and Ann-- while I shall remain on earth the veriest wretch!" (Wollstonecraft 142). Indeed, Mary was not to find comfort in this world for Henry was soon to die and she had to live with the husband she despised (Wollstonecraft 146-8).

Eventually, Mary fell sick and it was suggested in the novel that she would soon die. Mary's health was worsened by the immense grief she felt for Henry's death, however, she was able to find some joy and comfort when she imagined a world "where [there] is neither marrying-, nor giving in marriage" (Wollstonecraft 148). Accordingly, Mary despised her husband and marriage to the extent of only finding happiness when contemplating a life without marriage. In *Mary: a Fiction*, Wollstonecraft did not particularly criticize eighteenth century matrimonial laws, instead, it criticized fortune marriages that were arranged between middle-class families. These marriages never considered love or even harmony between the man and woman to be married.

Moreover, Wollstonecraft largely contested women's financial dependence that usually compelled them to remain in loveless marriages. I would argue that Mary Wollstonecraft's vision of marriage in *Mary: a Fiction* was particularly radical and reflected her own assessment of marriage. Mary's husband, Charles, was presented as a man who was

mostly lenient and kind. He allowed Mary to travel with her friend Ann to Lisbon and remain there until her friend fully recovered. Afterwards, he allowed her to travel for one year without him; this was Mary's condition to stay with him. He also agreed to never speak about love for any mention of love from his side repelled Mary (Wollstonecraft 148). Thus, it seems that Charles was after all a good man who loved, respected and cherished Mary. Therefore, even if Mary could not love Charles, she could have at least respected him for his good nature. However, Wollstonecraft largely emphasized how much Mary was repelled by her husband and by the idea of marriage as a whole. I would argue that through *Mary: a Fiction* Wollstonecraft largely exposed her own negative view of marriage and her romantic vision of free love.

Seemingly, Mary Wollstonecraft may have despised marriage in real life since she engaged in a third love affair with William Godwin outside marriage. The start of her relationship with William Godwin, an English writer, was in 1796. Their relationship grew from friendship to love. However, they did not marry at first since according to Godwin "Mary felt an entire conviction of the propriety of her conduct" (161). Moreover, Godwin himself opposed marriage and admitted that despite his love for Mary he "should have felt it very difficult, at least in the present stage of intercourse, to have resolved on such a measure" (157). But Godwin and Wollstonecraft were to change their minds. After several months of relationship, Wollstonecraft was pregnant and the two became married (Godwin 162).

In fact, it was Wollstonecraft who deemed it necessary to legalize their union since she "was unwilling, and perhaps with reason, to incur that exclusion from the society of many valuable and excellent individuals, which custom awards in cases of this sort" (Godwin 162). Simply put, Wollstonecraft realized that if she chose to remain unmarried while pregnant, this

would not merely earn her criticism of her readers but also of her closest friends and companions. Therefore, after seven months of cohabitation, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin decided on having a legal marriage and started sharing the same house (162-3). Arguably, Wollstonecraft did not believe that a love affair could only be lived within marriage. However, she clearly believed marriage to be a social necessity, one that would earn her the respect of her social circle and spare her their criticism. Nonetheless, I would contend that Wollstonecraft's request from Godwin to marry her suggests that she may have refused Imlay's marriage proposal because she did not think he actually wanted such a commitment. Thus, doubting his love and commitment to her, she probably thought that the idea of marriage with all its responsibilities and commitment was to drive him further away from her.

Believing that their marriage would put them "upon a surer footing in the calendar of polished society" (Godwin 166), Wollstonecraft and her husband were shocked by the results. Before Wollstonecraft's official marriage to Godwin rumors of the nature of her relationship with Gilbert Imlay were circulating. Therefore, individuals from the "polished" society she attended knew about her status as a single mother, however, they preferred never to acknowledge the fact. They regarded and dealt with Wollstonecraft as a married woman; especially since she officially held the name of Mr. Gilbert Imlay. Nonetheless, Wollstonecraft and Godwin's marriage declaration confirmed all rumors and as a result they were expelled from the "polished" society. Godwin admitted that their decision "forced these people to see the truth, and to confess their belief of what they had carefully been told; and this they could not forgive" (Godwin 166).

Nonetheless, Godwin asserted that although Wollstonecraft lost some of her friends who were strict about their social conformity, she managed to preserve the great bulk of her friends. At first, Wollstonecraft regretted the injustice she was treated with but was able to quickly move ahead (167). Accordingly, Wollstonecraft was well aware of the consequences of free unions. Although she was convinced of her right to free union, bringing a child outside marriage was to risk all of her social life especially after she became famous. At the time, Wollstonecraft started enjoying the company of celebrated writers and intellectuals. Therefore, she requested from Godwin to legalize their relationship in order to avoid all criticism and exclusion from the society and company she valued the most.

In short, Mary Wollstonecraft's love life was filled with rebellion against social conventions of eighteenth century English society. From the lifestyle she conducted, it does not seem that Wollstonecraft believed greatly in the sanctity of marriage. In fact, her criticism of marriage in *Mary: a Fiction* largely asserts this view. On the contrary, Wollstonecraft did portray a positive and even a romantic picture of free love, one which was uninhibited by social conventions. Her progressive view of free love is largely emphasized by details from her own private life since she engaged in two relationships throughout her life, both of which were characterized by a free union.

To conclude, Mary Wollstonecraft's life was indeed that of a rebel. Early in her life, Edward's poor skills with money as well as his bad temper taught Wollstonecraft the necessity to seek her own financial means and to defend her mother against the tyranny of her father. Certainly, the disagreeable marriage of Mary's parents influenced her later ideas and writings, particularly, her refusal of women's subjection, advocacy of equality between men

and women, and most importantly the strength of her arguments and actions to challenge the norms of her society.

As a writer, Mary Wollstonecraft's interaction with the radical circle of intellectuals which included Joseph Johnson and Richard Price helped in the development of her radical and rebellious mind. Most importantly, the historical context of eighteenth century France was a powerful trigger for Wollstonecraft's radical ideas. Wollstonecraft found an outlet for her revolutionary ideas in the French Revolution. Constant demands for the rights of men led her to intervene and demand the rights of her own sex. For Wollstonecraft, the French Revolution was a fresh start not only for France but for England as well. Thus, she could not but hope and demand that women should benefit from this revolution of rights as their male counterparts. Furthermore, Wollstonecraft rebelled against social standards of marriage both in her novel *Mary: a Fiction* and in her personal life. Wollstonecraft first engaged in a free union with Mr. Gilbert Imlay and had her daughter, Frances, outside marriage. Afterwards, Wollstonecraft engaged in another free union with William Godwin before she became pregnant and decided to legalize their relationship.

Chapter 2: Emmeline Pankhurst's Struggle for the Vote

'Deeds not words' is the slogan that Emmeline Pankhurst chose for her suffrage union, The Women's Social and Political Union. The slogan highlighted both the policy of her union and the course of her life. Indeed, Emmeline Pankhurst was a woman of deeds not words both in her personal and professional life. Since actions speak louder than words, Emmeline Pankhurst usually acted more than talked, a fact that contributed in crowning her as a rebel. In this chapter, I will emphasize the rebellion of Emmeline Pankhurst. First, I will stress the rebellious nature of her political family and how this inspired her later insurgence. Second, I will demonstrate how her public work and involvement in political concerns of her time drove her to rebellion. Third and last, I will stress her adoption and incitement of militancy as an actual example of her revolt. The aim of this chapter is to accentuate

Emmeline Pankhurst's rebellious undertakings as opposed to her conformist efforts that will be studied later in this research.

On 15 July 1858, Emmeline Pankhurst was born to the Goulden family in Manchester (S. Pankhurst 7¹⁷⁷). Her father Robert Goulden was a holder of a calico- printing and bleach works¹⁷⁸, and her mother Jane Quine was a housewife (S. Pankhurst). Fortunately for Emmeline, her father was a prosperous middle-class man who could afford an immense house with a big and beautiful garden in which Emmeline and her ten siblings lived and played (C. Pankhurst 15).

Emmeline was blessed to be born to the Goulden family, an incredibly active political family that was to influence Emmeline enormously in her future political struggle. In her autobiography *My Own Story*, Emmeline stated that she was fortunate to have parents who played a great role in the most significant political movements of their age. She recalls that during her infancy, she accompanied her mother to a fund-raising event that was held to collect money to assist the newly liberated black slaves in the United States. Mrs. Goulden took a great part in the fund-raising, and she delegated her child daughter Emmeline to collect the money. Therefore, early in her life Emmeline knew precisely the meaning of the words slavery and emancipation. She stated that as a child, she used to hear contradictory arguments about slavery and the Civil War in America. Her father, Mr. Robert Goulden was a passionate opponent of slavery. In fact, his role in the movement was so great that he was selected as

¹⁷⁷ Pankhurst, E. Sylvia. *The Life of Emmeline Pankhurst; the Suffragette Struggle for Women's Citizenship*. London, T. Werner Laurie Ltd, 1935.

¹⁷⁸ Pankhurst, Christabel. *Unshackled, the Story of How We Won the Vote*. London, Cresset Women's Voices, 1987.

one of the members of a committee that received Henry Ward Beecher on his arrival to England for a series of lectures (E. Pankhurst 3-4).

The legacy of her grandparents was to further her revolutionary nature. Tales of her grandfather's near death at the Peterloo franchise demonstration in Manchester in 1819, and his wife's contribution in the 1840s protests in favor of the abolition of the Corn Laws were great assets in the building of Emmeline's political mind (Purvis 9¹⁷⁹). According to Emmeline, stories of her family and the memory of the fund-raising arose in her two types of perceptions, "first, admiration for that spirit of fighting and heroic sacrifice by which alone the soul of civilization is saved; and next after that, appreciation of the gentler spirit which is moved to mend and repair the ravages of war" (E. Pankhurst 4-5¹⁸⁰).

Moreover, the fact that she was born and raised in Manchester was another feature that supported her political upbringing. Manchester was an industrial town that attracted a great deal of manufacturers as well as migrants during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Manchester was remarkable due to "the pretensions of its confident, expanding middle-class" (Pugh 2-3¹⁸¹). Manchester's middle-class manufacturers felt excluded from political power, they had property but did not have the right to vote and represent their interests. Their indignation was further exacerbated after the introduction of the Corn Laws in 1815, a law that accentuated the political power of the landed classes over the government in London. The resentment of the status quo led 60,000 people to demonstrate in 1819 at St Peter's fields, Manchester, asking for the vote. This resulted in the killing of eleven people and hundreds of casualties "this incident, dubbed 'the Peterloo Massacre' in an ironic reference to

¹⁷⁹ Purvis, June. *Emmeline Pankhurst: A Biography*. London, Taylor & Francis Group, 2002.

¹⁸⁰ All the citations in this chapter are taken from Emmeline Pankhurst's *My Own Story* unless otherwise listed.

¹⁸¹ Pugh, Martin. *The Pankhursts: The History of One Radical Family*. London, Vintage Books, 2008.

the battle of Waterloo, passed into radical history as a symbol of the oppressive methods of the traditional political elite” (Pugh 3-4).

Finally, Manchester’s radicalism was contained through the introduction of the 1832 Reform Act through which industrialists and employers obtained the right to vote. Although the reform left working classes without the vote, which led to further demands for reform, anticipation of a more radical and revolutionary Manchester proved unwarranted. The years between 1846 and 1867 represented the utmost of the influence of Manchester. Prominent industrialists who supported former revolutionary movements joined the rank of the existing political and social standing after winning the vote. Instead of asking for further change, they were content with the reforms that had already been introduced (Pugh 5).

In the view of Emmeline Pankhurst, Manchester was a city that went through various stirring stages, specifically those of a political nature. In general, inhabitants of Manchester had a liberal tendency and were eager protectors of freedom of speech. Nevertheless, this pattern was interrupted in 1860s, during a Fenian revolt in Ireland; leaders of the Fenian uprising were detained by the police. During their transportation to prison, several men attempted to attack the prison van and save them. This resulted in the death of a police officer, the men were found guilty of murdering the police officer and eventually the three of them were hanged publicly in Manchester. This incident left Emmeline with a great sense of social injustice for, according to her, the men accidentally shot the policeman and they never intended to kill him. Emmeline commented on the incident: “It was my awakening to one of the most terrible facts of life—that justice and judgment lie often a world apart” (E. Pankhurst 5-6). Emmeline narrated this incident to illustrate that childhood recollections

could have a greater impact on later personality and experiences than family influences or schooling (E. Pankhurst 6).

Besides, Emmeline reported the incident in order to emphasize the fact that her support for militancy stemmed from compassion rather than repression, which she never experienced personally. Unlike deprived men and women who fought social injustice out of their personal suffering, Emmeline's motivation for her militancy was that of sympathy (E. Pankhurst 6). Considering Emmeline's later militancy, one could expect that her militancy stemmed from a dreadful experience of subjection and oppression. Yet, Emmeline asserted that her advocacy of militancy came from her observation of the injustices suffered by other women.

Furthermore, Emmeline's recollections of the past included her earlier impression of the inequities in boys' and girls' education. According to Emmeline, an English boy's schooling was different from that of his sister. Certainly, boys' education was considered as more important than that of girls. This was made clear to her through her parents' vision of the matter. In particular, she recalled her father speaking of her brothers' schooling more seriously than that of her education. In fact, he rarely spoke of Emmeline and her sister's education. Nevertheless, his selection of the girls' school that she attended along with her sister was wisely made, considering the period at least (E. Pankhurst 7).

The school director was a gentlewoman, it was an only girls' school and all the pupils seemed to be from the middle-class. However, none of them seemed to be interested in schooling. Unfortunately for Emmeline, the type of schooling that girls' education offered at the period was intensely feminine. It tended to teach girls to fulfill their ladylike career of making their home a gorgeous place for men. The emphasis on learning certain skills to

please men frustrated Emmeline greatly; she never understood why it was her duty and she asked the question: “why I was under such a particular obligation to make home attractive to my brothers but it was never suggested to them as a duty that they make home attractive to me. Why not? Nobody seemed to know” (E. Pankhurst 7). Hence, from her childhood, Emmeline seemed to reject the ideology of the separate spheres. She frequently questioned women’s exclusive role in the home as opposed to men whose role was always outside of it.

Moreover, Emmeline was greatly shocked when she overheard her father, speaking to her mother, regretting that she was born a girl. His view was considered as men’s claim of superiority over women and of women’s conformity to this reality, considering the fact that her mother did not object to his view. Her realization of women’s alleged inferiority to men was particularly difficult to manage especially as both her parents supported universal suffrage. The paradox she felt between her mother’s support for suffrage and conformity to women’s subordinate status was to haunt her later in her youth (E. Pankhurst 7-8).

Another experience that left a permanent impact on Emmeline Pankhurst’s life was her journey to France. At the age of fifteen, Emmeline joined a school of girls’ higher education in Paris, one of the most distinguished schools that were concerned with girls’ education at that time. The director of this school, Mlle Marchef-Girard, deemed girls’ education as important as that of boys, and therefore, it should be as comprehensive and useful. Consequently, the school was very advanced and provided its female students with different scientific courses such as chemistry. Emmeline’s roommate in that school was Noemie Rochefort, the daughter of the well-known republican and communist Henri Rochefort. They met at a time when the French capital was still suffering from the Franco-Prussian war consequences. In fact, Noemie’s father was exiled in New Caledonia due to his

role in the Paris Commune. Listening to Noemi's tales about the fights, confinements, and prison escapes of her father largely inspired Emmeline's political mind and reinforced the liberal ideals that she already had (11-12).

Upon returning to England, at the age of eighteen or nineteen, Emmeline was expected to fulfill the role of a genteel lady and was constantly arguing with Mrs. Goulden. One of their conflicts was over the anger of Emmeline at her mother's request to bring slippers to her brothers. Emmeline answered her mother's request by affirming that if she really supported women's emancipation, she surely did not act accordingly at home (S. Pankhurst 15). Accordingly, Emmeline Pankhurst understood from a very early age that there was no equality between men and women, and that she lived in a world where men were supposedly superior to women. Emmeline's frustration and refusal to this reality was to be expressed loudly in her later political career. Certainly, her later rebellion stems in part from her libertarian family, one which supported the abolition of slavery and women's suffrage to mention a few. Besides, the contradictions and inconsistencies that she witnessed within the same family were to play a significant role as well.

1. The Making of a Rebel

After she returned from Paris, Emmeline joined her parents in supporting the cause of women's suffrage. It was then that she first met Dr. Pankhurst (E. Pankhurst 12). Dr. Pankhurst was a distinguished lawyer and reformer who drafted the triumphant women's franchise amendment to the Municipal Franchise Act of 1869. He also served as counsel in *Chorlton v. Lings* (Wingerden 70¹⁸²). Charmed by his zeal and eloquent speech, Emmeline

¹⁸² Wingerden, Sophia A. *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain, 1866-1928*. Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999.

saw in Dr. Pankhurst a prospective husband who could advance her public and political career instead of stressing her domestic role (Pugh 22-3-4). The couple fell in love almost immediately and got married in 1879 despite an age gap of twenty years (Pankhurst 12, C. Pankhurst 19¹⁸³). By 1885, and within a relatively short time, Emmeline gave birth to Christabel Harriette Pankhurst, Sylvia Pankhurst, Henry Francis Robert, and Adela Constantia (E. Pankhurst 13). According to Martin Pugh, it is quite interesting that the Pankhursts had four children in a period of six years despite their active involvement in political affairs. By late 1870s, contraception was common among middle-class people. Birth control was used for multiple reasons, at times on financial grounds and at others for safety issues. Nevertheless, it seems that “the Pankhursts’ sophistication did not extend to matters sexual” (Pugh 25¹⁸⁴).

After giving birth to four children, Emmeline was deeply occupied with domestic affairs. However, she never allowed herself to neglect all public affairs. Certainly, her political activism was limited but did not cease. Her marriage to Dr. Pankhurst significantly encouraged her to remain politically active. Emmeline confessed: “Dr. Pankhurst did not desire that I should turn myself into a household machine” (13). Indeed, Emmeline asserted that Dr. Pankhurst believed that women’s efforts were essential to both society and family. In fact, throughout her children’s infancy, Emmeline was busy working on the executive committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage. Moreover, she was also appointed onto the married women’s property committee. In addition, since the bill became an Act of

¹⁸³ Op.cit.

¹⁸⁴ Op.cit.

Parliament in 1882, Emmeline was once again dedicated to the suffrage cause (E. Pankhurst 13).

Emmeline and Richard were an impressive couple who supported each other's political causes, which was best demonstrated in the elections of 1883. Dr. Pankhurst chose to stand as an independent candidate on a program that included universal adult suffrage, the disestablishment of the Church of England, the elimination of the monarchy and of the House of Lords, free mandatory and secular schooling. Most importantly, his program claimed home rule for Ireland, a demand that English candidates never dared to claim. Despite his idealistic electoral program, Emmeline greatly believed in him and in his success. Her enthusiasm led her to request the support of Lydia Becker, a secretary of the suffrage society. Unfortunately, her appeal was coldly rejected (S. Pankhurst 19-20).

Unsurprisingly, Dr. Pankhurst lost the election with 6000 votes compared to 18,000 for his opponent. His loss stunned the young Emmeline (20-21). She did not expect the defeat of her husband's idealistic program. Clearly, Emmeline was politically immature at the time. She looked for political wisdom in Dr. Pankhurst although he did not seem to possess much of it himself. His program was too radical to be supported by a majority. Nevertheless, Dr. Pankhurst was chosen by the local Liberal and Radical Association to contest for the constituency of Rotherline in 1885 and once again, Emmeline was on his side. Although this time he was more likely to win the elections, he eventually lost due to his radical views (Pugh 40-1).

Richard Pankhurst was attacked by his conservative opponent for denying God and since he was an agnostic, he could not precisely repudiate the claim. Here, Emmeline strongly suggested that he would go with her to church to prove his respect for the Christian

faith (Pugh 40-1). Emmeline assured Dr. Pankhurst “I understand these people”, she insisted, “I know what to do; you have always got your head in the clouds!”¹⁸⁵(S. Pankhurst 75). This incident showed a great deal of Mrs. Pankhurst’s growing political maturity. She quickly became disillusioned with her husband’s idealistic and unrealistic principles. In fact, Emmeline became more readily acquainted with the world of politics and political dealings than her husband. This case could be regarded as one of Emmeline Pankhurst’s earliest attempts to strategically conform to social standards before her creation of the Women’s Social and Political Union.

Emmeline carried on supporting her political cause through her affiliation to the Fabian society, the Women’s Liberal Association, and the Women’s Franchise League (15-6-19). Her new house at 8 Russell Square grew into a midpoint for socialists, radicals, suffragists, freethinkers, Fabians and revolutionaries’ meetings. Unfortunately for Dr. Pankhurst and his wife, their young son Frank died of diphtheria. To overcome her sorrow, Emmeline channeled all of her energy in supporting the women’s suffrage movement (S. Pankhurst 23-4). Accordingly, Dr. Pankhurst promoted Emmeline’s political ambitions in two ways. First, he involved her in most, if not all, of his political endeavors and hence her zeal for politics was increased and intensified. Emmeline soon began to pursue her own political interests by becoming a member in several suffrage societies instead of merely supporting her husband’s political undertakings. Second, Dr. Pankhurst’s idealistic vision of politics and his recurrent electoral defeats provided Emmeline with a deeper political

¹⁸⁵ Pankhurst, Estelle Sylvia, *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals*. Read Books Limited, 2013.

maturity, one that would enable her later to have a more realistic and pragmatic approach to politics.

2. Suffrage Societies and Women's Political Organizations

Before going any further in examining Emmeline Pankhurst's political career, it is important to provide some background on the suffrage campaign at the time. In the nineteenth century, campaigns for women's suffrage proliferated and different societies were established for the main aim of securing women the vote. In 1866, the first organized campaign for votes for women started. Barbara Bodichon, Emily Davies, Jessie Boucherette and Elizabeth Garrett circulated a petition of women's suffrage that succeeded in accumulating 1,499 signatures. Some of the major personalities who signed the petition were Florence Nightingale, Harriet Martineau, and Josephine Butler. The petition was advanced to the House of Commons through John Stuart Mill¹⁸⁶, an ardent supporter of women's rights who stood for a Member of Parliament with a program that comprised woman suffrage (Kent 192¹⁸⁷).

In the same year, Barbara Bodichon delivered a lecture about women's enfranchisement in front of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science¹⁸⁸ in Manchester. Upon hearing her lecture, Lydia Becker was very much inspired and resolved to take action. She established the Manchester Women's Suffrage Committee in 1867. Before long, suffrage organizations in London, Edinburgh, and Bristol were established as well.

¹⁸⁶ John Stuart Mill have made a tremendous contribution to the cause of women's rights through his publication of 'The Subjection of Women' in 1869. In fact, historians such as Rosemarie Tong argued that liberal feminism obtained its basic manifestation in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and in John Stuart Mill's "*The Subjection of Women*" (1).

¹⁸⁷ Kent, Susan Kingsley. *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987.

¹⁸⁸ The Social Science Association was an establishment that espoused the cause of women's enfranchisement and offered prospects for the expression of suffrage claims.

Although the four organizations functioned separately from each other, their contributors briefly acknowledged the necessity for having a chief organization that would direct action and strategy. The London National Society for Women's Suffrage became that chief body with Frances Power Cobbe and Millicent Garrett Fawcett as its administrators. Louisa Garrett Smith, the sister of Millicent Fawcett, was its honorary secretary (Kent 192-3).

Nevertheless, the London National Society for Women's Suffrage was soon to split due to disagreements over the repeal campaign of the Contagious Diseases Acts (CD Acts), which were advocated by Josephine Butler. Suffragists disagreed about whether or not they ought to distance their suffrage society from the repeal campaign, which they feared might jeopardize the suffrage cause. This debate eventually triggered the division of the society in 1871-72. Meanwhile, the group who held that the campaign for the vote should be dissociated from the CD Acts, espoused by John Stuart Mill and Millicent Garrett Fawcett, remained with the London National Society for Women's Suffrage. The group who wished to uphold the repeal campaign created the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage in 1872. The majority of the local societies adhered to this Committee. Nonetheless, the division was not to last long for the two societies were brought together in 1878 under the name 'the National Society for Women's Suffrage' (Wingerden 34¹⁸⁹).

Apart from the National Society for Women's suffrage, other societies existed that were politically affiliated to either the Liberal or the Conservative Party. On the one hand, women who supported the Conservative Party operated along their male counterpart in the Primrose League in the Ladies Grand Council. On the other hand, women who supported the

¹⁸⁹ Op.cit.

Liberal Party created their private Women's Liberal Federation (WLF); uniting the Liberal Women's Associations that were already operating. Initially, the women's political associations exclusively aimed to assist party candidates in parliamentary elections. Later, these associations were brought to disagreement over the suffrage cause (Wingerden 57).

Indeed, conflicts readily emerged over voteless women's support to candidates who might be against women's enfranchisement. Various women, belonging to both suffrage and party associations, judged that the Primrose League and the Women's Liberal Federation ought to vigorously operate for women's enfranchisement or decline to operate for anti-suffrage candidates at the very least. This issue triggered strains between suffrage societies that were nonpartisan and women's political organizations who were hesitant about making women's suffrage part of their political agenda. However, while conservative women maintained their neutrality¹⁹⁰, Liberal women were divided over the matter. In 1892, Mr. Gladstone affirmed his antagonism to the woman suffrage. Consequently, adherents to the WLF were divided over whether they should promote their party's ideals or women's enfranchisement. One group wished to render the WLF a center for their suffrage campaign whereas the other wished no more than supporting 'simple laws' for women with no commitment to promoting women's suffrage. The second group separated from the WLF in 1893 creating the Women's Liberal Association (ibid.58-9).

As for suffrage societies, the issue of party loyalty resulted in the division of the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage in 1888. The debate was created over the possibility of women's political organization, such as the WLF for example,

¹⁹⁰ Despite the personal support of a number of the Primrose members.

to join suffrage associations. Such conversion in strategy could first suggest suffrage societies' abandonment of neutrality. Second, it might suggest suffrage societies' involvement with societies that might be supportive of anti-suffrage candidates. This debate resulted in the Central Committee's acceptance of the membership of party associations. The decision was largely criticized by Mrs. Fawcett and Lydia Becker but to no avail. Hence, the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage split off. The new Central Committee, which rejected the affiliation of party organizations, was directed by Mrs. Fawcett (ibid.59-60).

Regardless of the bitterness associated with the division of the Central Committee, interactions between the two factions were not damaged for long. Nonetheless, the question of enfranchising married women led to the creation of another faction that was of a more radical nature. While the two Central Committees opposed the provision of depriving married women from the franchise, a number of suffragists could not but disagree. Among these were Mr. and Mrs. Pankhurst, Josephine Butler, Jacob Bright, and Elizabeth Wolstenholme-Elmy who established their special Women's Franchise League (Wingerden 61).

3. Disillusionment with Political Parties

Trusting that the rights of married women were constantly jeopardized, Emmeline Pankhurst and her husband worked hard to secure their rights. The Women's Franchise League was formed by the Pankhursts and other prominent members such as Jacob Bright and Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy. The Franchise League breached the "cautious timidities of Lydia Becker, Mrs. Fawcett and their circle, into a freer atmosphere" (S. Pankhurst 28). It embraced Dr. Pankhurst's Women's Disabilities Removal Bill with the addition of a supplementary term 'individuals should not be debarred from the election or selection to any

function or service based on their gender or matrimonial status'. The league also aimed to eliminate prejudices against women in the inheritance, divorce and custody rights (S. Pankhurst 28).

Ultimately, the debate over the rights of married women came to a climax. The Local Government Act of 1894 raised the question of whether married women's legal disability should be removed or validated. This in turn would determine whether married women were able to vote and preserve their right to serve for Boards of Guardians and Vestries or not. While the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies only aimed to secure the rights of unmarried women, the Franchise League focused its effort on married women. Particularly, Emmeline Pankhurst became a member of the Lancashire and Cheshire union of women's Liberal associations, founded a shared board of various associations and organized a free trade hall protest (S. Pankhurst 31).

Meanwhile, Ursula Bright was busy protesting against the impulsiveness of the Manchester committee, which at the request of Emmeline Pankhurst was appealing to Liberal members to oppose their party bill in case the women's clause was turned down. Similar to suffragists of the time, Ursula Bright was afraid of disaffecting Liberal allies by demanding extreme measures. She consequently noted to Mrs. Pankhurst, "Remember they unfortunately lose nothing by voting against us, except their self-respect, which is only a trifle!" (qtd. in S. Pankhurst 32). The answer of Mrs. Bright infuriated Emmeline Pankhurst. Fortunately, the Local Government Act of 1894 granted the local government franchise to all women regardless of their matrimonial status and the Franchise League fulfilled its aim (S. Pankhurst 31-32). This incident illustrated to Emmeline Pankhurst the importance of women's suffrage

to Liberal leaders. Clearly, women's suffrage was not a major concern for the Liberals and was certainly not one of their priorities.

Although Emmeline Pankhurst was very suspicious of the promises of the Liberal party, she did have some faith in the Labour Party. Both Emmeline and her husband joined the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P) and were entirely impressed by Keir Hardie. Already Emmeline and Dr. Pankhurst were affiliates of the Fabian Society by the 1890s (S. Pankhurst 33). Emmeline believed a great deal in the "permeating powers of [the society's] mild socialism" (E. Pankhurst 16). She affiliated to the Labour Party trusting that by means of its councils a positive change may occur such as granting women the right to vote (E. Pankhurst 33).

After the sudden death of her husband in 1898, Mrs. Pankhurst had to find a salaried job so that she could provide for her family. Thus, she left her work as a Poor Law Guardian and was directly offered a job as a Registrar of Births and Deaths in Manchester. During her service as a Registrar of Births and Deaths, Emmeline witnessed cases of underage girls coming to register the birth of their illegitimate infants, usually the outcome of rape from the girl's own father or relative (E. Pankhurst 30). Through her work as a Registrar of Births and Deaths, Emmeline came again to the conclusion that the enfranchisement of women was not only a right "but [...] a desperate necessity" (E. Pankhurst 27).

Subsequently, Mrs. Pankhurst became a member of the school board of Manchester. She was later selected as a member of the committee on Technical Instruction. Mrs. Pankhurst was disappointed to discover that the Manchester Technical College, one of the finest in the continent, did not have any facility to educate women, including classes that were typically designed for women such as bakery and confectionery (E. Pankhurst 31-3). In

fact, women were excluded from the Manchester Technical College due to male trade unions opposing women's training to skilled professions. Once again, Mrs. Pankhurst concluded that women were considered as a "servant class in the community, and that women were going to remain in the servant class until they lifted themselves out of it" (E. Pankhurst 33). Christabel Pankhurst asserted that her mother wished to press upon the Labour Party to include women's suffrage in its most pressing agenda, thus, bringing the cause into functional politics. At the very least, this could inspire the rest of political parties to imitate the Labour Party in its endeavor (C. Pankhurst 43).

In fact, starting from 1903, the labour party was in coalition with the liberal party; the parties' leaders disagreed over the question of women's suffrage. Further, there existed a deep anti-feminist sentiment among the leaders of trade unions. This intricate state of the labour party led its leaders to constantly delay any resolution concerning the extension of the franchise to women (Roberts 126¹⁹¹). Disappointed by the labour party as well, both Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst decided to take action and imitate the Independent Labour Party by forming an Independent Women's Party. It was then that Emmeline Pankhurst took the notable decision to found the Women's Social and Political Union "Women", said mother on a memorable occasion, 'we must do the work ourselves. We must have an independent women's movement. Come to my house tomorrow and we will arrange it!" (C. Pankhurst 43).

Emmeline Pankhurst later warned American suffragists about trusting political parties. She argued that British suffragists assumed that if they worked alongside political parties,

¹⁹¹ Roberts, Martin. *Britain, 1846-1964: The Challenge of Change*. Oxford University Press, 2001.

hostility towards women's suffrage could be ended, since women would prove their political maturity and aptitude for political work (15). She advised American suffragists:

Let them not be deceived. I can assure the American women that our long alliance with the great parties, our devotion to party programmes, our faithful work at elections, never advanced the suffrage cause one step. The men accepted the services of the women, but they never offered any kind of payment (E. Pankhurst 15-16).

Emmeline Pankhurst affirmed that she personally was distrustful of political parties and after working with both the Liberal and Labour Party, it became evident that women's suffrage would not be achieved through any of the major political parties (16).

4. 'Actions Speak Louder than Words'!

In October 1903, Emmeline Pankhurst initiated a militant suffrage organization, The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Suffrage for women on the same grounds as men was the party's main goal. Party membership was to be exclusive to women. Emmeline commented on the party policy stating, "We resolved to limit our membership exclusively to women, to keep ourselves absolutely free from any party affiliation, and to be satisfied with nothing but action on our question. Deeds, not words, was to be our permanent motto" (36). The union's motto "Deed not words" did not imply militant action at first. The earlier policy of the WSPU adopted peaceful campaigning for the vote. It included leading deputations to meet the prime minister, interrupting political meetings and heckling liberal politicians such as Winston Churchill and Edward Grey. Regardless of how disturbing they were to the government at this phase, they were nevertheless peaceful and did not cause any damage whether to property or to individuals (Wingerden 74-5).

The Women's Social and Political Union undertook its first militant action in 1904. During the annual conference of the ILP, Mrs. Pankhurst, still a member of the National Council, resolved to urge the party's members to present a women's franchise reform bill before the parliament. When the time came, February 1905, Mrs. Pankhurst could not find one labour member who was willing to introduce the bill if his name was drawn¹⁹² except for Mr. Keir Hardie. All the other members seemed to have a more important bill to advance. Unfortunately, the name of Mr. Keir Hardie was not drawn and the council convinced Mr. Bamford Slack to introduce the bill instead (E. Pankhurst 38-9).

The prospect of a new suffrage bill spurred enthusiasm and anticipation among the members of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and the rest of suffrage organizations alike. A large gathering of women were united at the Strangers' Lobby which was unable to host all the women who rushed to the House of Commons. The bill that was to be discussed first on that day required that carts circulating at night-time along public highways ought to have front and back lights. The council urged the sponsors of this trivial bill to retreat it in favor of women's enfranchisement bill. However, the sponsors rejected the suggestion and were thus able to 'discuss' women's suffrage bill. Instead of seriously discussing the bill, the sponsors distracted the course of discussion with pointless narratives and ridiculous anecdotes. Hence, the members laughed out and applauded the offensive debate (E. Pankhurst 39-40).

Upon hearing about the incident, the gathering of women in the Strangers' Lobby was outraged. Here, Emmeline Pankhurst wanted to use the women's indignation for a new type

¹⁹² Emmeline Pankhurst is talking about introducing a private members' bill which she believed, had little chance to attain its second reading and it almost never became a law (E. Pankhurst 36).

of protest, “such as no old-fashioned suffragist had ever attempted”. She urged the women to meet her outside for a demonstration against the government. The women followed and Mrs. Wolstenholme-Elmy, an old suffragist, started the protest. The police were instantly alarmed and told the women to disperse. The women complied and changed their position, however, the police were still not satisfied. Eventually, the police allowed the women to gather close to Westminster Abbey. There, various speeches were made and the women denounced the resolution of the government to allow a minority to discuss their bill. Emmeline trusted that the incident was “the first militant act of the WSPU. It caused comment and even some alarm, but the police contented themselves with taking our names” (E. Pankhurst 41). Although the incident was a simple act of protest, it did stir a direct confrontation between women and the police and was definitely a starting point for greater militancy that was yet to come.

In 1905, the liberal party held a large rally in Manchester as part of its campaign for the General Election. Christabel Pankhurst along with Annie Kenney, a working-class member of the WSPU, decided to attend the rally and ask the liberal politician, Sir Edward Grey¹⁹³, the following question: “if you are elected, will you do your best to make woman suffrage a government measure?” There was no answer on the part of the liberal party. Sir Edward Grey answered few questions without replying to Miss Pankhurst’s and Miss Kenney’s question. Therefore, the two suffragettes rose a banner inscribed on it ‘Votes

¹⁹³ Grey, Edward, Viscount Grey of Fallodon (1862–1933) was a liberal politician who served as a foreign secretary from 1905 till 1916 (Robbins ODNB).

for Women'. This time the answer came by the hands of guardians who threw the two young women out of the hall. They were then escorted by two policemen (Kenney 33-6¹⁹⁴).

Having learned from the first militant act, Christabel Pankhurst wanted a protest that could attract more attention. Therefore, Miss Pankhurst decided to 'assault the police' in order to be imprisoned and obtain more publicity for her cause. After she failed in hitting any of the policemen or "even stamp on their toes", she spat at a police officer. The two suffragettes were arrested and had the choice of either be imprisoned or pay the bail. Although Mrs. Pankhurst wanted to pay the fine, her daughter and Kenney chose imprisonment. The two suffragettes were nonetheless shortly released (C. Pankhurst 51-4). Newspapers' coverage of the incident was very negative. Annie Kenney described the press coverage as "the very extremity of abuse, criticism, and condemnation" (37).

Furthermore, Emmeline Pankhurst was supportive of her daughter's decision to heckle Sir Edward Grey from the beginning. Christabel told her that unless they obtained an answer from him, they would bring the matter to imprisonment. Mrs. Pankhurst agreed with her decision and took the responsibility for a militant campaign. She did so knowing that she risked her governmental post from which she received the only income that sustained her family. Christabel Pankhurst stated, "It was for mother an hour of crisis. She stood utterly alone in the world, so far as this decision to militancy was concerned. Reckoning the cause in advance, mother prepared to pay for it, for women's sake. The loss might be all hers, but the gain would be theirs" (Unshackled 50). Certainly, Emmeline Pankhurst was utterly devoted and committed to the cause of women's suffrage. Despite her declining financial status after

¹⁹⁴ Kenney, Annie. *Memories of a Militant*. London, Edward Arnold & Co, 1924.

the death of her husband, she was still willing to sacrifice her only source of income to support women's enfranchisement.

Despite press criticism of Miss Pankhurst and Kenney's militant policy, the policy proved partly successful. Miss Pankhurst and Kenney's militant act was largely propagated by the press that it brought the women's suffrage movement into newspapers' headlines, which was to remain for the ensuing nine years (Lyon 95¹⁹⁵). Hence, "where peaceful means had failed, one act of militancy succeeded and never again was the cause ignored by that or any other newspaper" (C. Pankhurst 55). Whether militancy set the cause forward or backward is a largely disputed question among historians and critics. However, examining press coverage to woman suffrage in the early twentieth century¹⁹⁶, we could ascertain that militancy was largely successful in attracting the attention of the press and reviving the cause of woman suffrage in the media.

Proving successful, Emmeline Pankhurst carried on with the policy of obstruction and heckling Liberal candidates declaring that, "If we had been strong enough we should have opposed the election of every Liberal candidate, but being limited both in funds and in members we concentrated on one member of the Government, Mr. Winston Churchill" (48). This brought the suffrage movement to eminence as most newspapers covered the event with great interest. Christabel and Annie's imprisonment and the policy of obstruction empowered the cause of women's suffrage and therefore it was adopted as a temporary technique that an incredible number of Suffragists embraced (Purvis 76¹⁹⁷).

¹⁹⁵ Lyon, Janet. *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*. Cornell University, 1999.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. the Times newspaper for instance.

¹⁹⁷ Op.cit.

Nevertheless, Emmeline Pankhurst's decision to pursue a technique of interrupting meetings and heckling politicians prompted an array of illegal acts, detentions and prosecution. The suffragettes would persist on sending a deputation to parliament, be prevented from entering but insist on staying. Violence would then start when policemen attempts to disperse the women by force. Consequently, after every instance of this kind, many women would be arrested and accused of illegal acts such as hindering policemen while performing their duties. The suffragettes would be given the choice of imprisonment or paying a fine, they persistently preferred imprisonment (Wingerden 79).

The fast growth of the WSPU led its leaders to extend their battle to London. Thus, while the WSPU had three divisions by early 1906, it had forty-seven divisions by late 1906 and the number of divisions kept expanding. Nevertheless, the Women's Social and Political Union proved successful in reviving the cause of women's suffrage (Wingerden 77). Most importantly, the WSPU gained incredible numbers of new converts in London (Kenney 66). According to Emmeline Pankhurst, the rapid evolution of the WSPU could be attributed to the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the union compared to other suffrage organizations. Unlike other suffrage societies, the WSPU was focused on one specific aim 'votes for women on the same basis as men'. The WSPU members were never distracted by pursuing many objectives. They were to obtain the vote first and then attempt to enhance women's conditions by introducing different legislation¹⁹⁸ later (E. Pankhurst 52-3).

In fact, the constitution of the WSPU stipulated that the main objectives of the union were to obtain the parliamentary vote on the same basis as men. Once acquired, the vote will

¹⁹⁸ Other suffrage societies were working on different social reforms in parallel with women's suffrage. Thus, their efforts were diverted and lacked focus on suffrage as one major objective.

be used to “establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes, and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community” (Constitution¹⁹⁹). As for the union’s methods, the WSPU emphasized the importance of working independently, detached from all political parties and opposing any government in power before the parliamentary franchise was secured. The constitution also stressed the following methods:

Participation in parliamentary elections in oppositions to the government candidate and independently of all other candidates. Vigorous agitation upon lines justified by the position of outlawry to which women are at present condemned. The organizing of women all over the country to enable them to give adequate expression to their desire for political freedom. Education of public opinion by all the usual methods such as public meetings, demonstrations, debates, distribution of literature, newspaper correspondence and deputations to public representatives (1).

These were the methods that the WSPU members were supposed to use in their fight for the vote around 1906. However, some of these methods were to develop, escalate and even change with the eventual progress of the union.

Moreover, joining the WSPU was relatively easy since membership fees were not more than one shilling. Nevertheless, the union was quite protective and even autocratic regarding its militant policy. New affiliates had to “sign a declaration of loyal adherence to [the WSPU] policy and a pledge not to work for any political party until the women’s vote was won”. Besides, members risked ejection from the union if they ever started questioning

¹⁹⁹ This citation was taken from a pamphlet of the WSPU newspaper ‘Votes for women’ entitled “Constitution”.

the policy of the union or proposed a different policy altogether. In fact, Emmeline Pankhurst believed that her union should be autocratic and must not be democratic. The WSPU was more than a suffrage society, it was a military organization on duty. “It is purely a volunteer army, and no one is obliged to remain in it. Indeed we don’t want anybody to remain in it who does not ardently believe in the policy of the army” (E. Pankhurst 53-4). Accordingly, Emmeline Pankhurst commanded the suffragettes to be militant recruits for the WSPU. Clearly, Emmeline Pankhurst believed greatly in the efficiency of militancy in winning women the vote. Therefore, she was willing to protect her militant movement by all means, even if this required becoming an autocratic leader. Peaceful campaigning were used by suffragists and suffragettes alike and did not prove to be effective. Thus, militancy seemed as women’s last resort for suffrage in the view of Emmeline Pankhurst.

Eventually, the autocracy of Emmeline Pankhurst led to a division in the ranks of the WSPU. Teresa Billington-Greig, Charlotte Despard and Edith How-Martyn split from the WSPU and initiated the Women’s Freedom League (WFL). Thus, suffrage advocates wishing to join the suffragette movement were able to adhere to any of the two “militant” societies. Both the autocratic WSPU and democratic WFL resorted to illicit means of protest against women’s disenfranchisement, therefore, adherents to the WSPU demonstrated their acceptance to the totalitarian policy of the union and the autocracy of its organizers (Boussahba-Bravard 368²⁰⁰).

In 1906, the WSPU adopted an anti-government strategy. This stipulated opposition to any government in power that opposed women’s suffrage. The WSPU leaders reasoned that

²⁰⁰ Boussahba-Bravard, Myriam. “Les Suffragettes De L’époque Édouardienne.” *À Droite De La Droite: Droites Radicales En France Et En Grande-Bretagne Au XXe Siècle*. Edited by Press Philippe Vervaecke, Universitaire De Septentrion, 2012, pp. 355–384

the government in power was responsible for the disenfranchisement of women and should therefore be contested. Hence, the WSPU opposed the Liberal government which was in office at the time (Billington-Greig 50-1²⁰¹). For years to come, opposition to the Liberal government was a key policy of the WSPU. Suffragettes raised banners of ‘votes for women’ and asked the question, ‘will the Liberal government give votes to women?’ in every Liberal gathering they were able to attend (E. Pankhurst 59).

Despite their scarce numbers and limited funds, the suffragettes were in a constant search for new affiliates in London. They did so by embracing methods of the Salvation Army. They pursued new members on the roads and streets of London. They tossed away traditional notions of femininity and only committed to what was practical! (E. Pankhurst 56). According to Emmeline Pankhurst, “We threw away all our conventional notions of what was "ladylike" and "good form," and we applied to our methods the one test question, will it help?” The suffragettes dealt with the question of women’s suffrage with a religious zeal. They preached to people in the streets about the significance of their cause in a way that stunned and outraged other suffrage organizations (56). In the nineteenth century, genteel women were not expected to go out into the streets telling people about women’s suffrage. This was an intrusion into the public sphere that feminine and refined women were not supposed to do. However, the WSPU was a very pragmatic union that cared for propagating its cause and winning the vote before any other considerations. In the chapter entitled “dressed in conformity”, I will demonstrate how the WSPU did not really ‘throw away’ all aspects of femininity. Certainly, the WSPU leaders and members rebelled against some

²⁰¹ Billington-Greig, Teresa. *The Militant Suffrage Movement*. London, Frank Palmer.

feminine notions but they definitely conformed to others and the key to understanding their strategy of conformity resides in their adoption to “Will it help?” (ibid. 56).

