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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

ON THE USE OF SIGNIFICANT WORDS: MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE MODERN RHETORICAL TRADITION

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

DEBRA L. FRANK DEW
Norman, Oklahoma
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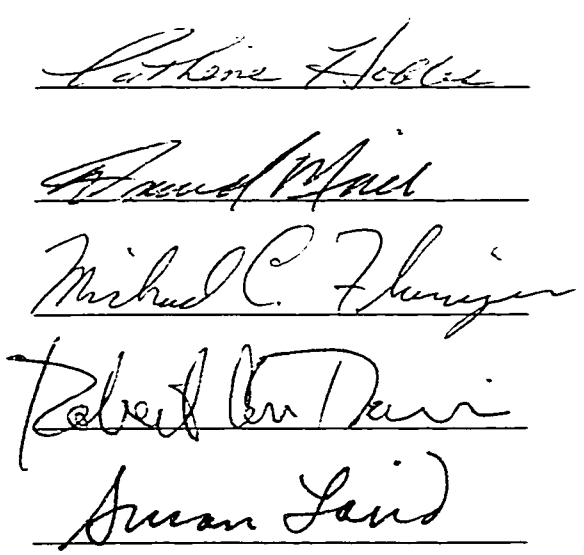
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MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE MODERN RHETORICAL TRADITION

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY



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On The Use of Significant Words: Mary Wollstonecraft's Contribution to the Modern Rhetorical Tradition

This study addresses the absence of female rhetors and theorists from the modern rhetorical tradition as a minor tradition within the western tradition as exemplified within Bizzell and Herzberg's *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* (1994) and Winifred Horner's *The Present State of Scholarship in Historical and Contemporary Rhetoric* (1990). Wollstonecraft's contribution to the modern tradition is extrapolated and conceptualized through an analysis of the principles she formulates and the textual strategies she employs within her primary texts, including both of her *Vindications* and *Thoughts on the education of daughters.*

Chapter one argues for the recovery of her theoretical work through a critical rereading of her primary texts. The study assumes a desegregated stance as it puts Wollstonecraft's recovered theory into play with classical theories that precede it and with those formulated by George Campbell and Hugh Blair, as modern theorists. As a feminist project, it analyzes Wollstonecraft's struggle for subjectivity within the gendered western tradition. Chapter two conceptualizes and critiques a rhetoric of sensibility as constitutive of women's rhetorical practice in Great Britain during the eighteenth century. A rhetoric of sensibility becomes the target of Wollstonecraft's revolution in female manners. Chapter three conceptualizes her rhetorical theory as with a comparative analysis of her understanding of the classical pisteis—ethos, pathos and logos—alongside of Campbell and Blair's treatment of the appeals. Chapter four conceptualizes her understanding of the classical canons of invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery in like manner.

Wollstonecraft's theory may be understood as a hybrid that is modern, feminist, and revolutionary. As a modern working within the western tradition, she understands and variously incorporates neoclassical elements. She also refigures these elements according to the epistemological dictates of the New Science. Her theory is feminist in its aims: she secures a subject position for women and inserts women's knowledge into civic discourse. As a skillful rhetor, she imbibes and dispenses revolutionary values and appeals to effectively address the sociopolitical issues of the late eighteenth century. Her work both extends and disrupts the masculine western tradition that precedes her and the modern tradition that scaffolds her theoretical enterprise.

Chapter One

The First of a New Genus: Women Who-Would-Be Rhetors

—I plead for my sex, not for myself. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Chapter one, divided into two parts, sets up a theoretical context for the recovery of Wollstonecraft's rhetorical theory. **Part one** admits and accounts for the absence of eighteenth-century female rhetors and theorists from the Enlightenment tradition. Wollstonecraft's work is offered as representative of women's theoretical accomplishments. **Part one** also articulates criteria for assessing the theoretical merits of her work. This project assumes a desegregated stance wherein Wollstonecraft's work is examined alongside her male peers in order to locate her within the Modern tradition of Western rhetoric. Wollstonecraft negotiates between criteria first formulated by the classical tradition; criteria formulated by her contemporaries, the New Rhetoricians, in particular; and criteria that she formulates in order to mark women as legitimate subjects, and women's knowledge as legitimate for civic discourse. **Part two** acknowledges the complex issues that impact the recovery of her work. Wollstonecraft assumes a particular subject position as a woman writing herself into the rhetorical tradition; the personal, the textual and the cultural intersect at this historical moment and open up a space for her work. **Part two** contextualizes her gendered discursive practice as it examines the cultural forces that both enable and impede her rhetorical efforts. Early assessments of Wollstonecraft's struggle for subjectivity illustrate the contested nature of her theoretical and practical achievements. Chapter one thus creates a theoretical context for her

critique of a rhetoric of sensibility, the focus of chapter two, and for the conceptualization of her rhetorical theory—the focus of chapters three and four.