Due to the rapid growth of the WSPU and its growing membership, a newspaper entitled ‘Votes for Women’ was created in 1907. The newspaper was edited by Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, a suffragette, and her husband Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, a women’s suffrage supporter. Apart from being impressive editors, the Pethick- Lawrences were remarkable in attracting efficient advertising, one that would earn them money and propagate their cause at the same time (Butler 42²⁰²). The newspaper was issued to first raise consciousness about the significance of women’s suffrage movement, its development and effects. The newspaper claimed that around 80,000 books, booklets and other literature were sold in 1907 to an increasingly curious audience. Further, the newspaper aimed to provide the WSPU members with a report on the union’s main activities and their effects. This was to allow the suffragettes to be more proficient in their efforts to support the movement (*Votes for Women* 1)²⁰³.

The policy of obstruction was carried on, and the suffragettes were again present on the opening of Parliament in 1908. As usual, the question of women’s suffrage was ignored in the King’s Speech. Therefore, a “Woman’s Parliament” was summoned. This parliament was created by Emmeline Pankhurst and was composed of the WSPU members. It was initiated in response to the parliament continuous disregard of the issue of women’s enfranchisement. A member of parliament, Mr. H. Y. Stranger, agreed to advance the Women’s Suffrage Bill as soon as possible. A women’s deputation was sent to Parliament,

²⁰² Butler, Rupert. *Emmeline Pankhurst: Portrait of a Wife, Mother and Suffragette*. London, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1970.

²⁰³ The aims of the newspaper were outlined in the first issue of *Votes for Women* (October, 1907).

and fifty women were imprisoned as a result. In court, the prosecutor threatened that if demonstrations continued and violations against the law persisted, the government would enact the Charles II Act. This act provided that no deputation sent to Parliament should be attended by more than a dozen people (Butler 56).

Infuriated by the Charles II Act, Emmeline Pankhurst decided to defy the act. Although she was urged to avoid imprisonment by her daughters, Emmeline headed to Parliament accompanied by some of her union members. The number of suffragettes steadily increased and in no time Mrs. Pankhurst was surrounded by a great number of women (Butler 57-8). The Charles II “Tumultuous Petitions” Act was successfully challenged and the government announced its unwillingness to revive the act. Nevertheless, Emmeline Pankhurst and her militant followers were charged with violent and ill-mannered conduct, beating helmets of policemen and attacking them. All of these charges were shocking to Emmeline Pankhurst who, when given the chance to speak, was crudely interrupted. Consequently, Mrs. Pankhurst was arrested and suffered a six-week sentence in the second division (E. Pankhurst 89-91).

In Holloway prison, Emmeline was treated as a common felon not as a political prisoner. She suffered the humiliation of having to almost completely undress and found the prison one of the “draughtiest building [she has] ever been in” (ibid. 92). Mrs. Pankhurst denounced the dreadful conditions of prisoners in Holloway and claimed that due to suffragettes’ denunciation of these conditions, some change was made and enhancements were visibly felt (E. Pankhurst 92).

In 1909, the WSPU adopted new methods and techniques to support the suffrage movement, including an attempt to petition the Prime Minister. Various deputations were sent

to the Prime Minister, Mr. Herbert Henry Asquith, and were refused entry. They were arrested afterwards for different offenses on policemen. On the 30th of June, the WSPU decided to practice women's right to petition the Prime Minister. Emmeline Pankhurst sent a note to Mr. Asquith requesting him to receive a women's deputation at the House of Commons but he declined. Nonetheless, Emmeline Pankhurst and her militant followers were determined to "rush the House of Commons"²⁰⁴ in any case. The WSPU attempt to meet Mr. Asquith despite his refusal was met with arrest and imprisonment of one hundred and eight women in the second division (E. Pankhurst 106-110).

This incident was significant for the WSPU. It implied that women had no constitutional rights and could not possibly claim their enfranchisement through legal and constitutional measures. Thus, Emmeline Pankhurst and her militants were incited to use, "new and more aggressive forms of militancy". Already by this time, two new acts of militancy had been committed. The first involved a number of women who, protesting against the Prime Minister's unwillingness to meet the deputation, smashed the windows of three legal and administrative buildings²⁰⁵. This was the start of 'window smashing', a method that was adopted by militant suffragettes immediately after this incident (ibid. 134).

Another suffragette, Miss Wallace Dunlop, started another militant technique 'hunger strike' after she was denied the treatment of a political offender. Upon hearing about Mrs. Dunlop's hunger strike, fourteen women who were charged with window smashing in the third division went on a hunger strike as well. By the end of the week, they were all

²⁰⁴ The WSPU distributed a leaflet entitled "Men and Women Help the Suffragettes to Rush the House of Commons on Tuesday Evening, 13th October, at 7.30".

²⁰⁵ These were the official residence of the First Lord of the admiralty, the Home Office and the Treasury and Privy Council Offices.

discharged (ibid.136-7). After this incident, Emmeline Pankhurst asserted that all suffragettes “unless otherwise directed, followed the example of these heroic rebels”. This, of course, infuriated prison officers who became increasingly more violent and cruel towards the suffragettes (ibid. 138). Interestingly, Emmeline Pankhurst was not really the one who inspired the new militant techniques. Certainly, she did start a militant union and outlined her union’s overall policy. Nevertheless, she did not directly dictate militant techniques such as window smashing and hunger strikes. Yet, what makes Emmeline Pankhurst a true rebel is her acceptance and even total embrace of any extremities committed by her militants. She was always ready to take responsibility for the actions of her union’s members. In fact, she was even willing to embrace their actions as new militant methods of the WSPU.

Indeed, Emmeline Pankhurst was a leader of militants who chose their own militant tactics knowing that they have the full and absolute support of their leader. As a result, the suffragettes became increasingly creative in their attempts to heckle the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith. Due to the strict security measures that deprived the suffragettes from accessing the Prime Minister’s meetings, the suffragettes resorted to methods such as camping the whole night close to the meeting’s location so as to call out ‘votes for women’ in the middle of the event. One suffragette even chained herself to a tree in order to voice her demands for as long as possible. Other suffragettes managed to interrupt Mr. Haldane, a Liberal politician, through the breaking of a window before he could even finish his first sentence (C. Pankhurst 136).

One of the coercive measures that the government resorted to was ‘forcible feeding’. Ever since the suffragettes adopted hunger strikes, they were discharged before finishing their sentence due to threats to their health. Certainly, the government could not let suffragettes die

from starvation and crown their cause with martyrs (Wingerden 91). Hence, the government began force feeding the suffragettes in prison. The method was cruel and since suffragettes instinctively resisted, their misery was worsened, “The women were seized and held by wardresses while doctors forced tubes down their nose, or throat, and poured food into their struggling bodies”. In its defense, the government depicted force feeding as a “medical treatment” although various doctors condemned the procedure (C. Pankhurst 140). Although the suffragettes’ militancy did not threaten the human life, it surely risked the lives of suffragettes themselves. Both hunger strikes and forcible feeding seemed to pose a threat to the lives of suffragettes, but they were nevertheless willing to take the risk.

In the year of 1910, both militancy and government’s cruelty seemed to be momentarily suspended. Emmeline Pankhurst announced a truce following the General Election of 1910. These elections gave the Liberal and Conservative Parties comparable results for none of them had the majority in the government. The rest of the House of Commons comprised some Irish nationalists and labor members. During the General Election of 1910, the government seemed to acknowledge the question of woman suffrage and to vaguely promise a measure in this regard. This was not sufficient but it was promising. As a result, the WSPU suspended all militant work and was committed to a policy of peaceful campaigning that mainly included demonstrations and processions (C. Pankhurst 149-50).

During the same year, the Conciliation Committee for Woman Suffrage was established. The members of this committee were all members of the House of Commons. The committee aimed to advance the question of women’s enfranchisement and it accordingly suggested a bill for woman suffrage (C. Pankhurst 149-153). The Conciliation Bill received favorable opinions from a large segment of the press, liberal politicians and the

public. To promote the Conciliation Bill, suffrage societies, including the WSPU, organized an impressive procession of militant and non-militant suffragists. They all had one mutual objective ‘the parliamentary franchise’. The procession was largely praised by the press. The Times, for instance, commented that “it is certainly no exaggeration to say that never had a political demonstration of such curious human interest been seen in London” (qtd in. C. Pankhurst 156²⁰⁶). Through this procession, the treasurer of the WSPU ‘Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence’ was able to collect donations of about £5,000 for the union’s funds (C. Pankhurst 149-157).

Fearing that the Prime Minister would delay the Conciliation Bill, Mrs. Fawcett headed the deputation of non-militants to Mr. Asquith. She entreated him to allow the House of Commons to advance the bill, or otherwise a pronounced disenchantment may take place. She was anxious that if the Conciliation Bill does not pass, a vast upsurge of hostility might follow. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of the House of Commons and a second procession that suffragists held, provisions for advancing the bill beyond its second reading were constantly delayed. Eventually, the Prime Minister called for a General Election in 1910, a measure that freed the government from dealing with woman suffrage and ended its pledge (C. Pankhurst 157-164). As a result, the truce was ended and militancy was resumed (164-170).

In 1911, the Liberal Party won the elections and militancy was once again suspended in support of the revised Conciliation Bill. Once again, however, Mr. Asquith pledged to introduce the Conciliation Bill in 1912. The WSPU wanted the government to pass the bill as

²⁰⁶ See Christabel Pankhurst’s *Unshackled* for more positive press reviews in page 156.

a 'government measure', but since the Liberal government was against woman suffrage, it refused to be responsible for advancing such a bill. Thus, Emmeline Pankhurst resumed militancy losing all hope in the Conciliation Bill and in peaceful measures (S. Pankhurst 99-102). She became convinced that "the argument of the stone, that time-honored official political argument" (E. Pankhurst 191) should be used excessively in response to the government's recurrent failings. She asserted in a meeting of 'stone throwers' upon their discharge from prison that:

We don't want to use any weapons that are unnecessarily strong. If the argument of the stone, that time-honoured official political argument, is sufficient, then we will never use any stronger argument [...] I say to every volunteer on our demonstration, 'Be prepared to use that argument.' I am taking charge of the demonstration, and that is the argument I am going to use. I am not going to use it for any sentimental reason, I am going to use it because it is the easiest and the most readily understood. Why should women go to Parliament Square and be battered about and insulted, and most important of all, produce less effect than when we throw stones? (E. Pankhurst 191-2).

Accordingly, Emmeline Pankhurst was willing to escalate militancy as far as needed for the achievement of the vote. She was determined to obtain the parliamentary franchise for women and for this she was ready to try every promising policy whether militant or not. For more than a year, Mrs. Pankhurst suspended militancy in support of other peaceful policies. However, when peaceful measures failed, she did not hesitate in resuming militancy and with a new and more fervent technique. Particularly, the technique of window-breaking was found more effective with the government and less harmful to the WSPU members.

Hence, militant acts intensified and a new method emerged ‘the destruction of private property’. Nicely dressed women in different places in London pulled out mallets and destroyed immense shop windows. Simultaneously, Emmeline Pankhurst smashed a window of the Prime Minister’s residence at Downing Street. Consequently, one hundred and twenty suffragettes were imprisoned (S. Pankhurst 105). Emmeline Pankhurst and Mrs. Tuke, honorary secretary of the WSPU, were already imprisoned. Meanwhile, the escalation of militancy led the government to target the main leaders of the movement for conspiracy. Since Emmeline Pankhurst was already confined, the government proceeded to arrest Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Christabel Pankhurst. While the Pethick-Lawrences were arrested, Christabel Pankhurst managed to avoid imprisonment (Kenney 172).

Christabel Pankhurst avoided arrest and escaped to Paris so as to direct the WSPU from there. She nevertheless appointed Annie Kenny to fill her position in the WSPU headquarters in London. She even made her responsible for *Votes for Women* (Kenney 178-80). When the day came for the Conspiracy Trials²⁰⁷, Emmeline Pankhurst and the Pethick-Lawrences were found guilty despite their moving and convincing defense. The three received a term of nine months in prison in the second division (1-2)²⁰⁸. Threatening to go on a hunger strike, the WSPU leaders were moved to the first division. Mrs. Pankhurst and the Pethick-Lawrences eventually went on a hunger strike in support of eighty-one suffragettes who were denied the first division (C. Pankhurst 202-16).

²⁰⁷ See the full account of these trials in *Suffrage Speeches from the Dock* (1912).

²⁰⁸ Pankhurst, Emmeline et al. *Suffrage Speeches from the Dock*. London, Woman's Press, 1912.

In response to the WSPU leaders' hunger strike, the government used forcible feeding. Particularly, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was the first to suffer from that dreadful practice. Hearing Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence frightening screams, Mrs. Pankhurst was terrified. When her turn came, she immediately grabbed a dense ceramic container and threatened to use it in her defense, "If any of you dares so much as to take one step inside this cell I shall defend myself", she asserted. Perceiving the seriousness of her claims, both the doctor and the wardresses withdrew. Thus, Emmeline Pankhurst never experienced forcible feeding in her lifetime (E. Pankhurst 229). After five days of hunger strike, Emmeline Pankhurst was discharged, later followed by the Pethick-Lawrences (C. Pankhurst 217).

After their release, the Pethick-Lawrences gradually started questioning Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst's wish to escalate militancy. By 1912, the suffragettes were burning vacant properties. The Pethick-Lawrences were worried that suffragettes' resort to arson may ultimately risk the human life. They wished to be convinced of the wisdom of such extreme acts (Kenney 187-91). According to Annie Kenney, a close friend of Christabel Pankhurst, "to question policy with Christabel meant everything. Once people questioned policy her whole feeling changed towards them" (191-2). Thus, the relationship between the Pethick-Lawrences and the Pankhursts was quickly deteriorating (Kenney 190).

Moreover, since Mrs. Pankhurst believed her union to be an army, no disagreement over the union's policy was allowed. Emmeline Pankhurst preferred to end all ties with the Pethick-Lawrences and carry on with her new policy unchallenged. The Pethick-Lawrences retained the management of *Votes for Women* and left the WSPU. The WSPU official newspaper became *The Suffragette* with Christabel Pankhurst as its editor (E. Pankhurst 235-6). In spite of the expediency of the Pethick-Lawrences and their incredible fund-raising

abilities, Emmeline Pankhurst renounced all their efforts as soon as they objected to her new militant policies. Unwilling to negotiate her decisions, Emmeline Pankhurst allowed for another division in the ranks of the WSPU, after the split of Teresa Billington-Greig and her creation of the Women's Freedom League. Thus, Mrs. Pankhurst proved her conviction and commitment to militant techniques. Despite the opposition of the Pethick-Lawrences, who always supported all of her endeavors, Emmeline Pankhurst did not hesitate or even doubt her resolution in any way. She was certain that she should escalate militancy. Hence, Emmeline Pankhurst first proved herself as a true autocrat of the WSPU. Second, she ascertained her belief in the efficiency of unconventional measures such as violent and militant methods.

Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst's new militant policy included persistent opposition to all political parties. Previously, the WSPU opposed the Liberal party, being the party in office. However, the coalition parties were now to be opposed as well. This included the Labour Party and the Irish Nationalist Party. This new policy represented the ultimate split with the Labour Party. Mrs. Pankhurst demanded the Labour Party to oppose the Liberal government in every measure until it gave women the vote. The leadership of the Labour Party were not ready for such a decision. Accordingly, Emmeline Pankhurst concluded that the Labour Party had other priorities and did not care enough about the emancipation of working-class women. Thus, it should also be opposed with the Liberal Party (E. Pankhurst 236-7).

Moreover, Emmeline Pankhurst incited her union members to be as militant as possible "each in [her] own way". If a member was able to voice her militancy through attending a political meeting in the House of Commons and refusing to depart without a

satisfying answer, she should do that. If another was able to voice her militancy through confronting the party hordes at Cabinet Ministers' gatherings after pointing out their deceptive principles, she should do that. As for the suffragettes who wished to voice their militancy through opposing politicians in by-elections, they should do that. The Suffragettes who were able to smash windows should smash them. Besides, the suffragettes who were able to destroy property in order to allow the government understand that property would be threatened by suffragists as much as it was by the Chartists, they should do that. Emmeline Pankhurst then addressed the government:

My last word is to the Government: I incite this meeting to rebellion. I say to the Government: You have not dared to take the leaders of Ulster for their incitement to rebellion. Take me if you dare, but if you dare I tell you this, that so long as those who incited to armed rebellion and the destruction of human life in Ulster are at liberty, you will not keep me in prison. So long as men rebels, and voters, are at liberty, we will not remain in prison, first division or no first division (E. Pankhurst 239).

Thus, Emmeline Pankhurst incited her followers to rebel against the government by any militant method that they deemed convenient to them. For Mrs. Pankhurst, the suffragettes should be allowed to rebel and escape imprisonment similar to the rebels of Ulster²⁰⁹. Women deserve to obtain the same treatment as men for their acts. Nevertheless, the government should distinguish between men's rebellion and women's rebellion; for the first attacked human life while the latter attacked property only. Certainly, by this stage,

²⁰⁹ A group of rebels who were against Home rule in Ireland and were led by Sir Edward Carson, leader of the Irish Unionist party.

Mrs. Pankhurst became convinced that rebellion was the only language that the government would understand. This was especially true after both suffragists and suffragettes used various peaceful measures and campaigns to win the vote without success. Therefore, militancy remained the only tool that could compel the government into granting women the parliamentary franchise.

Emmeline Pankhurst was particularly frustrated by the government's double standard in dealing with men and women's militancy. She lamented that the violent and 'blood-shedding' male militancy was celebrated while the 'symbolic' militancy of women was rebuked by imprisonment and force feeding. Mrs. Pankhurst explained that the reason for such an imbalanced treatment was "men's double standard of sex morals" (E. Pankhurst 241) which was engrained in all aspects of society. Men create their own convenient moral standards, and they await women to abide by it. They decreed that men have the right to press for their freedoms and rights while women have no such right (E. Pankhurst 241).

Emmeline Pankhurst's incitement to rebellion and the suffragettes' adoption of hunger strikes in prison were met with a new measure from the government, 'Temporary Discharge for Ill-health'. This parliamentary act stipulated that suffrage convicts who adopted hunger strikes could be discharged for a period of time until their health improved, when they would be returned to prison again. The act came to be identified as 'the Cat and Mouse Act'. Since the suffragettes used to guarantee their discharge from prison through hunger strikes, the act was introduced to exasperate their technique (Butler 85). Emmeline Pankhurst was infuriated by this measure which she described as "the most savagely devised ever brought before a modern Parliament" (E. Pankhurst 272).

In April 1913, Mrs. Pankhurst was convicted for inciting her followers to bomb Mr. Lloyd George's house at Walton. Although she was not accused of directly participating in the act of destruction, she was still found guilty of stirring her union members to commit it. As a result, Emmeline Pankhurst was sentenced to three years with penal servitude (E. Pankhurst 256-72). Nevertheless, Emmeline immediately started a hunger strike in prison totally ignoring the Cat and Mouse Act. Despite the cruelty of the act, neither Emmeline Pankhurst nor her followers were ready to surrender. In fact, Emmeline Pankhurst's incarceration resulted in the most critical eruption of civil disobedience that England experienced in almost a century. Vacant railway carts were destroyed; very precious portraits in Manchester Art Gallery were ruined with mallets. Moreover, public visitors were denied access to the British Museum, the National Gallery and Windsor Castle in London (Butler 87). In fact, the militants were responsible for a financial damage of around 500,000 pounds according to the Daily Mail (qtd. in Butler 87).

Since Mrs. Pankhurst was as ready as always to go on a hunger strike, she managed to reduce her prison sentence from three years to few weeks. In one of her multiple discharges under the Cat and Mouse Act, Mrs. Pankhurst appeared at an assembly of the WSPU branch in Glasgow knowing that the police would certainly raid the place. Briefly after she started delivering her speech, the police interrupted the meeting. As usual, the militants could not but resist with their utmost strength. The policemen were received with a storm of decoration pots, benches, seats and various other weapons. Nonetheless, their attempts failed and Mrs. Pankhurst was arrested by the police despite the protection of her bodyguards. Emmeline recalled,

I had been surrounded by members of the bodyguard, who hurried me towards the stairs from the platform. The police, however, overtook us, and in spite of the resistance of the bodyguard, they seized me and dragged me down the narrow stair at the back of the hall. There a cab was waiting. I was pushed violently into it, and thrown on the floor, the seats being occupied by as many constables as could crowd inside (E. Pankhurst 308).

Certainly, the increasing violence of the militants was met with increasing violence of the police as well. This violence was especially used against the leader of the movement, Emmeline Pankhurst, as she was responsible for inciting her followers to rebellion.

Furthermore, the image of Emmeline Pankhurst came to be identified with that of violence and rebellion not only in her country, where she was most active, but even in the United States of America. In 1913, Emmeline Pankhurst resolved to visit America for the third time. Her plan was well announced in the British, French and American press. On October 26th of the same year, Mrs. Pankhurst reached the harbor of New York only to find Immigration officials waiting for her. They informed her that she should stand before a panel of Special Inquiry on Ellis Island. There, she found a full record of her British legal documents resting on the bureau of the panel. The file was apparently sufficient to persuade the panel that Mrs. Pankhurst was “a person of doubtful character, to say the least of it”. Therefore, she was kept in custody awaiting for the higher boards at Washington to study her file and make their decision (ibid.291-92).

In the detention room, Emmeline Pankhurst was kindly treated and facilities were made to ensure her comfort. After two days and a half, she was discharged. Her visit, however, was all the more advertised by her detention and her addresses received better

attention and success. Besides, she came back to England with an exceptionally substantial American donation to the WSPU (E. Pankhurst 292-93). Certainly, ever since Mrs. Pankhurst decided to escalate militancy, her presence became a fearful event for authorities. Rupert Butler rightfully commented the incident “perhaps we can hardly blame the people of the United States for being rather alarmed when, in October 1913, Mrs. Pankhurst announced that she intended paying the country a visit” (90).

Nevertheless, the start of the First World War signaled the suspension of militancy by the leaders of the movement itself. Since Britain had to go to war, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst announced their cooperation with the country’s government. They proclaimed a truce with the government and postponed militancy until the end of the war. Moreover, the WSPU leaders asserted that the claim for women’s suffrage would be safeguarded only if Britain and its constitution were safeguarded. In order to enfranchise women, the triumph of the nation was required. However, some people were amazed that the WSPU declared an armistice despite the suffering and misery that the suffragettes experienced by the government. To this Christabel Pankhurst responded, “The country was our country. It belonged to us and not to the government, and we had the right and privilege, as well as the duty, to serve and defend it” (288).

Suspending militancy during the war was a challenging and an extremely brave decision from Emmeline Pankhurst, Christabel Pankhurst argued. Her armistice with the government had the crucial benefit of ensuring social peace in Britain during her warfare overseas. Had Emmeline Pankhurst insisted upon militancy, other opponents to the government would have pursued her example. Certainly, it was a time for her to prove her patriotism and loyalty to her country before all other concerns (C. Pankhurst 288). Moreover,

Emmeline Pankhurst decided to do more than suspend militancy and urged her followers to help in the war effort. In 1915, the WSPU arranged an enormous march in London claiming the “right to serve”. Subsequently, the proportion of women who undertook work grew readily (Taylor 26²¹⁰). In 1918, the Representation of the People Act was introduced. It granted the vote to men of over 21 and women householders of over 30 years of age. This act still did not grant women the vote on the same basis as men, however, this was to change with the act of 1928 which enfranchised women of over 21 (Chandler 24²¹¹).

To conclude, Emmeline Pankhurst’s life was largely characterized by rebellion and uprising. Her rebellion was originally prompted by her political family, who championed the cause of women’s suffrage and abolition of slavery, and not from any social injustice that she suffered herself. However, her apprehensions about the legal status of women in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century led her to campaign for women’s enfranchisement. Initially, Emmeline Pankhurst promoted the cause peacefully through her affiliation to various suffrage societies. She also believed a great deal in the Liberal and later the Labour Party. Nevertheless, when she realized that every political party had greater priorities than women’s suffrage, she determined to create her own political union, the Women’s Social and Political Union. Her union was distinguished by its adoption to militant techniques to press for women’s suffrage. Yet, militancy at first meant interrupting political meetings and heckling politicians. Eventually, the union’s militancy became exceedingly violent and reached the point of destroying private property.

²¹⁰ Taylor, David. *Modern World History for OCR Specification 1937: Foundation*. Oxford, Heinemann Educational Publishers, 2001.

²¹¹ Chandler, Malcolm. *Votes for Women, C.1900-28*. Oxford, Heinemann Educational Publishers, 2001.

Emmeline Pankhurst incited the suffragettes to be as militant as they could. The government responded to the suffragettes' militancy by imprisonment and force feeding, after they adopted hunger strikes. It also enacted the Temporary Discharge for Ill-health, an act that allowed for the temporary discharge of suffragettes until they recovered from hunger strikes. In addition to these governmental measures, the editors of Votes for Women, Emmeline and Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, split from the union because of Mrs. Pankhurst's decision to escalate militancy. All of these pressures on the suffragette movement did not induce Emmeline Pankhurst to doubt or even reconsider militancy in any way. Instead, she took full responsibility for the suffragettes' actions and was imprisoned on multiple occasions. This emphasized Emmeline Pankhurst's rebellious nature and unlimited confidence in the efficiency of militant techniques. Mrs. Pankhurst proved herself as a rebellious leader, one who fought so strongly for unconventional and illegal means such as militant tactics. Ultimately, Emmeline did suspend militancy during the First World War and effectively participated in the war effort believing that the vote was useless if the country lost the war. Thus, Emmeline Pankhurst did not accept to suspend militancy until her devotion to women's suffrage overlapped with her patriotism.

Part III: Conforming to Women's Traditional Image

After having emphasized Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's rebellion in the previous part, this part stresses the two feminists' conformity. At first, it presents the main criticism that women's rights campaigners were subjected to. It then stresses the two feminists' conformity to women's traditional role of a wife and a mother. It also highlights the two feminists' conformity to feminine dress. It lastly examines the contemporary reception of the two feminists' conformity to wifehood, motherhood and femininity so as to highlight the efficiency of their conformity. Overall, this part aims to answer why and how Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst attempted conformity.

This part begins with an introductory section entitled "Criticism of Women's Rights Campaigners". In this section, I attempt to underline possible reasons for Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's conformity. To achieve this, I will examine the main criticism that women writers and activists were exposed to. However, the first chapter in this part "Being Good Wives and Compassionate Mothers" deals with Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's conformity to notions of wifehood and motherhood.

Moreover, it focuses on how they presented themselves as an example of a good wife and mother. Lastly, the chapter examines the contemporary reception of the two feminists' conformity. The second chapter "Dressed in conformity," deals with Wollstonecraft's views of femininity and Mrs. Pankhurst conformity to feminine dress. The chapter particularly stresses the dichotomy between Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's attitude of femininity.

a. Criticism of Women's Rights Campaigners

Whether in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, women's rights campaigners were always confronted with various criticisms. This included female writers, poets and activists who dared to challenge the status quo of women's condition or simply did not conform to the traditional role and place assigned to women. Studying the criticism that women's rights campaigners were subjected to is a key aspect in understanding why Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst attempted conformity. Therefore, this chapter aims to first highlight the main criticism that was usually directed towards women's rights campaigners. Second, it aims to demonstrate the consciousness of eighteenth century women writers and nineteenth-century suffragists of the different allegations that were usually raised against them.

In the eighteenth century, many female writers from the seventeenth century were celebrated by men writers. Writers such as George Ballard published his *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain* (1752) which celebrated a number of women who excelled in writing, languages, art or science. Besides, George Colman's *Poems by Eminent Ladies* (1755) were among the earliest extensive anthology of women's poetry, morality and art. It promoted women writers who displayed respectability, reserve, and dignity. Hence, women who did not fulfill standards of "propriety, modesty and decorum" were excluded from praise. Indeed, Colman acclaimed a particular category of women writers who were genteel, domestic and conforming to the natural role of women that was assigned by a male-controlled culture. These publications attempted to eradicate any perceptions conflicting with the image of

female writers as an upright group that promoted “moral and aesthetic claims of the time” (Ingrassia 2-3²¹²).

In *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, George Colman presented a selection of poems published between late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century by various women poets. The selection came in two volumes and a brief biography of each poet’s upbringing, education and achievements were included. One of the poets that were celebrated in this anthology was Mrs. Anne Killigrew (1660 -1685), whose outstanding intellect was further enhanced by a refined education, Colman argued. Mrs. Killigrew was very gifted in both poetry and painting. However, the poets’ intellect was equally matched by her personal merits which commended her as the duchess of York’s maid of honor (Colman 2).

In the selected poems of Mrs. Anne Killigrew²¹³, various subjects were discussed such as platonic and divine love as well as the love of virtue. Mrs. Killigrew wrote for instance, *An Extemporary Counsel*, a poem in which she advises a gallant young man to have wisdom along with honor and courage. She also warns him of being enslaved to women’s charms and wealth, and asserts that he should indeed be righteous and have the courage to proclaim his piety to God (14). Moreover, she composed another poem in which she celebrated and acclaimed the piety and righteousness of St. John Baptist and his rejection of extravagance and personal glory stating “excess and grandeur I decline, my associates only are divine” (Killigrew 6). On the whole, Anne Killigrew dealt with noncontroversial subjects about love, piety, death and virtue.

²¹² Ingrassia, Catherine. *The Cambridge Companion to Women's Writing in Britain, 1660–1789*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

²¹³ Colman, George. *Poems by Eminent Ladies Volume II*. London, R. Baldwin, 1755.

Furthermore, the anthology contained poems by Mrs. Mary Leapor (1722- 1746). According to George Colman, Mrs. Leapor was self-instructed and despite her love for poetry, her library did not contain much of it. Nevertheless, she did possess some odd volumes of which Dryden's fables were her preferred ones. One of the collected poems of Mrs. Leapor was *Dorinda at her Glass*. In *Dorinda*, Mrs. Leapor elaborated on the hardships of a beautiful woman who mistakenly believed that her beauty will last forever. However, she later came to realize that beauty diminishes with old age and that beauty is indeed deceitful. This poem is but one example of Mrs. Leapor's many moralistic poems. Another poem of hers *The Crucifixion and Resurrection, An Ode* exhibited the poet's religious devotion and love for Jesus Christ. In the poem, Mrs. Leapor mourned Christ's crucifixion describing the universal sorrow that ensued his death. She subsequently rejoices in his resurrection and portrays the world's happiness and delight of his return (16-134).

Nonetheless, there was one poem in the anthology that was of a different nature, *Mira's Will*. In this poem, Mrs. Mary Leapor was absorbed in describing her person, character and works. Throughout the poem, the poet repeatedly celebrated her virtues and merits "My Name to publick Censure I submit, To be dispos'd of as the World thinks fit" (22-3). Mrs. Leapor composed the poem after she heard a gentleman, who upon reading a number of her poems, inquired about her personality. The poem did not appeal much to the editor of the anthology, George Colman, who seemed apologetic about the poem stating that "Her person was indeed plain, but the reader must not form an idea of it from the poem call'd Mira's picture, for though she had there made very free with herself, yet her appearance was by no means disagreeable" (16). Clearly, the editor of the anthology did not admire Mrs. Leapor's self-advertisement and preferred her moral poems in which she focused on advancing public virtue, moral standards and divine love.

Mrs. Katherine Philips (1631-1664) was another poet in the anthology, one who was celebrated for her wifely affection and domestic nature. Mrs. Philips was acclaimed for being an “excellent wife” for she supported her husband through his hardships with her wise administration. As a person, Mrs. Philips was humble, amiable and her pleasant exchange recommended her to whomever knew her. Her sophisticated writing, however, earned her the companionship and contact of various well-educated persons and people of distinction (214).

Around the year 1647, Mrs. Katherine was wedded to James Philips of Cardigan, a man whom she loved and supported greatly. In her poem “To my Antenor”, Mrs. Philips alluded to the trials that her husband went through stating, “Tis braver much t’ out-ride the storm, endure its rage and shun his harm; affliction nobly undergone”. She then assured him that life is full of surprises and everything could become better once again. Therefore, he should wait for a “succeeding good” and trust that God will rescue him (230-1). Accordingly, George Colman’s *Poems by Eminent Ladies* celebrated female poets who embraced higher moral, domestic, religious and altruistic ideals. This is particularly important since it illustrated the type of female poets and the nature of works that were favorably received in the eighteenth century. It also illustrated why some women writers conformed to ideals of morality and domesticity for instance.

Certainly, women’s commitment to the latter ideals raised them in the eyes of men critics and spared them reproach and disapproval. John Duncombe’s *The Femiinad* (1754) is one example of a poem that acclaimed some female writers while it disparaged others. Particularly, John Duncombe aimed to commend women writers and poets who improved “the British national identity”. Thus, Duncombe admires the intellect of British women declaring “Till man, no more to female merit blind, admire the person but adore the mind”

(6). He then moves to celebrate different poets the first of which is Mrs. Katherine Philips. Mrs. Philips is celebrated for being “the chaste Orinda” who emerged with a vivid bright such as humble Cynthia smiling in the dark (12). Moreover, Duncombe praised Anne Finch’s²¹⁴ intellectual abilities that allowed her to be a philosopher and poet at the same time.

Nevertheless, Duncombe did criticize certain women poets for their intrepid and immodest expression such as Delarivier Manley, Susannah Centlivre and Aphra Behn. He lamented how women who were instinctively created gracious offended their modest and renowned sex. Although he acknowledges that the works of the latter poets are full of coherence and unaffected intelligence, “nor genuine wit nor harmony excuse the dang’rous sallies of a wanton muse: nor can such tuneful, but immoral lays” (15). Duncombe disapproves of Manley, Centlivre and Behn due to their commercial ambitions in the growing literary market in London. He favors poets such as Anne Finch who anonymously circulated her works (Ingrassia 3).

For instance, Duncombe censured poets such as Mrs. Behn who was largely considered as one of the first professional woman writers. Mrs. Behn was abundant in writing. She published around eighteen plays, five concise novels, two volumes of poetry as well as a number of translations, prefaces and epilogues. Despite the fact that she suffered financially throughout her career, she did seek a dependable economic revenue along with an improved literary standing. Mrs. Behn challenged social prospects for “feminine” conduct through her copious writing, political involvement, honest account of sexuality and plainly

²¹⁴ Duncombe praised a Scottish poet without directly referring to her name, however, I acquired the name of Anne Finch from *The Cambridge Companion to Women's Writing in Britain, 1660–1789* by Catherine Ingrassia (3).

listed literary goals. As a result, she failed to conform to the social expectations of refinement and modesty (Ingrassia 3).

Through John Duncombe's celebration of some female poets and condemnation of others, it could be deduced that women poets and writers in general were more prone to criticism and censorship than their male counterparts. Moreover, it becomes clear why some eighteenth century female authors attempted conformity to certain notions of morality, modesty, gentility, wifehood, motherhood and femininity. According to Catherine Ingrassia "with its critique of "immoral" female writers and celebration of those whose virtuous, edifying discourse enhances national pride, aligns with dominant cultural norms. This moralistic attitude, feigned or legitimate, persisted through the end of the century and beyond" (4). Thus, 'the moralistic attitude' that existed in the eighteenth century censured the works of women writers and compelled them to commit to a set of social expectations with regard women's traditional role, prescribed morality and feminine outlook.

Apart from accusations of moral dissolution, women writers dealt with cultural anxiety concerning intellectual pursuits "beyond regulated boundaries" (Ingrassia 4). According to an eighteenth-century article "A Comparative View of Masculine and Feminine Employment", women were expected to have a feminine understanding because a masculine one is unpleasant to persons who possess a polished conception of female delicacy. Women and men should also have occupations matching their gender. A woman, for instance, is better celebrated for being a good cook than for being a historian. Besides, a woman is more agreeable when clothes and fashion are the topic of her conversation. However, if a woman

converse about grammar and languages, she raises a question regarding the real essence of her gender (*View of Masculine* 490)²¹⁵.

The writer of the same article “A Comparative View”, asserted that women did possess enough wit and a mind as intelligent as that of men. However, the pursuits of both men and women were different and they were expected to excel in their own particular field. On the one hand, therefore, a man writer such as Dr. Johnson who acquired a reputation for publishing a dictionary, could not have acquired the same reputation by making a pudding regardless of how perfect it was since it would not be his proper and ‘natural’ sphere. On the other hand, a female historian such as Mrs. M.G²¹⁶ is “entitled to no praise for making her history, because she had strayed out of feminine limitations” (*View of Masculine* 490). Accordingly, eighteenth-century women were expected to excel in their own private sphere and were not much acclaimed for intruding into men’s sphere through writing history and publishing.

In short, women writers who sought a professional career in writing were not equally celebrated as men writers. Besides, they were often confronted with allegations of immorality, unfemininity and impropriety. Therefore, some women writers tended to publish their writing anonymously so that their gender would not affect the reception of their works. Others, however, were excessively careful not to breach social constructions of morality, femininity and domesticity. Mary Wollstonecraft, for instance, first published her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) anonymously for fear of negative reception from the press and literary critics. Moreover, I would argue that Mary Wollstonecraft attempted

²¹⁵ “A Comparative View of Masculine and Feminine Employments”. *A Walker's Hibernian Magazine*, 1790.

²¹⁶ The writer of the article only mentioned the initials of the historians’ name and I could not procure the full name.

conformity to certain notions of morality, femininity and domesticity so as to avoid criticism and alleviate her revolutionary claims. Thus, Mary Wollstonecraft's conformity to the latter ideals was mainly prompted by social perception of women writers, particularly those who are bold enough to discuss politics or sexuality, and by the ideology of separate spheres.

Likewise, Emmeline Pankhurst in particular and suffragists in general experienced similar allegations in the nineteenth century. In an article from the Times newspaper, suffragists were accused of disregarding domesticity. In fact, the newspaper claimed that "with the active section of [suffragists] we cannot suppose that the domestic character of woman standing the highest place". Furthermore, the newspaper argued that the demand for woman suffrage was not a universal one not even among women themselves. This argument was justified by the decision of 250,000 women to petition parliament against giving women the franchise (qtd. in *Votes for Women* 1091²¹⁷). Accordingly, the newspaper insinuated that since suffragists did not possess a domestic character, one that enabled them to cherish the home and its ideals, they wished to intrude into the sphere of politics through women's suffrage. On the contrary, a large number of women who cherished their domestic sphere opposed women's enfranchisement.

Indeed, the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League argued that women's particular and specific responsibilities resided within her home. The league, which was organized by anti-suffrage women, claimed that they did not wish to impress any unnatural boundaries upon women concerning the work that they ought to perform. However, the league perceived that the major part of the "most important work of the world" is dependent upon women's

²¹⁷ Found in the papers of Vera Holme.

labor. In fact, the league believed that women were neglecting their particular duties for the time being. It also trusted that the franchise is the beginning of a “social revolution” that would impede development since the distribution of roles was the bedrock of any progress. Particularly, the league illustrated their argument with the example of animals “It is as if the animals on a farm should insist on changing places-the cows insist upon drawing the coach while the horses strive in vain to chew the cud and ruminate” (E.B. Harrison²¹⁸).

Accordingly, women should preserve their role in the domestic sphere and fulfill their natural role therein. Otherwise, they would never succeed or develop in life if they chose any other role outside their homes. Even worse, their decision to intrude into the public sphere would only obstruct the progress of civilization.

Moreover, the league asserted that women could not assist in the vital concerns of national defense and economy in case they were given the vote. Men always took full responsibility for concerns of national defense and economy and the intervention of women would only hinder men’s efforts in these fields. However, while women’s stance of the poor law and old age pensions was needed, it was already being considered and seriously measured without women becoming voters. Hence, the league claimed that pro-suffrage women had little knowledge if any of the significant work that men had to fulfill and were thus merely distracting women from fulfilling their own duties (E.B. Harrison). Hence, the Women’s National Anti-Suffrage League argued that women would not help their fellow men with issues of defense and economy. Besides, their sympathetic and womanly opinion of the poor law and old age pensions could be well considered without women being enfranchised.

²¹⁸ Harrison, E B. *Maud Arncliffe Sennett Scrapbook, Volume 1*. Women's National AntiSuffrage League, 1908.

Consequently, women were not needed in the public sphere and they had better focus on their responsibilities in the private one.

In response to such arguments, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies enumerated the various chores related to women's particular work in the home. Women were first expected to take good care of their offspring, make sure they were well-nourished and supervise their health. Second, they should cook for their husbands and wisely manage the house expenses; "All this is "the woman's job" (NUWSS 44²¹⁹). Thus, women's 'assumed' special work in the home revolved around feeding her husband and children and insuring their comfort.

Furthermore, suffragists were accused of masculinity especially the militant suffragists or 'the suffragettes'. Certainly, the WSPU leaders were well aware of such accusations. In a lecture entitled "the Meaning of the Woman's Movement", Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence listed the various allegations made against militant suffragettes, one of which was "masculine creatures" (4). They were described as such after a group of suffragettes insisted on delivering a petition to the House of Commons despite policemen's efforts to hold them back. Subsequently, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence described people's surprise at seeing the suffragettes' leaders, "When people began to see the leaders of these militant women, they found that many of them were exceptionally small and fragile; that they were gentle and that they were sensitive, and essentially feminine; then the world rubbed its eyes again. And that is where it stands today" (4). Thus, according to the WSPU treasurer, the

²¹⁹ National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. *Women in the Home*. NUWSS, 1913.

suffragettes were essentially ‘Weak, fragile, gentle, sensitive and feminine’ and this discredited critics’ view of suffragettes as masculine and physically strong.

Moreover, Sarah Grand²²⁰, a novelist and feminist, highlighted the various accusations made by women’s suffrage opponents enumerating the following characteristics: “short hair, coarse skins, unsymmetrical figures, loud voices, tastelessness in dress, and an unattractive appearance and character generally” (274). Accordingly, criticism of suffragettes included masculine appearance and physical traits but also a lack of any feminine characteristic such as elegance and delicacy.

The suffragettes were also accused of being ‘thirsty for fame’. Their intrusion into political meetings and public spaces were summed up into “Oh, these vulgar women, all they want is notoriety!” (P. Lawrence 4²²¹). Indeed, the suffragettes’ struggle for the vote was ridiculed and marginalized with this simplistic explanation. The suffragettes were not expected to be genteel or have a decent social status and could therefore make use of some recognition. Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence emphasized people’s surprise when they realized that most suffragettes were of high social status and disposed of an “honourable reputation” (4). That is to emphasize that the suffragettes’ main concern was obtaining the vote and not a simple social recognition that they possessed anyway.

Antagonism to suffrage did not merely include false accusation, but it eventually culminated in the emergence of many anti-suffrage societies. These societies were very active around 1909. According to the Sheffield Daily Independent press coverage, the Women’s

²²⁰ Grand, Sarah. “The New Aspect of the Woman Question.” *The North American Review*, vol. 158, no. 448, 1894, pp. 270–276. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25103291.

²²¹ Pethick-Lawrence, Emmeline. *The Meaning of the Woman's Movement*. Letchworth, Garden City Press Ltd.

Anti-suffrage National League was arranging a large campaign for 1909. Besides, the men's committee, a new committee that was established in the same year to oppose women's suffrage, came as a support to the league. Meanwhile, the ladies society founded forty-three divisions in Great Britain and initial measures were advanced to start another fifty. The aim of the league was to avert parliamentary candidates from committing themselves to "the revolutionary change which women's suffrage would involve" (7) (January 05)²²².

On March 19, 1909, the same newspaper wrote about the greatest petition against votes for women that had ever been presented to the House of Parliament by Mr. Massie, a member of parliament, on the second reading of the bill of Mr. G. Howard. The petition was advanced by Women's Anti-suffrage National League and comprised 243, 852 signatures by women. It contained 14, 848 sheets that were organized in a book format and was at least seven feet high. The petition was to be presented to Parliament by the secretary of the men's anti-suffrage committee in parliament, Mr. Julius Bertam, and the league's secretary, Mrs. E.L.Somervell. Speaking with the latter, the newspaper revealed the astounding circulation of the petition that traveled throughout the country and the diversity of women who signed it. According to the newspaper, this success was achieved despite the fact that the league "is too young to have been organized in many constituencies". The Sheffield Daily Independent press coverage reveals the newspaper's emphasis on women who were themselves opposed to the vote and the paper's support of anti-suffragist efforts. Most importantly, however, it highlights the stand that some newspapers, if not most of them, took against the suffrage movement.

²²² "Anti-suffragists". *Sheffield Daily Independent*. 05 January, 1909, p.7.

Furthermore, in a meeting of anti-suffragists in 1909 at Rockbeare, some letters were read on behalf of advocates who could not attend the meeting. In one letter, Lady Acland argued that if women consider the suffrage cause thoroughly, they would realize that their quest was not practical for the time being. While a supporter of the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League and an anti-suffragist, Lady Acland did not seem to oppose the idea of women's suffrage but its timing. Nevertheless, Sir Charles Follett commented on women's enfranchisement asserting:

Though tariff reform and the budget protest are my special subjects, I have very strong views against women's suffrage. I am confident that in claiming to go down with men into the rough and tumble of public life, the women will lose infinitely more than they could gain, they will lose the power and respect of men, which is their greatest asset and their supreme power (15).

Thus, opponents of woman suffrage feared that the vote would jeopardize the place of women in the home and would ultimately threaten the esteem and reverence that men felt for women.

In conclusion, both in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, higher values of morality, domesticity and femininity were expected from women particularly those engaged in writing and political activism. Eighteenth-century women writers were censured for intruding into the public sphere through professional writing and publishing. Similarly, nineteenth-century suffragists were criticized for demanding the vote, a measure that the press, some men and women deemed as an intrusion into politics 'the sphere of men' and an abandonment to the sphere of women 'the home'. Suffragists were also accused of masculinity and overall rebellion against their domestic obligations. Consequently, it is no

wonder that some women writers in the eighteenth century such as Mary Wollstonecraft and suffragists in the nineteenth century such as Emmeline Pankhurst attempted strategic conformity to some ideals of morality, domesticity and femininity to avoid any unnecessary criticism and soften their radical claims.

Chapter 1: Being Good Wives and Compassionate Mothers

The image of women has always been associated primarily with their capacity of being wives and mothers. Both in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women's traditional role was that of a spouse and mother. Therefore, I would argue that both Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst conformed to certain values of wifedom and motherhood, however, in the case of Emmeline Pankhurst, I would extend this argument for the whole WSPU propaganda. To sustain my argument, I will first present eighteenth and nineteenth century conduct books' perception of women as wives and mothers. Second. I will discuss how the two feminists defended spouses and mothers as part of their strategic conformity. Third, I will stress their promotion of women's emancipation for a better wifedom and motherhood. Fourth, I will demonstrate how the two feminists presented themselves as an example of good wives and compassionate mothers. Fifth and last, I will examine the contemporary reception of the two feminists' conformity to notions of wifedom and motherhood.

1. The Perception of Women as Wives and Mothers in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

In the eighteenth century, discourses of wifedom and motherhood were mostly characterized by discourses of domesticity. Marilyn Francus²²³ argued that conduct books, instructive and political tracts advocated the notion of domesticity for women, especially for wives and mothers. Women were expected to upkeep their offspring, superintend maids and

²²³ Francus, Marilyn. *Monstrous Motherhood: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Ideology of Domesticity*. Baltimore, the Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

comply with their husbands' wishes. They were also to be obedient, devoted, good managers of the house economy (without being penny-pinching), reserved, honorable, generous and considerate of the deprivations of others. Moreover, Francus asserted that works of fiction supported gender roles of the time by cherishing domestic women and disparaging those who were not. On the whole, domesticity might be perceived as a guide to the preferred female demeanor, flexible giving different situations, instead of a particular role that women performed (1-2). Nevertheless, Francus argued that "the lack of maternal narrative within domestic ideology" requires a reassessment of the account of motherhood and domesticity during the long eighteenth century (9).

Indeed, accounts of motherhood from eighteenth century contemporary works did not particularly associate the notion of motherhood with that of domesticity. Press reviews of the time, for instance, seemed to criticize mothers for their negligence to their children rather than cherish them for their good care. Moreover, they seemed to provide a portrayal of how good mothers should be instead of what they really were. Very often, however, wives and mothers were criticized for their infinite love for fashion and disregard for their homely duties and sometimes for their maternal ones²²⁴.

In an article entitled "A letter to a very good natured lady, who was married to a very ill- natured man"²²⁵, the writer laid the whole responsibility of successful marriage upon women's shoulders. Women were supposed to find their happiness in their effort to satisfy their husbands and make them happy. To achieve this, women had to be agreeable and

²²⁴ This conclusion was drawn from different press articles of the time. I am referring to some of them in the following paragraphs.

²²⁵ "A letter to a very good natured lady, who was married to a very ill- natured man". *Walker's Hibernian Magazine, or Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge*. British Periodicals, May 1790, (p. 426).

pleasant. Initially, they had to abstain from any talk that could disturb their husbands in anyway. Besides, they had to talk and act in accordance with their husbands' wishes. Women who committed to such agreeable behavior were to ensure their own happiness and that of their husbands (426). Thus, married women were urged to be obedient and agreeable to their husbands regardless of how angry and irritable their husbands were. Besides, they were largely deemed responsible for the success or failure of their marriage.

In another letter, the writer presented a more perfect and ideal model of wives and mothers which he called the "Reasonable woman"²²⁶. This wife and mother was loving, caring, dutiful and practical. She was a good house manager who daily prepared countless plans of kindness and usefulness. Without spending hours in front of her mirror, she took care of her beauty and made herself delightful to her husband "whom she loved too tenderly to omit a single opportunity of complying with his taste, or confirming his esteem" (194). Throughout the rest of her day, she read, worked and most importantly performed the crucial task of influencing her children with her virtuous behavior. Her exchange with people was both enlightening and entertaining and she fully endeavored to entertain her guests. Her cooking which was sophisticated, yet economical, was a great example of her thinking. To her husband, she was very dear and beloved because of all her fine traits. Further, the reasonable woman was everything the fashionable woman was not for she was humble, not obsessed with beauty, fame or attention and her happiness was found in fulfilling her obligations and the adoration of her husband (193-4).

²²⁶ "A Reasonable Woman". *The Town and Country Magazine*, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment. British Periodicals, Apr 1786, pp. 193-4.

Apart from comparing the reasonable woman with the fashionable one, some authors went to comparing the domestic woman with the gadder. The domestic woman was categorized as a very considerate woman towards her domestic responsibilities while the gadder was inattentive to her domestic duties and her ultimate concern was in gadding outside. The domestic woman and the gadder differed largely in numerous aspects. The domestic, for instance, made good use of her time. When she had plenty of time, she always found a suitable occupation and when she had little time, she still managed to accomplish her duties. Her intellect was very dear in marriage for it enabled her to be attentive to her family, to make wise decisions, to reflect and suspect. Such a woman was able to avoid the various difficulties, the chaos and perplexity that usually reign when a family was superintended by a mother with no domestic tendency. Hence, the difference between the domestic and the gadder was thus striking (Domestic woman 126²²⁷).

Furthermore, the domestic always found a useful occupation and her time passed merrily since she made it seem short. The gadder, however, could not find herself any valuable employment and her time passed very unpleasantly as she was bored all the time. The domestic was always in her home when needed. The gadder was only found at home when her *façade* was most jeopardized. The domestic condensed her nights and prolonged her days, the gadder did exactly the opposite. The domestic was very concerned with the needs and cares of her home. The gadder was always anxious to know every event taking place outside her home. The domestic was constantly glad and comfortable about fulfilling all her housework. The gadder was constantly nervous and worried about overlooking all

²²⁷ "Character of the Domestic Woman, and Gadder abroad". *Walker's Hibernian Magazine, or Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge*, Aug 1790, pp. 126-27.

housework. The domestic raised tidy, polite and pleasing children. The gadder allowed her children to assimilate bad behaviors from the maids and her children were generally ill-mannered or arrogant and pompous. Due to the domestic perfect character of a wife and mother, the writer of the article concluded that the “the domestic’s husband would be a monster indeed if not happy at home [while] the gadder’s is soon alienated from home, and becomes a rake, or a tavern husband” (domestic woman 126-7). Accordingly, the ideal wife and mother was characterized as one who was primarily domestic, a very caring wife and a dutiful mother.

As previously mentioned, the reasonable and the domestic woman seemed to embody the image of the ideal wife and mother. However, such accounts rather portrayed what wives and mothers were wished to be instead of what they really were. Comparisons between the domestic and the non-domestic were the best proof that the two models of wives and mothers existed in the eighteenth century. In fact, wives and mothers were often criticized in the press, for example, for not breastfeeding their children. In the *Royal Magazine*²²⁸, an excerpt from Jean Jacques²²⁹ Rousseau’s book *Upon Education* was published so as to advise women against wet nurses. Wives and mothers were accused of neglecting their homely responsibilities and their refusal to breastfeed their children was a powerful example of this negligence. Furthermore, the responsibility of breastfeeding and superintending the child was delegated to strange women who could not be expected to genuinely care for the child in any way. In particular, Rousseau claimed:

²²⁸ “A Word to MOTHERS, from the blunt Citizen of Geneva, John James Rousseau, in his Book upon Education”. *The Royal magazine*, Jul 1762, pp. 26-9.

²²⁹ For some reason, the magazine introduced Jean Jacques Rousseau as John James Rousseau. In fact, the article was entitled “A Word to MOTHERS, from the blunt Citizen of Geneva, John James Rousseau, in his Book upon Education”, thus, the name ‘ John James Rousseau’ was emphasized in the title of the article as well.

Since the mothers of this age, inattentive to the first and the most urgent of their conjugal obligations, have ceased to give suck to their children, it was necessary to commit these abandoned infants to the care of mercenary women. And what happens? Why these latter consider themselves only as the hireling mothers of strange children, are not re-commended to their tender industry by any feelings or impulse of nature, and consequently aim at no other end than to save themselves as much trouble as they can in performing their task (27).

Accordingly, mothers were accused of disregarding their duties towards their infants and delegating the responsibility of their care to nurses who had no great reason to treat the children well.

Additionally, nurses were accused of neglecting and mistreating children in many ways. Arguably, the nurses used to tie the children in order to be at liberty to pursue their own amusement. The suffering of the child, who was tied firmly and thus made unable to move, was of no importance to nurses. Unless there was visible damage to the child that could attest to the mistreatment of the nurse, the nurse had no reason to fear any future damage to the child's health. Compassionate mothers, however, having surrendered the cordial, though difficult, task of motherhood proceed with a profusion in their reckless profession of enjoyment and delight. Nevertheless, whereas mothers happily spent their time, they were unaware of the kind of ill-treatment that their children were exposed to under the supervision of nurses; they were confined, wrapped and fastened with great cruelty (word to mothers 27).

Moreover, Rousseau argued that when mothers discarded the habit of breastfeeding their offspring, they abandoned every feeling towards that appealing responsibility. Once the

maternal bond developed into an arduous bond, mothers quickly found ways to liberate themselves from it completely. Moreover, mothers resorted to sneaky techniques to avoid breastfeeding their children and engage in their favorite pastime of talking. Indeed, mothers had very elaborate techniques that served their resolution. They had people “at their command” who urged and implored them to reject suckling their babies, and their husbands, doctors and most of all, their crafty mothers were brought forth to support this quest. Consequently, husbands who would allow their wives to suckle their offspring would be jeopardizing their name and status (28-9). Thus, the natural habit of breastfeeding mothers became an alien tradition in eighteenth century English society among upper and middle-class women. However, this did not come without opposition for the custom was criticized by many writers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Mary Wollstonecraft.

Meanwhile, in the nineteenth century and particularly during the Victorian era, domestic wives and mothers were taken for granted. Conduct books no longer focused on advising women to be domestic, they just assumed that they were. However, women were rather advised to hold on to their sacred sphere of the ‘home’. In fact, the image of the ideal woman, especially upper and middle-class woman, came to be closely associated with the home. Nineteenth-century household ethics distinguished mothers and wives as guardians of the household and society’s morals (Abramovitz 118²³⁰).

In a *Woman’s Mission*, an anonymous book that was published in 1854, the author praised women’s innocence and self-devotion and admitted that women’s devotedness was incomparable with that of men. Moreover, the author claimed that women as a sex was

²³⁰ Abramovitz, Mimi. *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the present*. Routledge, 1996.

ennobled by a great moral maturity. However, he added that it was a fact that they were not intended to bring about any significant political or social change. Nevertheless, women could govern indirectly by influence instead of authority, as assistants instead of leaders (9-10). The author of a *Woman's Mission* asserted that men demanded for women a higher mission, higher than political and social power, of being one of God means for "the regeneration of the world, restorers of God's image in the human soul" (11). Therefore, who could assign for women or assure for them a nobler mission or a more exalted fate, the author exclaimed. Besides, the writer of a *Woman's Mission* argued that in order for women to achieve their mission, they should shift towards the sphere ordained to them by the author of nature and not alter that sphere for another (11).

In his *Daily Life in Victorian England* (2009), Sally Mitchell claimed that marriage was believed to be women's natural and ordinary function in Victorian England. Marriage fulfilled a woman's instinctive impulses, conserved the race, listed suitable obligations and guarded her from the anxieties and hazards of the rough and aggressive world. In the home, the higher intuitions of a woman such as compassion, altruism, inner virtues, all came into display. A woman was supposed to be protected in the privacy of her home since her absolute accordance, subservience, purity and delicacy would render her an easy target in a dangerous world (Mitchell 267²³¹).

Indeed, Sarah Stickney Ellis²³², a famous nineteenth century conduct books' writer, claimed that women 'presided over' their domestic sphere. However, she reassured men that the term "preside" was designed to direct women towards their homely responsibilities so as

²³¹ Op.cit.

²³² Ellis, Sarah Stickney. *The Women of England: their Social Duties and Domestic Habits*. London, Fisher, 1845.

to become “better wives, more useful daughters and mothers, who by their examples shall bequeath a rich inheritance to those who follow in their steps” (53). Obviously, Sarah S. Ellis perceived wifedom and motherhood as women’s initial role and she therefore wished them to govern their homely sphere and commit to it, implying that their presidency and authority could only be binding inside their home and not outside it.

Likewise, women in the nineteenth century, and especially under the reign of Queen Victoria, were supposed to take insight of the homely character of their adored queen. Queen Victoria was an example of a wifely and motherly character beautifully merged with that of a monarch. In fact, her reign had to “form an era in the British history, wherein woman shall have proved herself not unworthy of the importance attached to her influence. And her name” (Ellis 10). Accordingly, women had more motive to be better wives and mothers under the reign of Queen Victoria who should be taken as a great example of a good wife and mother.

Moreover, both men and women were naturally in need of marriage. In her book *The Wives of England*²³³, Ellis argued that despite men’s incomparable sense of command and autonomy, they too were in need of the divine support and unity of marriage. If this was the case with men, then a person could imagine to what extent marriage is important for the frailer hearts of women. Women who always found one guardian after the other had gone and whose unfamiliarity with the big world rendered them isolated and thus felt lonely. In fact, women by instinct deeply desired to be loved and guarded by whom they could share mutual love (109). Thus, women were believed to be more in need of marriage than men because of their great sensibility and natural dependence on men, from a father or a brother to a husband.

²³³ Ellis, Sarah Stickney. *The Wives of England: Their Relative Duties, Domestic Influence, and Social Obligations*. New York, D. Appleton & Co, 1843

To summarize, ideal wives and mothers in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were domestic women who were dutiful towards their husbands and children alike. Apart from idealism, however, eighteenth-century writers presented two models of wives and mothers: the domestic and the non-domestic, the one committed to fulfilling her domestic duties and the one who could not care less. Nonetheless, nineteenth-century writers seemed to present the domestic woman as the dominant example of wives and mothers, any deviation from this example was the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, advice to women to hold on to their domestic heaven suggested nineteenth century writers' fear from any future deviation from this domestic model and their attempt to prevent wives and mothers from contemplating any other model of wifedom and motherhood.

2. Defending the Wives and Mothers of the Nation

One means by which Mary Wollstonecraft conformed to the role of wives and mothers was through her defense of eighteenth century wives and mothers from criticism. In her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*²³⁴, Wollstonecraft focused largely on eighteenth-century writers' critique to wives and mothers of the time. Her defense was one that aimed not to validate and support the errors and flaws of wives and mothers of the time, but was aimed to explain, justify and rationalize their flaws. Particularly, Wollstonecraft argued that the faults of wives and mothers could all be attributed to the kind of education they received and thus they could be justified and excused. Wollstonecraft claimed that the behaviors and demeanors of women visibly demonstrated that their state of mind was defective. Such state of mind was due to the fallacious system of education that existed in the eighteenth century, one that was designed according to male writers' point of view. She argued that the latter

²³⁴ In this chapter, I am primarily using the 1796 edition of *Rights of Woman* unless otherwise stated.

writers considered women as a sex, not as human beings! Besides, these writers “have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers; and the understanding of the sex has been so bubbled by this specious homage” (2).

Moreover, Wollstonecraft admitted that despite the fact that female education had known some improvement recently, women were nevertheless considered as a vain sex and were scorned or empathized by authors who attempted to enhance their behavior by ridicule or tuition. Although she recognized that early in life women spent several years obtaining some achievements, they still lacked physical and intellectual force which was often sacrificed to perceptions of good looks and to the aspiration of finding a husband and getting married. Indeed, marriage was women’s sole chance of improving their social status in society, Wollstonecraft regretted. Unfortunately, women’s aspiration for marriage rendered them wild creatures who, once married, behaved the way children did: they took pleasure in dressing, painting and in nicknaming the divine creatures. Certainly, such vulnerable creatures were solely apt for sexual reasons since they were neither able to intelligently administer a household nor oversee the poor children to whom they gave birth (9).

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft contended that women who were solely educated to gratify the senses would always retrieve their pleasure in gratifying. Therefore, how women with such wildness and sometimes even corruption could be expected to be good models for their chaste daughters, Wollstonecraft exclaimed. In fact, similar mothers would be completely absorbed in the art of seduction and would consider their daughters as opponents for they threaten to propel them from their empire of good looks. Consequently, instead of befriending their daughters, they took them for enemies. Indeed, mothers who received the defective female education that was provided in Britain at the time should not be blamed for

behaving in a similar manner (101-2). Again, Mary Wollstonecraft criticized wives and mothers of the eighteenth century and dealt with their faulty behaviors as a 'natural and expected' course of action due to the education they were provided.

Mary Wollstonecraft also argued that until women forwent their dependence on men to a certain degree, men should not anticipate any natural compassion from women that may render them compassionate wives and mothers. As long as women completely depended on their spouses, they would be sneaky, shrewd and self-centered (213 [1891]). Wollstonecraft's criticism of women's dependence on men was part of her reproach of eighteenth century female education, for the education emphasized women's natural dependency on men. Moreover, Wollstonecraft claimed that since women were often victims of prejudice, they rarely felt rational maternal love. They even disregarded their offspring or indulged them with excessive leniency (114-5 [1891]).

Certainly, Wollstonecraft believed that married women had an emotional imbalance and this she attributed primarily to their inferior political status. She argued that since women in general were deprived of political rights and married women in particular were even deprived of a civic existence, women had to move their attention from the welfare of society to the welfare of individuals. She claimed that:

The mighty business of female life is to please, and refrained from entering into more important concerns by political and civil oppression, sentiments become events and reflection deepens what it should, and would have effaced, if the understanding had been allowed to take a wider range (426).

Accordingly, Wollstonecraft claimed that wives and mothers of England were more emotional than rational and this affected their ability to appropriately fulfill their duties as wives and mothers. Nevertheless, women were not to blame. The blame was on female educational system that worked to intensify women's sentiments instead of their understanding.

In particular, Wollstonecraft criticized Jean-Jacques Rousseau's instructions on female education. She believed that women following his instructions were destined to doom their family with domestic distresses and resentful flaws. Nonetheless, these women would be merely behaving in accordance with Rousseau's scheme. Surely, when women conformed to Rousseau's instructions, they were not to be accused of masculinity or non-domesticity for they would be considered as 'good women'. However, on what basis could they be regarded as good women? Certainly, these women refrained from making dreadful mistakes, yet, how were they supposed to fulfill responsibilities? Wollstonecraft concluded that such women had neither the time nor the force to fulfill responsibilities for they were busy beautifying their figure and harboring a fragile health (89 [1891]). To summarize, Wollstonecraft seemed to consider most wives and mothers as emotional instead of rational. Regardless of whether these women were domestic or not, their emotional nature, which was chiefly due to the false female educational system, was affecting their ability to be good wives and mothers. Moreover, despite the faults and flaws of eighteenth century wives and mothers, they were to be excused for the education that they received emphasized their sentiments instead of understanding and thus rendered them superficial and narrow-minded.

To support her claim, Wollstonecraft provided the example of a rational mother and demonstrated how such a woman was able to wisely manage her family. This woman had a

reasonably fair understanding. Her health which was supported by physical training granted her body the energy needed whereas her intellect was progressively enlarged to comprehend the moral responsibilities of life and the essence of human goodness and self-esteem. This woman married her husband out of fondness, not forgetting good judgment though. In her marital life, she managed to acquire her husband's esteem instead of resorting to miserable deceit to satisfy him and stir up their fading spark of passion. Nature destined affection to fade once the lovers became acquainted with each other. Love usually died after marriage, but this woman did not jeopardize her domestic serenity in order to stop this natural death from occurring. Moreover, Wollstonecraft assumed that her husband was a good man (90 [1891]).

Nevertheless, the domestic peace of this woman was interrupted by the unfortunate death of her husband. She became a widow with little to survive on. Yet she was not depressed. She surely ached for his death but after a while her grief was reduced to sad forbearance and she thus turned towards her offspring with increased affection and her concern to offer them her fondness displayed her maternal responsibilities as holy and gallant. This woman believed that all her righteous deeds were observed by the divine and that from him her relief should come and whose satisfaction was life to her. Her mind often imagined her spouse watching how she soothed any unruly affection so as to accomplish the dual responsibility of a father and mother to her offspring (90-1 [1891]). Wollstonecraft added:

Raised to heroism by misfortunes, she represses the first faint dawning of a natural inclination, before it ripens into love; and in the bloom of life she forgets her sex -forgets the pleasure of an awakening passion, which might again have

been inspired and returned. Her children have her love, and her brightest hopes are beyond the grave, where her imagination often strays (91 [1891]).

Thus, Wollstonecraft characterized the good wife and mother as rational, physically strong and affectionate woman towards her husband. This woman allowed her affection to subside into friendship ultimately. Besides, she was dutiful towards both her husband and children. If she was ever left without a partner, she would not seek a fresh love but would provide her children with all her love and fondness.

Eventually, this woman was to reap the fruits of her good motherhood, her children would be sitting around her with full health and virtue. When they became older, they would alleviate her burdens with their appreciative care. Indeed, this woman survived to witness how her children practiced the moral values which she attempted to ingrain in them as children. Further, she was able to witness the strong character that her children acquired in facing hardships, all having in mind her example. Wollstonecraft concluded: "The task of life thus fulfilled, she calmly waits for the sleep of death, and rising from the grave, may say - Behold, thou gavest me a talent, and here are five talents" (106). Thus, Wollstonecraft's assessment of good wives and mothers was not measured by the level of their domesticity. Instead, it was determined by their rational strength of character and healthy body, and their fulfillment of their duties towards their husbands and children. With regards their duties as mothers, Wollstonecraft emphasized mothers' responsibilities in influencing the morality, principles and overall character of their offspring.

On the whole, Mary Wollstonecraft defended wives and mothers from eighteenth-century writers' criticism of non-domesticity and neglect to their husbands and children; she

attributed women's shortcomings to the defective education of the eighteenth century which hindered rather than promoted good wifehood and motherhood.

Likewise, Emmeline Pankhurst in particular and suffragettes in general conformed to the role of wives and mothers through their defense of wives and mothers. In the nineteenth century, women did not possess many rights let alone equal rights with men, and therefore, suffragettes deemed it necessary to speak out for the rights and privileges that the wives and mothers of Britain were denied.

With regards the question, "Why Women Want the Vote?" a reply in the form of a WSPU leaflet claimed ²³⁵ that politics "invaded the home, and women must therefore enter politics" (1). Besides, it argued that serious issues in British politics could not be suitably resolved as long as women's view point was ignored. These issues included child's mortality, the dissipation of infant life, married women's labor, unemployment pays and upkeep of the elderly. Moreover, the leaflet asserted that women want the vote because as long as the bulk of women in Britain were kept outside the political arena, they would not be able to teach the children of the nation the importance of the fight for liberty; therefore, children of every generation had to understand the same ideal by harsh experience (1). Accordingly, the WSPU leaflet implied that women did not intrude into the public sphere of politics, it was politics that first intruded into the private sphere of women, the home. Besides, problems of women, infants and the elderly would be better solved if the point of view of the kind and compassionate sex was taken into consideration. Lastly, it argued that women who were the

²³⁵ In fact, she gave numerous reasons for why women want the vote, however, I focused on answers that was related to married women and mothers.

mothers of the nation would not be able to teach their children the meaning of liberty as long as they themselves were not free and did not struggle for freedom.

Furthermore, the leaflet asserted that when British women won the vote, members of parliament would be more considerate towards the interests of women. They would also try to remedy all the issues that women deemed significant. Namely, the condition of children would be given more importance as well as squalor, the maintenance of the diseased and the elderly, girls' education and the status of working women (3).

Moreover, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence²³⁶, warned of the social and political changes that were taking place at the time. According to her, middle-class manufacturers recognized their strength. Women's contestants in the work sector developed a solid and structured support in parliament and legislation restricting the employment of working women and particularly married women were contemplated. The immediate consequence of these developments would be to draw the spouses and mothers of Britain into a state of complete sex subjection. The subsequent consequence, however, would be to intensify moral and material vices caused by the vulnerability of women, women's financial dependency and subjugation of the mothers of the country. Eventually, the conditions of women and children would be worse than before (49).

Furthermore, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence drew her readers' attention to the dangerous aspect of women's economic dependence. She argued that the deprivation of women who failed to make ends meet compelled them into prostitution or into unhappy marriages "which is the same negation of all real morality" (49). In conclusion, Mrs. Pethick-

²³⁶ Pethick-Lawrence, Emmeline. "What the Vote Means to those who are Fighting the Battle". *Votes for Women*, Jan 1908, p. 49.

Lawrence stated “look at it from whatever standpoint you will, the religion, morality, the purity, the health, the beauty of all human life is dependent upon the freedom of women” (49). In other words, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence argued that women’s emancipation was the government’s right choice from every standpoint.

Additionally, the WSPU newspaper propagated that the suffragettes wanted the vote because they were particularly interested in childhood. Specifically, suffragettes wished to change regulations affecting the employment of children. In an article entitled “Woman’s Suffrage and the Child”, Evelyn Sharp²³⁷, a suffragette, condemned the employment of children that prevented them from enjoying their childhood, for some of them gave up their leisure time and even their sleep in order to do paid work. In Cheshire, for example, children who worked for about 55 hours weekly were no exception. Sharp asserted that she was in no way saying that men did not care about the deplorable conditions of child labor or that they did not proceed to make any reforms. However, she claimed that laws affecting children were inefficient for two reasons. First, women’s perspective was not sustained by political authority. Second, the fact that women were not enfranchised meant that laws concerning women and children were delayed for the sake of “more pressing business- more pressing business being, in parliamentary language, those bills affecting the interests of the male voter” (16).

Moreover, Evelyn Sharp claimed that women’s petition for the vote was likely prompted by their childhood. Therefore, when they grew older, their feminine nature compelled them to seek the vote so as to participate in making the laws concerning infants.

²³⁷ Sharp, Evelyn. “Woman’s Suffrage and the Child”. *Votes for Women*, Nov 1907, p. 16

Sharp argued that from their childhood, girls felt discrimination and injustice compared to their male siblings and this was due mostly to the English legislative system. Since the law granted the child's custody to the father and not to the mother who gave him birth, it should not come as a surprise that in all aspects of the social life there existed a tendency to belittle the significance of the girl child (16).

Furthermore, Sharp added that a wealthy man's son who empathized his sister for she was a girl would empathize his mother for she was a woman. Likewise, a modest man's son who saw his sister retained in the house after school similar to a drudge would take his wife for a drudge that was designed for his utility. Sharp asserted that:

The moral effect of laws that, which thus legalize the disability of sex, is to lower the standard of manliness among boys and womanliness among girls. How can a girl grow up with a high standard of motherhood- how can she think it a fine thing to prepare herself to bring children into the world when she began life by wishing, as so many little girls of very degree wish passionately all through their childhood, that she had been born a boy? (16).

Evelyn Sharp condemned the status of female children who suffered from discrimination from their early childhood. According to her, such discrimination prevented girls, who were to become the future mothers of the nation, from having reverence and veneration for motherhood for they grew up believing that the male sex was best.

Nonetheless, to men who still distrusted women's suffrage because they took women for sentimentalists, who would restrict all channels of men's amusement if given the vote,

Frederick Pethick-Lawrence²³⁸, an editor of *Votes for Women*, had some reassuring answers. Men should be relieved when considering the “*personnel* of the suffragettes”. However, the fears of men would only disappear completely when the suffragettes win the vote and start exerting it. Then, men would see for themselves that the authority of the suffragettes was not made to restrict innocent enjoyments but to improve the conditions of both men and women for the sake of a better and more contented life especially for children “who are women’s special care” (65). Again, the WSPU newspaper propagated the suffragettes as the ‘mothers’ whose special concern was taking care of the children.

In *A Message from the WSPU*²³⁹, the writer²⁴⁰ appealed to women’s notorious sense of sympathy and compassion to aid their oppressed sisters. He argued that although there was a number of women who were secure or living under the roof of a kind person, there was still a great number of women who were reliant upon the sympathy and upright conduct of other people for their contentment and worst, for their financial provision. Unfortunately, unemployed wives and mothers seemed to suffer the most, for while men earned certain privileges by their labor, women who were employed at the “highest and most self-sacrificing of all callings- that of a wife and mother” (1) were denied rights that they could have benefited from, had they remained unmarried. Moreover, while male workers could claim a specific salary from their employers, spouses and mothers could not demand a portion of their husbands’ salaries. Even worse, they had no right to assist in choosing the marital house or make decisions about its management. They also had few rights with regards the

²³⁸ Pethick-Lawrence, Frederick “What ‘Votes for Women’ Means to Men”. *Votes for Women*, Feb 1908, p. 65.

²³⁹ A leaflet from the Women’s Social and Political Union.

²⁴⁰ Writers of the WSPU leaflets were usually anonymous.

upbringing of their offspring, the decision of having them or not and the number of children (1).

Indeed, the condition of wives and mothers was of great importance for the suffragettes' movement; particularly, married women's financial status. Juliette Heal, a WSPU member, argued in her article "The Wage of the Married Woman" that the English law was accused of depriving women of their legitimate share of their husbands' wage. Heale criticized the English legislation for preventing women from even holding any savings that they collected through their good management of household allowance. Despite the diverse and numerous tasks that a poor man's wife might perform, she was nevertheless to remain penniless in her old age. Consequently, Heale claimed that the "the unpaid services" of wifehood and motherhood damage a woman's physical and intellectual strength beyond any other mental or physical labor. A working-class mother of a large family who spends her entire existence performing countless duties related to her gender role, finds herself in a deplorable situation when in her middle age her partner passes away or abandons her. Simply, she would be destitute without any commerce or skill, physically exhausted and mentally uninformed about the field of employment and salaries (48²⁴¹).

Accordingly, Heale suggested that a measure should be taken to enhance the financial status of working-class women as well as middle-class women. She argued that married women were the sole laborers whose extremely needed labor was unpaid and she deemed such a status as a kind of "serfdom" (48). Heale's demand of payment for wives and mothers suggested two meanings. On the one hand, it suggested that the suffragette movement was a

²⁴¹Heale, Juliette. "The Wage of the Married Woman". *Votes for Women*, Jan. 1908, p. 48.

womanly movement that was speaking for the rights of wives and mothers and wished to grant them the value and financial status that they deserved. After all, the Victorian age idealized wives and mothers and Victorians prided themselves with such example of womanhood. Therefore, the WSPU elaborated on such example and proved that the current status of womanhood and wifedom was a disgrace to the nation. On the other hand, it suggested a rather radical prospect concerning married women's financial standing, not that they should work and earn a living, but that they should be paid for their wifely and motherly duties. These responsibilities may have been considered by Victorian men as women's natural role as well as a pleasing and fulfilling task for them.

The latter articles "A Message from the WSPU" and "The Wage of the Married Woman" had two radical claims; women's right to choose whether they wanted to be mothers or not and their right to be paid for the services of wifedom and motherhood. The writers of these articles were ordinary members of the WSPU and their radical demands did not reflect a major claim of the WSPU. As seen earlier in this research, the chief claim of the Women's Social and Political Union was votes for women on the same basis as men. The leader of the suffragette movement, Emmeline Pankhurst, believed that when women become enfranchised, all of their grievances could be addressed more effectively. Therefore, although the radical demands of the two suffragettes were not part of the WSPU agenda, they still echoed a set of aims that could be pursued after the full enfranchisement of women.

These aims were indeed pursued after the enfranchisement of women but were more particularly pursued by socialist feminists. These feminists examine the power mechanisms

which maintain women's estrangement and discrimination in the public sphere²⁴². Social domination is characterized by the sexual objectification of women. They argue that:

The construction of woman, by men, as desirable, (hetero) sexually feminine – in the capitalist media and advertising industry – reinforces women's inequality, on this view, by objectifying her and making less visible her equal personhood, and reinforcing her traditional role as (no more than) 'wife and mother' (Barnett 141).

Hence, the construction of women as heterosexual individuals ultimately stress their role as wives and mothers and deprive them of exploring new possibilities.

Essentially, socialist feminists claim women's choice of reproduction, their freedom to choose to be mothers or not, the acknowledgment of the economic importance of the unpaid domestic services of women; fairness for women within the labor force, and its establishment on gender-impartial basis. Hence, "while women have conventionally been viewed as most suited to positions of 'support'—the clerk, the nurse, [...] equality can only be realised by reconceptualising employment on terms which render gender irrelevant to economic activity" (Barnett 141). Accordingly, what started as a mere suggestion and aspiration before women's suffrage became a genuine and persistent demand when the vote was won. This proves that from the beginning, the vote was a means not an end in itself for the suffragette movement. Suffragettes wanted to win the vote in order to gradually achieve equality between men and women in all domains. Thus, the legal equality was but a starting point but the eventual aim was economic and social equality. This quest was pursued by feminists from different schools of thought after the enfranchisement of women in 1928.

²⁴² Barnett, Hilaire. *Introduction to Feminist Jurisprudence*. Cavendish Publishing Limited, 1998.

3. Emancipation for Better Wifehood and Motherhood

Apart from defending the rights of wives and mothers, both Mary Wollstonecraft and the WSPU leaders suggested one effective solution to enhancing the status of women; emancipation. The more women were emancipated, the more they would be better wives and mothers. Certainly, Wollstonecraft largely advocated women's emancipation for an improved wifehood and motherhood. She claimed that unless liberty promoted women's intellect, women would not be able to comprehend their responsibilities and perceive their significance. Moreover, unless women were patriots, their offspring would not learn to comprehend the real value of patriotism. Most importantly, as long as women were denied civic and legal rights, they would not be able to teach their children the love of humanity; the trigger of every merit, which could solely be generated by attending to the public and moral benefit of society (ix [1891]).

Not only that a non-emancipated woman would not be able to be a good mother, but she would not even become a good wife. Indeed, Wollstonecraft asserted that a woman who was educated to be agreeable and pleasing in the eyes of men would not be a good wife. Once this woman got married, she would soon discover that the physical charm she had on her husband quickly faded and that she was left with no role to play. Subsequently, this woman either had sufficient strength to consider her own well-being and promote the thinking abilities she neglected or she would practice the art of pleasing over different men in order to forget her passion and vanity that were injured (60-1 [1891]). Accordingly, Wollstonecraft believed that emancipating women, through enhancing their education primarily, would render them more faithful wives.

As for women restricted by principle or influence, Wollstonecraft admitted that they would not resort to adultery. However, they would definitely contemplate the idea for they wish to be persuaded by men's courtesy that they were heartlessly abandoned by their spouses. In other cases, they would pass their time fantasizing the pleasure experienced by happy couples, thus damaging their physical and emotional aptitude by dissatisfaction. Hence, Wollstonecraft argued that both wives and mothers were frustrated by the fact that the art of pleasing which they learned was not of great benefit in life after all, except for a mistress, of course. In fact, Wollstonecraft asserted that:

The chaste wife, and serious mother, should only consider her power to please as the polish of her virtues, and the affection of her husband as one of the comforts that render her talk less difficult and her life happier. But, whether she is loved or neglected, her first wish should be to make herself respectable, and not to rely for all her happiness on a being subject to like infirmities with herself (61 [1891]).

Consequently, Wollstonecraft maintained that an education that mainly taught women how to please men and be agreeable to them jeopardized either wives' faithfulness to their husbands or their emotional and physical well-being once there was not enough passion to sustain the emotions, pride or sense of importance of these wives.

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft insisted that a female education which emphasized women's dependence on men was an education that barely upraised her above animals. Indeed, there could be nothing worse than convincing women that their ultimate objective in life was getting married. Nevertheless, if women were striving for a nobler task of being as virtuous as they could, they were to foster a better understanding. In the meantime, however, they should contemplate the characteristics of their future husband. Thus, when women

obtained the merits of a rational person, a future husband who might be tough and vulgar could offend their taste but would not break their spirit. Besides, instead of imitating their husbands' imperfections, they would mold their spirit as to endure them (66-7 [1891]). In short, Wollstonecraft maintained that a well-educated woman was a better wife since her strong state of mind would enable her to better tolerate a troublous man. Nevertheless, a woman who received an education that intensified her sensibility instead of her reason would be shocked and horrified if married to a tough and vulgar man. This woman may escape such a marriage as she may acquire her husband's qualities in order to adapt.

Moreover, Wollstonecraft posed the question of whether vain passive women ever made good wives. Additionally, she exclaimed whether such women were capable of fulfilling their duties or had the proper personality that qualified them to handle a family or instruct children. Subsequently, Wollstonecraft regretted the fact that observing the state of women, she could not but agree with the worst cynics that women were vulnerable, dependent and were simply the most subjugated half of human beings. Indeed, history had repeatedly shown that women were inferior and that very few women had succeeded in liberating themselves from the chains of men's authority. Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft concluded that women's inferiority had nothing to do with their spirit, but was strictly associated with the weakness of their bodies and minds. Wollstonecraft asserted that "the baneful consequences which flow from inattention to health during infancy, and youth, extend further than is supposed dependence of body naturally produces dependence of mind; and how can she be a good wife or mother, the greater part of whose time is employed to guard against or endure sickness?"(7 [1891]). Accordingly, women who were weak, submissive and on the whole inferior could never sustain a healthy marriage or raise well-behaved and educated children. Therefore, in Wollstonecraft's opinion, women should be

allowed to be independent and strong both physically and intellectually in order to be good wives and mothers. In other words, women should be emancipated.

To support her argument, Wollstonecraft provided the example of a submissive woman who was wedded to a prudent man. This man guided her decisions without allowing her to sense the cruelty of her enslavement. However, this man died and she had to take care of her large household alone. She was to instruct her offspring both as a mother and a father in addition to founding their values and protecting their wealth. Nonetheless, this woman was not used to making her own decisions let alone to proceed upon them. The only education she received was how to entertain men and to elegantly rely on them. Yet, how could she find another guardian and another replacement for her reason with the numerous children she had? A sound man would want an agreeable obedient woman but would rather choose a woman who was more beautiful and with no liabilities (Wollstonecraft 87-8 [1891]).

Eventually, this woman was to face one of two fates. She was to find a greedy husband who may deceive her and deprive her as well as her children of their wealth and thus leaves her pitiable or was to become a prey to dissatisfaction and extravagance. Incapable of educating her children or obtain their esteem, this woman agonized under the sorrow of impotent remorse and probably suffered from poverty as well, until she died. In order for women to avoid such a fate, Wollstonecraft argued that women were in great need for physical and intellectual strength in order to better manage their household and educate their offspring. She therefore opposed male writers' promotion to female domesticity which attempted to reduce their physical and intellectual ability. Nonetheless, if women were ever convinced to remain at home and merely be spouses and mothers, this would still be the

wrong method to induce women to fulfill their duties, wrong since it offended reason (88-9 [1891]). Thus, Wollstonecraft contended:

I appeal to experience, if by neglecting the understanding they be as much, nay, more detached from these domestic employment, than they could be by the most serious intellectual pursuit... I may be allowed to infer that reason is absolutely necessary to enable a woman to perform any duty properly, and I must again repeat, that sensibility is not reason (109 [1891]).

Hence, Wollstonecraft appealed to male writers not to neglect understanding and reason in women's education because a woman with no understanding could not fulfill her responsibilities as a wife and mother properly.

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft appealed for a better legal and political status for women. Although she agreed that the primary function of women was to be wives and mothers, she still believed that women of higher rank should be allowed to pursue a career, one that might render them more beneficial and autonomous. Wollstonecraft stated:

Though I consider that women in the common walks of life are called to fulfill the duties of wives and mothers, by religion and reason, I cannot help lamenting that women of a superior cast have not a road open by which they can pursue more extensive plans of usefulness and independence. I may excite laughter, by dropping a hint, which I mean to pursue, some future time, for I really think that women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government (190-1).

Accordingly, Wollstonecraft admitted that the basic role and duty of women is to be wives and mothers, thus, conforming to the ideal of wifedom and motherhood. However, she could not but suggest that certain women were capable of taking another road and choosing a career and a role different from the one destined to them by nature. Indeed, Wollstonecraft invoked the situation of women who did not choose to marry for noble reasons or those who could not find a husband. These women, who were neither wives nor mothers, were utterly ignored by the government. Certainly, a government that did not cater for honorable autonomous women by supporting them occupying reputable social positions was a malfunctioning one, she argued. Nonetheless, if the government ever wished to render their personal virtue a civic one, women married or unmarried should be granted a “civil existence in the state” (Wollstonecraft 193).

Concerning the question of female profession, Wollstonecraft suggested that not all women were destined to suckle babies and manage the family credits. Some of them were definitely able to become doctors and nurses. Women could also study politics and thus resolve their compassion on the largest scale. Besides, women could pursue different professions if their education was improved, hence, they would avoid actual or legal prostitution²⁴³. Lastly, Wollstonecraft urged men to help in the quest of women’s emancipation and allow them to be their mates and associates (194-5). She added,

would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational
fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant
daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable

²⁴³ Wollstonecraft was suggesting that certain women got married in order to secure themselves financially, thus marriage became a ‘legal prostitution’.

mothers—in a word, better citizens. We should then love them with true affection, because we should learn to respect ourselves; and a worthy man wouldn't be interrupted by the idle vanity of his wife, nor his babes sent to nestle in a strange bosom, having never found a home in their mother's (195).

Thus, Wollstonecraft appealed to men to help bring women's emancipation. This emancipation, she argued, would make women better wives and mothers because liberated women will have the self-esteem needed to truly admire their natural duties and fulfill them properly.

Likewise, the WSPU leaders advocated women's emancipation for better wifehood and motherhood. In fact, the WSPU reassured both followers and critics that once women were enfranchised, wifehood and motherhood would not be the least threatened. Particularly, the WSPU newspaper stressed that the home would not be neglected, as a matter of fact:

Women have already got municipal votes, and this has not led to any neglect of the home. In the countries where women have votes, families are quite as united, and homes as well kept, as in this country. Votes will be a weapon in the hands of women for the defense and improvement of the home. Now that parliament is so much concerned with questions relating to the home, it is more than ever necessary that the women should have the vote so as to be able to express their views (C. Pankhurst some questions 4²⁴⁴).

²⁴⁴ Pankhurst, Christabel. "Some Questions Answered". *The Suffragette*, Kingsway, *The Woman's Press*.

After enfranchisement, accordingly, women would still maintain the home as before. Besides, the vote would give them the chance to defend, enhance and convey the views of this home.

Moreover, Christabel Pankhurst urged men to help women win the vote for multiple reasons. First, men who are parents and husbands ought to aspire for better conditions for women. Second, the low wages that women received compromised the jobs of men. Third, men should want women to win the vote for, if Britain was to possess resilient and smart men, it should be evident that no effort is ever made to hold back the progress of the mothers. Furthermore, rendering women politically responsible would put them in a better position to teach their children to be “public spirited and to be worthy citizens of this great nation” (some questions 4). Interestingly, in order to convince men to support women’s enfranchisement, Miss Pankhurst used the image of a wife, daughter and mother. She did not bring any arguments about women being worthy of sharing the same rights with men. Instead, her arguments were intended to closely connect women’s enfranchisement with better wifedom and motherhood and this was the essence of the suffragettes’ conformity. Although they did demand the vote on the same basis as men and appealed for full equality with men, they still conveyed their reverence and commitment to their wifedom and motherhood and even to the ideal of the home as a whole. Additionally, Miss Pankhurst promised that when women become enfranchised, legislation improving the condition of women and children will be introduced. For instance, Austrian women, after enfranchisement, succeeded in securing parliamentary acts which increased their pays, defended young girls and enhanced the situation of children (some questions 3).

As for why women should want the vote, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence²⁴⁵ admitted that many women did not comprehend the necessity of the vote. Fortunate mothers who were blessed with joyful and serene homes might consider the vote as a tool that would distract women from their revered life ideals. However, what they did not comprehend was that the vote would convey some of their ideals into the nation's life and provide for countless people the opportunity to share with women the joy and loveliness that they possess in their home (5).

Besides, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence reassured women that, by demanding the vote, suffragettes did not desire to resemble men, that is to say they neither wished to perform men's work nor perform his role in society. Quite the opposite, suffragettes were well aware that men and women were fundamentally different, their vision in life was different as well as their principles and perceptions. In short, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence stressed: "we value too well our own womanhood. We do not want to do men's work, we want to do our own" (5). Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence also asserted that if not for the differences that existed between men and women in their opinions, judgments and role, the suffragettes would not have demanded women's representation in the political and social progress of the country. However, since men and women were basically distinct in perspective and principles, a government which ignored the female population "suffer [ed] the same loss as a household that has a father but no mother at its head" (5).

Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence explained the difference in attitudes between men and women arguing that the nation was indebted with all its national progress and expansion to men. Men

²⁴⁵ Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence. "What the Vote Means". *Votes for Women*, Oct 1907, p. 5.

succeeded in different domains such as power-driven machines and industrial improvement, companies, marketplaces, vessels and railroads. In fact, all the significant and vital achievements to the advance and improvement of the country could be attributed to men. Nevertheless, women's interest in all these issues was the "human life". Beyond the mechanism, the markets and beyond all sorts of things, they viewed 'the human being'. The reason for this was that women were the ones who "pay [ed] price of human life" and hence they knew its precious value. Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence added:

For every human being born into this world some woman has paid with her labor and her sorrow, sometimes with her life. To a woman the body of every little child is the hope of the future, the pledge of human evolution. The bodies and souls of the children are the greatest considerations in a nation's life, the happiness and well-being of the children its first care, the health and happiness and development of human beings are inseparable from a nation's greatness (5).

Clearly, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence attributed women's desire to participate in the political and social affairs of the country to their womanly nature. In fact, she presented women as affectionate and compassionate human beings who would bring their humanity to the world of politics once they were given the vote.