Part One

The Recovery of Women's Contributions to the Rhetorical Traditions

On the Absence of Female Rhetors and Theorists from the Modern Tradition

Any attempt to write Mary Wollstonecraft into the modern rhetorical tradition as both theorist and practitioner must recognize that this tradition remains indeed a gendered one. Our current understanding of eighteenth-century rhetorical theory is heavily constructed around the works of men, including natural philosophers, moral philosophers, language theorists, rhetorical practitioners and theorists, most notably—George Campbell, Hugh Blair, John Ward, Joseph Priestly, Adam Smith, David Hume, David Hartley, John Locke and Thomas Sheridan.

Women's contributions to rhetorical theory and practice during this era, however, remain marginal or unclear. Not one woman is included in Winifred Horner's bibliography of eighteenth-century works, *The Present State of Scholarship in Historical and Contemporary Rhetoric* (1990); furthermore, Horner's list of secondary sources reveals that most of the pivotal research on the eighteenth century has been written by men about men. In Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg's anthology of primary texts, *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* (1994), only two voices represent women's rhetorical activity during the Enlightenment—Margaret Fell, a seventeenth-century, British abolitionist, and Sarah Grimke, a nineteenth-century American. Bizzell and Herzberg link women's absence from the eighteenth-century

rhetorical scene and from theoretical production with women's exclusion from the primary venues for theoretical inquiry and rhetorical training (the university; as well as the male-dominated, intellectual circles which extend academic inquiry into the public sphere, the Royal Society of London, and the Edinburgh societies, for example) and civic participation (the polis, culturally coded as a masculine site).

To include Fell and Grimke in their anthology, Bizzell and Herzberg refigure canonical criteria for discerning what constitutes a significant contribution to rhetorical history. Fell and Grimke's texts, letters and addresses, are very brief. They do not, as theoretical works traditionally do, articulate rhetorical principles or incorporate canonical headings; rather, they exist as prose models that, in practice, embody principles of rhetorical production. The canonical figures, whose company Fell and Grimke join, offer lengthy philosophical and theoretical texts whose historical influence is extensively documented. Combined, Fell and Grimke's texts occupy only a few pages of the Bizzell and Herzberg anthology whereas the scope and depth of the works written by male theorists necessarily require that only excerpts from their works appear in the anthology.

By inserting shorter polemics written by women into their anthology, Bizzell and Herzberg adjust canonical criteria—they admit women as rhetorical subjects, and they recognize that multiple types of discourse that variously embody rhetorical theory or take up a rhetorical function may arguably yield principles and strategies that merit canonical status. They invite us to reread nonrhetoric texts as theories of rhetoric. Fell and

Grimke's texts do not admittedly focus on rhetoric; nevertheless, the principles and strategies that inform them may permit us to reconceptualize rhetorical studies.[1]

As Bizzell and Herzberg insert Fell and Grimke's texts within their western rhetorical tradition, they assume a "desegregated stance" in their recovery of women's rhetorical theories (Ratcliffe 3).[2] In such a stance, "women's theories are put into play 'equally' with men's" (3). Women's texts are assessed according to interpretative frames or elements that historically constitute rhetorical theories as predominantly conceptualized by men. The desegregated stance poses the risk that women's texts might be understood as "mere tokens" (3). The decision to include Fell and Grimke's texts may be interpreted as the editor's desire to account for gender bias in the construction of their tradition and to compensate female rhetors for the inequity. Whether or not these texts are received as tokens depends upon our efforts to read and to analyze them in a manner that effectively illustrates the theoretical tenets that inform them. Once texts are recovered, their critical reception hinges upon feminist historians' efforts to read them in search of principles and strategies that, once extrapolated, may be conceptualized into a theory of women's rhetorical production. Simply recovering and presenting these texts without theoretically scaffolding them through conceptualization increases the likelihood that women's texts will be received as mere tokens inserted for reasons other than their merit.

Bizzell and Herzberg's editorial move invites historians to further imagine that women's rhetorical work may typically manifest itself in nontraditional forms and that

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[1] Bizzell posits this option within her agenda for feminist research in the history of rhetoric. See, "Opportunities for Feminist Research in the History of Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Review.* 2 (1992): 50-7.