Furthermore, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence acknowledged that technology, innovation, discipline and progress were men's specialty. Nevertheless, on the human level, there existed ruins of human life everywhere, stunted men, devastated and despaired women and hungry children. This was due to the fact that the woman's work was not attended to, since women were not allowed to perform it and were excluded from national concerns. It was as if mothers of all British homes were sent to a different country and it was left for men to attend

their work and take care of their homes and children to the best of their abilities. Obviously, both the homes and the children would suffer. Thus, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence asserted that women have been demanding the vote since it would allow women to express their humanity (5). Very intelligently, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence succeeded in comparing the role of women in the home with that of their role in the nation. Simply put, if women were the compassionate, affectionate and moral teachers of the nation's future 'children', should not they deserve then a chance to bring some of their exalted qualities into the world of politics?

Indeed, the WSPU consistently propagated that the suffragette movement did not wish women to be similar to men, to abandon their traditional role as wives and mothers or to give away any of their womanhood. In an article entitled "the Battle Cry"²⁴⁶, published in *Votes for Women*, the writer urged women to join the suffragette movement assuring them that they would not surrender any of their womanliness when they join the movement because it was womanliness that the suffragettes required from their party members. Moreover, women were told not to "leave any of [their] mother's heart behind" because it was for motherhood that the suffragettes were struggling. The writer also added:

Do not leave your daughterhood, or sisterhood, or wifeness behind you when you come into this movement. This is no anti-man crusade; the women who take part in it are fighting for their fathers, and husbands, and brothers, as well as for themselves, because it will be a good thing for men and women alike when their combined point of view is recognized in the counsels of the state (6).

²⁴⁶Pethick-Lawrence, Frederick W., and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editors. *Votes for Women*. London, Oct. 1907.

Indeed, here is another example of how the suffragettes conformed to the notion of motherhood and wifehood. The movement declared itself as a defender of wifehood, motherhood, sisterhood and daughterhood. Thus, not only the suffragette movement negated any claim that the vote would lead to women's negligence of their traditional role as wives and mothers but it also used the latter notions as a justification for the necessity of the vote. Simply put, if men revered the wives and mothers of the nation for their uprightness and compassion for real, they would allow them to share their ideals in the social and political domain. Besides, if men and women cared for wifehood and motherhood sincerely, then they would recognize the shortcomings of the government towards wives, mothers, and children; who are women's special duty, and would then comprehend the importance of the vote in representing their voice.

In her turn, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence raised a question that she frequently received "when women are politically free, will not the ideal of the Home be destroyed?"²⁴⁷(9). This question embodied a chief concern for many people at the time: 'if women became politically active, they would inevitably abandon their role in the domestic sphere'. Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence repudiated this argument insisting that women's engagement in 'the home' was from the beginning a voluntary choice of women²⁴⁸. Moreover, allowing women to express themselves freely should not signify that they would disregard their homes in anyway; rather, "The home will be much more sacred than it has ever been before. There is plenty of need for the home to be more beautiful and for home ideals to be more sacred than they are to-day. And that is part of the work which the triumph of the Woman's Movement will accomplish"

²⁴⁷ Op.cit.

²⁴⁸ Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence claimed that women had a greater role in history but this role largely diminished during the time of the Georges; a time of great decadence.

(9). Thus, making the home more beautiful and sacred was presented as one of the aims of the suffrage movement in general, and the WSPU in particular.

When asked whether women's acquirement of political rights would undermine the exquisite value of motherhood, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence argued that only when women acquired their freedom that they would taste the true beauty of motherhood for the first time. Furthermore, some people propagated that one of the consequences of women's suffrage would be women's refusal to bear babies. Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence responded by highlighting the importance of life transmission and the happiness that it generates. She appealed to men to grant women their freedom so that the "the wonderful idea of motherhood be able to make its way through" and that it could be recognized and comprehended. She also pleaded:

For the sake of the children who are to be, if for no other reason, let us have a free and a fully responsible womanhood, for it is women who are the custodians of the future; they are the keepers of the Keys of Destiny; they are the Gates of Life. No human body or soul can enter into this life of the world, but it must enter through the body and soul of some woman, and it is for the sake of the race, it is for the sake of the generations to come, it is for the sake of the children above all that we want women to be free to express themselves, free to live out their best and their highest ideals (10).

In the previous passage, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence appealed to men to enfranchise women for their children's future, if they were not willing to consider any other argument. Ironically, while men opposed women's suffrage in order to preserve women's sacred role as wives and mothers, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence appealed for women's enfranchisement for the same reason, 'allowing wifedom and motherhood to be more sacred'.

In fact, the editor of *Votes for Women*, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, used the same arguments of women's suffrage critics to validate the need for the vote. Hence, while critics claimed that women's suffrage would undermine the value of the home, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence argued that with responsible womanhood, the home will be more sacred. Moreover, whereas critics feared that the world of politics would corrupt virtuous women, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence asserted that women would bring their virtue, humanity and morality to political affairs. She also argued that women would take better care of their children if they could exert political pressure to enhance their conditions. Thus, Emmeline-Pethick-Lawrence intelligently used 'arguments for women's subordination' to substantiate and support the necessity for votes for women.

4. Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst as Wives and Mothers

In the previous section, I argued that both Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst advocated women's emancipation for better wifedom and motherhood. As women, they both defended the rights of their fellow sisters who were spouses and mothers. However, both feminists tried to convey their own wifely and motherly instincts while making this defense. I would argue that both Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst attempted to stress their image as wives and mothers so as to strengthen their defense, making it more convincing and appealing. Whether speaking affectionately and compassionately about wives and mothers or speaking about their own affection and compassion as wives and mothers, the two feminists were certainly successful in transmitting their wifely and motherly instincts. Nevertheless, since Wollstonecraft and Pankhurst's compassion for married women was largely emphasized in their defense, which was discussed in previous sections, this section will closely discuss how they exhibited their own wifely and motherly affection.

In her *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*²⁴⁹ (1796), Mary Wollstonecraft closely revealed her affection and devotion as a wife. For one reason, the letters that she wrote during her visit to Scandinavia, which are the main letters of the book, were destined to her husband, Gilbert Imlay. For another reason, Wollstonecraft's visit to Scandinavia was aimed at saving the business of her husband (Brekke and Mee xiv²⁵⁰). I should stress that Gilbert Imlay was not actually her husband, however, Wollstonecraft's social circle and even the press believed him to be her legal partner. Therefore, I am introducing him as her spouse in this section so as to emphasize certain incidents through which Wollstonecraft conveyed her wifely affection to her readers.

Mary Wollstonecraft's husband Imlay Gilbert was expecting a French vessel that was loaded with French silver to arrive to his business partner in Gothenburg²⁵¹. The vessel, however, never arrived to Gothenburg, and therefore, Wollstonecraft was delegated by Imlay to settle the problem (Brekke and Mee xiv). Essentially, the very fact that Wollstonecraft was commissioned by her husband to manage his commerce was an indication of how greatly he valued her. In Gilbert Imlay's official commission to Wollstonecraft, he declared that he assigned his business undertakings to "Mary Imlay, [his] best friend and wife ... desiring that she will manage and direct such concerns in such manner as she may deem most wise & prudent" (135). Wise and prudent she was indeed or at least this is what she reflected in her travel narratives. Additionally, Wollstonecraft has certainly proved that she was a very affectionate wife. She was a wife who was ready to travel all the way to Scandinavia in order to settle her husband's business problems.

²⁴⁹ In this section, I will chiefly depend on her *Letters to Sweden* since Wollstonecraft seemed to exhibit her wifely and motherly affection best in them.

²⁵⁰ Tom Brekke and Jon Mee were the editors of the introduction of *Letters written in Sweden* (ed 2009).

²⁵¹ A city in Sweden.

Moreover, Mary Wollstonecraft demonstrated her wifely affection even further in her letters. When reflecting about death and the afterlife, Wollstonecraft could not but contemplate about the affection she had for her husband. She expressed, “thinking of death makes us tenderly cling to our affections—with more than usual tenderness, I therefore assure you that I am your’s, wishing that the temporary death of absence may not endure longer than is absolutely necessary” (49). Thus, Wollstonecraft expressed her longings for Imlay wishing to meet him as soon as possible. In her letters, Wollstonecraft was largely successful in displaying her wifely affection for Imlay. Most importantly, she was successful in persuading her readers that Imlay was actually her husband. In reality, Wollstonecraft had a free union with Imlay and was never married to him. Although Imlay proposed to her, she refused for he had a declined financial status and she did not wish him to be exposed to her family’s discomfiture. Besides, she did not wish him to become accountable for any financial liability she had at the time (Godwin 110²⁵²).

Mary Wollstonecraft started her relationship with Imlay in April 1793 and kept it a secret for several months. However, a political situation made it necessary for Wollstonecraft to acquire a certificate that rendered her officially Mrs. Gilbert, a wife of a Native American. This situation involved the French decree that urged the imprisonment of British citizens in France following certain political crises with the British government and hence Wollstonecraft’s marriage with Imlay secured her safety in France (Godwin 109-10).

²⁵² Op.cit.

Regardless of whether their marriage was real or not, Wollstonecraft certainly displayed her wifely affection to a large extent in her *Letters Written in Sweden*²⁵³.

Likewise, Emmeline Pankhurst was a great example of a good and affectionate wife. But contrary to Wollstonecraft, Mrs. Pankhurst's wifely image was more seen than heard of. During the first years of her political activism, Mrs. Pankhurst provided the best company and support to her husband, Richard Pankhurst. She supported him in his campaigns for parliament considerably²⁵⁴. In an article published in *Votes for Women*²⁵⁵ entitled "Mrs. Pankhurst life", the author commented:

For early thirty years, she has been engaged in working for women's emancipation, commencing by assisting her husband, the famous Dr. Pankhurst, in winning the married women's property act, which he drafted, and by being placed on the executive of the women's suffrage society (2).

Moreover, Mrs. Pankhurst was anxious to send a significant message to both her followers and critics that she was in no way opposed to marriage and childbearing. In fact, Mrs. Pankhurst ridiculed critics' view that suffragettes were using militancy as a channel for their miserable and depressed lives. Instead, she argued that this view was not true for most suffragettes and definitely not true for her (13). In her *My Own Story* (1914), she spoke of her perfect domestic life proclaiming:

²⁵³ There were so many instances where Mary Wollstonecraft reflected her wifely affection and nature in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. However, in her *Letters Written in Sweden*, this affection was more personal than universal; she did not merely describe how this affection should be, she displayed her own affection as an example.

²⁵⁴ Cf. the testimony of her daughters in the chapter of "Rebellion or Conformity".

²⁵⁵ (October 1907).

My home life and relations have been as nearly ideal as possible in this imperfect world. About a year after my marriage my daughter Christabel was born, and in another eighteen months my second daughter Sylvia came. Two other children followed, and for some years I was rather deeply immersed in my domestic affairs (13).

Thus, Emmeline Pankhurst openly emphasized her ideal domestic life and her capacity as a good wife and mother. Seemingly, she was a wife by excellence. She did not need to talk much about her ideal domestic life and her devotion to her husband, she simply demonstrated. Mrs. Pankhurst's support to her husband in his political career was visible to the public, and her conformity to notions of wifehood was mainly sustained by this fact.

In the Woman's Herald interview with Mrs. Pankhurst (1891), Emmeline was inquired about whether her suffrage work and her commerce²⁵⁶ were a hindrance to her domestic responsibilities. To this she replied resolutely:

In no way; I enjoy to the full the happiness of home. I have four little children, who, I might say, are quite as happy, quite as well looked after, as any children. They are devoted to me; indeed, I think they appreciate me all the more because they do not see too much of me. I have an excellent nurse and governess to whom I can confidently entrust my children. I do not think the mother is the best instructress of her own offspring in any way; she is often too indulgent; the constant intercourse may, in my opinion, be the reverse of beneficial.

²⁵⁶ In 1891, Emmeline Pankhurst was running a shop beside her suffrage work.

My children look forward to my return as a treat; I have two days a week I can devote entirely to them (qtd. in Purvis 34²⁵⁷).

Here, not only that Emmeline Pankhurst tried to negate any criticism of neglect to her offspring but she also attempted to present herself as a good, careful and devoted mother, one who was largely adored and appreciated by her children.

Furthermore, as a leader of the Women's Social and Political Union, Mrs. Pankhurst's motherly nature was greatly highlighted. Escorted by her three daughters 'Christabel, Sylvia and Adela', Mrs. Pankhurst was definitely perceived as 'the mother'. Together, Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters were known as 'the Pankhursts'. Nevertheless, Mrs. Pankhurst's motherly image was particularly displayed for her eldest daughter Christabel. The two founded the union together and always shared the same agenda. In the press, they were usually referred to as Mrs. and Miss Pankhurst. When interviewed, however, they referred to each other as 'mother' and 'daughter'²⁵⁸.

Apart from openly speaking about her motherhood, Mrs. Pankhurst also used implicit language to display her motherhood. In one of her greatest speeches "Freedom or Death" delivered in Hartford, Connecticut, Emmeline explained her resort to militancy using the example of babies. With the compassion and understanding of a mother, she said:

You have two babies very hungry and wanting to be fed. One baby is a patient baby, and waits indefinitely until its mother is ready to feed it. The other baby is an impatient baby and cries lustily, screams and kicks and makes everybody

²⁵⁷ Op.cit.

²⁵⁸ For examples, see *Votes for Women*, "In Holloway Goal" (Nov 19, 1908), "Welcome!" (Dec 24, 1908 p 217) and "The Home of the WSPU" (Sep, 1911 p766)

unpleasant until it is fed. Well, we know perfectly well which baby is attended to first. That is the whole history of politics. You have to make more noise than anybody else, you have to make yourself more obtrusive than anybody else, you have to fill all the papers more than anybody else, in fact you have to be there all the time and see that they do not snow you under (The Guardian).

In her explanation of her union's militancy in 1913, a time in which militancy reached its zenith, Emmeline found it convenient to explain the extreme militant actions of the WSPU through a purely motherly example. In the case of two hungry babies of whom one was patient and the other was noisy and loud, Emmeline asserted that the mother would feed the one who was constantly screaming first. This example highlighted three aspects. First, Emmeline wanted to talk to American women in a language that they understood the most, a language of a mother and her daily shores. Second, it served the purpose of identifying Emmeline as a woman and as a mother. Third, it sent a message to a gender mixed audience that suffragettes were not rebelling against notions of motherhood and that their militancy stemmed from their logic as mothers.

Particularly, Emmeline's example identified her immediately as a mother, one who was familiar with raising children and taking care of them. For a mother, explaining the functioning of politics in simple words meant giving an example from the daily life of any mother. Besides, since such example was given in front of a mixed gender audience, this may have left the male audience with an impression that Emmeline Pankhurst, the suffragette leader, was also a wife and mother. Of course, this is not to say that Emmeline Pankhurst's speech was a collection of maternal experiences, she used a variety of other examples that

pressed her thorough knowledge of political history as well. However, there was certainly a tendency to use a 'maternal language' to stress her identity as a mother.

Similarly, Wollstonecraft attempted to convey her maternal affection to her readers. In her *Letters Written in Sweden*, Wollstonecraft repeatedly mentioned her care, affection and love towards her thirteen-month-old daughter 'Fanny'. While contemplating the beauty of Sweden, for instance, Wollstonecraft was fascinated by wild pansies and her mind immediately toured between emotions and premonitions. Yet, all was interrupted when she saw her baby girl's excitement for finding wild strawberries. Wollstonecraft commented, "The gaiety of my babe was unmixed; regardless of omens or sentiments, she found a few wild strawberries more grateful than flowers or fancies" (9). Hence, Wollstonecraft suggested that all her fancies and thoughts as a writer were suspended at the sight of her child's cheerfulness. In other words, she suggested that her maternal affection and her identity as a mother was more important than her identity as a writer. Thus, her readers could content themselves that their writer was a woman and mother first and a writer second.

Additionally, Wollstonecraft used her letters to display the compassion and care she had for her daughter. When Mary, her daughter and the nurse were traveling through a stony and wearisome road, Wollstonecraft revealed that her daughter was very afraid and therefore she could only be comforted by her. She avowed, "I played with my girl, whom I would not leave to Marguerite's care, on account of her timidity" (12). Here, Wollstonecraft was again stressing her motherly character. Despite the fact that Fanny was mostly superintended by a nurse, when it came to emotions, Wollstonecraft could not depend on anyone but herself. Thus, she implied that a nurse could manage the child physically but could not possibly manage him emotionally. Love, affection and care could only be provided by the mother and

Wollstonecraft made sure to be the one to provide her daughter with such maternal affection and emotional support.

Moreover, Wollstonecraft adored her daughter and was incapable of bearing any separation from her. During her visit to Sweden, Wollstonecraft was attended by her daughter and the nursemaid. The latter, however, stayed in Sweden while Wollstonecraft headed to Norway alone (Brekke and Mee xv-xvi). Believing that her business in Norway would quickly end, Wollstonecraft had no problem leaving her daughter behind. Once in Norway, however, she discovered that she was to stay for three weeks in order to manage all her affairs there. Wollstonecraft regretted the incident disclosing, “The next morning, the 17th of July, conversing with the gentleman with whom I had business to transact, I found that I should be detained at Tonsberg for three weeks; and I lamented that I had not brought my child with me” (38). Here, Wollstonecraft shared with her readers her deep motherly affection that led her to blame herself for separating with her daughter for a whole three weeks.

When the three weeks were over, Wollstonecraft was impatient to return to Stromstad (Sweden) to call for a boy on that same night to bring the horses for she admitted being “unwilling to remain there a day, without having anything to detain me from my little girl; and from the letters which I was impatient to get from you” (90-1). Here, Wollstonecraft attempted to transmit both her motherly and wifely affection to her readers. Yet, Wollstonecraft regretted that her daughter may not enjoy the care and affection of a father as other children of her age. In Norway, Wollstonecraft was drawn by the image of a little girl who was held in her father’s arms. She saw the two enter into their lodge, the wife was preparing food and despite the fact that Wollstonecraft despised cooking, she still envied the

wife. Wollstonecraft commented: “I was returning to my babe, who may never experience a father’s care or tenderness. The bosom that nurtured her, heaved with a pang at the thought which only an unhappy mother could feel” (95). Accordingly, Wollstonecraft implied that she had a troublous marriage that might risk the serenity and happiness of her daughter after all²⁵⁹.

Nonetheless, Wollstonecraft was even more anxious about her daughter for belonging to the weaker sex. Contemplating the helpless and subjugated condition of women, Wollstonecraft was afraid that her daughter might be obliged to relinquish her heart for the sake of her values or vice versa. In particular, she believed that she ought to nourish her sensibility and delicacy of emotions so as to make her fit for social expectations, though this would only intensify her heartbreaks in life. She wished to nourish her thinking faculties, however, she feared that this would “render her unfit for the world she is to inhabit—Hapless woman! What a fate is thine!” (Letters Sweden 36). Despite the fact that Wollstonecraft feared her daughter would grow up not knowing the affection and care of her father, her biggest fear was that her daughter may never experience freedom of thought and cultivation of mind without condemnation.

Nonetheless, the contemporary reception of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst’s conformity to notions of wifhood and motherhood was fairly positive. As mentioned earlier, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), a collection of letters which she wrote to her lover Gilbert Imlay during her journey to Scandinavia. In these letters, Wollstonecraft insinuated to her readers that Imlay

²⁵⁹ In reality, Wollstonecraft had a very unstable relationship with Imlay.

was her husband, or at least, this is what her contemporaries had understood. Meanwhile, the criticism that her letters received at the time was due to her view of religion whereas her affection for Imlay was described by the British Critic as “the pang of misplaced affection inflicted by a husband” (qtd in. Letters xxiv). This review ascertains that Wollstonecraft succeeded in misleading her readers about the true identity of Gilbert Imlay. However, when William Godwin published his memoirs of Wollstonecraft’s life in *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798), it became clear that Imlay was her lover and not her husband, a revelation that resulted in an overall refusal of Wollstonecraft’s works and legacy throughout most of the nineteenth century.

In her *Letters Written in Sweden*, Wollstonecraft stressed her tenderness towards her daughter writing:

The sympathy I inspired, thus dropping down from the clouds in a strange land, affected me more than it would have done, had not my spirits been harassed by various causes—by much thinking -musing almost to madness -and even by a sort of weak melancholy that hung about my heart at parting with my daughter for the first time (36)

Mary Wollstonecraft’s motherly affection for her daughter was captured by the British Critic which described her letters as “The thrilling sensation of maternal tenderness has been excited towards an infant” (qtd in Letters xxiv²⁶⁰). Similarly, Emmeline Pankhurst was largely acclaimed for being a good wife and mother. In the opinion of Teresa Billington-

²⁶⁰ Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*. Edited by Tom Brekke and Jon Mee, Oxford University Press, 2009.

Greig²⁶¹, a former suffragette who left the union in 1907, Emmeline Pankhurst's home was one of affection, harmony and uncertainty. Although she did not know the Pankhursts during Dr. Pankhurst's life, she still had remarkable insights about their lives after his death. According to Billington-Greig, the Pankhursts were a devoted family, preachers of unison in a household that placed the cause of women's suffrage before all other concerns. Their cause had various features but only one objective; legal rights for women as a basis for sex equality (94).

Moreover, the unison of the Pankhursts objective was coupled with that of sentiments. Their common commitment to the cause strengthened their family ties for "They worshipped each other. They believed in each other. They had a large enveloping ambition for each other" (Billington-Greig 94). The determination and harmony of the Pankhurst family was reinforced by their type of struggle which was radical, defiant and insurgent. Hence, the home of the Pankhursts was to undoubtedly yield martyrs, ministers, radicals, legislators, propagandists, saints and autocrats (94). Accordingly, Teresa Billington-Greig found the Pankhurst family as loving, affectionate and harmonious. Most importantly, the Pankhursts' commitment to the cause of women's suffrage unified them and strengthened their family bond.

Rebecca West²⁶², a journalist and a critic of Emmeline Pankhurst, described Emmeline Pankhurst as a very lively person who was madly in love with Dr. Pankhurst. As a result, she was more than ready to support her husband in his public campaigns. Moreover,

²⁶¹ FitzGerald, Ann, and Carol McPhee. *The Non-Violent Militant: Selected Writings of Teresa Billington-Greig*. Routledge, 2016.

²⁶² West, Rebecca. "A Reed of Steel." *The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebecca West 1911-1917*. Indiana University, 1982, pp. 243–262.

West added that as a mother, Emmeline Pankhurst was attentive to her children, however, her political engagement eventually immersed her children in the cause of women's suffrage. Nonetheless, her daughter Sylvia was against sharing her mother with her political campaigns but her other children seemed to enjoy the political atmosphere. Despite the fact that Emmeline Pankhurst was absorbed in her emancipatory work for which she spent so much time and energy, she still considered herself "not as an independent worker, but as her husband's helpmate" (West 247-9). Thus, Emmeline Pankhurst was seen by her contemporaries as a good wife and dedicated mother, a woman who always put her family first!

Furthermore, the motherly spirit in the WSPU leaders and propaganda was another successful method, particularly in gaining new converts to the suffragette movement. Mrs. Leonora Cohen²⁶³ admitted that besides her admiration to Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence for her impressive ability to raise funds, she greatly admired Mrs. Pankhurst's motherly nature. When asked why she adored Mrs. Pankhurst so much, Mrs. Leonora answered "because she was a lovely motherly woman, she was like my own mother, she had a heart; she was typical to me of a lovely woman". Mrs. Leonora also contended that Mrs. Pankhurst reminded her of her own mother because of her great motherly love and she admitted "that's why she affected me!"(1:31:30- 1: 32:20). Unfortunately, it is hard to assess the success of the WSPU leaders' conformity to motherhood or even wifehood for lack of evidence. Arguably, the appeal of the WSPU to wives and mothers was another factor behind the ever-

²⁶³ Cohen, Leonora. *Oral Evidence on the Suffragette and Suffragist Movements: the Brian Harrison Interviews*. By Brian Harrison. 26 Oct 1974. *The Women's Library*

increasing membership of the WSPU, however, there is no sufficient evidence to sustain such a claim.

In conclusion, Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst conformed to the notion of wifedom and motherhood in three ways. First, they attempted to defend wives and mothers so as to associate their emancipatory efforts with the aspiration of better wifedom and motherhood. Specifically, Mary Wollstonecraft defended wives and mothers from criticism and argued that their errors were the outcome of the flawed educational system that they received while Emmeline Pankhurst, or more inclusively the WSPU propaganda, defended their rights claiming that the current status of wifedom and motherhood was a disgrace to the nation. This came at a time when the role of women as wives and mothers was largely emphasized. Second, they both claimed that women's emancipation was the only solution to an improved wifedom and motherhood. Third, the two feminists displayed themselves as examples of good wives and mothers so as to make their claims more engaging and convincing. Their conformity to notions of wifedom and motherhood did not negate their ability to be politically active wives and mothers, it only asserted their capacity of maintaining a home and raising children during that activism. Mary Wollstonecraft's conformity was well received by the press while Emmeline Pankhurst's daughters, contemporaries, followers and even opponents testified to her affectionate wifely and motherly nature.

Chapter 2: Dressed in Conformity

In the previous chapter, I argued that Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst have conformed to ideals that are traditionally²⁶⁴ linked to women such as wifehood and motherhood. In this chapter, however, I will discuss the two feminists' strategic conformity to 'femininity'. To begin with, I will present prevailing notions of femininity in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Subsequently, I will illustrate the two feminists' stance on femininity and compare their different outlooks. Lastly, I will review opinions of Emmeline Pankhurst's contemporaries about her femininity.

1. Ideals of Femininity in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Britain

In the eighteenth century²⁶⁵, women acquired their knowledge about female proper behavior and the norms according to which their conduct was judged from their parents and from discerning the conduct of other people in social gatherings, for example. Besides, these women were attentive to religious lectures which preached the principles of a righteous life and gradually became familiar with standards of femininity through print. During the early eighteenth century, the print industry thrived enormously with female readers becoming one of its significant consumers. This reading tendency encouraged the provision of a print material that targeted female readership primarily. The print materials reacted to shifting conceptions of women's social role and helped in shaping them. Hence, eighteenth-century female readers were flooded with instruction on the right and appropriate conduct (Tague 18). Women were the target of a new urge to reformation. Unlike the seventeenth century in

²⁶⁴ These ideals were emphasized as female ideals in both the 18th and 19th centuries. Refer to the previous chapters for more details.

²⁶⁵ Tague, Ingrid H. *Women of Quality Accepting and Contesting Ideals of Femininity in England, 1690-1760*. Boydell Press, 2002.

which women were supposed to be precarious, unbalanced and sexually unrestrained, eighteenth-century women were supposed to safeguard “the moral order” (Tague 19).

One example of a print material which aimed at instructing women to be more feminine was Dr. James Fordyce²⁶⁶ *Sermons to Young Women*. In his sermons, Dr. Fordyce asserted that a masculine woman was typically a disagreeable person. Dr. Fordyce admitted being stunned by both effeminate men and masculine women. Meanwhile, a masculine woman was defined as one who cast all the beautiful gentleness of her sex and imitated the bold defying attitudes of men. Although feminine dress was indispensable for feminine women, it became useless once the character of a woman was masculine according to Dr. Fordyce. The change should be brought from within. Besides, while effeminate men could be appealing to some women, masculine women, or ‘amazons’ as they were dubbed, will always be disagreeable to men (Fordyce 78-80).

In his *Letter of Advice to a Young Lady, on her Affecting Masculine Airs*, Samuel Richardson²⁶⁷ blamed women for their tendency to emulate the conduct of men and thus acquire a certain masculinity which was offensive to both their natural agreeable gentleness and gender. More particularly, Richardson found his niece’s newly exercised diversion of horse-riding insulting. Once riding, a woman can definitely be confused with men for she stops resembling a modest lady and fails to resemble a pleasant man. Nevertheless, Richardson provided his nephew with the ultimate foundation of femininity “whatever is soft, tender, and modest, renders your sex amiable” (39-40). In contrast, whatever is daring,

²⁶⁶ Fordyce, James. *Sermons to Young Women, Volume 1*. 14th ed., St. Paul's Church Yard, 1814.

²⁶⁷ Richardson, Samuel. “Letter of Advice to a Young Lady, on Her Affecting Masculine Airs. London Universal Letter-Writer: Or, Whole Art of Polite Correspondence, Crosby & Co., 1802, pp. 31–32.

independent and judicious is man-related characteristics that women should avoid. Men did not wish to see women with masculine traits for the more women were feminine, the more they became charming and agreeable in the eyes of men and vice versa (40). Thus, according to Samuel Richardson, a feminine woman was chiefly modest, gentle, affectionate. However, if we take into consideration the masculine traits he wanted women to avoid, we can also add courageous, autonomous and rational.

Concerning dress, Dr. James Fordyce described the ideal dress of a woman as simple but incredibly attractive and beautiful. This dress should represent solemnity to the person. Solemnity is a kind of divine costume that is void of exhibitions, ample, homemade and resilient. It should be destined to preserve women from the harms of the world and to conceal the bareness of her soul. The dress should be appropriate for daily wear, modest and very beautiful. In short, “indispensable and becoming, that she who is without it has been ever deemed, by the virtuous and wise, and object of deformity, loathing and wretchedness²⁶⁸” (93-4). Thus, the perfect dress for eighteenth-century women, was plain, modest but most importantly charming and pleasant.

During the nineteenth century, femininity was a set of morals, manners and qualities that women were supposed to possess. For instance, being a good, compassionate and virtuous wife or mother were some of the qualities of a feminine woman according to nineteenth-century conduct books²⁶⁹. However, since I already discussed the latter qualities in previous chapters, I will emphasize other feminine qualities in this chapter such as delicacy and feminine dress.

²⁶⁸ Op.cit.

²⁶⁹ See for example the works of Sarah Stickney Ellis.

Indeed, Sarah Stickney Ellis²⁷⁰ asserted that the chief quality that crowns the female character is delicacy. Particularly, Ellis admired a certain type of genuine delicacy; one which is equally exhibited to women as well as to men. She thus contested any type of fake delicacy which is solely aimed at impressing men by faking modesty and timidity. Besides, a genuinely delicate woman is one who fulfills her duties and is ready to talk, once needed, of course, with solemnity and gentleness of topics that she would otherwise be embarrassed to discuss when pretending delicacy. A delicate woman would also:

confer a benefit without wounding the feelings of another ... understands also how, and when to receive one-that delicacy which can give alms without display, advice without assumption; and which pains not the most humble or susceptible being in creation. This is the delicacy which forms so important a part of good taste, that where it does not exist as a natural instinct, it is taught as the first principle of good manners, and considered as the universal passport to good society (81).

Accordingly, Sarah Stickney Ellis emphasized the importance of the genuine and natural delicacy in the female character. Nevertheless, when a woman does not naturally possess delicacy, she should learn it. In other words, Ellis was suggesting that in the absence of a genuine and natural delicacy, women should still pretend and fake delicacy.

Moreover, in her discussion of the study of science, Sarah Stickney Ellis asserted that although women are not expected to frequently attend science lectures let alone to teach science, they could still benefit from some science classes if they are partially equipped with

²⁷⁰Ellis, Sarah Stickney. *The Daughters of England: Their Position in Society, Character & Responsibilities*. D. Appleton & co. 1843.

some prior knowledge. However, women should preserve their delicacy by avoiding thorough exploration of the subject or “approaching too near the professor’s chair” (42). In fact, a slender understanding of science is the ‘recommended’ dose for women (42). Thus, women had to be delicate in order to be feminine. This delicacy was not exclusive to the delicacy of feelings but extended to behavior. Studying too much science, for instance, was deemed indelicate for women desiring to be feminine.

Furthermore, a delicate woman should have a passion for poetry. In fact, while men were supposed to forgo their love of poetry for more practical and material concerns of real life, women were expected to embrace their love of poetry and strengthen it for they were sensible creatures. According to Sarah Stickney Ellis, a nineteenth-century writer of conduct books, “for woman to cast away the love of poetry, is to pervert from their natural course the sweetest and loveliest tendencies of a truly feminine mind, to destroy the brightest charm which can adorn her intellectual character, to blight the fairest rose in her wreath of youthful beauty” (73). Hence, admiring poetry was one of the qualities of a delicate woman who possesses a genuinely feminine intellect. Besides, the latter rhetoric of femininity emphasized women’s sensibility and men’s rationality and thus stressed a different set of behavior for men and women. The latter examples provide but few insights of the manners and qualities that a delicate woman should possess.

Aside from delicacy, feminine dress was the prime manifestation of a feminine woman. In this chapter, feminine dress is of a particular importance since I would argue that Emmeline Pankhurst and the rest of the WSPU organizers conformed to femininity through feminine clothing. As could be expected, feminine dress in the nineteenth century was

designed by fashion, therefore, it was constantly changing and evolving. According to Sarah Stickney Ellis,

Nineteenth-century fashion was random and miscalculated. Chiefly, fashion sets the following requirements in dress such as: the woman of sallow complexion must wear the same colour as the Hebe; the contracted or misshapen forehead must be laid as bare as that which displays the fairest page of beauty; the form with square and awkward shoulders must wear the same costume as that which boasts the contour of the graces; and, oh! Most pitiful of all, old age must be “pranked up” in the light drapery, the flowers and gauds of youth! (127)

Sarah Stickney Ellis lamented the presence of a single and unique fashion for all women regardless of the particularities of their bodies. Besides, she contested the ‘fashionable waist’ that existed at the time. Women were supposed to have a significantly small waist, one which is neither natural nor healthy (127). Moreover, Ellis claimed that any woman with candid opinion on the subject of fashion will realize by herself that exposing a shoulder is both indelicate and dreadful. While choosing their dress, women should aspire to become more attractive and pleasant and not merely ‘visible and noticeable’. Lastly, Ellis affirmed the necessity of conforming to fashion to some extent. Nevertheless, women should still be selective about the kind of fashionable dress that they choose so as not to jeopardize their modesty or their refinement (128).

Concerning fashion in the nineteenth century, Caroline Goldthorpe²⁷¹ argued that fashionable dress became international and throughout the nineteenth century, English fashion was considerably inspired by the French one. From 1837 to 1877, fashionable women pursued artificial silhouette that was shaped by different undergarments. These undergarments were created to provide extra volume to one part of the body or condense unwanted ampleness in another (Goldthorpe 11-23). One example of the undergarments that helped women obtain a fashionable and feminine silhouette was ‘the corset’. Despite the fact that tight-lacers were blamed for utilizing the corset to provoke sexual appeals, not using a corset may render a woman suspect of sexual looseness or moral leniency (Kortsch 56). In fact, Patricia A. Cunningham²⁷² claimed that this might even suggest that a woman was a prostitute for they wore no corsets at all so as to lure new clients (23). Nevertheless, when fastened to the ‘proper’ dimension, the corset embodied refinement and propriety. However, the corset’s initial use was to outline and exhibit “the feminine form to the greatest advantage” (Kortsch 56).

Moreover, a feminine dress was never complete without headwear. During the early Victorian age, all women, whether wealthy or poor, used to wear hats before leaving their houses. In fact, most women wore a smooth cap of linen or muslin at home. Nonetheless, in formal evening events, rich women usually preferred to replace hats with other hair accessories such as “feathers, flowers, ribbons, decorative combs” (Bix 40)²⁷³. Thus, both eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’ conduct books stressed the following ideals of

²⁷¹ Goldthorpe, Caroline. *From Queen to Empress: Victorian Dress 1837-1877*. New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988.

²⁷² Cunningham, Patricia A. “Introduction: Fashion, Health, and Beauty.” *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920: Politics, Health, and Art*. Kent, the Kent State University Press, 2003.

²⁷³ Bix, Cynthia Overbeck. *Petticoats and Frock Coats: Revolution and Victorian Age Fashions from the 1770s to the 1860s*. Twenty-First Century Books, 2012.

femininity: delicacy, sensibility, softness and reserve. The latter qualities coupled with feminine dress was the ultimate representation of femininity. Nevertheless, women had to avoid appearing masculine by escaping all masculine traits and activities such as physical sports and profound inquiry into scientific subjects.

Femininity as part of Mary Wollstonecraft's Rebellion and Emmeline Pankhurst's Conformity 'Dress, physical decoration, delicacy and sensibility' these were all notions that Mary Wollstonecraft discussed about 'femininity'. On a personal level, Mary Wollstonecraft conformed to the dress code of the eighteenth century and her style was no different than any middle-class woman of the time. Despite her conformist efforts, she was not the least satisfied with ideals of femininity in her society. In fact, Wollstonecraft criticized clothing styles of the time and hoped for a change of fashion. Indeed, in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft condemned conduct books' emphasis on dress and largely opposed their ideals of femininity. Consequently, Wollstonecraft attempted to reform eighteenth-century notions of femininity instead of conforming to them. However, I will still analyze her statements about femininity and attempt to compare her stand with that of Emmeline Pankhurst.

In Wollstonecraft's opinion, ignorance was the ultimate reason for women's wild keenness for dress. It engendered the pride and egotism from which the latter keenness instinctively arose, thus, eliminating any opportunity for evolution and development²⁷⁴. Mary Wollstonecraft supported Jean-Jacques Rousseau's claim that women's physical adornment rendered them more agreeable. For this particular reason, however, Wollstonecraft wished to

²⁷⁴ "Dressing up".

preserve young women from the infectious attachment to dress. Particularly, weak women were more prone to be enslaved by their adoration to physical beauty. Women who sought to be agreeable using only their physical charms, and thus neglected the intellectual allure, were undoubtedly weak women. Women should possess “the moral art of pleasing” which could only come from dismissing ignorance and practicing their reason and rational abilities, Wollstonecraft contended.

Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft asserted that considerations to dress, that was usually deemed a sexual tendency, was instinctive to all human beings. However, once the intellect lacks adequate development due to the exclusion of thinking, the body becomes ornamented with assiduous attention and spirit (277). Particularly, dress fondness was more prevalent in women owing to their lack of intellectual development. In fact, a discussion of a group of men usually included various topics such as commerce, political affairs and literature. Nevertheless, a discussion of a group of women usually included shallow conversation about dress since they have no interest in commerce or literature and have no appreciation to political affairs. This is “because they have not acquired a love for mankind by turning their thoughts to the grand pursuits that exalt the human race, and promote general happiness” (Wollstonecraft 277).

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft stressed that the appalling conditions of women were the result of a desire to uphold their innocence, a gentle word for ignorance. Before women attained intellectual vigor, they were pressed into embracing a false character. Starting from childhood, women were instructed that beauty was their main asset and hence the intellect adapted itself to the figure. However, men had different engagements and recreations that occupied their time and which provided the mind with a strong character. On the contrary,

women were restrained to a single quest of adoring their bodies “the most insignificant part of themselves”, a quest that absorbed all their time and energy. Nevertheless, if the minds of women were liberated from the vanity and sensibility that men imposed on them, any person would be stunned to read about women’s faults and limitations (83).

Moreover, while men attempt to emphasize their intelligence and knowledge in gatherings, women attempt to exhibit their femininity and beauty. Therefore, men consider their chief asset to be their intellect while women consider it to be beauty. Consequently, women are more anxious to decorate their bodies than developing their intellectual capacities (Wollstonecraft 278). Indeed, Wollstonecraft lamented that women sacrificed reason, physical strength and utility for ideals of beauty and femininity. She also blamed eighteenth century education for emphasizing women’s appearances instead of understanding. Most importantly, Wollstonecraft urged women to seek physical and intellectual strength and to disregard notions of femininity such as “susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste”. In her opinion, the latter phrases were but different synonyms to ‘vulnerability’. (Wollstonecraft 34).

Hence, Wollstonecraft rejected various aspects and notions of femininity. This is because men used these notions to justify and validate women’s dependency on men. Besides, she loathed the weak delicacy of mind, admirable susceptibility and gentleness of behavior which were all deemed as female traits or “sexual characteristics of the weaker sex”. Wollstonecraft affirmed that delicacy was subordinate to the virtue and that the ultimate laudable aspiration should be to acquire a “character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex” (34). Moreover, Wollstonecraft asserted that she will abstain from polishing her language and elegantly composing her phrases while defending women’s

entitlement of a rational education. Her chief aim, she emphasized, was making women more worthy of respect as members of society (34-5). Accordingly, Wollstonecraft opposed all feminine traits that targeted women's appearances and sensibility and as a result weakened and enslaved them. In fact, Wollstonecraft refused to even use an elegant and flowery language in her *Vindication*²⁷⁵ and preferred to use a more forward, logical and practical language to convey her claims.

Unfortunately, women seemed to be content and even proud to be degraded by different notions of femininity, Wollstonecraft regretted. Women attempted to exhibit their physical vulnerability by pretending to be incapable of picking up the lightest objects and were embarrassed to be seen strong and sturdy. According to Wollstonecraft, women strived to be thought feeble so as to look more feminine and at the same time use that vulnerability for reasons of cunning. Certainly, men were physically stronger than women. However, women could be strong too and could therefore support themselves financially and become truly 'autonomous', but only when they rebelled against false notions of femininity (Wollstonecraft 138).

Furthermore, some of the disadvantages that arose from women's submission to a false system of femininity was an inclination of some women to tyrannize and become cunning. Wollstonecraft claimed that women's embellishment with false charms prompted them to become despots for a while. Women's particular concern was to appear good-looking, to inspire sentiments rather than esteem and this despicable tendency ruined their character and weakened it. Besides, Wollstonecraft asserted that "Liberty is the mother of

²⁷⁵ *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

virtue, and if women be, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature” (72-3). Thus, women had to disregard notions of femininity in order to enjoy liberty.

Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft affirmed that women were born to be adorned and should not want to have esteem unless they wish to be labeled as ‘masculine’ by society (69). She admitted that women will be accused of being “unsexed” when they aim to strengthen their bodies and understandings and that femininity will be denied to them. However, Wollstonecraft believed that if women were more empowered physically and intellectually, they will possess a finer type of beauty; one that is exalted and gracious. This beauty will emerge from their “many powerful physical and moral causes”. Women will finally have the splendor and refinement that would exalt and render them more worthy of respect as human beings (254-5).

Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that Mary Wollstonecraft did not oppose women’s natural interest in dress, she merely opposed any excesses related to the matter. Furthermore, she lamented that women’s clothing and their overall femininity was given higher importance than their understanding. However, she did admire genteel women who rarely immersed in dressmaking and only employed their taste. Since these women cared less about dress, they spent less time in front of the mirror. Moreover, once they were finished arranging themselves, they would engage in other employment without worrying too much about their appearance (126).

In the case of Emmeline Pankhurst, however, feminine appearance was the main aspect of femininity that the WSPU leaders as a whole attempted to conform to. Particularly,

Emmeline Pankhurst was the best representation of feminine dress and appearance. The WSPU newspaper was filled with pictures of her and other WSPU leaders such as Christabel Pankhurst and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence wearing very genteel and feminine clothes which accentuated their feminine look and overall attractive silhouette²⁷⁶. Moreover, the WSPU newspaper largely advertised fashionable and feminine clothes. In fact, the newspaper advertised Mappin & Webb, suffragettes' jewelry collection, to its followers as well as other elegant clothes that held the colors of the suffragettes, purple, green and white (263²⁷⁷). Besides, elegant and fashionable set of coats were marketed. The models in these advertisements always wore feathered hats and appeared all fashionable and feminine²⁷⁸. They also publicized a type of practical corsets which supposedly carved the woman's body to a more attractive and feminine silhouette without the usual discomfort of corsets (*Votes for Women*²⁷⁹).

Apart from advertising feminine and fashionable clothes, the WSPU official newspaper propagated the femininity of its leaders, particularly, that of Emmeline Pankhurst. In *An Impression of Mrs. Pankhurst*²⁸⁰, an article that was published in *Votes for Women*, Emmeline Pankhurst was described as a 'summer day' owing to her tender, passionate and compelling personality. Mrs. Pankhurst was also admired by those who knew her personally

²⁷⁶ Cf. the Appendix for the supplement to *Votes for women* (October, 1907) for a picture of Emmeline Pankhurst, Supplement of January, 1908 for a picture of Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, portraits of different WSPU spokeswomen in "To Hyde Park!" *Votes for Women*, 7 May 1908, pp. 141–143. Picture of Christabel Pankhurst (October 22, 1908) p 55.

²⁷⁷ Pethick-Lawrence, Frederick W., and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editors. "Mappin and Webb." *Votes for Women*, 21 Jan. 1910, p. 263.

²⁷⁸ See for example "Simmons & Sons." *Votes for Women*, 7 Apr. 1911, p. 419. and *Votes for Women*. London, 13 Jan. 1911, p 243.

²⁷⁹ Pethick-Lawrence, Frederick W., and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editors. "Eva: Practical Corsetière." *Votes for Women*, 21 Jan. 1910, p. 263.

²⁸⁰ Pethick-Lawrence, Frederick W., and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editors. *Votes for Women*. London, 14 June. 1912.

for her gracefulness and refinement. Besides, neatness and swiftness were great assets of Mrs. Pankhurst for after a long journey of travel, she will quickly “arrange herself” and come out from the train “irreproachably tidy and delightful to look upon” (601-2). Moreover, her relaxed acceptance of recurrent losses of a package or an umbrella, her swift summer storms of resentment and the vivid glare that ensues, her pragmatic spirit and great coolness with which she deals with minor concerns, all render her a truly exceptional mate. To conclude, the article asserted that Emmeline Pankhurst “possesses the legend making quality- that is personal magnetism on a heroic scale- is indisputable” (602). Accordingly, Mrs. Pankhurst was presented by the WSPU newspaper as an ideal model of femininity. This was done through the newspaper’s emphasis on Emmeline Pankhurst’s concern with feminine appearance, her refined manners and compelling personality.