[2] The desegregated stance is one of two options for our "handling" of women's rhetorical theories once they are recovered. The second option, the gynocritical stance, emphasizes women's differences and

such work is thus retrievable from similar nonstandard textual sites. Bizzell and Herzberg open up a historical space wherein an eighteenth-century woman's contribution to rhetorical theory and practice may be recovered, extrapolated and conceptualized. This project addresses a specific gap within *The Rhetorical Tradition* as constructed by Bizzell and Herzberg—the absence of eighteenth-century female rhetors or theorists from the Enlightenment scene. Furthermore, this project recovers one eighteenth-century British woman's theory of rhetorical production and thus regenders the modern tradition. Specifically, I move beyond earlier research that examines Mary Wollstonecraft's polemics as early articulations of feminist thought. Her theoretical work is much wider in scope. Her contribution to our understanding of Enlightenment rhetorical theory is both discernible and copious enough to yield a theory of women's rhetorical production. In fact, her work takes up a double function: it yields two various theories of rhetorical production—the principles and strategies that constitute a rhetoric of sensibility, and the principles and strategies of a refigured rhetorical practice for eighteenth-century women who-would-be modern rhetoricians.

Locating Wollstonecraft Within the Modern Rhetorical Tradition

This project assumes a desegregated stance as it locates Wollstonecraft's work within the western rhetorical tradition as shaped within a theoretical line that begins with the classical tradition of Greek and Roman rhetorics. This is the western tradition as she understood it is during her lifetime. A desegregated stance assumes that the western tradition before Wollstonecraft and the modern tradition as the local context within which

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constructs a separate rhetorical tradition. Ratcliffe offers two examples of gynocritical research: Andrea

she works both set standards for an analysis of her work. Wollstonecraft, like her male contemporaries, acknowledges her forbears as she attends to classical precepts. As a modern theorist of the eighteenth century, however, she also joins her contemporaries as she refigures several classical elements to better align them with the epistemological principles of the New Science. Wollstonecraft's work is set into play with the classical tradition before her and with the modern tradition, as the intellectual company that she keeps. A desegregated stance does not require the theorist to replicate the tradition before her, to keep its principles and strategies "in tact"; rather, it admits innovative moves within the established constraints of a particular historical line. In fact, these innovative moves, points of departure, if you will, often earn the theorist her claim to theoretical fame within the tradition.

Wollstonecraft's position as a modern or New Rhetorician within the western tradition as conceptualized during the eighteenth century is justified according to the following criteria: 1. Wollstonecraft has a respectable knowledge of the western tradition as it extends from the classical Greek and Roman theorists through the Enlightenment. 2. Her theoretical work parallels that of her peers, George Campbell and Hugh Blair. She shares the following elements with the modern theorists of the Enlightenment: a desire to acknowledge, extend or refigure principles of classical theory; the appropriation of an empirical epistemology, faculty and association psychology; the refiguring of invention as inquiry; a preference for inductive logic in the treatment of arrangement, memory and logos; an emphasis upon the natural for standards of style and delivery. Wollstonecraft, Campbell and Blair all present their theories as the result of their own inquiry into human

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Lunsford's *Reclaiming Rhetorica*; Mary Ellen Waithe's *A History of Women Philosophers* (3).

nature—their principles and strategies are aligned with the laws of nature. Thus, their theoretical projects answer the New Science's call for individual inquiry and meet the epistemological criteria for knowledge as the result of such an inquiry. While Campbell and Blair comfortably appropriate Locke's principles of human nature, Wollstonecraft strategically inquires into women's nature as to re-locate women within the terms of *human* nature, and thus within the realm of civic discourse. 3. As a female rhetor, a practitioner, Wollstonecraft knows the forum she enters. Her *Vindications* take up important rhetorical functions: She enters the public sphere to address the most prevalent issues of her age; she critiques the principles and strategies that constitute the civic discourse of male rhetors of prominence, most notably, Edmund Burke, the "Cicero" of the House of Commons. Her discourse has civic effect—it both disrupts and extends rhetorical practice. 4. In terms of method, Wollstonecraft defines the principles and strategies of her theory against the principles and strategies of a *lesser practice*, a rhetoric of sensibility. The use of a thesis/antithesis topos for arranging one's discourse and for the conceptualization of a rhetorical theory is a common practice within the western tradition. 5. Wollstonecraft moves theoretically beyond her male contemporaries: Her theory opens up a space for female rhetors; she appropriates an empirical epistemology and strategically uses principles and strategies sanctioned by her male peers to disrupt masculine definitions of *logos*. In her treatment of logos and the canon of arrangement, specifically, Wollstonecraft inserts women's knowledge, formerly constructed as personal or subjective, thus *illegitimate*, into civic discourse. In so doing, she vitally refigures *abject* nonevidence as *legitimate* evidence.[3]

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[3] The distinction between abject knowledge and legitimate knowledge is made by Judith Butler in *Bodies*

Criterion One

Wollstonecraft and the Western Rhetorical Tradition: What Does She Know?

To argue that Wollstonecraft's work merits inclusion within the modern tradition, we might first consider Wollstonecraft's knowledge of the western tradition that flourished before her times. As a woman, self-educated and self-promoted as the "first of a new genus," a woman earning her livelihood as a writer (*VRW* 92), what is the likelihood that she understands the discourse of rhetoric, its principles and strategies, especially given women's exclusion from civic discourse and the public sphere as well as the universities where courses in rhetoric and logic are the standard fare for elite white males? How is it that an eighteenth-century woman might gain a respectable understanding of the technical components of civic discourse as formulated by Aristotle or Plato, Cicero or Quintilian?

Wollstonecraft's primary texts variously answer this important question. She gains insight into the classical tradition through private study, a self-initiated inquiry into the nature of rhetorical theory. In her polemics and her private letters, she alludes to canonical texts whose contributions to rhetorical theory and practice are uncontested. For example, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, Wollstonecraft holds Edmund Burke accountable to principles articulated by Plato in both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* (48).[4] She also alludes to Cicero as she admonishes Burke to align his claims with Ciceronian principles rather than relying upon emotional rant to make his case (*VRM* 45). Such citations suggest her familiarity with the Greek and Roman texts that constitute the classical tradition.

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that Matter. 15-16.

Wollstonecraft is also familiar with rhetorical theory as formulated by her male contemporaries. Miriam Brody argues that Wollstonecraft keeps company with British intellectuals who are well-versed in Enlightenment theory. She claims:

> The intellectually generative community of political radicals and religious Dissenters who gathered at Newington Green around the Reverend Richard Price in the 1780s or at the hospitable tables of Joseph Johnson, publisher of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, would have been familiar with the works of the New Rhetoricians of the Scottish Enlightenment published in the preceding decade. (109)

Wollstonecraft's personal letters reveal that she did, in fact, read Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres.* In a letter to her sister, Everina, dated February 12, 1787, Wollstonecraft recommends Blair's text as "an intellectual feast" (qtd. in Kelly 290).[5] Wollstonecraft takes it upon herself to study rhetorical theory; her efforts are supported by the male intellectuals who form the circle of Dissenters of Newington Green.

Wollstonecraft also applies many classical precepts as she writes her polemics. Like the New Rhetoricians, George Campbell and Hugh Blair, she appropriates neoclassical concepts, principles and strategies. Nan Johnson explains the theoretical relationship between the New Rhetoricians and their classical antecedents: Campbell and Blair "do not dispense with classical principles and attitudes but rather recast these in the

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[4] She critiques Burke's endorsement of women's reliance upon their sensibility and specifically, an ethos of fragility. She uses Plato's "ladder of love" from the *Phaedrus* to argue that *compassion for weakness* differs decidedly from *love of perfection*. The lesser emotion should not be recommended. See, *VRM* 48.

[5] Kelly traces rhetorical lines from Quintilian to Blair to Fuseli to Wollstonecraft in his "Mary Wollstonecraft as *Vir Bonus*." Fuseli recommends Quintilian's polemical style as read through Blair's *Lectures* to Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft's critique of Edmund Burke's *Reflections* thus works from classical criteria for "the good man speaking well."

light of their particular theoretical interests, reexamining and thus reinscribing a number of classical presumptions as principles of theory: the conventional status of the divisions and the canons; the theoretical and pragmatic maxim that the rhetorical process can be understood in terms of the interplay of purpose, audience and occasion, and the pedagogical assumption that eloquence can be acquired through the study of rhetorical principles, practice in the rhetorical genres, and imitation of works of genius" (*Nineteenth.* 94-5). Wollstonecraft shares several theoretical moves with her male contemporaries. Campbell and Blair, like Wollstonecraft, know the western tradition and refer to classical theorists as authorities on matters of principles and practice.