Nevertheless, feminine dress was not exclusive to the WSPU leaders, it was to be shared by the WSPU members as well. The Pankhursts encouraged suffragettes to dress femininely to discredit any allegation of masculinity. A WSPU member, Grace Roe, spoke of how the Pankhursts were very concerned with the suffragettes’ dressing style. According to Roe: “they [the Pankhursts] felt that we were doing very extreme things, therefore, we had to be very conventional and I was far more particular than I would have if I was not a suffragette”. Moreover, Roe spoke of Emmeline Pankhurst’s incredible affection and meticulous regard for garments as well as her daughter Christabel. She affirmed that Christabel too shared her mother’s great taste for clothes “we were what the Pankhursts wanted us to be and I think they were quite right,” she emphasized. They were right because

the only way to discredit critics' accusations of unfemininity was through looking feminine (Roe 00:18:10- 00:21:07²⁸¹).

As for Mrs. Pankhurst's reaction to dressing styles that did not match her taste, Roe described how she "disapproved the way somebody dresses and she says "no, no not at all" and she would turn around". When asked about the type of clothes that Mrs. Pankhurst specifically did not like, Roe replied that she disliked sweaters, particularly the ones which were short of breasts. Obviously, Mrs. Pankhurst was very conservative in her taste for dress. In fact, Roe described her as 'extremely Victorian', a description that I would not ascribe to her strategic conformity. Nevertheless, I would still argue that the leadership of the WSPU wanted to share their conventional and feminine taste for dress with the rest of the WSPU members. They encouraged and inspired the suffragettes to dress well and look their best to discredit their opponents. According to Roe: "a suffragette who knew what she was doing and this stuff, she will be the best-dressed person in the whole room, not in expensive clothes but she would know how to dress" (00:18:10- 00:21:07).

The feminine appearance of both the WSPU leaders and their followers was also well propagated in several demonstrations and processions that the WSPU organized. The most notorious of these processions were the Women's Coronation Procession of 17 June 1911. About forty thousand suffragists paraded in a seven-mile-long procession. They were clothed in historical outfits and organized by their suffrage union's membership. Moreover, around seven hundred suffrage prisoners paraded in a Prisoners' procession, all clothed in white

²⁸¹ Roe, Grace. *Oral Evidence on the Suffragette and Suffragist Movements: the Brian Harrison interviews*. By Brian Harrison. 23 Sep 1974. The Women's Library.

(Green 78-9²⁸²). The procession, which was arranged by the WSPU, was an exhibition of the femininity of suffragists and suffragettes alike. Not only that the procession discredited any allegations of masculinity, it also proved suffragists' impressive number of supporters and their ability to unite and arrange such an event. Pictures of the feminine and majestic parade of women were published in *Votes for women* along with positive press opinions on the procession²⁸³.

Accordingly, while Emmeline Pankhurst embraced some of the feminine ideals of her society, Mary Wollstonecraft criticized them. Certainly, Wollstonecraft's dressing habits was similar to her contemporaries and she therefore conformed to the dress code of her society. Nevertheless, in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she spoke against all aspects of femininity of the eighteenth century. This included, delicacy, sensuality, self-adoration and excessive attention to dress and ornaments. The reason Wollstonecraft did not conform to ideals of femininity, despite her conformity to morality, wifehood and motherhood, was her belief that such ideals were enslaving women and holding them back from emancipation. Therefore, she had to condemn and oppose such ideals to advance her emancipatory claims. In other words, there was no need for any strategic conformity to ideals of femininity because such conformity will only harm her cause and will not promote it in anyway.

As for Emmeline Pankhurst, strategic conformity to feminine dress and appearance was extremely useful in discrediting her critics' accusations of masculinity. Around 1912, the suffragettes were engaged in more militant acts that involved arson, throwing stones at

²⁸² Green, Barbara. *Spectacular Confessions: Autobiography, Performative Activism, and the Sites of Suffrage, 1905-1938*. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1997.

²⁸³ See "Echoes of the Procession". *Votes for Women*, 30 June 1911, p. 641.

Westminster Parliament and many other acts that were considered as violent²⁸⁴ and masculine by the press. Consequently, the WSPU leaders wished to present a feminine image of the suffragettes so as to alleviate criticisms of masculinity. In fact, the WSPU leaders and members rebelled against certain feminine ideals that were to restrict their militant campaigns but conformed to feminine dress that would further their cause. Certainly, feminine women in the nineteenth century were supposed to be fragile, delicate and quiet. The suffragettes, however, were strong, rough and loud, hence, feminine dress was their only chance to reclaim their femininity in front of the press and the general public.

2. The Elegant, Delicate and Genteel ‘Emmeline Pankhurst’

In this section, I will review the reception of Emmeline Pankhurst’s²⁸⁵ conformity to certain aspects of femininity by both her contemporaries and union members. To achieve this, I will depend largely on the oral evidence of two suffragettes: Sybil Morrison and Sybil Thorndike. This oral evidence is part of the Brian Harrison interviews that were conducted with the suffragettes few decades after the enfranchisement of women. I will also review Rebecca West’s opinion of Emmeline Pankhurst in her “A Reed of Steel” and Teresa Billington-Greig’s “Emmeline Pankhurst. The Home”. Unfortunately, this section will not include the reception of Mary Wollstonecraft’s views on femininity. This is because she did not attempt to conform to any ideals of femininity in her works and therefore, it is difficult to speak of any positive reviews. Thus, this section will only discuss reviews about Emmeline Pankhurst.

²⁸⁴ For more details, see the chapter of “Emmeline Pankhurst’s Struggle for the Vote”.

²⁸⁵ And the rest of the WSPU leaders by extension.

When interviewed in 1975, Miss Sybil Morrison²⁸⁶, a former suffragette, spoke about her first impression of Mrs. Pankhurst. To Miss Morrison, Mrs. Pankhurst was a marvelous and extraordinary speaker. Miss Morrison also believed that Mrs. Pankhurst and Lloyd George were “at the top of best class speakers, they came very quietly and suddenly” (00:04:38- 00:05:06). Mrs. Pankhurst had a pleasant voice and was very attractive and good-looking, Miss Morrison judged. When asked whether Emmeline Pankhurst was ‘beautifully dressed’, Miss Morrison asserted that she “most certainly” was. She also added that anti-suffragettes’ caricatures attempted to portray the suffragettes as unpleasant and unfeminine but this was far from the truth (00:05:08-00:06:20). Thus, Miss Morrison admitted being charmed by Emmeline Pankhurst’s voice, beauty and femininity. Mrs. Pankhurst’s image of the talented, beautiful and feminine suffrage leader was particularly important for young women interested in suffrage. I would argue that a number of them were even prompted to join the WSPU or at least were more encouraged to join the union due to the impressive image of Emmeline Pankhurst and the rest of the WSPU leadership.

Surely, certain suffragettes such as Sybil Thorndike joined the WSPU after seeing Mrs. Pankhurst in person. When she first saw Emmeline Pankhurst, Sybil Thorndike found the leader of the Women’s Social and Political Union “wonderful, she hardly raised her voice at all and she spoke beautifully, beautifully chosen words ... oh she had a lovely voice and I was completely captivated by her, and, of course, I joined the party then” (00:2:00- 00:2:36). Thus, Sybil Thorndike was so impressed by Emmeline Pankhurst’s voice and beauty that she decided to join her union. Moreover, Thorndike admitted being “bouleversé” by the

²⁸⁶ Morrison, Sybil. *Oral Evidence on the Suffragette and Suffragist Movements: the Brian Harrison interviews*. By Brian Harrison. 3 Apr 1975. The Women’s Library.

charismatic personality of Emmeline Pankhurst (00:00:00-00:00:30). However, when asked whether Mrs. Pankhurst was a bit of an actress and performer, Thorndike asserted that she was genuine and natural. She definitely managed to deliver her ideas in a very admirable way, without using her hands often and certainly without any acting (00:2:42-00:3:05).

Nevertheless, the same could not be said about her daughters according to Sybil Thorndike²⁸⁷. She claimed that Emmeline Pankhurst's daughters used their hands a lot while speaking and Christabel, in particular, was a great performer (00:03:06-00:03:24). Thorndike repeatedly claimed that Emmeline Pankhurst was a wonderful speaker with a captivating voice. However, her daughter Christabel was an actress who liked to advertise herself, her beauty and even her clothes. Furthermore, the interviewer asked Thorndike about her opinion of the dramatic and beautiful dresses that Christabel Pankhurst and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence always wore along with big colored hats. Particularly, the interviewer wanted to know whether Miss Christabel and the rest of the WSPU leaders were merely acting, he argued, "I think they were actors and actresses you know these people". Thorndike agreed with him especially when it came to Miss Pankhurst (00:31:35 -00:33:05). Thus, Sybil Thorndike, a former suffragette, emphasized aspects of Emmeline Pankhurst's femininity as well as the rest of the WSPU leaders. However, while she perceived Mrs. Pankhurst's beauty as genuine and solid, she thought of other WSPU leaders such as Christabel Pankhurst as mere performers. One proof of this is that Mrs. Pankhurst was less demonstrative than the others, a behavior that implied true delicacy and refinement.

²⁸⁷ Thorndike, Sybil. *Oral Evidence on the Suffragette and Suffragist Movements: the Brian Harrison interviews*. By Brian Harrison. 2 Dec 1975. The Women's Library.

In the 1930s, Rebecca West²⁸⁸ wrote an essay about Emmeline Pankhurst entitled “A Reed of Steel” in which she described Mrs. Pankhurst’s character, appearance and principles. Rebecca West was a journalist active from 1911 to 1917, a feminist and an opponent of the WSPU moral claims and ideals. Although she was opposed to Mrs. Pankhurst’s overall policy, West still admired and respected her. For West, Emmeline Pankhurst was a very unique and charming woman. In fact, West argued that “there has been no other woman like Emmeline Pankhurst. She was beautiful. Her pale face, with its delicate square jaw and rounded temples; recalled the pansy by its shape and a kind of velvety bloom on the expression”. Moreover, Rebecca avowed that Mrs. Pankhurst managed to clothe her firm petite body with the stylishness of a Frenchwoman and the gracefulness of a nun (243). Hence, even Mrs. Pankhurst’s opponents could not but be charmed by her beauty, dressing style and refinement.

Furthermore, Rebecca West asserted that Emmeline Pankhurst was incredibly courageous; a courage that was largely inspired by the legitimacy of her cause. Aside from being beautiful, brave and sympathetic, she was energetic and her voice was beautiful and fabulous. When she gave speeches, “one felt, as she lifted up her hoarse, sweet voice on the platform, that she was trembling like a reed. Only the reed was of steel, and it was tremendous” (243). Similar to Sybil Morrison and Sybil Thorndike, Rebecca West was impressed by Emmeline Pankhurst’s voice which was both feminine and deep. A voice which succeeded in combining beauty and strength at the same time.

²⁸⁸ Op.cit.

Additionally, Teresa Billington-Greig, a former suffragette, found Emmeline Pankhurst an ideal woman, incredibly good-looking, very kind and influential. Billington-Greig joined the WSPU in 1904 and was a prominent member until 1907 when she disagreed with Mrs. Pankhurst and had to leave the union (ODNB). As a leader, Emmeline Pankhurst was seen by Billington-Greig as an accomplished politician, a committed reformer but merciless tyrant. Certainly, Teresa Billington-Greig disagreed with Emmeline Pankhurst's autocratic character, yet, she still recognized her personal charms (94-95)²⁸⁹.

Likewise, the WSPU leaders were most probably successful in exhibiting a feminine image of their union and its members through the multiple processions that they organized. Their success becomes more evident after we observe press opinions of the time. Concerning the success of June 1911 procession, the WSPU newspaper published press reviews of the most famous newspapers in Britain, all of which seemed to agree on the success of the procession. *The Saturday Review*, for instance, asserted that the procession ascertained that Britain is "on the side of the suffragettes". On the other hand, *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* assured that the procession was so huge that it ought to have captivated the worst ardent and intolerant opponents of the movement with a clue on the "driving force behind the suffrage agitation". *The Star*, however, considered the procession:

The most beautiful demonstration ever seen in the streets of London A triumph of organising ability. It was a notable achievement to marshal with complete precision and order 40,000 women in a procession five miles long

²⁸⁹ Op.cit.

which took two hours and a half to pass a given point. It proves that women as well as men can combine together in the common pursuit of a high ideal (641²⁹⁰).

Indeed, the WSPU procession seemed to capture the eye and change the mind of the press after all. The suffragettes were finally able to veto accusations of masculinity and disorder²⁹¹.

To conclude, Emmeline Pankhurst was largely successful in drawing her supporters' attention to her femininity, refinement and genteelness. She discredited her critics' accusations of masculinity and roughness and even prompted some of her opponents such as Rebecca West and Teresa Billington-Greig to admire her beauty and elegance. Moreover, the testimony of Sybil Thorndike asserted that Mrs. Pankhurst's femininity influenced some women to join the Women's Social and Political Union. To summarize, Emmeline Pankhurst and the rest of the WSPU leaders conformed to femininity through advertising feminine clothes in their newspaper, wearing feminine and fashionable clothes themselves and through pressing upon their union members to dress femininely. Mary Wollstonecraft, however, chose to denounce feminine ideals of the eighteenth century since, in her opinion; they were destructive of female character and only served to further women's subjection.

²⁹⁰ Pethick-Lawrence, Frederick W., and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editors. "Echoes of the Procession". *Votes for Women*, 30 June 1911, p. 641.

²⁹¹ Suffragettes were very often accused of disorder due to their militancy.

Part IV: Conformity in Rhetoric and Practice, a Precarious Balance?

While the previous part dealt with why and how the Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst conformed to notions of wifedom, motherhood and femininity, this part deals first with how Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst conformed to notions of morality. Second, it attempts to assess Wollstonecraft and Mrs. Pankhurst's use of both rebellion and conformity.

The first chapter "Defending Morality" stresses Mary Wollstonecraft's moral rhetoric and Christabel Pankhurst's moral campaign against venereal disease as part of their conformity to certain notions of morality. Besides, the chapter highlights some examples of conformity from the wider propaganda of the WSPU. Lastly, the chapter examines the contemporary reception of Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst's moral claims.

The second chapter "Rebellion or Conformity?" attempts to compare the ideals that Mary Wollstonecraft, Emmeline Pankhurst and Christabel Pankhurst embraced in public with the ideals which they held in their personal life. It also presents historians' reviews of Wollstonecraft and Pankhurst's conformity. Lastly, the chapter stresses both rebellion and conformity as possible political instruments in the hands of feminists.

Chapter 1: Defending Morality

In the previous chapters, I stressed Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's conformity to particular notions of wifehood, motherhood and femininity. In this chapter, however, I will stress how Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst conformed to some moral notions of their societies. Whether discussing the Georgian or the Victorian age, morality was more closely associated with the image of women. In fact, in both ages it was feared that women's emancipation would negatively affect women's morality²⁹². Nevertheless, in this chapter, I would argue that Mary Wollstonecraft and the leadership of the WSPU as a whole conformed to morality in order to advance their emancipatory claims. I particularly chose to compare Wollstonecraft's moral claims in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* with that of Christabel Pankhurst in her *Plain Facts about a Great Evil* for more precision and clarity. Miss Pankhurst's book is a collection of articles that were first published in the WSPU newspaper, hence, the book is part of the WSPU propaganda. To begin with, I shall discuss constructions of morality in both the Georgian and Victorian era. Subsequently, I shall explore the ways in which Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst used morality to advance their cause. Lastly, I shall examine the contemporary reception of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* and Christabel Pankhurst's *Plain Facts*.

1. Morality in the Georgian and Victorian Age

In the eighteenth century, conduct books did not simply prescribe guidelines for female propriety. They also attempted to establish an "orthodox sexual morality" and firm rules of behavior. Women's morality, as proposed in these conduct books, was categorized by

²⁹² Cf. the chapter "Criticism to Women's Rights Campaigners".

a number of qualities such as: modesty, self-control, docility, obedience and delicacy and most significantly ‘chastity’. Bridget Hill²⁹³ claimed that these qualities were utilized in a fashion which demonstrated that women’s morality was understood almost entirely in sexual means, based on sexual distinctions between men and women (17).

In *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady*, 1746, Wetenhall Wilkes²⁹⁴ argued that chastity was a virtue incomparable with any other virtues. A woman who observed the decrees of such a virtue “flourishes like a rose in June, with all her virgin graces about her—sweet to the sense, and lovely to the eye” (100-1), however, an unchaste woman merits only contempt and shame. Chastity intensifies every other virtue in the human being and liberates all noble endowments. Chastity was the greatest element in a woman’s honor, thus, the faintest blemish on a woman’s honor was unforgivable. It was this quality of chastity that made the male sex regard the female sex and value it. Chastity, Wilkes explained, was a kind of swift and subtle sentiments in the spirit that makes a woman shrivel and retreat from all that is immoral or malicious (101).

Nevertheless, Wetenhall Wilkes warned women against pretentious modesty, which instead of promoting their character would earn them people’s attention, who would then discern and criticize their behavior. Acting virtuously could be exaggerated, for instance, pretending not to laugh at an amusing and pure joke was an absurd pretension and insincerity; one which was usually exposed. Sincere amusements never conflict with genuine modesty, however, a pretentious appearance of shyness and severity was always questioned. Therefore, women should not receive men’s admiration with anger and contempt but rather with

²⁹³ Hill, Bridget. *Eighteenth-century Women: An Anthology*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1984.

²⁹⁴ Wilkes, Wetenhall. *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady*. London, C. Hitch, 1746.

simplicity and courtesy (101-2). Modesty did not imply toughness and harshness to whomever addresses a woman with a gentle word, or reveal a wild passion for her “or take any other little freedoms that are not rude” (102). A woman should always respond with calmness and with no reserve to the latter endeavors. Such conduct protected women against impudent assaults and pitiful discourses and preserved their conscience in a pure and tranquil state.

Immodest women, on the other hand, were a type of freaks, deformed from their original state. Disgrace became the companion of a dishonored woman. It all starts with wanting to fulfill dissolute appetites and ends with imprudence and remorse. Nevertheless, Wilkes wished to warn women against all kinds of frivolities of dress, posture or dialogue which might stain the chastity of their thinking. Women who attempt to charm men with their pretentious costume and seduce them were as unchaste as women who commit fornication. Hence, Wilkes advised women not to exert a great effort in exhibiting their external beauty and allow their clothes to exhibit the purity and easiness of their hearts (103-5²⁹⁵).

Likewise, Mr. John Gregory addressed his two daughters in what was published later under the title *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774), Mr. Gregory began his letter asserting that he neither counted women as “domestic drudges” nor as “slaves” of men’s desire, rather they were men’s partners and equals. Nonetheless, a particular “propriety” of behavior seemed more compatible with the female sex. Apart from certain universal regulations of proper behavior that both the male and female sex were concerned with, Mr. Gregory preferred to devote his advice to ‘the proper female conduct’ that his daughters

²⁹⁵ Op.cit.

had to pursue for a more honorable and joyful life (9). Most importantly, his instructions would direct his daughters to what he believed “those virtues and accomplishments which render you most respectable and most amiable in the eyes of my own sex” (10).

Mr. Gregory claimed that one significant attraction in women’s person was their “modest reserve”, a timid gracefulness that evades people’s looks and is perturbed even by looks of fondness. Of course, this does not mean that they should stop reacting at all to admiration because this renders them less agreeable according to Mr. Gregory. If a girl lost her ability to blush, then she had failed to possess the most influential trait of beauty. Incredible sensibility was perhaps a weakness and an impediment for the male character but it was bizarrely charming in the female sex. When a woman blushed, this did not mean that she made a fault that made her ashamed, instead, ‘nature’ enabled her of doing so despite the fact that she committed no crime and compelled men to adore her for such a trait (20). In fact, Mr. Gregory defined blushing as “far from being necessarily an attendant on guilt, that it is the usual companion of innocence” (20-1²⁹⁶). Thus, modesty was one central trait of morality, one that women had to comply with in their quest for the praise and adoration of men.

Furthermore, one of the requirements of female modesty, in Mr. Gregory’s opinion, was silence in gatherings, particularly in big gatherings. Genteel people would certainly not judge women’s silence for dryness. In fact, a woman was capable of perfectly taking part in a conversation with facial expressions only and a good observer would not fail to notice this. Most importantly, women should be careful not to exhibit their intelligence because they will be assumed to have deemed themselves superior over the other members of the gathering.

²⁹⁶ Gregory, John. *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters*. Dublin, Thomas Ewing and Caleb Jenkin, 1774.

However, in the case of women who possessed some education, they ought to be discreet about it, particularly in front of men, who usually felt intimidated in the presence of highly educated women. A man of good sense and sincerity would appreciate and value a woman's education but where such a man was to be found! (21-3). Further, once in company, women should be aware that "the art of pleasing in conversation consists in making the company pleased with themselves. You will more readily hear them talk yourselves into their good graces" (23). Thus, according to Mr. Gregory, women should conceal their intellectual abilities so that men would not be disturbed. They should also please men by remaining silent and carefully listen to what 'men' had to say. In short, he claimed that women should not exhibit any sign of superiority in front of men; they should show inferiority instead through their silence and art of pleasing.

Moreover, Mr. Gregory argued that men would sometimes accuse women of prudery which was generally synonymous with pretentious delicacy. He claimed that he did not want women to fake delicacy but to truly own it. Nevertheless, if it must be, it was better to fake it and appear silly than repulsive. He also asserted:

The men will complain of your reserve. They will assure you, that a franker behaviour would make you more amiable: but, trust me, they are not sincere when they tell you so. —I acknowledge, that on some occasions it might render you more agreeable as companions, but it would make you less amiable as women: an important distinction, which many of your sex are not aware of (25-6).

Accordingly, Mr. Gregory deemed delicacy in women as 'essential', essential to the extent of preferring pretentious delicacy over indelicacy. On the whole, conduct books'

writers perceived women to have a better morality than men although they still deemed it necessary to teach them how to be modest, delicate and chaste.

In the nineteenth century, however, particularly during the Victorian age, it was taken for granted that women had better morality compared to men. Conduct books no longer focused on advising women to be modest and moral, they just assumed that they were. Women were rather advised to hold on to their sacred sphere of the 'home'. Indeed, the image of the ideal woman, especially upper and middle-class woman, came to be closely associated with the home. Nineteenth-century household ethics distinguished mothers and wives as guards of the household and society's morals (Abramovitz 18)²⁹⁷. A classic image of the ideal Victorian woman was best introduced in Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House* poem.

In fact, the domestic ideology which prevailed conduct books in the nineteenth century upheld the idea that every woman was a wife and a mother. Surely, marriage became the standard for most women in the nineteenth century since wage labor allowed more men and women to get married (Kent 184)²⁹⁸. An extract of the *Western Medical Reformer* clearly explained this ideology of domesticity:

Woman-the good government of families leads to the comforts of communities, and the welfare of states. Of every domestic circle, woman is the center. Home, that scene of purest and dearest joy -home is the empire of woman. There she plans, directs, performs: the acknowledged source of dignity and felicity. Where

²⁹⁷ For more information on how the image of a woman came to be associated with the home see Mimi Abramovitz's *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the present* "A Woman's Place is the Home".

²⁹⁸ Kent, Susan Kingsley. *Gender and Power in Britain 1640-1990*. London, Routledge, 1999.

female virtue is most pure, female sense most improved, female deportment most correct, there is most propriety of social manners. The early years of childhood_ those most precious years of life and opening reason-are confined to woman's superintendence. She, therefore, may be presumed to lay the foundation of all the virtue and all the wisdom that enrich the world (208²⁹⁹).

Hence, the image of women in the Victorian age became closely associated with the home, family and child care. The Victorian woman was depicted as the best superintendent of the house and the offspring. She was virtuous, pure and respectable and, as a result, she was most qualified to properly raise a moral and wise nation.

Furthermore, the Victorian woman was 'passionless' by nature according to medical men, researchers and writers who managed to inculcate this belief in the English society by the nineteenth century. Indeed, Susan Kingsley Kent argued that whereas in the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century, women were supposed to restrain their passions and protect their chastity, by the end of the eighteenth century, women were passionless and their chastity was guaranteed as an extension of their instinctive innocence, an outcome of their innate uprightness, which was a result of their absolute absence of sexual appeal (147). Accordingly, honorable women in the Victorian age came to be seen as naturally 'innocent and moral'.

Additionally, in *Sesame and Lilies: Two Lectures Delivered at Manchester* in 1864, John Ruskin³⁰⁰ claimed that men and women had distinct characters and accordingly had distinct functions. On the one hand, the power of men was dynamic, broad-minded and self-

²⁹⁹ Op.cit.

³⁰⁰ Op.cit.

protective. He was exceedingly the achiever, the maker, the inventor and the protector. On the other hand, the power of women was intended for command, not for the combat. Her intelligence was one for agreeable organization, planning and resolution. Her ultimate role was honor. Her status and dwelling shielded her from all menace and trial. While the man exposed himself to the outer world with all its dangers and temptations, he was liable to fault and misguidance. However, the man protected the woman from such hazards within the confines of his home, which was commanded by her (90-1). Indeed, this was the real essence of a home, a dwelling of peace, a shield “not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division” (91).

Besides, the real wife was the queen of the home and the reason for its joy. Therefore, the home was the woman’s proper sphere and essence of authority. When a woman commanded the house, everything ought to be well because this woman had to be:

Enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise-wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fail from his side: wise, not with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service - the true changefulness of woman (92³⁰¹).

In short, John Ruskin described the good Victorian woman as the perfect manager of the home because of her honor, goodness, righteousness and wisdom. In summary, women were perceived to have instinctively higher moral sense in both the Georgian and the Victorian age. However, eighteenth century moral writers’ inclusive instructions on the

³⁰¹ Ruskin, John. *Sesame and Lilies: Two Lectures Delivered at Manchester*. New York, John Wiley & Son, 1867.

proper behavior of a modest and delicate woman, as one of the constructions of morality, imply that they did not exactly trust that all women were by nature modest and delicate. Nevertheless, it is clear that they believed that women were naturally chaster than men. Nonetheless, in the nineteenth century, moral writers clearly trusted women's moral superiority and took it for granted; they sought to hold women responsible for the morality of their home, husbands and children. They aimed to associate women with the homely sphere because of their superior morality. On the one hand, keeping women in the 'home' allowed them to guard the morals of their household. On the other hand, women were better protected in their 'homely sphere' from the immoral exterior world and they could thus remain untainted.

2. Conforming to Morality

Since women's morality received great attention from moral writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries alike, I would argue that both Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst strategically used certain moral notions in order to advance their emancipatory demands. In fact, I would argue that the two feminists conformed to morality so as to support their claims for emancipation; rendering them less radical and more in conformity with the pre-existing image of moral women. Nevertheless, I would like to specify that in the case of Mary Wollstonecraft, conformity to morality was only displayed in her writing. However, her real life which was exposed after her death revealed a different set of morality, one in which Wollstonecraft rebelled against eighteenth century moral values³⁰².

³⁰² For more details, see "A Rebel in Love" in the chapter "Mary Wollstonecraft: the Life of a Rebel".

To achieve their aims, both feminists preached morality in their writings, Mary Wollstonecraft in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and Miss Pankhurst in her *Plain Facts about a Great Evil*. They also attempted to set themselves as moral teachers; this argument will be examined in ‘Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst as Moral teachers’. Additionally, certain beliefs about women’s morality, that men used as an argument against women’s emancipation, were intelligently used by the two feminists to prove the necessity for women’s liberation; this claim will be presented in ‘Emancipation for a Better Morality’.

2.1 Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst as Moral Teachers

Although Mary Wollstonecraft was accredited among contemporary historians for her suggestion that women should be politically represented, she was, in fact, an ardent campaigner for a better education for women, one that would strengthen their reason and intellect and not their sentiments and sensibilities. She asserted that men’s prominence over animals was due to reason while virtue was the quality that raised one human being over the other. Wollstonecraft also argued that human beings were given passions in order to resist them and achieve a level of knowledge that animals could not attain. Hence, reason, virtue and knowledge were the qualities according to which human perfection and capacity for happiness should be judged (15-16³⁰³). In fact, Wollstonecraft considered education as a key element in women’s emancipation and all her arguments and claims seemed to support her vision of a suitable education for girls.

³⁰³ Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. London, J. Johnson, 1796

Wollstonecraft complained greatly about the state of ignorance that women suffered under the pretext of maintaining their ‘innocence’. Women were denied direct power and authority because of the kind of education they received, therefore, they resorted to indirect means of power. Wollstonecraft explained:

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 puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives (33³⁰⁴).

Accordingly, Wollstonecraft reasoned that keeping women in a state of ignorance would not preserve women’s innocence and goodness, but it would certainly damage their morals since their ignorance would incite them to be cunning and manipulative. Moreover, if women were left to merely obtain personal charms, men would search for their pleasure in various women. Eventually, adulterous husbands would induce their wives to adultery. Nonetheless, Wollstonecraft proclaimed that these wives were forgivable for the educational learning they received, one that did not teach them to revere public benefit or admitted them civil rights, would lead them to achieve justice by vengeance (xi-xii).

On the other hand, Wollstonecraft avowed that modesty, temperance and self-denial were the wise production of reason, but in the presence of an education that emphasized sensibility instead of reason, the life of modest women became a constant struggle, for

³⁰⁴ Unless otherwise stated, all of Mary Wollstonecraft’s quotes in this chapter are from her *Rights of Woman* (1796).

modesty stopped being a natural quality in women but became a behavior incited by artificial rules of conduct (181). However, if women were given room for intellectual acquirements “nobler passions and motives will govern their appetites and sentiments” (Wollstonecraft 182).

Besides, Wollstonecraft appealed for the eradication of any type of oppression in society and when this end was realized, she asserted that “the common law of gravity prevailing, the sexes will fall into their proper places” (xii). A father would not undermine his character by going to prostitutes; he would not chase his sexual desires in the wrong place. Likewise, a mother would not disregard her offspring to engage in the “arts of coquetry when sense and modesty secure her the friendship of her husband” (Wollstonecraft xiii). Wollstonecraft also urged the female sex to discard ignorance and vanity if they truly desired to acquire modesty, for the acquirement of such a virtue required the abandonment of these vices (296).

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft advised women to develop a pensive mind that could be acquired by the carrying out of responsibilities and the quest of knowledge or otherwise they would stay reliant and be admired merely for their beauty. However, she insisted that “modesty, being the child of reason, cannot long exist with the sensibility that is not tempered by reflection. Besides, when love, even innocent love, is the whole employ of your lives, your hearts will be too soft to afford modesty that tranquil retreat where she delights to dwell, in close union with humanity” (Wollstonecraft 296-7). Thus, Wollstonecraft repeatedly criticized sensibility and the education that strengthened such a quality in women. In summary, Wollstonecraft claimed that modesty was a natural outcome of reason; and sensibility, which was not governed by thinking, was a threat to the noble quality of modesty.

Apart from sensibility, Wollstonecraft criticized the superficial conduct that supposedly upheld a woman's "good reputation" in her eighth chapter³⁰⁵ "Morality Undermined by Sexual Notions of the Importance of a Good Reputation". Wollstonecraft believed that instruction given to women to behave in a certain manner for the sake of being well reputed was an artificial system of morality, one which would poison morality and destroy its 'substance' (298). She explained that preserving a good reputation became the initial task of women in a way that instructions to adjust the demeanor and to maintain an unblemished reputation often became more important than fulfilling moral duties. Nevertheless, the latter concern with reputation was restricted solely to 'chastity'. Therefore, when the honor³⁰⁶ of a woman was intact, she was allowed to disregard all other social obligations, however, she "still present a shameless front-for truly she is an honorable woman!" (Wollstonecraft 311). Wollstonecraft suggested that one way of enhancing female morals was through directing their focus towards the true quality of chastity. Although a woman might have a fine reputation, she was still unworthy of respect for her modesty if she engaged in the art of seduction and temptation, she claimed (180-181).

On the subject of chastity, Wollstonecraft admitted that although marriage was the root of nearly all social virtues, she could not but sympathize with the ill-fated women who were cut off from society and after a single mistake they were broken off from their social interactions, of family and friends, which enhanced the heart and intellect. In most situations, these women could not even be considered to have committed a mistake for they were innocent women who became a victim to their earnest compassionate heart. Besides, there

³⁰⁵ Chapter eight of her *Rights of Woman*.

³⁰⁶ Wollstonecraft criticized this narrow vision of honor.

were a greater number of girls who were ruined at a time when they could not differentiate between right and wrong and since the education they received, Wollstonecraft argued, “prepared [them] for infamy, they become infamous” (155). A woman who gave up her chastity would suppose that she could not have done worse. She was aware that she could not make any amends in order to regain her previous standing and with the absence of financial provision, prostitution would appear as her sole sanctuary. Numerous women resorted to prostitution out of necessity because of the kind of education they received, one that trained women to depend on men financially, and to deem themselves as the suitable payment for men’s financial provision (Wollstonecraft 156).

Interestingly, Wollstonecraft claimed that “all causes” of women’s immorality and fault were a result of men’s “lack of chastity”. To justify her claim, Wollstonecraft presented the example of extremely voluptuous men and their ways of seducing women and stated that:

To satisfy this genus of men, women are made systematically voluptuous, and though they may not all carry their libertinism to the fame height, yet this heartless intercourse with the sex, which they allowed themselves, depraved both sexes, because the taste of men was vitiated; and women, of all classes, naturally square their behavior to gratify the taste by which they obtain pleasure and power (316).

Thus, Wollstonecraft believed that the initial cause for women’s moral degradation was sensuous men who tried to seduce women, and women, being taught to please, became equally sensuous. In summary, Wollstonecraft argued that “the two sexes mutually corrupt and improve each other” (318). Besides, Wollstonecraft urged men to uphold women they tempted. She suggested that for sure one way of improving female morals would be to

provide dishonored women with a substitute to prostitution, hence, preventing a vice that was disastrous to both people and morality (319).

Likewise, Christabel Pankhurst claimed that women were chaster than men. She contended that when a woman was unchaste, she was considered a “fallen” woman and became rejected in genteel society. However, unchaste men were considered as merely submitting to their “human nature” and they were not to be considered as unchaste in the first place. Giving the male logic, a woman who committed adultery was gravely mistaken that her husband could divorce her. She could not possibly use the pretext of “human nature” to defend herself. Nevertheless, men who frequently visited prostitutes throughout their marriage were only following their human nature and deserved no punishment according to their male logic. Hence, Christabel concluded that according to men’s view of themselves, “women’s human nature is something very much cleaner, stronger, and higher than the human nature of men” (18-9³⁰⁷). Similar to Wollstonecraft, however, Christabel hoped that the morals of men were higher than they themselves believed and that they were certainly able to live a decent and honorable life as their female counterparts. She proclaimed that the “woman’s ideal” was to maintain her chastity until she could find the right companion and this should be the ideal of the man as well (18-9).

The belief of all women, except those “diseased”³⁰⁸ or morally dissolute as a result of severe poverty or extreme indulgence and recklessness, was that sexual relationship was “beneath human dignity” in the absence of true affection and spiritual approval. Indeed, the very fact that such a relationship was prohibited by God himself and was more severely and

³⁰⁷ Pankhurst, Christabel. *Plain Facts about a Great Evil*. New York, Medical Review of Reviews, 1913.

³⁰⁸ I believe she meant “mentally-ill”

bitterly penalized compared to other sins, was a proof of its ugliness (C. Pankhurst 35). Here, Miss Pankhurst was hinting to what she called “the hidden scourge”, a sexual illness that consisted of two types- syphilis and gonorrhea. The latter diseases were the outcome of prostitution, or more particularly, of sexual vice. Nevertheless, the disease was not limited to corrupt men, the fact that the two diseases were infectious meant that they could be transferred to innocent people, especially to spouses (5).

Furthermore, Miss Pankhurst insisted in her book *Plain Facts about a Great Evil*, many chapters of this book were originally published in *The Suffragettes* newspaper, that the two sexual diseases, gonorrhea and syphilis, were the “the great cause of physical, mental, and moral degeneracy, and of race suicide. As they are very widespread (from 75 to 80 per cent, of men becoming infected by gonorrhea, and a considerable percentage, difficult to ascertain precisely, becoming infected with syphilis), the problem is one of appalling magnitude” (6). Moreover, she assumed that on the whole, spouses who got infected were unaware of the disease they contracted. The men, who avoided saying the label syphilis and gonorrhea in front of their wives because of delicacy, did not find it indelicate to contaminate them with the horrible diseases for which these names stood for (6). Of course, the statistics that Miss Pankhurst presented seem to be exaggerated. Nevertheless, she obviously wanted to present women as the innocent, chaste and pure wives who were married to vicious, immoral and inconsiderate men who would not mind infecting them with such horrible diseases. Moreover, perhaps her aim was to present another form of women’s subjection, one that not only prevented women from propagating their morality but also made them a victim of men’s immorality.

Additionally, Miss Pankhurst attributed the spread of these sexual diseases to women's subjection, or more precisely, to the belief that "woman is sex" and nothing else beyond that. Occasionally, this belief was disguised in the statement that women were mothers and nothing beyond that. However, "what a man who says that really means is that women are created primarily for the sex gratification of men, and secondarily, for the bearing of children if he happens to want them, but of no more children than he wants" (30). Due to this doctrine, the relationship between men and women was placed around the sex. Even worse, the relationship between them was one of a proprietor and his property and not one based on equality and justice between two human beings. As a result of this doctrine, one "slave" was not enough to please the man; he had to seek his pleasure in various women. Thus, sexual immorality developed, and resulted in the emergence of the latter sexual diseases (C. Pankhurst 30-1).

Christabel Pankhurst's sense of deduction does not seem very logical since men still visited prostitutes even after women became politically empowered. Nonetheless, it is still interesting to observe the way Christabel Pankhurst managed to link sexual diseases to women's subjection in such a clever way. Moreover, Miss Pankhurst's logic about men becoming voluptuous and seeking their pleasure in various women highly resembles Wollstonecraft's argument about men's lack of chastity. The only difference is that Wollstonecraft argued that men's immorality would lead to honorable women's immorality, especially in the light of the education they received, whereas Miss Pankhurst's argument merely implied that men will resort to prostitutes to satisfy their excessive urges. I would argue that since Wollstonecraft saw education as the first step towards women's emancipation, she warned that the existing educational system along with men's immorality would jeopardize women's morality. Nevertheless, since Miss Pankhurst demanded women's

enfranchisement as a tool to empower women against men's indecency and to enhance the morals of the political world, she did not wish to bring any mention of honorable women's possible moral dissolution, especially since her whole claim was based on the belief that women were by nature morally superior to men.

Wollstonecraft also critiqued eighteenth century education which, according to her, aimed at making upper and middle-class women more agreeable and pleasing (20). Besides, she condemned the prevailing belief that women were created for men, a belief that had its origins in Moses's poetical narrative. Nonetheless, Wollstonecraft supposed that only few readers of the story actually assumed that Eve was one of the ribs of Adam for real. Therefore, this belief should be abandoned or accepted merely as a proof that men from very ancient times attempted to exercise their power to suppress their mate. It should also be a proof that men wanted to display that women "as well as the brute creation, was created to do his pleasure" (26). Similar to Miss Pankhurst, Wollstonecraft was opposed to viewing women as a pleasing being and as a 'sex' merely.

Furthermore, Miss Pankhurst refuted men's claims that prostitution was unavoidable and attributed such a claim to men's lack of knowledge and fallacy. Dissolute relationship with prostitutes as men chose to call it "the exercise of their natural functions" was the reason that campaigns against prostitution were seen as campaigns against the human nature. Besides, observers who argued that sexual immorality was due to economic causes and that when men were able to marry, prostitution would vanish were largely mistaken for two reasons. First, wealthy men, who were easily able to marry, were fairly as corrupt as poor men. Second, both married and single men consorted with prostitutes (53).

Nevertheless, the problem of sexual promiscuity became an economic one when speaking about women who were financially reliant upon men since they were more likely to fall in the evil of prostitution. It is noteworthy that men by nature liked to maintain women in a condition of financial dependency. Thus, the wish of men to maintain women in state of economic dependence was “at the root of men’s opposition to the industrial and professional employment of women” (C. Pankhurst 53) Similar to Wollstonecraft, Miss Pankhurst argued that when women were able to support themselves financially by intellectual or industrial labor, it would be very difficult to oblige them to sell their bodies to make ends meet. They both believed that economic dependence was the reason why countless women resort to prostitution.

Another problem with men who visited prostitutes was that with time they became very deviant and dishonored that they started finding sexual relationships with honorable women unfulfilling. They longed for sexual relationships with women whom they could disparage. Miss Pankhurst added:

They want to resort to practices which a wife would not tolerate. Lewdness and obscenity is what these men ask for, and what they get in houses of ill-fame. Marriage does not “satisfy” them. They fly to women who will not resent foul words and acts, and will even permit unnatural abuse of the sex function (55).

Besides, such men were not satisfied with merely debasing adult women. They desired underage girls, and if possible, virgins (C. Pankhurst 55).

In fact, Miss Pankhurst asserted that women were mindful that the extreme sexuality, which was expressed in prostitution, was abnormal and eventually led to further abnormal

acts. Not only that these women did not perceive the dissolution as “manly”, they perceived it as an appalling stain upon their spirit, as ineligibility for parenthood and for husbandhood (131). Consequently, Christabel Pankhurst declared that from now on upright women, who were frequently accused of abandoning their “fallen sister [s]” and befriending the fallen men, would not hold out the hand of friendship except to men of pure mind and pure life (57). Although Miss Pankhurst affirmed that women will not support immoral men anymore, she still did not claim that they would support their immoral sisters either. Her rhetoric on the immorality of men was destined to virtuous women, that is to say, she offered no support to prostitutes such as Josephine Butler who campaigned for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. Yet, Christabel did display a great sense of sympathy and understanding to the reasons to their ruin.

As for Mary Wollstonecraft, she believed that the sexual immorality that stemmed from prostitution did not only involve prostitutes, the “devoted part of the sex—devoted for the salvation of the rest” (315), it also affected virtuous women. Wollstonecraft argued that the moral character and serenity of mind of the virtuous section of women were weakened by the demeanor of those very women to whom they gave no alternative to a life of immorality. Prostitutes were women “whom they inexorably consign to the practice of arts that lure their husbands from them, debauch their sons, and force them—let not modest women start-to assume in some degree the same character themselves” (315). Although Wollstonecraft’s latter argument about modest women behaving as prostitutes is probably overstated, it is still interesting to examine how she held honorable women responsible for the ruin of prostitutes. Wollstonecraft did not seem to criticize prostitutes as much as she criticized honorable women and the whole society for giving women who lost their chastity no refuge from guilt.

In fact, Wollstonecraft blamed men for any immorality that women might commit for they were the ones who lured them into faults (179). Moreover, Wollstonecraft asserted that men's account of women 'as the main source of their pleasure' was the reason for women's deprivation since men only considered their desires and pleasure (89). Thus, no attention was ever made to the wants and needs of a woman, she was merely treated as a sex and not as an equal human being. Besides, Wollstonecraft criticized certain practical men or "worn out libertines" who went after marriage not for the sake of chastity, but simply because they desired safer companions (89). Indeed, Wollstonecraft believed that marriage was an institution that was intended to please men and subject women for two reasons. First, men seemed to regard women as a pleasing object and no more beyond that. Second, matrimonial laws which "make an absurd unit of a man and his wife; and then, by the easy transition of only considering him as responsible, she is reduced to a mere cipher" (331). Wollstonecraft criticized the unfair marriage laws for they undermined the whole legal existence of a woman.

On the subject of marriage, Wollstonecraft also criticized women whose sole objective seemed to be 'getting married'. Whereas young men were eager to pursue a career, not perceiving marriage as the impressive mark in their lives, women had one great plan which was not commerce or wide-ranging ideas about the future; it was marriage! Indeed, middle-class women needed to marry "advantageously" in order to rise in this life and be at liberty to chase their pleasures. Furthermore, Wollstonecraft claimed that women forgo their time as well as their bodies which were "often legally prostituted" to achieve this aim. Besides, while men considered pleasure as a simple type of relaxation, women pursued pleasure as the chief reason of life. However, women were not to blame for the education they received taught them "the love of pleasure". Here, women's love of pleasure was their

love of enjoyment and their concern with subordinate issues instead of important obligations (Wollstonecraft 127-8). Interestingly, Wollstonecraft seemed to describe middle-class women's 'interest marriage' as a legal prostitution, one that was not based on love but on interest!

For a better morality, Wollstonecraft advocated a unique set of morals for both men and women. In her chapter *Modesty Comprehensively Considered and not as a Sexual Virtue*, Wollstonecraft claimed that both men and women could be virtuous and advocate the same virtues, one example of such virtues was modesty. She claimed that modesty was not a feminine trait and that both men and women must share this trait. She opposed the imaginary female character that was portrayed in poems and novels, one which called for an abandonment of honesty and earnestness. Hence, modesty became "a relative idea, having no other foundation than utility, and of that utility men pretend arbitrarily to judge, shaping it to their own convenience" (106). Seemingly, Wollstonecraft meant that modesty became a mere superficial set of manners instead of morals, one that was aimed at impressing men, and men in turn got to judge the efficiency of these manners. Moreover, Wollstonecraft admitted that men and women had different responsibilities to perform³⁰⁹, however, they were still human responsibilities. Therefore, the values that should govern the fulfillment of these responsibilities should be the same for both sexes.

Ultimately, Wollstonecraft called men to be more virtuous and chaste saying "Let men become more chaste and modest, and if women do not grow wiser in the same ratio, it will be clear that they have weaker understandings" (10). Wollstonecraft extended the

³⁰⁹ This idea will be discussed in another chapter

premise that if men became chaster, women would stop behaviors such as ‘cunning’ which they used to maintain and govern over their voluptuous men. Nevertheless, Mary Wollstonecraft’s kind demand of men to be chaster was largely exceeded by Christabel Pankhurst’s radical demand. After bringing forth various opinions from medical men, opinions that supported her claim about sexual diseases being the great scourge, Miss Pankhurst called women to abstain from marriage until men became virtuous. She argued that the statistics that she presented about gonorrhea and syphilis were an alert to men to refrain from prostitutes and was a “warning to women of the grave danger of marriage so long as the moral standards of men continue to be lower than their own” (52). Seemingly, Miss Pankhurst used Victorian notions of women’s morality as a weapon against men. Since women were to be virtuous and honorable, men had to be equally virtuous and honorable if they desired to marry them. Unchaste men were simply a danger to women’s morality and health.

Furthermore, Christabel Pankhurst argued that women were well acquainted with the fact that marriage, observed as a religious bond, had its perils. Love could die from the man or from the woman’s side or a conflict of attitude or character might risk their joy. Thus, marriage had long been considered as a lottery. Nevertheless, what women were unaware of was that from a physical point of view, marriage took great risks on women’s health. Aside from the hazards of childbirth, which women were aware of, marriage had another serious danger to their health. This danger came from dissolute morals of men and their unchaste practices. Prior to their marriage, and sometimes even during their marriage, men associated with prostitutes and became infected with sexual diseases that they transmitted to their spouses (C. Pankhurst 71). Miss Pankhurst quoted Dr. Prince Morrow who declared that

chaste women's contamination of sexual diseases in marriage was the ultimate infamy of the British society (qtd in. C. Pankhurst 72), he also added:

Let every woman not yet married remember that the vast majority of men contract sexual disease in one of its forms before they are married. Let every woman learn that to cure a man of such disease is long and difficult, and strictly speaking impossible, since no doctor can give a guarantee that his patient is cured, and will not immediately, or in years to come, infect his wife (qtd in. C. Pankhurst 73-4).

Consequently, Miss Pankhurst warned single women that they could be healthy and sturdy and yet lose both health and strength after they get married. This was tough information, still, it was a fact and women should have access to the security that information provided. She advised young women saying, "Never again must young women enter into marriage blindfolded. From now onwards they must be warned of the fact that marriage is intensely dangerous, until such time as men's moral standards are completely changed and they become as chaste and clean-living as women" (74). Clearly, Miss Pankhurst set herself as a guardian of morality, one that went to the extent of calling women to abstain from marriage until men became as virtuous and chaste as they were. Moreover, she explained that men who endanger themselves with such diseases should be aware that they were making themselves unsuitable for marriage (95). Hence, Miss Pankhurst wanted men to know that by visiting prostitutes, they were not only exposing themselves to sexual diseases but to a life of celibacy as well! Besides, it seems that Christabel Pankhurst's arguments about the danger of marriage stems from her emphasis on a single set of morality, one that should be respected by both men and women and should have the same punishment for deviants from both sexes.

Thus, similar to unchaste women whose immorality made them unsuitable for marriage, immoral men should become unfit for marriage.

Furthermore, Miss Pankhurst admitted that marriage was gradually becoming “distasteful” to smart women. She emphasized that it was not the prospect of motherhood that repelled women but rather marriage. There are a lot of women who would love to have children, nevertheless, they are discontent with matrimonial laws and men’s ideals of husbandhood and parenthood. Therefore, women should not accept a union that would only endanger their health and joy. More extremely, Miss Pankhurst attributed the decline of the birth rate to men’s immorality. She explained that the decline of the birth rate was partially due to women’s choice. However, it was largely due to women’s physical inability to conceive because they contracted venereal disease from their husbands, a disease that had detrimental effect on women’s capacity to breed (102-5-6). Miss Pankhurst justified her unexpected conclusion about the fall of birth rate by referring to men from the medical profession (107-9). Finally, she addressed men saying: “We say again that it is for those who have inherited from Adam the inclination to blame women for all that goes wrong in the world, now to admit the true facts connected with the falling birth-rate—facts that have so long been kept hidden from women” (111).

To summarize, both Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst conformed to morality by completely agreeing with some moral beliefs of their societies and by rejecting others and setting themselves as moral teachers and theorists who appealed for a better morality for both sexes. On the one hand, Wollstonecraft agreed with the main constructions of morality in the eighteenth century such as: chastity, modesty, self-restraint, however, she proclaimed herself as a moral teacher by arguing for a more genuine and unaffected

conception of such constructions. On the other hand, Christabel Pankhurst was in total conformity with the belief that women were guardians of morality. In fact, she acted upon this belief when she preached men to have a better morality. More interestingly, Miss Pankhurst became both a moral teacher and judge when she warned men that unless they become as moral as women, they will have to endure a life without marriage because chaste women will not marry unchaste men. Thus, both Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst, despite their differences, conformed to morality in a similar way.

2.2 Emancipation for a Better Morality

After having established themselves as moral teachers, Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst proceeded to appeal for women's emancipation for the sake of a better morality. To begin with, both Wollstonecraft and Miss Pankhurst condemned the double standard morality that existed in their societies and argued for a single set of morality for men and women. Wollstonecraft claimed that the existing 'female character':

Was subversive of morality [...] that to render the human body and mind more perfect chastity must more universally prevail, and that chastity will never be respected in the male world till the person of a woman is not, as it were, idolized, when little virtue or sense embellish it with the grand traces of mental beauty, or the interesting simplicity of affection (vii).

Here, Wollstonecraft insisted that in order for men to be chaste, women had to be respected for their knowledge, understanding and sincere compassion, qualities that could be acquired through better education, instead of merely being adorned for their beauty and charms.

As for Miss Pankhurst, her solution to the immorality of men, whom she deemed responsible for venereal disease, was to eliminate prostitution. Miss Pankhurst reasoned that in the past, efforts were repeatedly exerted to eradicate prostitution, however, they were unsuccessful. The reason for their failure, she argued, was that they “have never tried to abolish prostitution, and so, of course, [they] have not succeeded”. The ultimate remedy for prostitution, she believed, was the “strengthening of women, and the education of men” (113). Initially, to make women stronger was to emphasize their significance in society as the perpetuators of the race (113).

Furthermore, Miss Pankhurst argued that ascertaining women’s liberty and equality with men, aside from issues of motherhood and gender, was a significant measure against prostitution. Miss Pankhurst claimed that it was mostly due to men who believed to a great extent that women were different from themselves that they desired to dominate and use them for immoral practices. If prostitution was to be ended, it was essential that men should consider virtuous women as mothers, but most importantly, as human beings “who are like and equal to themselves” (117).

Moreover, for prostitution to be abolished, women, single or married, had to obtain financial independence. Women should not be obliged to sustain themselves by “the sale of sex. For sex is degraded by any hint of sale or barter” (C. Pankhurst). Here, similar to Mary Wollstonecraft, Christabel Pankhurst suggested that marriage was a kind of legal prostitution. In fact, Miss Pankhurst expressed clearly that the state of economic dependence that a married woman endured was a significant safeguard of sex subjection and an enormous fortification to prostitution. Therefore, people were driven to believe that a married woman

was one “who has made a permanent sex bargain for her maintenance; the woman who is not married may therefore make a temporary bargain of the same kind” (C. Pankhurst 119).

Nevertheless, Christabel Pankhurst argued that the most significant method of empowering women was through enfranchising them. Indeed, the parliamentary vote was the ultimate representation of liberty and equality, therefore, a class which was exempted from the right of representation was a subordinate one. The disfranchisement of women teaches them subordination while it instills in men superiority and prejudice when dealing with women. Moreover, the subordination of women was a revolting scheme that was imposed by the law and became embedded in the British constitution, thus, rendering any hope of a reformed relationship between the two sexes impossible unless women became politically represented (C. Pankhurst 122).

Nonetheless, Miss Pankhurst did not merely claim that women’s disenfranchisement upheld their subordination, but also argued that it shielded and promoted the moral dissolution of men and sexual abuse of women. To support her argument, Miss Pankhurst gave the example of the bastardy laws. These laws, she proclaimed, allowed men to effortlessly evade their duty towards their illegal children. Divorce laws were another example of how a male elected parliament shielded men’s moral dissolution. The outrageous “leniency” with which offenses against young girls were dealt with, offered a further example of the harm produced by women’s denial of political contribution (123).

On the other hand, Wollstonecraft prophesied that once a single set of morality was shared by both sexes, women would prove themselves as either companion of men or as their subordinates. The question of whether women were “moral agents” or “the link which unites man with brutes” will be answered. However, if it becomes evident that similar to animals,

women existed chiefly to be used by men, then men shall leave them to take in their subordination without deceiving them with fake acclaim. Nevertheless, if it becomes evident that women possessed a sound logic, men shall not curb their progress for the mere purpose of fulfilling their “sensual appetites” (69-70). Wollstonecraft demanded that:

men will not, with all the graces of rhetoric, advise them to submit implicitly to the guidance of man. He will not, when he treats of the education of women, assert that they ought never to have the free use of reason, nor would he recommend cunning and dissimulation to beings who are acquiring, in like manner as himself, the virtues of humanity (70).

In summary, Wollstonecraft wished men to put women to the test by providing them with a logical and rational education as that of men, and only then judge the result.

Wollstonecraft maintained that girls’ education should enlighten women about the deceptive notion of ‘sentiment’, a term that she considered as a subtler word for ‘sensuality’. From their early age, men should even teach women to remain silent as their fellow eastern princes or teach them in a way that would allow them to reason and make decisions for themselves. Wollstonecraft questioned how men could anticipate uprightness from an enslaved person or a person who was enfeebled by the very law of civil society. Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft admitted that eliminating the long held influences that sensualists have engrained would be a long process, besides, it would be a long process to persuade women that when they held dear feebleness or acted as if they have it, under the pretext of being delicate, they were only proceeding against their real long-standing interests. Ultimately, it would be a difficult task to persuade the world that the ultimate source of women’s immorality and irrationality was the sensual tribute given to beauty (32). Here,

Wollstonecraft insisted that the education that women received accentuated their sensibilities instead of their reason. She also held men responsible for such an education that merely aimed to weaken women who were already enfeebled by the fact that they were denied their legal rights in a country of law. Clearly, Wollstonecraft was greatly disturbed by the fact that women were denied their legal rights in Britain compared to their male counterparts. Thus, she advocated better education trusting that it was the first step towards women's emancipation. She believed that in order to change the current state of mind of most women, women, men and the whole world should become aware of the futility of such educational system.

Consequently, Mary Wollstonecraft appealed to men to educate women and enhance their thinking abilities when they ascertain their rationality. Men should also provide women with the constructive and uplifting restraint of reason and allow them to achieve premeditated self-respect by believing that they solely rely on God. Women should be educated along with men that they ought to yield to responsibilities, rather than attempt to render them more agreeable by "giving [...] a sex to morals" (71). Most importantly, Wollstonecraft called for a "revolution in female manners". She argued that:

It is time to restore to them their lost dignity - and to make them, as a part of the human species, labor by reforming themselves to reform the world. It is time to separate unchangeable morals from local manners. -If men be demigods- 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. But to justify the ways of providence respecting them, by pointing out some irrefragable reason for thus making such a large portion of mankind accountable and not accountable, would puzzle the subtlest casuist (92-3).

Thus, Wollstonecraft appealed for a revolution in female behavior through a reconstruction in girls' education. This reconstruction should allow women to improve the world by improving themselves. Moreover, women should learn to make a distinction between long-held and fixed morals and between societies prescribed behaviors, that is to say, women's manners should be based on a genuine understanding of fixed morality and not a simple reflection of social protocols of behavior. Such a prospect could only be achieved through an education that would target women's thinking faculties instead of their sensibilities.

Evidently, Wollstonecraft believed that the kind of 'feminine and genteel' education that her fellow women of upper and middle-class received during the eighteenth century was the main reason for their inferior economic, legal and political status in the English society. Hence, Wollstonecraft focused on education believing that if women received a better education, they will gain respect and recognition for their rationality and as a result men would recognize them as citizens. Indeed, Wollstonecraft wished to see women as citizens who enjoyed all the rights that a civil society could offer. In fact, she asserted that women were kept in a state of dependence and ignorance because they were refused any civil or political rights, for certainly no responsibility could be obliging unless it was based on reason. However, she contended that claims for civil and political rights could be deduced from reason and the more knowledge women obtain, the more they will be committed to their

responsibilities. She added that “unless their morals be fixed on the same immutable principle as those of man, no authority can make them discharge it in a virtuous manner. They may be convenient slaves, but slavery will have its constant effect, degrading the master and the abject dependent” (x³¹⁰). Accordingly, Wollstonecraft contended that women could only be virtuous and chaste when there was a single standard of morality. Besides, women’s denial of their civil and political rights was keeping them both ignorant and dependent, therefore, no one should expect them to fulfill their duties while in such a state.

In short, Wollstonecraft professed that the reason for most of the irrationality and the cunning of the female sex was ‘the oppression of men’. Therefore, Wollstonecraft urged men to allow women to share with them the same rights and privileges, and then women will surely imitate the virtues of men. She asserted, “Let women share the rights, and she will emulate the virtues of man; for she must grow more perfect when emancipated, or justify the authority that chains such a weak being to her duty” (451). If women did not deserve to have any rights, then it was better that men should start importing whips from Russia, for women should be beaten and treated as animals by the ultimate rational supreme being who was given authority and power by God, Wollstonecraft suggested (451).

However, Wollstonecraft argued that if for a certain reason men judge that women did not merit any rights, they should then, based on the same reason, expect them to fulfill no responsibility for rights and responsibilities could not be detached from one another. Moreover, Wollstonecraft called men to be fair saying:

³¹⁰ This quote is found in the dedication of her *Rights of Woman*.

Be just then, O ye men of understanding! and mark not more severely what women do amiss, than the vicious tricks of the horse or the ass for whom ye provide provender- and allow her the privileges of ignorance, to whom ye deny the rights of reason, or ye will be worse than Egyptian task-masters, expecting virtue where nature has not given understanding! (451-2).

Accordingly, Wollstonecraft appealed to men to be just towards women and grant them a rational education that would empower them and put them on an equal foot with men. Nevertheless, if men wished to maintain women in a state of ignorance, they should realize that morality was not to be expected from an ignorant.

In her *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft put forth various convincing arguments that supported her initial aim that women should be provided with an education that would develop their reason instead of their sensibilities. Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft went even further giving a detailed curriculum of the education she had in mind. In her opinion, in order to enhance the character of men and women, boys and girls had to be schooled together. She argued that both boys and girls should be allowed to follow the same curriculum. When this happens, the two sexes would early on learn the gracious decency that generates modesty. Besides, there would be no need for instructions about politeness and decorum because they would be replaced by usual propriety of conduct (380-1).

To attain such an educational system, elementary schools should be established where boys and girls of the age of five to nine could be schooled. The school should consist of students from all social classes, wealthy and poor and they should all wear a single unified outfit to avoid any sort of pride. However, at the age of ten, male and female students who were destined for domestic services should be transferred to another school where boys and

girls should still study together in the morning whereas in the afternoon girls ought to join a school where they could learn stitching and dressmaking, etc.

As for students of great capacities or wealth, after the age of nine, they could be schooled in other schools different languages, science and pursue the subject of history and politics more extensively. “Girls and boys still together? Yes!” Wollstonecraft affirmed. She asserted that she was not afraid of this co-education except for few early affections that might occur between the two sexes that would have a good impact on their moral character. However, for the time being, parents would be strictly opposed to such an affection for until they become solely concerned with their children’s morals, only then, they would permit them to choose their life partners themselves. Furthermore, co-education would encourage early marriages which would in turn promote great physical and moral benefit. On the benefits of this educational system on both sexes (389-90), Wollstonecraft continued:

In this plan of education the constitution of boys would not be ruined by the early debaucheries; which now make men so selfish, or girls rendered weak and vain, by indolence and frivolous pursuits. But, I presuppose, that such a degree of equality should be established between the sexes as would shut out gallantry and coquetry, yet allow friendship and love to temper the heart for the discharge of higher duties (390).

For an eighteenth-century context, Wollstonecraft’s suggestion of a co-education where girls could learn subjects such as botany and science along with boys may have seemed very strange and even radical. However, Wollstonecraft’s suggestion were largely softened by her argument that her advised plan of education aimed to improve the moral character of both sexes. Indeed, in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft

elaborately linked most of her radical suggestions to morality. In fact, Wollstonecraft dubbed her advised type of schools as “schools of morality- and the happiness of man” (390), for society could solely be contented and liberated when it is moral, nevertheless, the current divisions which existed in society destroyed all kinds of morals, she claimed. Mary Wollstonecraft’s ‘schools of morality’ could be cited as a good example of how she managed to utilize the notion of morality, a notion that men wished women to conform to or supposed that they already did, to put forth her radical views about girls’ education.

In addition to education, Wollstonecraft demanded that women start sharing with men the gift of government. She admitted that she had always been against the practice of restraining women to domestic shores so they would become barred from any political and civil concern, and as a consequence, their wits became constricted which rendered them inept to meet their natural³¹¹ responsibilities. In fact, Wollstonecraft declared:

Though I consider that women in the common walks of life are called to fulfill the duties of wives and mothers³¹², by religion and reason, I cannot help lamenting that women of a superior cast have not a road open by which they can pursue more extensive plans of usefulness and independence. I may excite laughter, by dropping a hint, which I mean to pursue, some future time, for I really think that women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government (335).

³¹¹ Most probably, Wollstonecraft meant by ‘their natural responsibilities’ or as she put it: “the peculiar duties which nature has assigned them” (391) that is duties of wifehood and motherhood.

³¹² Wollstonecraft view of women’s natural role as wives and mothers was thoroughly explained in the chapter of “Being Good Wives and Compassionate Mothers”.

Indeed, Wollstonecraft's ultimate goal seemed to be women's political and legal emancipation. However, at a time when women did not even benefit from an equal and rational education as that of men, Wollstonecraft focused her efforts on improving girls' education first. Simply put, she believed that when women proved their thinking and rational abilities, they would prove themselves as worthy citizens, not only of equal education but of political and legal equality. Moreover, she argued that the British system of representation was as a whole unfair and unjust, not only to women but even to men.

Certainly, Wollstonecraft assumed that women's intellectual inferiority was the reason behind their degraded status. If women, however, received equal education and proved their equal intellectual abilities with men, they shall be granted an equal social, economic and political status as that of men. This seemed a feasible logic that was believed not only by Wollstonecraft but by most feminists after her. Emmeline Pankhurst, for instance, resorted to militancy because this seemed as her only chance to bring about change. By the early twentieth century, women proved themselves capable intellectually but they were still far from being politically emancipated.

Although I chose to compare Mary Wollstonecraft's conformity to morality in her *Rights of Woman* with that of Christabel Pankhurst in her *Plain Facts* primarily, I nevertheless deem it necessary to present some examples of conformity from the general propaganda of the Women's Social and Political Union. In the following paragraphs, I will present examples from the WSPU newspaper and Emmeline Pankhurst's autobiography *My Own Story*. These examples will demonstrate how the suffragettes conformed to the image of moral Victorian women, who were believed to have superior morality compared to men, and used it as a tool to advance their emancipatory demands.

In her *My Own Story*, Emmeline Pankhurst praised the moral education she received at a school in Paris which she judged was as important as the academic one (11)³¹³.

Mrs. Pankhurst believed that through the WSPU propaganda, massive work was done to liberate women. In a correspondence to the honorary secretary of the WSPU, Mrs. Mabel Tucke, Mrs. Pankhurst appealed to her friend and colleague to raise as many funds as possible. She held that her union was one that started a war against “a hateful and degrading moral system, the fruits of which are prostitutes, disease and death. To raise the funds to carry on our war against evil is the duty of us all and I am sure that you will do your part” (E. Pankhurst Correspondence 2³¹⁴). Such was Emmeline Pankhurst’s approach in encouraging members of her union to raise money. In her letter, she repeatedly used the words ‘crusade’, ‘fight’ and ‘war’ against evil and gave the impression that the leader of the suffragettes along with her union members were soldiers in a battle against immorality. Mrs. Pankhurst’s self-portrayal was indeed one of a champion of morality, one that was to wage a moral crusade against an evil and immoral system.

Similar to the WSPU leader, Pleasance Pendred, a teacher and a suffragette who engaged in breaking windows, provided a moral argument in her defense. In an article published in *The Suffragette*³¹⁵ newspaper “Why Women Teachers Break Windows”, Pendred admitted that she broke the law by destroying property. She started her defense, the article was an extract of her defense in court³¹⁶, claiming that as they could see, she did not appear the type of woman who would commit such an offense without a solid and upright

³¹³ Pankhurst, Emmeline. *My Own Story*. London, Vintage Books, 2015.

³¹⁴ Pankhurst, Emmeline. “Correspondence”. *Ellen Isabell Jones papers*. Women’s Library, 21 May. 1914.

³¹⁵ In 1912, the WSPU newspaper *Votes for women* changed its name to the ‘*The Suffragette*’ with Christabel Pankhurst as its editor.

³¹⁶ Although her defense was read to the judge, I chose to discuss it since it was published as an article in *The Suffragette*, thus, becoming part of the WSPU propaganda.

cause, hence, suggesting her respectability and propriety. She insisted that destroying property was an act out of her habit and that she had to gather all the bravery she had in order to proceed in a similar deed. However, believing in the righteousness of her cause, she was able to do it, she declared “we women believe that the vote, used as we women mean to use it, will be a mighty aid in preventing moral evils” (1³¹⁷). Hence, Pendred claimed that it was for the sake of improving morality in Britain that they fought very hard for the vote.

To support her defense, Pendred gave precise examples of cases of immorality that she wished to change. Her first example involved children who were abused at schools by their teachers and the leniency with which the court handled such cases. She claimed that a schoolmaster who molested eleven schoolboys on multiple occasions, was sentenced to a year and a half only in the second division. A month later, a suffragette was sentenced for two months of hard labor in the third division for smashing a glass of 3s worth (2). Through this example, the WSPU member tried to prove the leniency with which acts of immorality were penalized in Britain, especially compared to other trivial offenses that were committed by women suffragists.

Pleasance Pendred’s second example, of the immorality that she wanted to change, involved police stations’ arrangements for women. She asserted that unlike what government officials propagated, that women were held by female wardresses and had camp beds to sleep on, women were attended by male warders and had no proper beds. More seriously, women had open toilets in their prison cells that had no cover or curtains. Pendred posed the question: “Is it decent when men officials visit women in such cells, and have full and sole

³¹⁷ Pleasance, Pendred. “Why Women Teachers Break Windows”. *The Suffragette*.

control of such cells containing women?”(2). She thus demanded that female detainees should be granted the right of decency, a right that she deemed one of the necessities of life. She then demanded from the court to induce officials to make changes in police stations, “If this be accomplished, I shall not have gone to prison in vain” (2), she declared. Hence, fighting immorality and demanding decency were indeed significant claims of the WSPU member, Pleasance Pendred.

In another article³¹⁸ in *The Suffragette*, the writer who was anonymous, claimed that militant suffragettes were following the example of their ancestors when they attempted to compel the government to enfranchise them. Moreover, she argued that if women had the vote, they would have struggled against the social evils that existed in the British society. However, the government preferred to seek the aid of doctors to force feed women instead (Doctors as torturers 1³¹⁹). In a different article “Message from the WSPU”, the writer argued that it was the responsibility of women to reform the world but this could not be done before women won their liberty, she stated, “It is given to the influence of women to upraise and purify humanity. But if we are to develop this power at its highest, we must first be free women” (2³²⁰). This freedom could only come through enfranchisement. She specified, “We want the good influence of women to tell to its greatest extent in the social and moral questions of the time. But we cannot do this unless we have the vote and are recognized as citizens and voices to be listened to” (2). Again, the idea that women were moral reformers

³¹⁸ An article that was published in *The Suffragette* ‘Doctors as torturers’, the article condemned doctors who were involved in forcible feeding.

³¹⁹ The Women’s Social and Political Union. “Doctors as Torturers”. *The Suffragette*. Lincoln’s Inn House, the Woman’s Press, Ellen Isabell Jones papers.

³²⁰ The Women’s Social and Political Union. “Message from the WSPU”. *Votes for Women*. Kingsway, The Woman’s Press.

and that once enfranchised, they will solve social and moral problems of their society was largely present in both articles³²¹.

Nonetheless, while Mary Wollstonecraft promised that women's morality would be improved once they gain equality, suffragette leaders and members promised to fight moral evils with their good morality. However, male critics responded to suffragettes' moral claims by arguing that if women became involved in politics, their morals would become corrupted because of the corrupted field of politics and "we would rather that our women remained as they are". To this argument, suffragettes responded by asserting that women's moral principles in trade as well as politics would certainly be different than that of men (F. Pethick-Lawrence 65³²²). Accordingly, the suffragettes managed to use the criticism of men to their benefit. They asserted that the field of industry and politics lacked morality and needed women to bring about change when they acquired the vote.

Nevertheless, there was another argument that male critics advanced 'women are not merely seeking political freedom, they are seeking sexual freedom'. Women's enfranchisement will be followed, or even preceded "by wild oats for women". Votes for women was not intended to enhance men's morality but to lower women's morality. To this argument, Christabel Pankhurst was greatly opposed. She asserted that women will certainly gain the vote, and when this happens, women will "be more and not less opposed than now to

³²¹ I have taken these articles as a sample only, however, there are plenty of other examples in the WSPU propaganda.

³²² Cf. "What 'Votes for Women' Means to Men". *Votes for Women*, Feb 1908, p. 65.

making a plaything of sex and of entering casually into the sex relationship” (134-5).

Miss Pankhurst stated³²³:

In the opinion of the Suffragettes sex is too big and too sacred a thing to be treated lightly. Moreover, both the physical and spiritual consequences of a sex union are so important, so far-reaching, and so lasting, that intelligent and independent women will enter into such union only after deep consideration, and only when a great love and a great confidence are present (134).

Here, Miss Pankhurst seemed to threaten men that once women became politically free, they will be more cautious about marriage because of all the immoral acts that men engaged in before marriage.

As seen previously in the chapter “Theoretical Framework”, prostitution was still a vital issue for feminists today. Cultural feminists, a section of radical feminists, contend that the elimination of patriarchal institutions such as prostitution, which sexually objectifies women, is a major step in the quest of women’s liberation (Ferguson 108-9). Shannon Bell argued that the debate over prostitution is significant since the body of the prostitute is a ground upon which feminists “context sexuality, desire, and the writing of the female body” (73)³²⁴. Around the 1970s, feminists held a modern interpretation in a sense that the body of the prostitute was perceived as “fit into a theorized totality of feminist space” (73). This means that the prostitute becomes a subject of study. However, the voice of the prostitute and her own view of herself and of prostitution is often neglected, especially when her view might challenge the feminist interpretation of her body (73).

³²³ Op.cit.

³²⁴ Bell, Shannon. *Reading, Writing, and Rewriting the Prostitute Body*. Indiana University Press, 1994.

Meanwhile, there exists two different and significant visions of prostitution and the prostitute body held by radical and liberal feminists. On the one hand, the radical feminists deem prostitution as an entirely demeaning experience; the prostitute is declined to a mere commodity to a client who is solely interested in the service and not the person. On the other hand, liberal feminists perceive prostitution as an agreement between individuals based on consent and accord. They claim that radical feminists' victimization of prostitutes is exaggerated. Nevertheless, most prostitutes, particularly, those who suffered maltreatment, tend to support the stance of radical feminists. According to Sana Loue and Martha Sajatovic³²⁵, "Studies indicate that poor living conditions, unhealthy neighborhoods, neglected homes, inadequate education, and early coercive sexual experiences are common social denominators among prostitutes" (538). Since both Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst deemed prostitutes as victims of social problems and financial difficulties, therefore, the radical feminist perspective of prostitution seems to better extend their views in the twenty-first century.

3. Contemporary Reception

Although it could be expected that Mary Wollstonecraft's works were received with contempt and rejection, giving the nature of her works, but the truth was different³²⁶. R. M. Janes, for instance, argued that contrary to what is 'popularly' believed, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was positively received. This fallacy about her initial reception is primarily due to William Godwin's later revelations about her private life. The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' press slandered Wollstonecraft after

³²⁵ Loue, Sana, and Martha Sajatovic. *Encyclopedia of Women's Health*. Kluwer Academic, 2004.

³²⁶ Janes, R. M. "On the Reception of Mary Wollstonecraft's: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 39, no. 2, 1978, pp. 293–302. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2708781.

the publication of her memoirs and consequently her name was used to “brandish at feminists as evidence of the horrific consequences of female emancipation”, Janes claimed (293). Nevertheless, the following press reviews prove that in 1792³²⁷, Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* was reviewed positively by most literary magazines of the time. Certainly, there was some criticism but was mostly constructive, scientific and precise, such as any serious review of a literary work at the time.

On the one hand, in a review of *The Analytical Review*, Mary Wollstonecraft was celebrated for her work which was expectedly to provide readers of the latter magazine with ‘fulfillment and delight’. Firstly, the magazine outlined the main arguments of Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication* in each chapter, giving the title of every chapter along with a brief account of the content. Besides, numerous excerpts were taken from her *Rights of Woman* to emphasize the strength and logic of her claims (241-9³²⁸, 481-8 Aug³²⁹). Lastly, the magazine stressed their effort to choose the most impressive remarks and quotes although, they confessed, they may have failed in choosing the best (488 Aug). Moreover, the magazine could not “dismiss the work, without recommending it warmly to the perusal of all classes of society, as [they] are convinced all will find some partial instruction at least in it” (488).

Nevertheless, Mrs. Wollstonecraft’s work, *The Analytical Review* admitted, might be met with opposition for three reasons. First, Wollstonecraft’s appeal for the political representation of women. Second, her demand of co-education with male and female students

³²⁷ That is; immediately after the publication of her *Rights of Woman*.

³²⁸ “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.” *The Analytical Review: or, History of Literature*. British Periodicals. Mar. 1792, pp. 241-5.

³²⁹ “Wollstonecraft’s Vindication of the Rights of Woman”. *The Analytical Review : or, History of Literature*. British Periodicals, Aug 1792, pp. 481-9.

studying the same subjects even after the age of nine. Third, her profusion in defending her ideals. Nonetheless, the magazine guaranteed that every reader will obtain certain knowledge from Mrs. Wollstonecraft's sharp remarks on the "maintenance of pernicious prejudices, and from her judicious thoughts on the different branches and objects of education. The style is strong and impressive" (488-9 Aug). Accordingly, *The Analytical Review* recommended Wollstonecraft's work and praised the quality of its language and arguments despite its radical claims of women's political representation and co-education.

On the other hand, *The Literary Magazine and British Review* found Wollstonecraft's remarks "solid and entertaining" (133³³⁰). Despite the fact that the magazine had some reserves on Wollstonecraft's arguments, it was still satisfied with the work as a whole. Significantly, the magazine agreed with Wollstonecraft's remarks about kings and armies, which it found strict but nonetheless just. The magazine also declared its satisfaction "to find one female, who has sense and spirit enough to think of this profession as it deserves". Subsequently, the magazine proceeded to display Wollstonecraft's ideas about the male sexual nature and the opinions she advanced against Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Dr. Gregory (135).

Interestingly, *The Literary Magazine and British Review* chose not to provide any commentary or summary to Wollstonecraft's reflections on the basis of women's deprivation. This was due to the fact that the authoress did not "[advance] anything new" (137). Indeed, Wollstonecraft's criticism to female education was quite common among female writers at the time, therefore, the magazine's choice could be comprehended. However,

³³⁰ "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects". *The Literary Magazine and British Review*; Feb 1792, pp. 133-139.

Wollstonecraft's concluding remarks were cited entirely with the exception of few omissions. The remarks were particularly significant since they stressed Wollstonecraft's appeals for better education, equal rights and legal status for women³³¹. Evidently, the magazine was in total agreement with Wollstonecraft's emancipatory ideals for all her concluding remarks about the necessity of women's liberation were quoted without omissions.

*The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*³³², however, assented the line of reasoning of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* but nevertheless found it erroneous. The magazine argued that Wollstonecraft succeeded in using the doctrines of the rights of man to claim the rights of her own sex (389). However, her arguments were of no appeal to the latter magazine. In fact, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* was criticized for its various attempts to establish full equality between men and women. Besides, her plan for achieving justice between both sexes was perceived as a plan against women's domesticity and their traditional role as women. The magazine reasoned that, according to Wollstonecraft, there existed no sexual character, therefore, men and women were both alike in terms of sexual character. Besides, women's intellect was arguably equal to that of men in efficiency and their determination is similarly resilient (390).

The Critical review, or, Annals of Literature was particularly concerned with the insinuation of Wollstonecraft's arguments. Assuming that men and women had neither sexual nor intellectual distinctions, there would be no weaker element to whom the delicate employment was ascribed. In fact, intellectual women will begin to despise the employment of dressing an infant and nurturing him. Moreover, young women will start challenging their

³³¹ The excerpt presented in the magazine extended from page 444 to page 451; with some omissions.

³³² "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on political Subjects". *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*; Apr 1792, pp. 389-398.

companions for intellectual authority and grander claim to virtue contending the study of the delicate and appealing skill of entertaining. More seriously, a woman will have to attest her equality with men or even dominance before she decides to marry him. Fearing the latter consequences, the magazine admitted that the current status of women and state of affairs was more appealing. In fact, the magazine advised Wollstonecraft to embrace the different feminine characteristics suitable for a lady of her age such as “‘the weak elegance of mind’, the ‘sweet docility of manners’, ‘the exquisite sensibility’” (390).

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft was assured that if she observes the feminine qualities of her sex, she will be more agreeable and satisfied with her life and the magazine claimed that she will even be “infinitely happier” (390). Nevertheless, *The Critical Review* admitted that Wollstonecraft was a pioneer in the quest of the rights of women and that if she is mocked in any way, they will be criticized for attempts to weaken the quest. Particularly, the magazine claimed:

This is the first female combatant in the field of the rights of woman, if we smile only, we shall be accused of wishing to decline the contest; if we content ourselves with paying a compliment to her talents, it will be styled inconsistent with ‘true dignity’, and as showing that we want to continue the ‘slavish dependence (ibid. 390).

Accordingly, the magazine was conscious that if it takes any of Wollstonecraft’s arguments lightly, it will be criticized for ridiculing the rights of women and attempting to maintain women in a state of ignorance and reliance. Regardless of any criticism, however, the magazine was still opposed to Wollstonecraft’s claims. It was convinced that women’s education and status was fulfilling and “really and effectually inspire the love of mankind”

(391). Nevertheless, the magazine agreed with Wollstonecraft's claims about chastity³³³ and the cunning of women when they were not allowed to obtain their rights legitimately (391-2).

Undoubtedly, *The Critical Review*³³⁴ refuted many, if not most, of Wollstonecraft's arguments in her *Rights of Woman*. Chief among these arguments was the issue of women's subjection, female education and the conservation of feminine qualities. First, the magazine denied that women were subjected or degraded in anyway, on the contrary, they were dignified and honored. Second, the female reason was by nature inferior to that of men and this could not be enhanced by education. In fact, the magazine claimed that Wollstonecraft's vague and badly pronounced claims provided the best proof for women's intellectual inferiority. Third, feminine qualities undoubtedly made a woman more agreeable and pleasing but this was not to say that women were not allowed to have any other "merits". The magazine then advised Wollstonecraft again to be an agreeable companion, and she would be permitted to acquire different virtues. Nonetheless, without feminine qualities, no other virtues were worthy of mentioning (132-5).

However, *The Critical Review* seemed to pay special attention to Wollstonecraft's suggestions of co-education. Wollstonecraft claimed in her *Vindication* that one of the consequences of co-education is early marriages. Nevertheless, the magazine questioned whether early marriages are of any benefit to the country. Besides, co-education would mostly bring 'seduction' into display instead of marriage. Interestingly, the magazine noted that there is little mention of religion in Wollstonecraft's coeducational plan whereas morality

³³³ She claimed that when women are respected for their intellect instead of charms, chastity will be more attainable.

³³⁴ "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects". *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*; Jun 1792, pp. 132-141.

is barely mentioned. Subsequently, the magazine ridiculed Wollstonecraft's eventual association of co-education and the development of moral character and 'schools of morality' (140). Obviously, Wollstonecraft's radical suggestions of co-education could be hardly linked to morality or 'schools of morality' and *The Critical Review* emphasized this. However, as I argued in this research, Wollstonecraft seemed to use morality to merely justify and legitimize her radical statements.

Accordingly, *The Critical Review* advised its readers against reading Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Moreover, it urged men to make their decision with regards to sending their daughters to Wollstonecraft's innovative school. Besides, the magazine pressed women to decide whether they wish to exchange their feminine and "pleasing qualities" with the rigorousness of reason, the intrepid shameless decorum of speaking their mind and "of rising superior to the vulgar prejudices of decency and propriety" (141). The magazine expected both men and women to refuse the latter prospects (141). Thus, Wollstonecraft's educational plan was largely opposed by the magazine. Most importantly, Wollstonecraft's pleas to women to favor reason over pleasing qualities were met with indignation and ridicule. In fact, Wollstonecraft was accused of lacking propriety and decorum and, therefore, women were advised to disregard her appeals.

Despite *The Critical Review*'s opposition to Wollstonecraft's main claims and its overall suspicion of her intents, the magazine still judged that her *Vindication* was aimed at defending women's entitlement to education so as they would become "more suitable companions for their husbands, better tutors in the earlier period of their children's lives and more useful active citizens" (392). Hence, the magazine still recognized and appreciated the ultimate aim of Wollstonecraft's work even if it did not think her arguments were elaborate

and convincing enough. Most importantly, the magazine did not extend any claims of radicalism to the authoress of *Rights of Woman* although it did not recommend her work for its fallacious logic, inconsistent reasoning and ambiguous language (141).

Another magazine which positively reviewed Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* was *The General magazine and impartial review*³³⁵. The magazine affirmed being satisfied and delighted to read Wollstonecraft's work providing virtue, intellect, wisdom and sentiments were well sustained. The magazine selected a number of extracts from Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* and asserted that careful readers of these extracts would realize that "her best praise is contained in her work" (187). The first passages that the magazine presented discussed the importance of providing women with a rational education so as to fulfill their duties and responsibilities in a better way. However, the magazine admitted that Wollstonecraft's passionate claims compromised her reasoning in certain passages. Yet, the magazine did not wish to display any errors in a work which was filled with splendors (189).

Furthermore, *The General Magazine* praised Wollstonecraft and professed that any person hoped his daughter and beloved ones to be as "half as accomplished as Miss Wollstonecraft" (189). Accordingly, the magazine presented Wollstonecraft as a role model for daughters and female relatives mainly due to her outstanding capacities as a writer and probably, I would argue, to the wisdom, love of virtue and commitment to duties that Wollstonecraft demonstrated in her *Rights of Woman*. Subsequently, the magazine quoted different passages from Wollstonecraft's work concerning her promotion to a more rational education for women, the absurdities of the female sex (due to the education they received),

³³⁵ "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with strictures on political and moral Subjects". *The General Magazine and Impartial Review*; Dec 1792; pp. 187-191.

the necessity of enhancing the educational, economic, social and legal status of women. Specifically, the magazine quoted the passage in which Wollstonecraft suggested that women should be represented in parliament (189-91). Interestingly, the magazine did not provide any specific commentary on her suggestion. On the whole, the magazine praised Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* and recommended it to its readers.

Similarly, *the English review, or, an abstract of English and foreign literature*³³⁶ praised Wollstonecraft's accomplishments and her increasing fame particularly in the field of the rights of women. The magazine found Mary Wollstonecraft full of intellectual force, vivacity of imagination, and developed understanding. Nevertheless, the magazine still believed that a number of her chief arguments were erroneous. Particularly, Wollstonecraft's zealous demands were considered too ambitious for the time she lived in and she did not "seem inclined to wait for" (349). Hence, the magazine deemed Wollstonecraft's appeals unrealistic and hard to be fulfilled at the time. On the question of religion, the magazine did not trust that Wollstonecraft believed much in Christianity. Yet, she managed to take benefit from the Holy Scripture and inspire "much political as well as moral and divine instruction" (349). Accordingly, *The English Review* thought highly of Wollstonecraft and her ideals, nonetheless, it still found them exceedingly advanced for the eighteenth century³³⁷.

³³⁶ "An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution". *English Review, or, an Abstract of English and Foreign Literature*; May 1795, pp. 349-352.

³³⁷ It is important to mention that the *English review, or, An abstract of English and foreign literature* reviewed Wollstonecraft's *An Historical and Moral View of the origin and progress of the French Revolution*, therefore, I only cited the introductory passage of the review; in which the magazine speaks about Wollstonecraft's work in general. I chose not to go through the whole review since I am particularly interested in press reviews of Wollstonecraft's most 'revolutionary' work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

*The Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal*³³⁸ was another magazine which celebrated Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman*. Interestingly, the latter magazine did not hail Wollstonecraft 'the writer' but 'the philosopher'. Indeed, *The Monthly Review* argued that Wollstonecraft deserved an eminent rank among philosophers. The magazine considered the chief aims of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* as follows: amending mistaken views about the character of women, regaining women merited status in society and relieving them from the state of subjection that they endured so that they could fulfill their responsibilities and appreciate the life of rational existence. Besides, the magazine argued that the central doctrine upon which Wollstonecraft grounded her claims was the exclusion of sexual differences in all matters³³⁹. Thus, women became equal partners with men who enjoyed the same gift of reason, and that women's initial purpose was to acquire and obtain "a character as a human being" (198). Accordingly, the magazine considered Wollstonecraft a reformist in the field of women's rights, one who aimed at enhancing the status of women and granting them a fair share of rational learning.

Moreover, *The Monthly Review* emphasized Wollstonecraft's arguments concerning female education, causes of women's subjection, the fulfillment of duties and women's interest in false appearances. Further, the magazine gave particular concern to Wollstonecraft's discussion of modesty and considered her views concerning the subject "singular in a female, but with a philosophical air of dignity and gravity, which precludes every idea of indecorum" (206). Thus, Wollstonecraft's views about modesty, which were

³³⁸ "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects". *The Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal*; Jun 1792, pp.198-209

³³⁹ Except those which were love related.

unique and original³⁴⁰, were largely appreciated by the magazine. However, the magazine insinuated that these views were only admitted from a philosopher's standpoint and not from the stance of a moral writer.

Most importantly, *The Monthly Review* found Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* an incredibly singular and remarkable work. Mary Wollstonecraft was praised for acquiring "great energy of intellect, vigor of fancy, and command of language" (208). The magazine also judged that Wollstonecraft's chief doctrines, if practiced by the authority of sound intellect and wise understanding, might promote the betterment of women's status to a great extent. Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft's proposals of a revolution in female manners were not readily approved and were mostly found 'imaginary and idealistic'. Particularly, the magazine disagreed with Wollstonecraft's claim that women's civil representation would improve their status. The magazine insisted:

We do not see that the condition or the character of women would be improved by assuming an active part in civil government. It does not appear to us to be necessary, in order to enlighten the understandings of women, that we should prohibit the employment of their fingers in those useful and elegant labours of the needle, for which, from the days of Penelope, they have obtained so much deserved applause (209).

Thus, in spite of *The Monthly Review*'s earlier support of rational education for women, it still wished to see women perform traditionally feminine tasks such as sewing. Moreover, the magazine doubted that the political representation of women would enhance

³⁴⁰ Wollstonecraft aimed at completely redefining the concept of modesty, cf. the chapter 'Defending Morality' for more information.

their condition and trusted that rational education would alone be sufficient to better women's status (209).

The Monthly Review stressed its agreement with rational education as a tool to greatly enhance the condition of women. This education, however, should largely consider women's knowledge, taste, temperaments and demeanors so that "women might be rendered at once more agreeable, more respectable, and more happy in every station of life" (209). Moreover, the rational education, which was suggested by Wollstonecraft, might also help in increasing respect and esteem between men and women so that they would regard each other as human beings. In conclusion, the magazine invited Mary Wollstonecraft to present concrete and "reasonably adopted" methods in the second volume of her vindication. Besides, the magazine expected to find more detailed ideas about the legal status of women and their specific responsibilities (209). Accordingly, *The Monthly Review* espoused Wollstonecraft's educational plans, hoping that a rational education would render women more pleasing and upright. Concerning women's political representation, however, the magazine deemed the suggestion useless in the quest of women's emancipation. Although Wollstonecraft's proposal of a civil existence for women was a logical plan for enhancing the status of women, the magazine did not support the idea and insinuated that the plan was unrealistic.

Another review of *The Town and Country Magazine, or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment* described Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* as an outrageous criticism against the treatment of women as creatures of momentary pleasure. Yet, the magazine was surprised of the free spirit with which Wollstonecraft spoke about sensuality and the sexual character of men and women. The magazine claimed that Wollstonecraft "seemed to allude too freely to the communication of the sexes, and talks of

the essence of sensuality the sexual character &c” (279³⁴¹). Unfortunately, the review was very brief and did not provide a detailed opinion about Wollstonecraft’s various claims. Nonetheless, *The Town and Country Magazine* did not seem to disagree with Wollstonecraft’s claims but with the bold language that she used and her detailed discussion of the subject.

On the whole, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* was positively received by the press of the eighteenth century. Most of the magazines disagreed with some of Wollstonecraft’s ideas but they mostly agreed with the work as a whole. The only magazine which stood as an exception and which seemed to clearly comprehend the radical prospects of Wollstonecraft’s claims was *The Critical Review*. Apart from this magazine, all the other reviews studied above were in favor of her claims and did not seem to perceive her radical insinuations. Accusations of radicalism, immorality or masculinity, which were later raised against Mary Wollstonecraft, were not to be found in the previous reviews. Most importantly, all the reviews recognized that Wollstonecraft aimed primarily to improve the rights of women and they all seemed to assent her promotion of rational education as a solution. Nonetheless, Wollstonecraft’s suggestion of political representation was even ignored, opposed or criticized.

I would argue that the subtle language that Mary Wollstonecraft used, in which she transmitted radical claims through a rather conformist language, was responsible for the positive reception of her *Rights of Woman*. In fact, through her conformist language in which she emphasized morality, wifhood, motherhood and femininity, Wollstonecraft was given

³⁴¹ A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political Subjects”. *The Town and Country Magazine, or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment*; Jun 1792, p. 279.

the benefit of the doubt for her radical claims which were merely described as ‘too ambitious, unrealistic and idealistic’. Thus, the latter magazines agreed with the aim and intention of her ideals, they merely disagreed with some of the plans that she set for their achievement. I would argue that had Wollstonecraft used a nonconformist language in her *Vindication*, her radical ideas could have been more accentuated, and thus, her *Vindication* could have been negatively received. Wollstonecraft was largely successful in presenting herself as a moral writer and teacher, an effort that saved her any suspicion of libertarian ideals or morals.

Unfortunately, the press was to change all of its positive opinions about both Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and her talents as a writer. A year after the death of Mary Wollstonecraft³⁴², William Godwin published his *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1798. As mentioned earlier in this research, the memoirs exposed Wollstonecraft’s private life; her engagement in free love, the fact that her daughter, Frances, was born outside marriage and her overall libertarian views. These memoirs earned Wollstonecraft tremendous criticism from the press, and her reputation was ruined as a result. In the following paragraphs, I will present two³⁴³ reviews about Godwin’s memoirs which, I assume, should be sufficient to highlight the kind of criticism that Wollstonecraft received at the time.

*The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, or, Monthly Political, and Literary Censor*³⁴⁴ ridiculed William Godwin’s memoirs and his consideration to his wife as a role model. It claimed that Wollstonecraft is indeed a role model but one to be avoided not

³⁴² Mary Wollstonecraft died in September 10, 1797.

³⁴³ All the reviews I have found criticized Wollstonecraft’s sexuality and opposed her lifestyle except the Analytical review. It published Wollstonecraft’s different works and was thus biased towards her.

³⁴⁴ “Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Woman”. *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, or, Monthly political, and Literary Censor*; Jul 1798; pp. 94-101.

imitated (94). Besides, the magazine criticized Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* and described it as shallow, one that "the superficial fancied to be profound, and the profound knew to be superficial: it indeed had very little title to the character of ingenuity" (95). Moreover, the magazine found Wollstonecraft irresponsible for she went abroad with her friend Miss Blood leaving behind her school and her parents. Wollstonecraft left knowing that her father and mother were in desperate need for her financial support while her students were in need of her knowledge and provision (96). Thus, Mary Wollstonecraft was accused of following her sentiments and feelings instead of trusting her reason and logic. In short, the magazine asserted that Mary Wollstonecraft lacked the restraint of reason and established values (96).

Furthermore, *The Anti-Jacobin Review* criticized Wollstonecraft for her two sexual relationships outside marriage and claimed that William Godwin did not "mention many of her armors" (97), hence, suggesting that Wollstonecraft was morally dissolute and that Godwin did not mention all of her lovers. Moreover, the magazine suggested that Wollstonecraft's assertions of women's right to pursue their feelings towards men that they liked was not a singular idea, it "is as old as prostitution". Besides, all of Wollstonecraft's moral sentiments and behaviors were apparently characteristic of the 'Jacobin morality'³⁴⁵ (97). Accordingly, the magazine greatly highlighted Wollstonecraft's 'distasteful and inappropriate' views on sexuality to the extent of accusing her of propagating prostitution.

Most importantly, the *Anti-Jacobin Review* called on parents concerned with the benefit of their offspring, and authorities concerned with the welfare of society, to declare their opposition to Mary Wollstonecraft's thoughts and behaviors. The magazine emphasized

³⁴⁵ The magazine was anti-Jacobin, therefore, its review of Wollstonecraft's memoirs was particularly exaggerated because of the magazine's particular bias against the Jacobins.

that “wise parents, enlightened statesmen, sound and comprehensive philosophers, must concur with us in reprobating such inculcations, whether any precept or example, as destructive of domestic, civil, and political society” (99). Thus, the *Anti-Jacobin Review* provided some serious warnings to the whole society against Wollstonecraft’s ideas and values. Most importantly, the magazine perceived Wollstonecraft as a threat to domestic and civil life. Despite the fact that Wollstonecraft attempted to preach morality, the essence of domestic happiness and civil rights of women, the discovery of her private life ruined all of her efforts.

Furthermore, *The Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal* ³⁴⁶ criticized William Godwin for exposing the latter facts about his wife’s private life. The magazine received the memoirs with disappointment and apprehension. It also failed to understand why Godwin narrated all of Wollstonecraft’s personal life in detail instead of “burying in oblivion” her shameless acts. Besides, the magazine was shocked by William Godwin’s lack of esteem to the institution of marriage and his reaction to Wollstonecraft’s suicide attempts (321-2). Accordingly, the *Monthly Review*, which in 1792, recommended Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, was largely shocked by both Wollstonecraft’s sexual relationships and her attempts to end her life in 1798. It therefore wished if her husband concealed her dishonorable life. Finally, the magazine argued that Wollstonecraft could not have been convinced of “the propriety of her conduct”, as her husband claimed, for she must have learned from her relationship with Mr. Imlay the consequences of breaching social norms (223).

³⁴⁶ “Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman”. *Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal*; Nov 1798, pp. 321-324

To summarize, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was well received by the press in 1792 despite certain reserve on some of her suggestions.

Nevertheless, the publication of William Godwin's *Memoirs*³⁴⁷, which revealed Wollstonecraft's breach of eighteenth century moral values, drove the press to discredit the values that Wollstonecraft advocated in her *Rights of Woman* and question her writing capacities and the utility of her works. However, the same cannot be said about Christabel Pankhurst's moral values in *The Great Scourge*. Miss Christabel's book was largely criticized immediately after its publication. However, such criticism did not come from conservative circles but from libertarian ones.

Indeed, Christabel Pankhurst's conformity to morality in her *Plain Facts* did not go unnoticed particularly by radical feminists. Miss Pankhurst's arguments of chastity and morality were largely criticized by some radical feminists such as Dora Marsden and R. B. Kerr. Marsden, for example, considered Miss Christabel's arguments as prudish and narrow-minded. In Marsden's opinion, when Christabel Pankhurst spoke about chastity, she was merely speaking about virginity. Most women were chaste from a physical point of view. i.e. virgins but very few were chaste from a spiritual point of view. Hence, Marsden deemed Miss Pankhurst's call for men's chastity as no more than a call for virginity (44-5³⁴⁸). She claimed that in the case of chaste women "The flesh [was] strong and intact, but the spirit [was] confused and stricken" (45-6). Besides, Marsden found Miss Pankhurst's statistics and facts about venereal disease laughable and exaggerated (46).

³⁴⁷ Op.cit.

³⁴⁸ Marsden, Dora. "Views and Comments: the Chastity of Women." *The Egoist*; 2 Feb. 1914, pp. 44-46.

Likewise, the Canadian feminist R. B. Kerr deemed Miss Pankhurst's arguments and facts inaccurate and erroneous. Moreover, Kerr accused Miss Pankhurst of degrading chastity for she brought the issue into a "mundane and utilitarian atmosphere. She has represented chastity as a prudential virtue for surgical reasons" (119³⁴⁹). Kerr was reflecting Miss Pankhurst's large dependence on doctors' testimonies about venereal disease in her book. In her opinion, Miss Pankhurst debased chastity when she used it as a practical instrument to support her argument of 'votes for women and chastity for men'. Nevertheless, Kerr admitted that Miss Pankhurst definitely succeeded in making a strong argument against prostitution.

The fact that Miss Pankhurst's book was largely disparaged by radical feminists was actually a good sign that her views were rather conservative and Victorian. Various radical feminists including Dora Marsden advocated free love and polygamy³⁵⁰. Hence, it could be expected that Christabel Pankhurst's views were not to be hailed by Marsden's and her counterparts. However, Miss Pankhurst's book was widespread among conservative circles. Evangelical clergymen took Christabel Pankhurst's warnings of venereal disease very seriously and they kept her book circulating among the believers (Dangerfield 199-200³⁵¹). George Dangerfield even suggested that "many a Boy's Club and Men's Bible Class must have sat and shivered at the thought of unguessed contamination as Miss Christabel's amazing pages were read aloud" (199-200). It is quite comprehensible how Miss Pankhurst appealed to a conservative and even religious audience. After all, she claimed that fornication

³⁴⁹ Kerr, R. B. "Leaders of the People." *The Egoist*, 16 Mar. 1914, p. 119

³⁵⁰ Cf. the first issue of *The Freewoman* (November 23, 1911) "A definition of Marriage" & "Contemporary Recognition of Polygamy" No. 1. Vol. I.

³⁵¹ Dangerfield, George. "The Women's Rebellion." *The Strange Death of Liberal England 1910-1914*. New Brunswick, Transaction publishers, 2011.

was a sin and that pure and honorable women should preserve themselves for similar honorable and pure men. Certainly, Miss Pankhurst's pamphlet preached and assumed many Victorian morals as well as biblical ones.

In short, Mary Wollstonecraft and Christabel Pankhurst conformed to morality in two ways. First, they established themselves as moral teachers and preached morality. Second, they claimed women's emancipation for better morality. Both feminists advocated a single set of morality. On the one hand, Wollstonecraft claimed that unless women receive equal education, chastity will not prevail. She claimed that when moral conduct is taught to ignorant women, it is received as a simple set of manners not as a genuine and real morality. Moreover, she added that virtue cannot be expected from a creature who is socially, economically, and politically subordinate. Wollstonecraft confronted men that they should either consider women as moral agents who have rights and duties or as subordinates who do not deserve any rights but no higher duties should be expected from them either.

On the other hand, Christabel Pankhurst believed that to enhance the morality of the country, men's immorality should be cured through the abolition of prostitution. In turn, prostitution could be eliminated through the strengthening of women, giving them importance as mothers of the nation, making them equal citizens with men, helping them obtain economic independence and most importantly 'giving them the vote'. Christabel Pankhurst's *Plain Facts* was favorably received by conservative circles and was largely attacked by radical ones who deemed her book conventional and prudish. Similarly, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* was, on the whole, favorably reviewed by eighteenth-century press. Seemingly, Wollstonecraft was largely successful in disguising her radical claims with a subtle conformist language.

Chapter 2: Rebellion or Conformity?

In this research, Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst were presented as two feminists who both rebelled against/and conformed to certain social and legal standards in order to promote women's rights. Concerning their conformity, I claimed that the two feminists attempted conformity to certain aspects of women's traditional role and image in order to better advance their emancipatory claims. However, this chapter aims to compare the two feminists' conformist views with the lifestyle they conducted. In other words, I will compare the values that they advocated in public with the values that they held in their private lives. Moreover, this chapter aims to present the perception of modern historians of the two feminists' 'conformity' to the above-mentioned values. Lastly, the chapter aims to present both rebellion and conformity as possible political tools in the hands of feminists.

1. Practicing Conformity

Both Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst arguably conformed to certain notions of morality, wifehood, motherhood and femininity. However, it is interesting to investigate whether they practiced such conformity in their own personal lives or not. This should help us assess to what extent their conformity was strategic and if it was strategic in the first place. Unfortunately, not all aspects could be thoroughly examined due to the lack of adequate information about their personal lives. Yet, I will attempt to consider some of the aspects of which I was able to procure sufficient evidence.

Women's emancipation will enhance the morality of men and women and thus the world will enjoy better moral standards; this is in short the argument that Mary Wollstonecraft and the WSPU leaders extended in their attempt to strategically conform to morality. In her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft's rhetoric about

morality was one which presented her, not only as a virtuous person but as a teacher of virtue and morality. In reality, however, her views and rhetoric were largely challenged by her lifestyle. In fact, Wollstonecraft's love affairs did not precisely conform to eighteenth-century morality³⁵². According to her husband William Godwin, Wollstonecraft had three love relationships, two of which he claimed, were outside marriage (Godwin 86-182).

Through William Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, we discover that Mary Wollstonecraft's personal life largely contradicted the moral ideals and values that she advocated in her two *Vindications*. In her most distinguished work *The Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft proclaimed herself as a moral teacher and largely defended morality as a result. However, according to her husband's memoirs, Wollstonecraft did not embrace these moral values in real life and had actually rebelled against them. In her *The Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft advocated modesty, self-denial and temperance and regarded them as the prudent offspring of reason. She also argued that if love is the main occupation in a woman's life, her heart "will be too soft to afford modesty that tranquil retreat where she delights to dwell, in close union with humanity" (Wollstonecraft 296-7).

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft claimed that concerning chastity, marriage was the essence of every virtue³⁵³. In reality, she clearly did not take marriage to be sacred. She neither sought to marry Mr. Fuseli nor Mr. Imlay; although Godwin suggested that the latter did propose to her but she refused. In the case of Gilbert Imlay, Wollstonecraft supposedly refused to marry him for reasons of property, thus, conforming to her social status as a middle-class woman. However, having a sexual relationship outside marriage, an act that was

³⁵² For an extensive account of eighteenth century morality see the chapter "Defending Morality".

³⁵³ Cf. the chapter "Defending Morality" for a better understanding of her moral stand.

greatly condemned in the eighteenth century especially among middle-class women, seems to contradict her class conformity. Arguably, Wollstonecraft's disregard for marriage might be attributed to the unjust laws of matrimony in eighteenth century England, women's legal rights under marriage were repeatedly challenged in her *Rights of Woman*. Nevertheless, it could be simply attributed to Imlay's unwillingness to marry her; this could be deduced from his cruel demeanor towards her. Despite the fact that Imlay proposed to Wollstonecraft as Godwin suggested, Wollstonecraft may have refused after she sensed a reluctance or a disclamation on his part.

Regardless of Wollstonecraft's motives for her refusal to marry Imlay, it is important to stress that her engagement in a sexual relationship outside marriage was shrewdly disguised in her *Rights of Woman*. In fact, the essence of Wollstonecraft's conformity to morality and wifehood was the impression that she gave to her readers of a different moral code and marital status than the one she embraced in real life. In her *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft's moral principles and views largely conformed to the eighteenth century perceived morality³⁵⁴. In real life, however, Wollstonecraft rebelled against most of these moral values. Thus, I would argue that Wollstonecraft's conformity in her *Rights of Woman* did not merely aim to alleviate her radical ideas about women's education, social and legal status but it also aspired to disguise her real-life moral stance about marriage for instance. Her conformity helped her to avoid criticism about her morality, a criticism that could have shifted her readers' attention away from her emancipatory claims to that of her personal life.

³⁵⁴ Cf. the chapter "Defending Morality".

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft's conformity to wifehood, through her insinuation that Gilbert Imlay was her husband in *Short Residence*, suggests her consciousness about the criticism she was liable to receive if her readers realized the real status of her relationship. Hence, Wollstonecraft avoided all criticism by suggesting that Imlay was her husband and that her daughter, Frances, was the fruit of their marriage. The motherly affection that Wollstonecraft exhibited in her writing was also contradicted by the fact that she attempted suicide twice after the birth of her daughter, an act that demonstrated that her passionate love for Imlay was stronger than her love and concern for her daughter.

Certainly, Wollstonecraft was passionately in love with Gilbert Imlay that she preferred to end her life than live without him. Despite the fact that in her *Rights of Woman*, she denounced passionate love as an impediment to reason, Wollstonecraft's suicide attempt could still be justified. After all, when Wollstonecraft wrote her *Rights of Woman*, she had not met Imlay yet. She became involved with him while writing her *Short Residence*. Thus, making assumptions about love is different than experiencing it. In other words, Wollstonecraft's statements about passion at a time when the feeling was unknown to her was easily challenged once she actually experienced a passionate love.

Besides, Mary Wollstonecraft largely stressed her motherly affection in her *Rights of Woman*. Therefore, attempting suicide and leaving behind her baby girl raises some questions regarding her self-restraint and sense of responsibility as a mother. In her *Short Residence*, Wollstonecraft displayed her longing for her daughter and asserted her inability to bear any separation from her. However, Wollstonecraft's desire to end her life twice does not support these assertions. In fact, according to Godwin's memoirs, Wollstonecraft did not reflect about her child's future neither before nor after she attempted suicide. Concerning her motherhood,

I would argue that Wollstonecraft's emphasis on her motherly affection was partly designed to impress her readers but was mostly genuine and sincere. Therefore, I would not present any claims against the sincerity of her motherly affection despite the obvious contradictions that emerge between her words and actions. Seemingly, Wollstonecraft was overwhelmingly in love with Imlay that her actions were miscalculated in many instances. Her desperation from Imlay may have led her to attempt suicide without thorough thinking of the consequences of such an act on her daughter.

In short, Mary Wollstonecraft's lifestyle greatly contradicted her rhetoric about morality, wifehood and motherhood in her *Rights of Woman*. This contradiction could be attributed to the conformity she embraced in her *Vindication* and/or to the specific circumstances she underwent. The purpose of this research, however, is to stress Wollstonecraft's use of conformity to alleviate any criticism of her radical ideas and to attract the attention of her readers. Therefore, whether her actions in real life contradicted her conformity in *Rights of Woman* or not should not undermine the main claims of this research.

Emmeline Pankhurst, on the other hand, was mostly true to her moral values and did not suffer any posthumous scandals or controversial revelations about her private life. There were, however, some suggestions about the deviancy of the Pankhursts' moral conduct. In her *Unshackled*, a book which documented the story of women's suffrage and the Pankhurst family alike, Christabel Pankhurst suggested her mother's willingness to have a free union with Dr. Pankhurst when she first met him. A day before their wedding, Dr. Pankhurst pledged to Emmeline Goulden to love her as long as he lived and Emmeline responded, "are you sure you will always love me and want me for ever?" she said. 'Wouldn't you have liked to try first how we should get on?'"(21). Accordingly, Emmeline Pankhurst did not mind the

idea of a free union. However, Christabel implied that her mother was merely longing to hear Richard's confession and persuasion of their love again (21). Even if Emmeline Pankhurst was seriously considering a free union with Dr. Pankhurst, the fact that she was very young at the time makes it difficult to argue that she still held that opinion years later, especially after she became the leader of the WSPU.

Nevertheless, historians such as Paula Bartley³⁵⁵ suggested that Emmeline was opposed to the idea of marriage and therefore she wanted a free union. Bartley added that Emmeline's offer was both courageous and principled and could have exposed her to rejection from the middle-class society. She also argued that Emmeline was unfavorable to the prejudiced state of marriage which subjugated and restricted women. However, her objection to marriage was soon overcome for she married Richard and agreed, as a result, to all the unfair laws that marriage at the time implied (26-27).

Moreover, Bartley explained that Emmeline Pankhurst's proposal of a free union was inspired by her political stance. In fact, Mrs. Pankhurst's proposal was highly expected from a proponent of radical and feminist politics and was "hardly the action of a conventional empty-headed young woman bent on securing marriage to a famous Mancunian figure" (27). Undoubtedly, Emmeline Pankhurst was opposed to the unjust laws of matrimony in the nineteenth century³⁵⁶, nonetheless, it is doubtful whether her proposal of a free union was a serious one. Even if her suggestion was well considered, there is no evidence that she took this decision to oppose the laws of matrimony at the time. Although Emmeline was

³⁵⁵ Bartley, Paula. *Emmeline Pankhurst*. London, Routledge, 2002.

³⁵⁶ Reforming the laws of matrimony was one of the objectives of the WSPU.

politically engaged from a very young age, it is unlikely that she possessed great political maturity and resolve during the period of her marriage.

Both Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst do not seem to have betrayed their moral ideals, at least after becoming leaders of the WSPU. The same could be said about the rest of the WSPU leaders. Sylvia Pankhurst was the only person who evidently swayed from the Pankhursts' moral standards. According to Barbara Winslow, Sylvia had a love affair with Keir Hardie. This relationship did not merely influence Sylvia's political stance but also her relationship with her mother and sister Christabel. Sylvia's love affair empowered her against her mother and sister who, in her opinion, stood against her love for Hardie and socialism alike (Winslow 4³⁵⁷).

In a short story that Sylvia wrote in 1932, but never published, she seemingly echoed details of her relationship with Keir Hardie. In her story, the protagonist was an old man, obviously Keir Hardie, who suffered an unaffectionate marriage for a long time, and a young girl, apparently Sylvia, who nourished a passionate affection for him. Initially, the girl rejected a sexual affair with him before she established that his marriage was "in name only". The mother of this girl (clearly Emmeline) trusted the old man had love feelings for her and not for her daughter, therefore, upon revealing their relationship, she was infuriated (qtd in Winslow 5).

Barbara Winslow asserted that the story is purely fiction, nevertheless, "its picture of sexual rivalry between mother and daughter is clearly one way in which Pankhurst dealt with her mother's later renunciation of her" (Winslow 5). It is difficult to argue that Emmeline had

³⁵⁷ Winslow, Barbara. *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual Politics and Political Activism*. London, Routledge, 2013.

any feelings for Keir Hardie, let alone to contend that this was the essence of her rivalry with Sylvia. However, I would argue that Mrs. Pankhurst's initial problem with her daughter was mainly due to Sylvia's political allegiance to socialism. Afterwards, it was due to her love affair with Keir Hardie, a married man, and her pregnancy of a child outside marriage.

Despite the fact that Christabel Pankhurst did not face any sexual scandals during her political activism, numerous literary critics contemplated the possibility of her lesbianism. Andrew Rosen, for instance, claimed that the approval of the WSPU members of the dreadful arguments of Christabel's *Plain Facts*, was possibly due to the aspiration of various single suffragettes to sanction the unwarranted social and political status of single women³⁵⁸. Since heterosexuality, as was frequently suggested by the WSPU propaganda, was largely linked to moral deviance and was a tool that fulfilled the sexual drives of men and maintained their supremacy in marriage, marriage became a risky choice to make in the opinion of Miss Pankhurst (210-11). Accordingly, Rosen³⁵⁹ emphasized Christabel Pankhurst's antagonism to heterosexuality along with adherents of the WSPU. Through this emphasis, he suggested Miss Pankhurst's lesbianism as well as other unmarried members of the WSPU³⁶⁰.

Similarly, historian George Dangerfield claimed that the suffragette movement as a whole was a "pre-war lesbianism" (128³⁶¹). Critic David Mitchell, however, insinuated that Miss Pankhurst was a lesbian herself. Nonetheless, various critics such as Susan Kingsley Kent and Timothy Larsen disagreed with this insinuation and argued that there is nothing that

³⁵⁸ For a full account of Christabel Pankhurst's arguments in her *Plain facts*, see the chapter "Defending Morality".

³⁵⁹ Rosen, Andrew. *Rise Up, Women! The Militant Campaign of the Women's Social and Political*. London, Routledge, 2013.

³⁶⁰ Likewise, historian Susan Kingsley Kent argued that Andrew Rosen hinted to Miss Pankhurst's lesbianism in her book *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* p 6.

³⁶¹ Dangerfield, George. *The Strange Death of Liberal England*. California, Stanford University Press, 1997.

proves the supposition³⁶² (10). Certainly, Christabel Pankhurst could have been a lesbian; however, since there was no such suggestion during the years of her activism, the issue loses its significance for this research. Besides, there were no first-hand revelations about Miss Pankhurst's sexual life as it was the case with Mary Wollstonecraft. Therefore, it could not be argued that the moral values that Miss Christabel advocated in her *Plain Facts* were betrayed in any obvious way.

Emmeline Pankhurst's conformity to ideals of wifehood and motherhood, however, was largely validated by her daughters Christabel and Sylvia. Both daughters praised Emmeline Pankhurst for being a devoted wife and mother in their autobiographies. According to Christabel, Emmeline was incredibly supportive of her husband's political career. She wished him success and helped him with all her capacity to achieve his aims. She even wanted to assist him financially by demanding a dowry from her father. When her request was denied, she was extremely disappointed since she hoped to promote her husband's proposed reforms even further (Unshackled 23). Emmeline's devotion to her husband was rewarded by his passionate love for her. In a letter that Richard sent to Emmeline after nine years of marriage, he avowed, "you know how I love you and want to cherish your life. How splendid you were on Saturday- in all that unconscious loveliness! Dear heart, I hold you to mine!" (C. Pankhurst 27³⁶³).

Similarly, Sylvia Pankhurst asserted her mother and father's mutual love and affection. The couple enjoyed a happy and lively marriage. According to Sylvia, Emmeline

³⁶² See Susan Kingsley Kent *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* (7); and Timothy Larsen *Christabel Pankhurst: Fundamentalism and Feminism in Coalition*, p 10.

³⁶³ Pankhurst, Christabel. *Unshackled, the Story of How We Won the Vote*. London, Cresset Women's Voices, 1987.

“adored her husband with all that ardent and impassioned loyalty of which she was capable, whilst he remained the most tender and affectionate of lovers” (18³⁶⁴). Besides, Christabel avowed that Emmeline’s children gave her joy and interest in life, and it was only after she became “free from maternal cares” that she returned to politics again (24-5). Sylvia, however, seemed to lament that Emmeline favored Christabel over her. She even believed that at times Emmeline became a mere follower of Christabel’s opinions (S. Pankhurst 71). On the whole, both daughters attested to Emmeline Pankhurst’s incredible devotion as a wife and mother in their autobiographies. Nonetheless, practicing wifedom and motherhood is a very intimate and personal conduct. Therefore, discussing the authenticity of Emmeline Pankhurst and Mary Wollstonecraft’s conformity to ideals of wifedom and motherhood remains relative and subjective.

2. Conformity in the Light of Recent Historical Studies

This section presents the views of recent historians and literary critics about Mary Wollstonecraft, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst’s ‘attempts of conformity’. This will first include critics’ views of Christabel Pankhurst’s *Plain Facts* and feminists’ stance on morality during and immediately after the Victorian era. Second, it presents critics’ analysis of the contrast between Mary Wollstonecraft’s lifestyle and the moral claims she presented in *Rights of Woman*. Third, it discusses their views about Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst’s wifedom and motherhood. This will include a brief discussion of motherhood from a contemporary feminist point of view. Lastly, critics’ views of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst’s femininity will be presented.

³⁶⁴ Pankhurst, E. Sylvia. *The Life of Emmeline Pankhurst; the Suffragette Struggle for Women's Citizenship*. London, T. Werner Laurie Ltd, 1935.

Christabel Pankhurst's moral claims in her *Plain Facts* were perceived as a moral crusade by certain critics. Particularly, Les Garner³⁶⁵ argued that in 1913, Christabel Pankhurst unleashed a 'moral crusade', one that was conventional regardless of the explicit language that she used in her appeal. Indeed, Miss Pankhurst's ideas about venereal disease were largely representative of Victorian views regarding sex and male sexual desire. Nevertheless, although Miss Pankhurst fiercely disclosed the truth of Victorian morality, she founded her arguments on undisputed moral principles in her society. After all, Miss Pankhurst did not discuss the right of women to take pleasure in sexual intercourse or the utility and choice of contraception (Les Garner 54). Thus, Les Garner perceived Miss Pankhurst's claims of morality as conservative and limited in scope.

Further, Les Garner argued that the 'moral crusade' which was launched by Miss Pankhurst echoed her "political bankruptcy" as well as her militant union (54). Thus, Garner perceived Miss Pankhurst's use of moral rhetoric as a weak resort to moral claims in the absence of strong political claims from the militant campaign. Lastly, Les Garner emphasized that Miss Pankhurst's viewpoints in *Plain Facts* were neither "new, nor revolutionary, however shocking some of the details. And, in spite of the contemporary restrictions on a free discussion on sex, they certainly were not militant" (55). Indeed, there was nothing revolutionary about Miss Pankhurst's 'moral crusade', however, it was filled with conformist views from contemporary Victorian morality.

³⁶⁵ Garner, Les. *Stepping Stones to Women's Liberty: Feminist Ideas in the Women's Suffrage*. Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984.

Nevertheless, Janet Lyon³⁶⁶ argued that *Plain Facts* was destined to “shock and polarize a reading public already reeling from the unprecedented physical violence of suffragette militancy” (120). Besides, Lyon claimed that *Plain Facts* emphasized gender and sexuality as means of rebellion and uprising. In fact, Christabel Pankhurst’s book suggested a scheme of a rearranging gender and sexuality within the early twentieth century “avant-garde” (Lyon 120-1). Hence, Janet Lyon emphasized the revolutionary and rebellious side of Miss Pankhurst’s moral rhetoric. Unlike Les Garner, Janet Lyon thought *Plain Facts* an attempt to redefine gender and sexuality. I would argue that *Plain Facts* conformed to the main Victorian moral values which were conservative in their nature. In other words, the principles of morality upon which Miss Pankhurst built her chief arguments against venereal disease and moral dissolution of men were rather conservative and ‘Victorian’. Yet, the solutions she proposed for a better morality such as her appeal to women to abstain from marriage until men became equally virtuous as women, were fairly revolutionary and unconventional. Thus, the means that Miss Pankhurst used were conventional while the objectives were revolutionary.

Yet, it is important to stress that the moral rhetoric which Miss Pankhurst embraced³⁶⁷ was part of greater feminists’ moral crusade against the sexual dissolution of men. Particularly, this moral crusade started with efforts against “state regulation of prostitution” (Walkowitz 124³⁶⁸). In 1864, Parliament passed a law which allowed for prostitutes’ sanitary examination, mainly in military yards in southern England and Ireland. The law, which was named ‘The Contagious Diseases Act’ was met by public indignation that intensified around

³⁶⁶ Lyon, Janet. *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*. Cornell University, 1999.

³⁶⁷ In her *Plain Facts*, Christabel Pankhurst suggested various solutions to eradicate prostitution.

³⁶⁸ Walkowitz, Judith R. “The Politics of Prostitution.” *Signs*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1980, pp. 123–135. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3173970.

1870s. This was due to the combined efforts of feminists, nonconformists' middle-class and radical working-class men who condemned the legislation for being unethical and appealed for its repeal (124).

Meanwhile, contemporary observers were shocked of the role that middle-class women played in the repeal campaigns and deemed this uprising of women very alarming. The repeal campaign was led by Josephine Butler who initiated the Ladies National Association (LNA) in 1869, a separatist-feminist society. The LNA released the Ladies Manifesto which condemned 'The Contagious Diseases Act' as a flagrant instance of prejudice based on social division and gender. Besides, the manifesto claimed that the acts denied destitute women of their legal rights and compelled them to yield to a humiliating medical inspection. Moreover, the acts legitimized a "double standard of sexual morality, which justified male sexual access to a class of 'fallen' women and penalized women for engaging in the same vice as men" (Walkowitz 180). Accordingly, moral crusades against the double standard of morality and male sexual dissolution started with campaigns against state regulation of prostitution. In fact, Miss Christabel Pankhurst was following the steps of other feminists such as Josephine Butler. However, while Josephine Butler advocated better legal status for prostitutes, Miss Pankhurst advocated the eradication of prostitution³⁶⁹.

As for Mary Wollstonecraft, recent critics largely commented upon her personal life and the controversial reception of William Godwin's memoirs. Julie A. Carlson, for instance, considered both William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft to have difficulties in "making love". Carlson deemed Wollstonecraft's love troubles to be "conventional, in part because

³⁶⁹ Through the 'strengthening of women and the education of men'

she loved more readily”. Further, Carlson argued that Wollstonecraft’s negative reception, after the publication of Godwin’s memoirs, stressed her love affairs as a significant question mark in both her life and works and accentuated “discrepancies between head and heart, theory and practice, saying and doing, dying and generating”³⁷⁰ (23).

Similarly, Anna Clark suggested that William Godwin’s refusal to marriage was softened by Wollstonecraft who “recognize [ed] the value of affections while still upholding to conform to society by marrying”³⁷¹ (133). Clark also maintained that Wollstonecraft valued marriage but only when it was founded on fairness. Particularly, Wollstonecraft believed that marriage under the established laws of matrimony that existed in the eighteenth century subjugated women more than it protected morality. However, when Wollstonecraft became pregnant, the two became married in order to protect their daughter from social prejudice (133).

Moreover, Caroline Franklin³⁷² argued that Wollstonecraft’s private life, especially her love affair with Gilbert Imlay, was perceived as a failure on her part to implement the ideals expressed in her works. Wollstonecraft’s advocated values of friendship and amicable affection were seen to have been sacrificed to her “sexual desire”. Franklin stated that “[Wollstonecraft’s] determination to work out her principles of conduct anew, without recourse to patriarchal conventions [did] bring her much suffering” (110-1). Nevertheless, her determination and refusal to negotiate her principles advanced her feminist thinking much more than the values conveyed in her *Rights of Woman*, and even more than the thinking of

³⁷⁰ Carlson, Julie A. *England's First Family of Writers*. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.

³⁷¹ Clark, Anna. *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013.

³⁷² Op.cit.

most of her fellow writers. Franklin perceived the passionate love that Wollstonecraft experienced with Imlay as an experience that changed her vision of rational love to that of unbound and fervent love (111). This research had a similar conclusion to that of literary critic, Caroline Franklin, concerning Wollstonecraft's passionate love as opposed to the rational love she promoted in her *Rights of Woman*.

Likewise, Barbara Taylor ³⁷³regarded Wollstonecraft as a victim of the passionate love she criticized in her *Rights of Woman*. Taylor argued that Wollstonecraft, who deemed sexual love as a chief basis and sign of women's servility in her *Rights of Woman*, found herself after a few years "to be such an abject woman, as hostage as any other to the irrationalisms of the heart" (117). Nonetheless, almost all critics agree that William Godwin's memoirs did more harm than good to Wollstonecraft's legacy. Anna Clark, for instance, contended that Wollstonecraft who condemned the flaws of women and the vices of the nobility was largely celebrated for her literary genius. Nevertheless, Godwin's publication of the memoirs of his wife came to ruin her reputation and scandalize her legacy. Conservatives used the latter biography to scandalize the life of all feminists claiming that "female sexual freedom disrupted society and destabilized politics" (135). Mary Wollstonecraft as well as other feminists of the late eighteenth century attempted to resist the menace of the scandal, which lingered around all exceptional and unconventional women, through a reformation of the essence of morality.

Indeed, Godwin's biography made feminism the subject of scandal due to its emphasis on the personal and sexual life of Mary Wollstonecraft. In the late eighteenth

³⁷³ Taylor, Barbara. *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

century, a controversy started around Wollstonecraft's sexual life and the works of some feminist writers. The debate focusing on Wollstonecraft as well as other writers such as Mary Hays and Mary Darby Robinson was aimed at questioning these feminists' political and literary principles (Clark 134). Moreover, feminist writers who supported the French Revolution were specifically targeted by anti-Jacobin political controversy, Wollstonecraft was a keen supporter of the French Revolution (Jacobus 274). According to Elizabeth Eger, Godwin's memoirs did certainly put Wollstonecraft's legacy at risk during the eighteenth century and even beyond (Jacobus 274)³⁷⁴.

Nevertheless, Mary Jacobus suggested that the significance of William Godwin's confessions for readers today "lies less in any revelations about the nonconventionality of [Wollstonecraft's] personal life, than in exposing the unstable relations between the so-called 'life' and the 'letters'-between publicity and intimacy". Indeed, Godwin's biography of Wollstonecraft was aimed at redefining "the always fluctuating boundaries between the personal and the public, bringing both intimacy and indiscretion into the realm of political debate" (275). Accordingly, Wollstonecraft's unconventional love life was ascribed to different reasons by different critics. However, they all seem to agree that William Godwin's memoirs switched critics and readers' attention from Mary Wollstonecraft's works to that of her private life.

While some critics stressed Wollstonecraft's approach to morality and marriage, others stressed her approach to motherhood. In particular, Joel Spring³⁷⁵ argued that

³⁷⁴ Jacobus, Mary. "Intimate Connections: Scandalous Memoirs and Epistolary Indiscretion." *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

³⁷⁵ Spring, Joel. *Wheels in the Head: Educational Philosophies of Authority, Freedom, and Culture from Confucianism to Human Rights*. New York, Routledge, 2012.

Wollstonecraft's proposed example of motherhood involved the exercise of reason primarily. In her exemplar family, the mother was to practice her reason in order to acquire the finest means of childbearing, instruction and running domestic chores. The practice of her intellect should match that of her husband. Despite the fact that all members of the family will acquire compassion, Spring claimed that Wollstonecraft did not attribute any particular emotional or moral merits to women (190). Hence, critic Joel Spring deemed Wollstonecraft's exemplary family as egalitarian and rational. In other words, both the mother and the father were to share common responsibilities towards their children and the mother's essential quality with her children was rationality not affection.

Moreover, Rosemarie Tong³⁷⁶ contended that Wollstonecraft provided an example of a woman who is physically and intellectually sturdy, a master of her own passions and a companion to her husband and offspring. For Wollstonecraft, women could only free themselves from sensuality through a submission to reason and a devoted performance of the charges of a wife and mother (16). Indeed, Wollstonecraft advocated the exercise of reason for a sounder fulfillment of wifely and motherly duties. Most importantly, she called for a rational education for women, one that would enable them to practice this reason in discharging wifely and motherly duties.

As for Emmeline Pankhurst, June Purvis maintained that Emmeline Pankhurst conformed to middle-class Victorian values of wifhood and motherhood by marrying and giving birth to five children in a period of nine years. She, however, redefined Victorian social standards when she "combined her duties as a wife and mother with running a shop,

³⁷⁶ Tong, Rosemarie. *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Avalon Publishing, 2013.

organizing political meetings in her home, campaigning for her husband's political career, and carving out time for her own political interests" (30). Her unconventional vision was characteristic of the 'new woman', a late nineteenth century stereotype of femininity in middle-class women (Purvis 30).

The term of the 'new woman' raised significant scholarly debates on feminism, which prevailed on the literary and social scenes of the late nineteenth century. The term dominated literature and journals in 1894. The 'new woman' came to question a variety of foundations, perceptions and values, especially those related to sexuality, matrimony and family. For some activists within the women's movement, the 'new woman' was held as a synonym for "advocates of women's rights". For others, it was a loathsome label that seemed to suggest appalling features. The debate about the term illustrated the gap between the different generations of the women's movement, especially since a group of younger feminists defined the term in a way that opposed Victorian values of matrimony and womanhood that were embraced by older Victorian feminists. These Victorian feminists consistently tried to repudiate any novelty in womanliness of the late nineteenth century by emphasizing that the 'new woman' was merely more educated compared to women in previous times (Caine 134-5).

In 1894, Sarah Grand, a writer and a feminist, attempted to explain what the term 'new woman' signified. She is considered as the first writer to start 'the new woman novels' (ODNB). In her article "The New Aspect of the Woman Question", Grand described men as the 'Bawling Brothers' who fall into two categories. The first of which are men who are content with the 'cow-kind of woman', thus, any chance of a rebellion within their "domestic cattle" leave them furious and outrageous. The second category of Bawling Brothers is one

which is charmed by scum- women, these women use, destroy, and eradicate their character. These men think that all women are scum-girls (270). Grand explains:

Both the cow-woman and the scum-woman are well with in range of the comprehension of the Bawling Brotherhood, but the new woman is a little above him, and he never even thought of looking up to where she has been sitting apart in silent contemplation all these years, thinking and thinking, until at last she solved the problem and proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman's-Sphere, and prescribed the remedy (271).

Hence, for Sarah Grand the 'new woman' was neither submissive nor manipulative. She was independent, assertive and far more different than the "cow" and "scum" women who existed before. She was a woman who realized the wrongs of her fellow women and decided to speak against it. The 'new woman' challenged the groundless superiority of men and refused their authority. Nevertheless, Grand's assertions of what identified the 'new woman' were rather ungrounded since older feminists had the same characteristics. Yet, Grand's discourse³⁷⁷ reflected a new characteristic of women in the 1890s, a sense of moral superiority that took men for children that needed to be taught by women. Men were to be pitied, empathized and helped instead of despised. New women are more critical of men than of themselves. To summarize, new women were educators of men, saviors of oppressed women and defenders of women's rights.

Sarah Grand's article "The New Aspect of the Woman Question", which was considered by Barbara Caine as a rebellion against all "Victorian ideals of femininity" (135)

³⁷⁷ Cf. Sarah Grand's article "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" (271-6).

had still a female voice in it. Grand assured men who accused feminists of having no sense of womanliness, femininity or responsibility that: “True womanliness is not in danger, and the sacred duties of wife and mother will be all the more honorably performed when women have a reasonable hope of becoming wives and mothers of men” (274). Grand reassured men that womanliness will be more cherished when women are emancipated. Besides, the holy duties of women as wives and mothers will only be enhanced and revered.

Accordingly, Emmeline Pankhurst’s lifestyle and principles are characteristic of the ‘new woman’, one who conformed to her role as a wife and mother but still refused to be confined within the domestic sphere. Emmeline Pankhurst was a wife and mother who also had her own business, campaigned for women’s rights and supported her husband in his political career. Consequently, according to June Purvis, when her son Frank died, Emmeline was swiftly able to overcome the misfortune by throwing herself again in women’s suffrage and married women’s property campaigns (30). Having read Emmeline Pankhurst’s speeches, articles and autobiography, I can safely assert that Emmeline Pankhurst never identified herself as the ‘new woman’. However, her lifestyle and vision of life was definitely representative of the new woman. Arguably, even if she did consider herself as a new woman, she would still avoid labeling herself as such for the term was largely controversial and implied a radical change in the prospect of womanhood.

Other recent critics mostly considered Emmeline Pankhurst as a good wife and compassionate mother. However, their arguments are mainly founded on the autobiographies of her daughters ‘Christabel and Sylvia’ which I discussed earlier in this chapter. Therefore, I will rather discuss critics’ views about the subject of motherhood and feminism and how the two interact at various levels. Critic Nancy Fix Anderson, for instance, argued that although

mothers were believed to be idealized in the Victorian age, this was not completely true. In reality, mothers were only treasured by society when they were judged as ‘good’ mothers. Various characteristics distinguished the good mother such as moral values and decorum of conduct and beliefs. In fact, the representation of wives and mothers as ‘angels in the house’ was highly demonstrative of the status of ‘nonangelic’ mothers. These women were deemed unfit for motherhood. The case of the Besant custody trials is a good example of this. Annie Besant (1847-1933) was a nineteenth century social radical who advocated contraception and atheism. Due to her beliefs, Besant was unable to win the custody of her daughter in court (Anderson 13-4).

In 1878, Annie Besant was found “not fit and proper person” to take custody of her daughter. This was due to her beliefs and not to her aptness as a mother. The court’s decision to deny Besant the custody of her daughter due to her unconventional views as well as the public’s large support for the verdict, clearly demonstrated the prevailing Victorian stance on motherhood. Mothers were certainly assessed by their reputation instead of their motherly affection. During the Victorian age “social conformity was more important than maternal love” (Anderson 13-4). According to Nancy Fix Anderson, Annie Besant trials present “fascinating insights into the contradictions and hypocrisies in the Victorian image of motherhood, and into the social realities defining ‘good’ motherhood” ³⁷⁸(14). Thus, unless mothers conformed to the main beliefs of the Victorian society, they were easily labeled as ‘unfit for motherhood’, regardless of how compassionate and affectionate they were as mothers.

³⁷⁸ Nelson, Claudia and Ann summer Holmes. *Maternal Instincts: Visions of Motherhood and Sexuality in Britain, 1875-1925*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1997.

Contemporary feminists acknowledge the comparison of motherhood with womanhood since women are often considered as “women’s reproductive counterpart to men’s productive labor” (Star 350³⁷⁹). Indeed, procreation is an essential element to comprehending women’s status in society. Certainly, feminists acclaimed women’s exclusive biological ability to bear infants as a life-making capacity that renders them sympathetic and loving. However, they lamented that this same special gift was responsible for women’s social marginalization. Male-controlled legal systems exploited procreation as a pretext to deny women the suffrage, entrance to university and holding various occupations. Socialist feminists, for example, recognized procreation as the basic foundation for the staggering accountability of child care and housekeeping for women (Lewis424-5³⁸⁰).

Moreover, second-wave feminists criticized normative perceptions that women could and should bear children. The establishment of women as mothers disguises the fact that women’s aspiration to bear children “is neither inherent, nor specific, to women; nor are women equipped thereby with know-how to care for children” (Star 351). Besides, the dominant cultural glorification of motherhood as women’s ultimate accomplishment in their lifetime, particularly if they are married, is blamed by certain feminists for the increase in depression rates among mothers. Mothers’ sense of seclusion, insufficient public child support and deficiency of social support are examples of how women’s special gift and compassionate toil is being rewarded in our modern societies (Star 350-1). Thus, unlike Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst who perceived motherhood as a strategic tool to promote their feminist ideals, various contemporary feminists perceived motherhood as an

³⁷⁹ Star, Lynne. “Motherhood”. *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*. Edited by Lorraine Code, London, Routledge, 2000.

³⁸⁰ Lewis, Nancy. “Reproduction” *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*. Edited by Lorraine Code, London, Routledge, 2000.

impediment to their full liberation. In the opinion of the latter feminists, the emphasis on women's reproductive ability limits women's scope of achievements to motherhood and exclude all other accomplishments. In turn, this puts tremendous pressure on women to become mothers regardless of whether they want to or not.

Concerning femininity, there has not been much written about Mary Wollstonecraft's femininity. However, critic Anna Clark did comment on one of her portraits saying "her hair [was] romantically tumbling about her face, framed in a Grecian scarf in the French revolutionary manner, or jauntily wearing a man's top hat" (126). According to Clark's description, Wollstonecraft was eager to appear daring and revolutionary more than feminine. On the other hand, Paula Bartley described Emmeline Pankhurst as an "idiosyncratic mixture of feminine charm and political guile" (2³⁸¹). She also added that for supporters of Emmeline Pankhurst, she was the emblem of the suffragette movement, an audacious and gorgeous superwoman who conquered all the boundaries and biases of the nineteenth century society in order to proclaim a fresh genesis of women's rights (2). Certainly, Emmeline Pankhurst was successful in exhibiting her beauty and femininity, thus impressing both her contemporaries and recent critics.

Aside from critics' views about Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's femininity, I wish to emphasize some of the nineteenth century exertions to reform feminine dress. In the nineteenth century, various campaigns for women's rights spurred the spirit of women's liberation on various levels including fashion. Indeed, women were believed to be enslaved by fashionable clothes that were neither practical nor hygienic. Consequently, the

³⁸¹ Op.cit.

Rational Dress Society was created in 1881. It aimed to alter the supposedly unsanitary and constricting features of the modern feminine dress. The society did not denounce the corset explicitly, however, its affiliates voiced their aversion to the routine of tight lacing.

Nevertheless, other movements such as the Aesthetic Dress Movement overtly opposed the corset since it changed women's natural silhouette (Aindow 75-6)³⁸².

Moreover, affiliates of the Rational Dress Society endeavored to bring together both body and self. This was to be attained through a sanitary attitude towards clothing that included the use of natural textiles and patterns that were linked to the natural body instead of the fabricated and fashionable one (Arnold 27)³⁸³. Meanwhile, in order to appeal to a wider conservative society, women's rights campaigners such as Lydia Becker³⁸⁴ and Emmeline Pankhurst supported the corset and the genteel silhouette that it produced while Mrs. Harberton, the creator of the Rational Dress Society, ridiculed it and held it responsible for the enslavement of both the body and intellect of women (Kortsch 19)³⁸⁵.

In response, Lydia Becker appealed to women to hold on to their corsets and prevail over men (qtd in Kortsh 94). Becker trusted that radical dress choices jeopardized the cause more than promoted it. Emmeline Pankhurst was of the same opinion. Despite the different policies, regarding women's emancipation, of the two suffrage leaders, Emmeline Pankhurst and Lydia Becker, the two seemed to agree that "the more radical their message, the more feminine their clothing. This theatricality in the suffragists' dress served to popularize their

³⁸² Aindow, Rosy. *Dress and Identity in British Literary Culture, 1870-1914*. Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010.

³⁸³ Arnold, Rebecca. *Fashion, Desire and Anxiety: Image and Morality in the 20th Century*. London, I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2001.

³⁸⁴ A suffragist leader.

³⁸⁵ Kortsch, Christine Bayles. *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women's Fiction: Literacy, Textiles, and Activism*. Burlington, Ashgate Publishing, 2009.

pageants and marches, drawing the public's attention to the suffragists' beauty and respectability, and perhaps assuaging public censure" (Kortsch 94). Certainly, both the conservative Lydia Becker and the radical Emmeline Pankhurst wished to avoid any unnecessary radicalism that would harm and alienate their cause.

In fact, Emmeline Pankhurst opposed her husband's support to Helen Taylor, a candidate for Camberwell, and considered it suicidal. Not only because she opposed her politics but also her clothing style. Taylor appeared wearing trousers in her campaigns, turning attention from her cause to her own radicalism. At a time when even the women's suffrage societies refused to associate themselves with Helen Taylor, Richard Pankhurst actually campaigned for her (Pugh 40-1). The fact that Emmeline rejected Helen Taylor partly for her insistence to wear trousers should come as no surprise. Emmeline believed that suffragists' dressing style was significant to their political cause. According to Pugh: "Emmeline adopted pronounced views on the importance of dress for a woman in public life. She believed that a suffragist should always be the best-dressed woman in the room and consciously used her own femininity as a way of disarming critics of the suffragists movement" (11-2).

Moreover, Christine Bayles Kortsch argued that for Lydia Becker and Emmeline Pankhurst to defy contemporary fashion and political conservatism was particularly risky. In fact, remembering the hostility that the American suffragists were met with due to their bloomers³⁸⁶ was sufficient warning to Victorian suffragists. Further, for feminists such as Emmeline Pankhurst and Lydia Becker, dress was a means to promote their cause. Kortsch

³⁸⁶ A dress with a short skirt and large-legged trousers underneath. It is named after its designer and advocate Amelia Bloomer (Kortsch).

argued that “dress could be used as a subtle tool, as a way to render intellectual or political radicalism more palatable” (92).

Accordingly, while Emmeline Pankhurst and her union members worked hard to conform to feminine dress, other feminist societies attempted to reform the feminine Victorian dress into a more rational and practical one. Emphasizing the radical dress reform movement that took place in the nineteenth century is specifically important to stress Emmeline Pankhurst’s particular conformity to feminine dress. Despite her rebellion and readiness to embrace extreme measures to emancipate women, Emmeline Pankhurst still chose to conform to feminine dress and avoided to support any dress reform movement. Arguably, Mrs. Pankhurst did not wish to support a dress reform movement that would only alienate and distort her initial claim which is ‘women’s enfranchisement’. Emmeline Pankhurst believed that once women were enfranchised, all of their other rights will be gradually acquired. Therefore, a dress reform movement must have seemed a subordinate claim to Mrs. Pankhurst compared to women’s suffrage, one that was likely to distort her aims instead of promoting them.

3. Rebellion vs. Conformity

Arguing that Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst used both rebellion and conformity to advance their feminist claims inevitably poses the question: which method was more effective and how the two methods could serve the same political aim? Although conformity and rebellion are antonyms which are opposed in meaning and implication, the two words come closer when used as methods to serve the same purpose. I initially intended to compare the effectiveness of the two methods in serving the same political cause, however, I came to realize that the way the two methods were used by Mary Wollstonecraft and

Emmeline Pankhurst makes my attempt of comparison meaningless. This is simply because the two feminists used rebellion and conformity so strategically and elaborately that the two methods became inseparable and incomparable. They were fused and merged together to serve one political objective that it became difficult and even pointless to compare them.

Instead, rebellion and conformity could be seen as two political instruments that can be reconciled to promote one shared political cause. In the case of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst, rebellion and conformity coexisted within the same political strategy. The two feminists chose to conform to certain ideals of the English society while they rebelled against others. Had they rebelled against all social prejudices that prevailed in the English society, they could have alienated their public and failed in attracting any supporters to their cause. Similarly, if they conformed to all social standards and expectations, they could not have affected or helped effect any change. Thus, when rebellion is joined with conformity, they have a better chance of achieving their goals. The two feminists pressed for their claims through their rebellion and attempted to alleviate and gain followers through their conformity. Besides, rebellion and conformity became almost synonymous when both Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst used conformist views to appeal for more radical change, such as their use of moral claims to call for women's emancipation.

On the one hand, while Mary Wollstonecraft's revolutionary claims in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was rather positively reviewed by eighteenth-century press³⁸⁷, her conformity to notions of morality, wifehood and motherhood played a significant role in her positive reception. Despite her radical claims, she still managed to leave a good

³⁸⁷ Cf. the reception of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* in the chapter "Defending Morality".

impression about her moral values and views about marriage and motherhood. To justify, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* and entire legacy and writing were criticized after the publication of her *Memoirs*³⁸⁸. This is to prove that once her personal life was exposed and her conformity was discredited, her radical claims became all of a sudden more radical and unacceptable.

On the other hand, while Emmeline Pankhurst adopted militancy and resorted to extreme measures to protest against the disenfranchisement of women, she still avoided any unnecessary radicalism that would harm her cause more than uphold it. Perhaps the best person to summarize the WSPU methods of conformity and rebellion is one of the leaders of the union itself, Christabel Pankhurst. In her autobiography and narrative of the suffragette movement, Miss Pankhurst emphasized that they conformed to all social norms in order to alleviate any accusations of radicalism and masculinity. She asserted "to parry any charge of "unwomanliness, "extreme views", and so forth, conformity to convention in all but militancy was the rule" (126). This was indeed the policy of the WSPU. On the one hand, the suffragettes' militancy was intended to attract public opinion and force politicians to recognize their cause. On the other hand, conformity was intended to discredit critics' accusations of radicalism and masculinity.

Together, militancy and conformity were the best policy for the WSPU. I would argue that the success of the Women's Social and Political Union was due to a large extent to this unique combination of militancy and conformity, coexisting within the same union policy. Certainly, the suffragettes conformed and agreed to certain notions of morality, femininity, wifehood and motherhood, however, this did not come without negotiations. Through

³⁸⁸ *Op.cit.*

conformity, the WSPU leaders were able to negotiate notions of morality, wifhood and motherhood through their demand of a single set of morality, better wifhood and motherhood.

In this research, I repeatedly claimed that Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst conformed to notions of morality, femininity, wifhood and motherhood so as to promote their feminist claims. Through this claim, I intended to illustrate how conformity can be more than an attitude and behavior, but a political instrument as well. In fact, the two feminists' use of conformity for political ends makes conformity or rather 'strategic conformity' a political instrument. Hence, I would argue that 'strategic conformity', a conformity that is exercised for tactical reasons, should be recognized as a political tool that deserves the attention and thorough examination of historians and literary critics. In the field of women's studies, in particular, conformity may well be revisited in analyzing the works and lives of female writers. For one reason, literary critics largely stressed feminists' rebellion as the main and almost the sole tool for change. On the other hand, the works of conformist feminists were frequently analyzed without much contemplation about their political resonance.

To conclude, Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's conformity was largely commented upon by recent historians and critics. Yet, their conformity was discussed under different labels and analysis, which enriches this study even further. I would argue that similar to Wollstonecraft and Pankhurst, a large number of female writers and activists who were labeled by some historians as 'conformist', 'traditional', 'Victorian' ... etc. did practice some sort of strategic conformity. Many female writers and activists could not opt for rebellion to bring about change, however, some of them may have attempted strategic conformity to advance radical claims. The case of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline

Pankhurst is the best proof of this. Although the two feminists did opt for rebellion, they could not but practice some 'strategic conformity' for more effectiveness. Certainly, not all conformity is strategic or should be regarded as a political instrument. However, through comprehensive analysis, historians and literary critics would be able to distinguish between the two types of conformity.

Conclusion

In 1911, the WSPU newspaper *Votes for Women*³⁸⁹ published an article that acclaimed Mary Wollstonecraft as the leader of the women's movement stating that, "Mrs. Wollstonecraft leads in front, we today are following the path she has tracked" (Lawrence 338). Indeed, the suffragettes' movement which was led by Emmeline Pankhurst was greatly inspired by the legacy of the famous eighteenth century campaigner for women's rights, Mary Wollstonecraft, for "Never was the world so immediately interested in her thoughts and her life as it is today—never so ready for the message which she had to give it" (Lawrence 338).

Mary Wollstonecraft initially experienced prejudice at home which was but a mirror of the prejudices about women that prevailed in 18th century British society. Women suffered an unjust social, intellectual, economic, legal and political system. Although women's situation differed according to their class and marital status, they all experienced a prejudice of some sort. Socially, middle and upper-class women were exceedingly expected to remain within their private sphere, making the home a pleasant place for their husbands and offspring. The same cannot be said about working-class women who had to join the public sphere and work alongside their fathers or husbands. Nonetheless, this did not exempt them from their domestic responsibilities.

Moreover, female education was designed to make women more feminine than rational. It aimed to prepare girls, especially girls from the middling classes, for their homely

³⁸⁹ Lawrence, Frederick W., and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editors. "Mary Wollstonecraft". *Votes for Women*. London, Feb24. 1911, p. 338.

responsibilities and teach them refined behavior and manners. Working-class girls received little education if any since they had to join the work force early in their life. Economically, women had a subordinate economic status. Wishing to maintain their social standing, upper and middle-class women mainly opted for intellectual work, this is about the few who pursued a career in the first place. On the contrary, working-class women pursued manual jobs that included domestic service and factory work, after the advent of the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century.

Likewise, the English legal and political system had its fair share of prejudice against women. Married women had no property rights and their whole legal existence was merged with that of their husbands under the law of coverture. They also had no political rights. They had no representatives in Parliament and they could neither vote in local nor in general elections. The women's disfranchisement continued throughout the nineteenth century and was a chief concern of many feminists. In response to all the injustices that prevailed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, various feminists campaigned against the social, intellectual, economic, legal, and political system in Britain. However, this research focused on two feminists in particular, Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst.

Mary Wollstonecraft questioned the status of women in the eighteenth century and appealed for a rational education for girls, one that would make women more worthy of respect and esteem for their intellect rather than their charms. While Wollstonecraft's earliest works were conduct books about the subject of education such as her *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) and *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788), her most celebrated works were two political pamphlets *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

Mary Wollstonecraft was in France when the revolution started and her two political pamphlets were an immediate reaction to the French Revolution. Wollstonecraft largely believed in the principles of the revolution and trusted that a new dawn of freedom and equality could emerge as a result. Thus, when Edmund Burke criticized the principles of the revolution and warned of its impact on Britain in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Wollstonecraft responded almost immediately by writing her *Rights of Men*. In her pamphlet, Wollstonecraft criticized the aristocracy and their unwarranted privileges. She also believed in the corruption of the French monarchy and called for its abolition. Moreover, she defended the radical Dr. Richard Price whom she admired greatly. Through her response to Burke, Wollstonecraft joined the revolution controversy in which many radical intellectuals were involved. In fact, her interaction with radical intellectuals such as Joseph Johnson and Richard Price were instrumental in the evolution of her political and even radical thinking.

Most importantly, the French Revolution spurred Wollstonecraft's rebellion against the subjection of women and its origins. She particularly lamented girls' feminine and domestic education that was advocated by the National assembly in France. Her protest was articulated in her second political pamphlet *Rights of Woman*. In this pamphlet, Wollstonecraft argued that women were maintained in a state of dependence through the education they received. She urged for a rational education for women, economic independence and fairer legal system. Wollstonecraft even suggested that women should be represented in parliament.

Despite the various protests against the subordinate status of women in the eighteenth century, the condition of women did not change much in the nineteenth century. In fact, the advent of the industrial revolution in the early nineteenth century may have worsened the

condition of working-class women who suffered dreadful working conditions in factories. Nonetheless, the Industrial Revolution did bring new work opportunities in some industries. Most importantly, the nineteenth century was home to many social, legal and political reforms. Regarding women, campaigns for improving work conditions in factories, granting married women property rights and winning women the vote proliferated.

Emmeline Pankhurst was one of the political activists who campaigned for women's suffrage through her union 'The Women's Social and Political Union'. The union declared itself as a militant suffrage association and adopted radical tactics to promote women's suffrage. Thus, while Mary Wollstonecraft appealed for women's rights at a time when all focus was on the rights of men, Emmeline Pankhurst adopted violent militant tactics when all suffrage societies were peacefully campaigning for the vote. This led many historians such as Miriam Brody, Eliza Lynn Linton and Paula Bartley to consider the two feminists as rebels and even radicals. Besides, Wollstonecraft was considered as a radical and revolutionary author because of her proposal to establish a unified educational system for boys and girls, her advocacy of a single standard of morality for both sexes and her private life which was considered as scandalous by 18th-century standards.

Furthermore, Emmeline Pankhurst was perceived as a rebel by many historians³⁹⁰ due to the militant tactics that the suffragettes adopted. Her militancy was deemed as a radical and innovative method for claiming the vote. Since historians largely focused on Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's rebellious words and deeds, this research aimed to shed light on a different method that the two feminists used that of 'strategic conformity'. I

³⁹⁰ Such as David Horspool, Paula Bartley and George Dangerfield.

contended that despite Mary Wollstonecraft's and Emmeline Pankhurst's rebellion against the subordination of women in their societies, they both attempted to conform to certain social norms that were directly linked to women's traditional role in the British society such as notions of morality, wifehood, motherhood and femininity.

Particularly, this research aimed to study conformity not as a method of acquiescence but rather as an instrument of change in the lives of subordinated women. To this end, I largely relied on middle-eastern studies of conformity such as Janice Boddy's study of how Hofriyati³⁹¹ women's conformity to social norms was a means of resistance to male hegemony (345). Moreover, Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder claimed that not only women use conformist behavior to sustain and promote social change but their concession to change a particular social norm upholds the creation of another (209).

Before demonstrating how Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst conformed to certain notions of morality, wifehood, motherhood and femininity, this research attempted to display why they attempted conformity in the first place. The answer lies in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' perception of women's character, conduct and roles. Seventeenth and eighteenth century female writers, for instance, were only celebrated when they exhibited propriety, reserve, modesty and self-esteem. Writers who swayed from this model were critiqued and their works were at best disregarded. Female writers who ignored the prescribed moralistic attitude were particularly censured. Female writers were also more prone to criticism than their male counterparts. Thus, for a writer like Mary Wollstonecraft who advocated revolutionary change in the status of women, it is clear why she would attempt

³⁹¹ Women in northern Sudan.

conformity to moral ideals and women's traditional role in her works. Wollstonecraft may have feared to completely alienate her readers and must have wished to alleviate any radical claims that she presented in her works through her conformity.

The same could be said about Emmeline Pankhurst who, along with other suffragists, was faced with accusations of disregarding domesticity, masculinity and lack of delicacy and elegance. These allegations were mainly propagated by the press and anti-suffrage societies. Emmeline and the rest of the WSPU leaders felt that their militancy was already extreme enough and there was therefore, no need for any unnecessary radicalism or nonconformity. Thus, they attempted conformity to conventions so that they would not alienate a public who was already alienated by the suffragettes' violent militant acts. Besides, they wished to discredit critics' accusations of masculinity and rebellion against domesticity.

Consequently, the two feminists conformed to certain notions of morality that prevailed in eighteenth and nineteenth century English society. In the chapter 'Defending Morality', I chose to focus on Christabel Pankhurst's conformity in her *Plain Facts about a Great Evil* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman*. The two feminists conformed by first setting themselves as moral teachers. They conformed to moral notions by agreeing to certain moral ideals of their contemporary society and by discarding others and establishing themselves as moral teachers who aimed to present a better model of morality for men and women. Thus, while Mary Wollstonecraft agreed with moral notions such as chastity and modesty, she nevertheless urged for a pure and unpretentious practice of these virtues. Likewise, Miss Christabel agreed with the perception of women as guardians of morality and even acted upon it when she preached men to commit to better moral standards. Second, the

two feminists conformed by arguing that women's emancipation would provide for a better morality.

Additionally, Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst conformed to ideals of wifehood and motherhood in various ways. Initially, they did so by defending the rights of wives and mothers, thus, linking their emancipatory claims to the aim of enhancing the conditions of wives and mothers. Further, they conformed to the latter ideals by contending that women's liberation was the key to a better prospect of wifehood and motherhood. Last but not least, the two feminists conformed by setting themselves as a good example of wives and mothers so as to render their contentions more appealing and compelling.

Nevertheless, regarding Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's conformity to ideals of femininity, I argued that while Emmeline Pankhurst largely conformed to feminine appearance, Wollstonecraft almost completely rebelled against it. On a personal level, Wollstonecraft did commit to eighteenth-century feminine dress. However, she did criticize eighteenth century's constructions of femininity in her *Rights of Woman*.

Wollstonecraft believed that ideals of femininity were detrimental to women's character and merely aimed to worsen women's domination by men. Her stand can be easily comprehended, she simply wished women to become more rational than sensitive and perceived ideals of femininity as an obstacle in the way of achieving this aim. On the contrary, Emmeline Pankhurst aimed to discredit her critics' accusation of masculinity through exhibiting her femininity, advertising feminine outfit in her *Votes for Women* and encouraging the suffragettes to look feminine in public.

Apart from examining why and how the two feminists conformed, I sought to assess the success of their strategy of conformity. To achieve this, I studied the contemporary

reception of the two feminists' conformity. In the case of Mary Wollstonecraft, press reviews about her most revolutionary work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* were generally positive. Although most reviews had reserves on some of Wollstonecraft's claims, they still approved of the work as a whole. *The Critical Review* was the only magazine which seemed to grasp Wollstonecraft's radical insinuations whereas the other magazines did not seem to recognize the radical nature of her work.

Nonetheless, after the death of Mary Wollstonecraft on the 10th of September 1797, her husband, William Godwin, published her memoirs in *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. These memoirs exposed Wollstonecraft's unconventional love affairs and illegitimate child. Ever since, her works were read in the light of her personal life and her legacy was condemned by eighteenth-century critics. However, it is important to note that Wollstonecraft's later rejection, after her private life was exposed, proves that she was successful in her conformity. She effectively managed to disguise her radical claims with conformist ones to receive positive reviews for her work. Nonetheless, when her unconventional love life was revealed, critics seemed to notice her unconventional claims all of a sudden. On the other hand, Christabel Pankhurst's *Plain Facts* was negatively received. However, the negative reception mainly came from radical feminists who rebelled against the moral standards of the nineteenth century such as Dora Marsden and R. B. Kerr, which was an indication that her book was conservative and conventional.

Furthermore, Mary Wollstonecraft's maternal and wifely affection were appraised by the British Critic while Emmeline Pankhurst's wifely and motherly devotion was commended by her daughters. Yet, Mrs. Pankhurst was much acclaimed for her conformity to femininity. Not only did Emmeline Pankhurst manage to inspire her followers to be feminine, she also

inspired a number of women to join her union. Mrs. Pankhurst even succeeded in impressing some of her opponents such as Rebecca West and Teresa Billington-Greig with her feminine look, gentility and refinement.

The study of Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst's rebellion and conformity aimed to shed light on 'strategic conformity' as a means of change and even as a political instrument that can be as useful for women's emancipation as rebellion. Perhaps any discussion of women's struggle for emancipation in Britain remains purely historical and provides no benefit for the already emancipated British and European women, although full equality between men and women in all aspects of our social life is yet to be attained. Nevertheless, women's struggle for emancipation is still the main concern of many feminists in different parts of the world such as the Middle East, India and Africa.

I believe that this dissertation about conformity and rebellion is more than a theoretical research, instead, it can provide a practical and real-world insight. To give a more practical example, feminist movements based on a western model of equality between men and women in the Arab world are easily disregarded in favor of feminist Islamic movements. Although their goals and claims are usually the same, the fact that Islamic feminist movements claim to derive their model of justice from religion makes the movement more appealing to both men and women. This is simply because the movement asserts it conformity to pre-existing religious values. It argues that it is culture that subjugates women in the Arab world not religion, therefore, religious claims are brought forth to eradicate the more dominant and oppressive cultural practices that impede women's emancipation.

Nevertheless, feminist movements which are founded on a western model of emancipation usually fail to make any positive change. This is due to the fact that their values

are inspired by a western and ‘foreign’ model of women’s emancipation; this is usually perceived as a rebellion against the existing religious and cultural values and has no appeal to the majority of men and women in the Arab world. Hence, these movements are frequently criticized and even attacked for importing a ‘foreign’ model of emancipation that does not merely aim to enhance the status of women but aims to encourage Arab and Muslim women to follow a western libertarian model of emancipation, one that would corrupt their religious and cultural values. I trust that the study of conformity in relation to feminist movements needs further investigation and can open new conceptual paths for both researchers and activists alike.

Appendix

1. A picture of Mary Wollstonecraft.
2. A picture of Mary Wollstonecraft holding a book
3. A picture of Emmeline Pankhurst
4. A picture of Christabel Pankhurst
5. A picture of Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence
6. Examples of advertisements of feminine and fashionable clothes from *Votes for Women*

Appendix 1: A picture of Mary Wollstonecraft ³⁹²



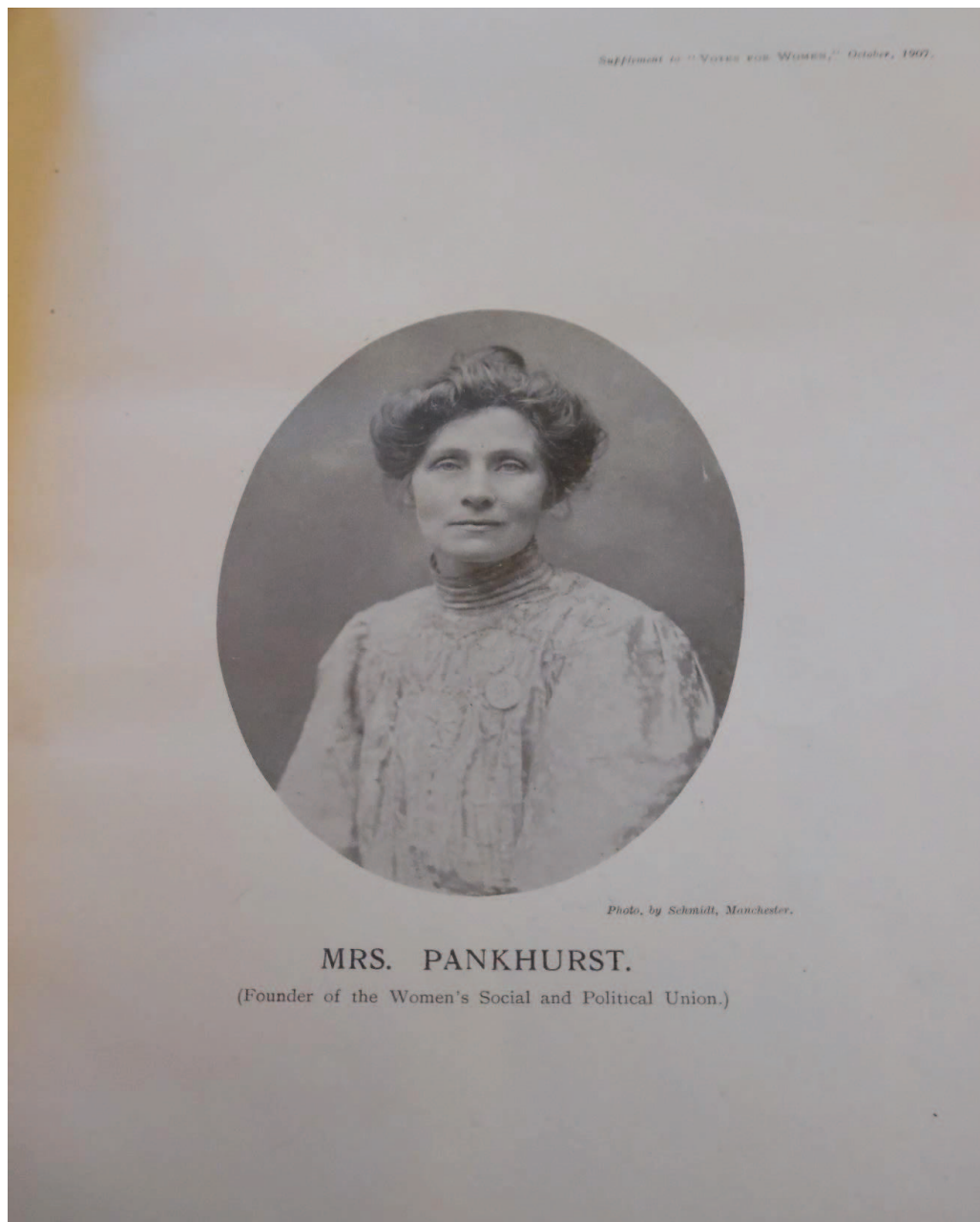
³⁹² Opie, John. "Mary Wollstonecraft". National Portrait Gallery, NPG 1237, 1797, www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02603/Mary-Wollstonecraft

Appendix 2: A picture of Mary Wollstonecraft holding a book³⁹³



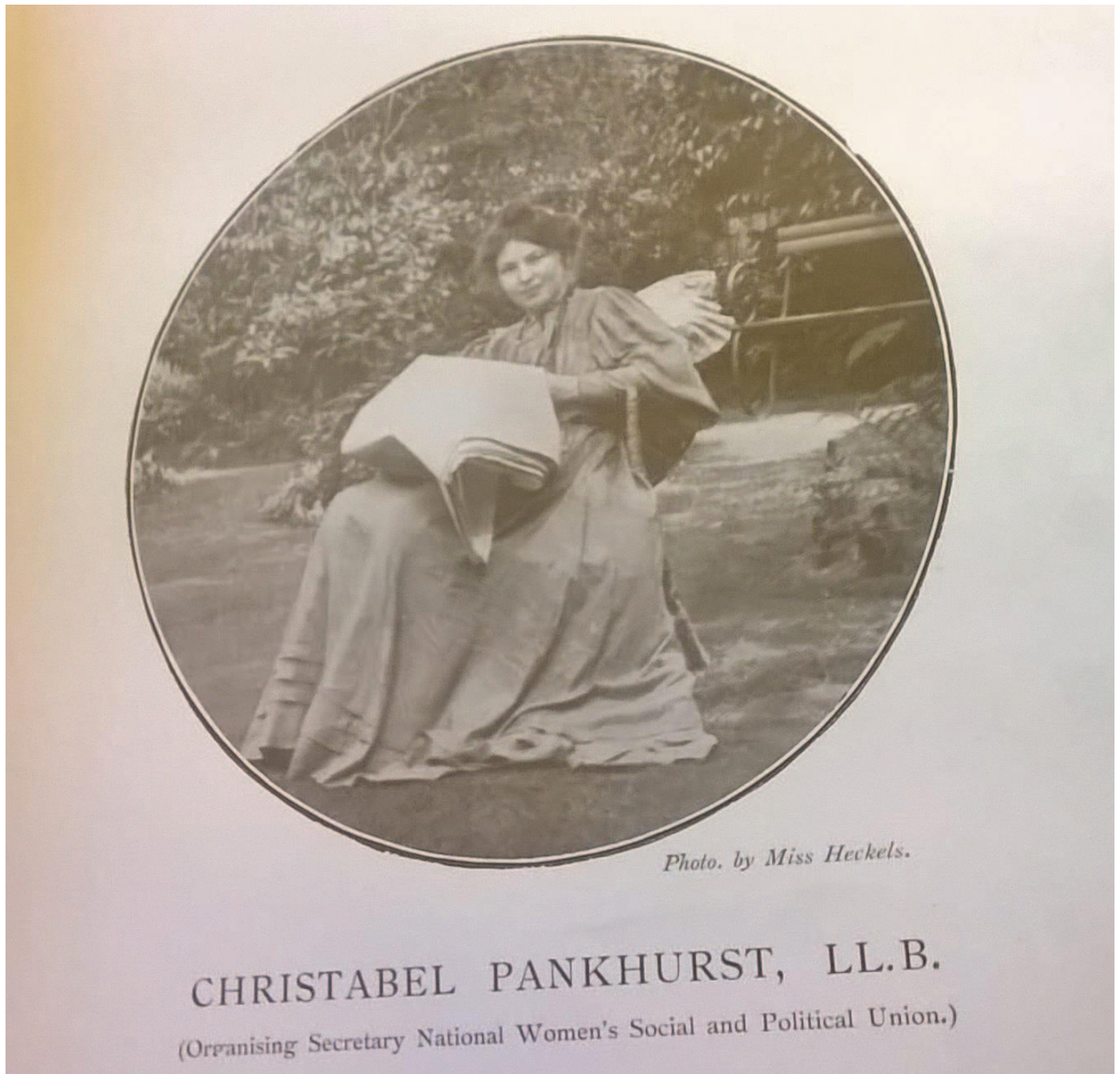
³⁹³ Opie, John. "Mary Wollstonecraft (Mrs William Godwin)". Tate, N01167, c.1790–1, www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/opie-mary-wollstonecraft-mrs-william-godwin-n01167

Appendix 3: A picture of Emmeline Pankhurst in *Votes for Women*³⁹⁴



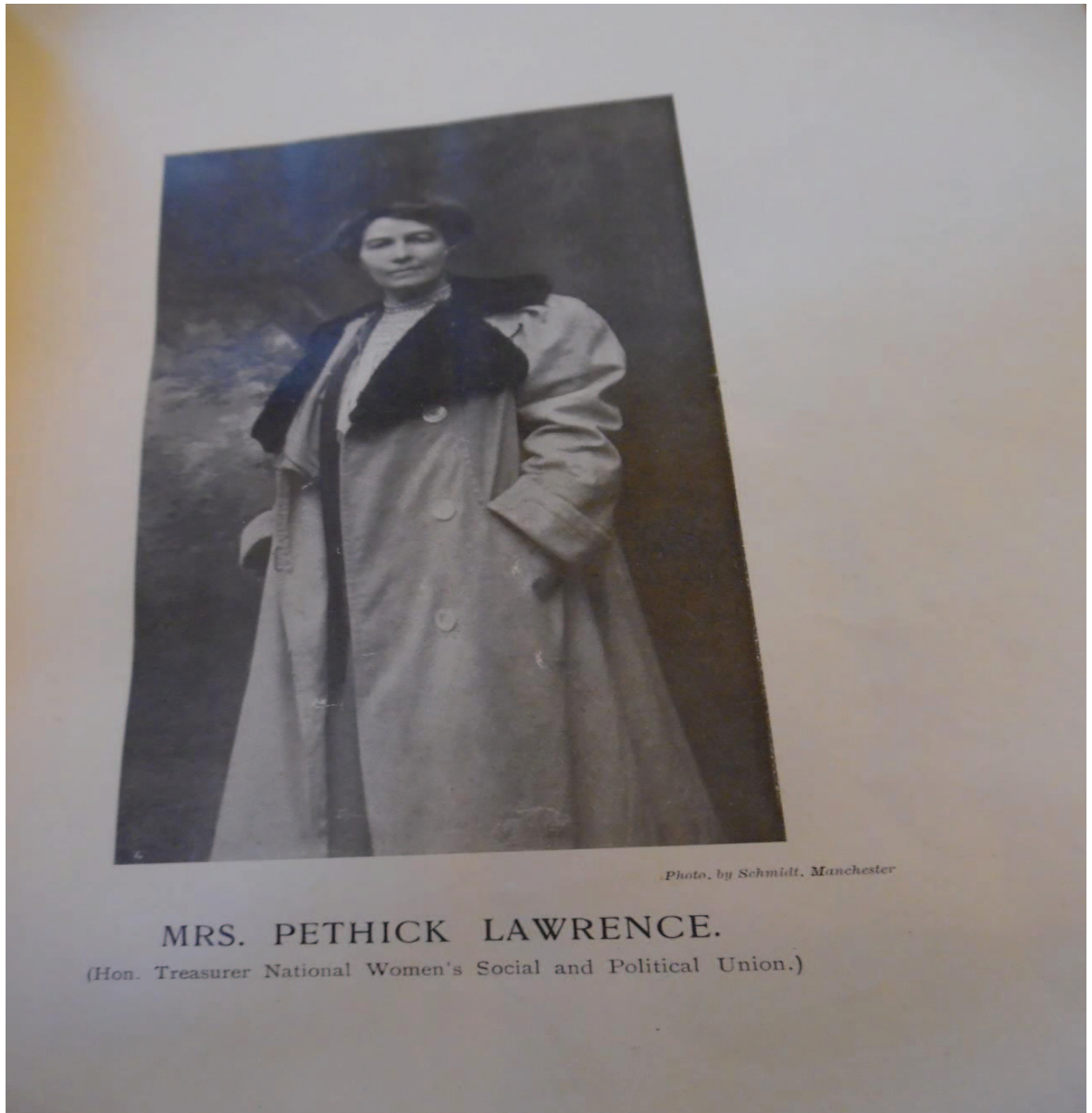
³⁹⁴ Schmidt. "Mrs. Pankhurst" *Votes for Women*. Manchester, Oct. 1907.

Appendix 4: A picture of Christabel Pankhurst³⁹⁵



³⁹⁵ Heckels. "Christabel Pankhurst, LL.B." Votes for Women, Dec 24. 1908.

Appendix 5: A picture of Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence³⁹⁶



³⁹⁶ Schmidt. "Mrs. Pethick Lawrence" Votes for Women. Manchester, Jan. 1908.

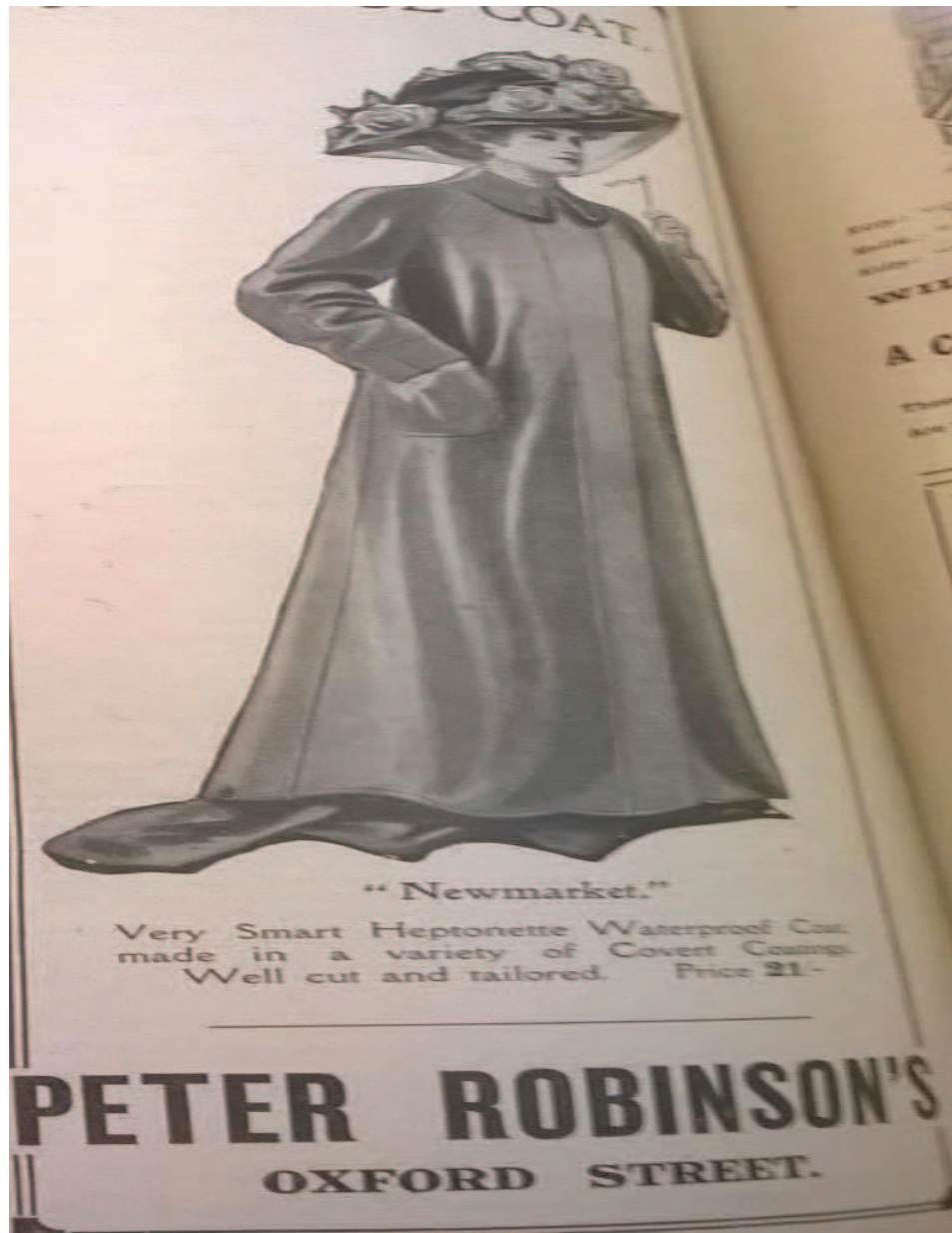
Appendix 6: Examples of advertisements of feminine and fashionable clothes in
Votes for Women

Figure 1: “Mrs. Olivier”³⁹⁷



³⁹⁷Pethick-Lawrence, Frederick W., and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editors. “Mrs. Olivier”. *Votes for Women*. London, 15 Oct. 1908, p. 37.

Figure 2: "A Useful Coat"³⁹⁸



³⁹⁸Pethick-Lawrence, Frederick W., and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editors. "A Useful Coat". *Votes for Women*. London, 23 Apr. 1909, p. 588.

Figure 3: "Debenham and Freebody"³⁹⁹

Debenham & Freebody.
Wigmore Street.
(Cavendish Square) London.W.

SALE IS NOW PROCEEDING



TAILOR SHIRT (as sketch)

in good quality Chiffon Taffeta, in Ivory, Pink, Sky, Rose du Barri, Saxe, Mauve, Tabac, Green, Brown, Navy, and Black, &c., &c. - Stocked in 3 Sizes: 13½, 13, 14½.

Special Sale Price 8/11.

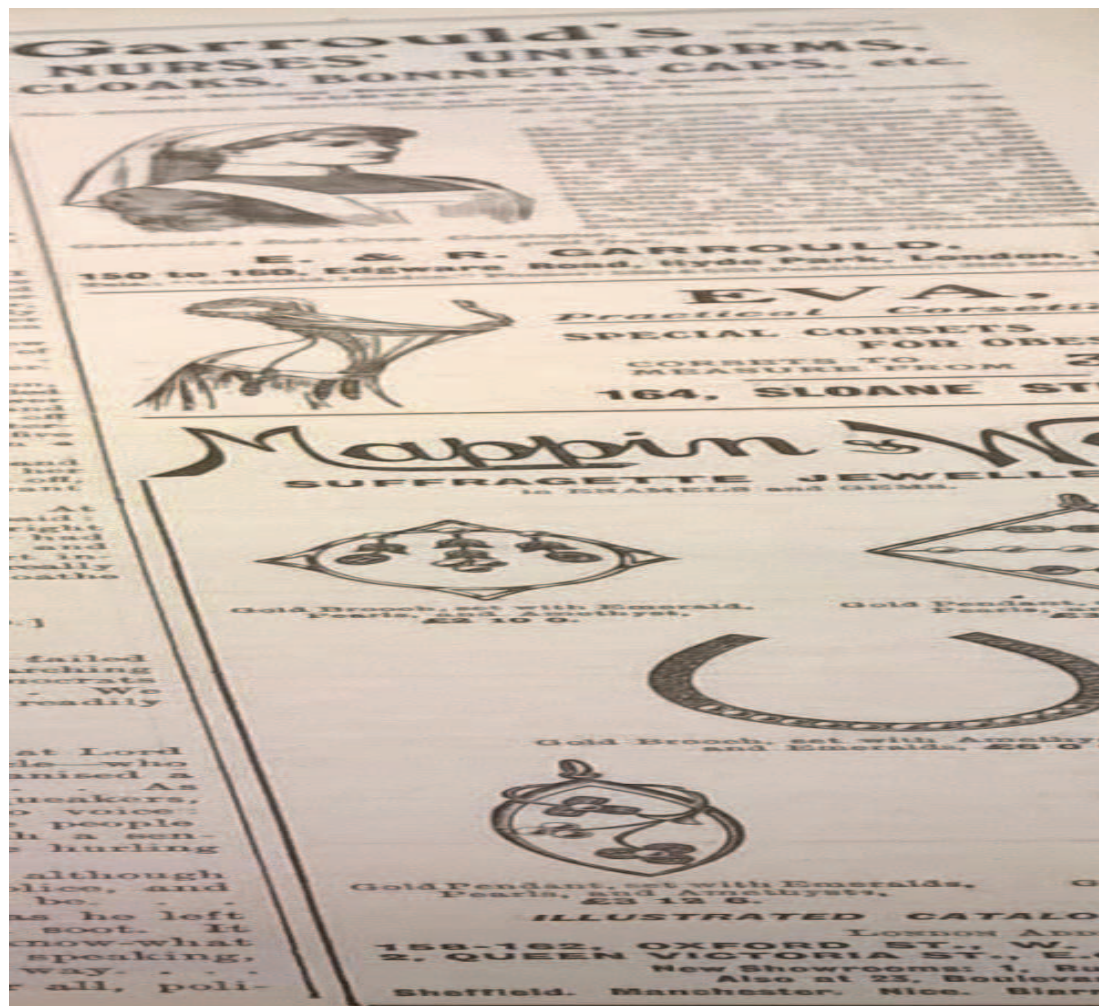
Sent on Approval. Bargain Catalogue Post Free.

Bargain Catalogue Post Free.

Debenham & Freebody.

³⁹⁹Pethick-Lawrence, Frederick W., and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editors. "Debenham and Freebody". *Votes for Women*. London, 07 Jan. 1910, p.207.

Figure 4: “Mappin & Webb”⁴⁰⁰



⁴⁰⁰ Pethick-Lawrence, Frederick W., and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editors. "Mappin and Webb." *Votes for Women*, 21 Jan. 1910, p. 263.

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Résumé

Mary Wollstonecraft et Emmeline Pankhurst ont joué un rôle important dans la lutte pour les droits des femmes. Elles ont fait de l'écriture et du militantisme politique un moyen de lutte contre les injustices subies par les femmes. La plupart des historiens se sont concentrés sur les revendications révolutionnaires portées par les deux féministes. Cette recherche a au contraire pour dessein d'explorer leur utilisation de la « conformité stratégique » pour faire avancer leurs revendications émancipatrices. Il s'agit d'examiner la manière dont les deux féministes se sont conformées de manière stratégique à certaines notions de moralité, de statut matrimonial, de maternité et de féminité, afin d'atténuer le radicalisme de leurs revendications et de leurs actions, et du même coup, discréditer les accusations de leurs critiques. Cette recherche vise par ailleurs à évaluer l'efficacité de la conformité comme moyen de lutte émancipatrice des deux féministes et à démontrer que la conformité stratégique constitue un instrument politique tout aussi important que la rébellion.

Mots-clés : Mary Wollstonecraft, Emmeline Pankhurst, conformité, rébellion, émancipation, féminisme, droit de vote, suffragettes, Révolution française.

Abstract

Mary Wollstonecraft and Emmeline Pankhurst played a leading role in the fight for women's rights, the former through writing and the latter through political activism. While most historians focused on the revolutionary claims and means that Wollstonecraft and Pankhurst used in their struggle for women's rights, my research aims to explore their use of 'strategic conformity' to further advance their emancipatory claims. It investigates how the two feminists strategically conformed to certain notions of morality, wifehood, motherhood and femininity so as to soften their radical claims and means, and hence discredit their critics' accusations. Moreover, this research attempts to assess the efficiency of the two feminists' strategy of conformity by examining the contemporary reception of their ideas and actions. Lastly, this research stresses "strategic conformity" as an equally significant and efficient political means as rebellion.

Key words: Mary Wollstonecraft, Emmeline Pankhurst, conformity, rebellion, emancipation, right to vote, suffragettes, French Revolution