Criterion Two

Enlightenment Theory and the New Science

As Edward P. J. Corbett and Wilbur Samuel Howell both claim, Enlightenment rhetoricians whose treatises constitute the New Rhetoric, or the Modern Rhetoric, embrace the epistemological premises articulated within the New Science.[6] John Locke's epistemological program is often cited and widely appropriated by Enlightenment theorists. That Wollstonecraft judiciously read, absorbed and appropriated Lockean principles throughout her polemics is common knowledge. Through extensive citation, and at times, an almost word-for-word reiteration of his criteria for empirical inquiry and the accumulation of knowledge, Wollstonecraft's intellectual indebtedness to Locke extends throughout the scope of her work. In that Wollstonecraft reads her Locke and appropriates his premises, albeit to her own distinctive ends as a *female* rhetor, her work

aligns itself with male theorists as a modern treatise. In her appropriation of an empirical epistemology, she joins George Campbell, Hugh Blair and Thomas Sheridan, whose rhetorical treatises enjoy canonical status as modern theorists.

Also, it is very significant that Wollstonecraft's revolutionary aim rests upon women's innate capacity for rational thought. Reason and rational thought are integral to the empirical epistemology that scaffolds the New Science. She would educate women to exercise their reason to the same degree that her male contemporaries do. In that she sanctions women's use of rational discourse and that rational discourse meets historical criteria for the rhetorics of her male counterparts, a canonical frame that embraces sound reasoning is suitable for treating her work. At no time does Wollstonecraft advance theoretical claims about women's modes of rhetorical production functioning practically or theoretically apart from men's. Her audience includes those political leaders who have the power to liberate women from their sociopolitical subjugation, and her theory of production is specifically suited for women who would follow her lead and take up civic discourse.

Her theoretical project may be understood as an inquiry into the very nature of women's rhetorical aptitude in an effort to discern what it is that women are suited for and as a result of such inquiry, to formulate the principles that most naturally arise from women's discursive nature. As an inquiry into women's nature, her work aligns itself with Locke's inquiry into the human understanding and with Campbell and Blair's inquiry and their alignment of their rhetorical principles with the laws of nature, as well. Her overarching goal is to equip women with principles and strategies that ready them for their

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[6] See, Corbett's "John Locke's Contributions to Rhetoric," *CCC.* 32 (1981): 423-33; and Wilbur Samuel

strategic re-location as speaking subjects within the male-dominated public sphere, and thus, to ready them for full participation in civic discourse. She strategically follows the theoretical models formulated by the leading intellectuals of her age. She knows their authority adds credibility to her work. Because Wollstonecraft aligns her work with the principles valued within the western tradition along with those of the moderns as her contemporaries, a traditional canonical heuristic and a desegregated stance are methodologically viable for the recovery of her theory as well.

Criterion Three

Wollstonecraft as a Savvy Rhetorical Practitioner

The theoretical merits of her work may also be gleaned from her own rhetorical practice—what she *does* in the public sphere embodies the principles and strategies she advances. As a female rhetor, she directly addresses issues currently under debate in the public sphere—the merits of the French Revolution; the political future of the British government, along with debates over the rights of men, debates that she strategically extends to encompass the rights of women. As a politically savvy rhetor, Wollstonecraft contributes her polemics to the most vital discourse of her era. What she does is thus what she imagines women may do and should do.

To speak within the public sphere, she must do what male rhetors have done since classical times—compose her polemic according to the constraints of the forum. As Wollstonecraft strategically "speaks" herself into the polis, her theoretical enterprise may be assessed according to the subject position she assumes, and the rules governing the

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Howell's *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971. (443-5).

forum she elects to enter, even if the subject position and forum have a gendered history. Wollstonecraft theoretically realizes a site for herself as a rhetorical subject in the polis. For these reasons then, reasons that are linked to Wollstonecraft's intent as arguably revealed both in her works and her deeds, this project draws theoretical criteria out of the specific forum Wollstonecraft enters, both despite and because of its gendered history. It understands Wollstonecraft's desire as she herself articulates it—women should indeed "wrangle in the senate to keep their faculties from rusting" (*VRW* 263).

Wollstonecraft's civic intent is vitally linked to that of other rhetoricians whose political company she keeps, writers like Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke, whose historical contributions to revolutionary discourse are widely documented. As Janet Todd explains, the men and women who wrote on socio-political issues dealing with the French Revolution, during the period of 1790-1794, were "not sages of more peaceful periods but engaged polemicists who believed that their ideas might soon be put into practice; they also knew that their publishing might have political and social consequences for their personal lives" (Todd vii).

Wollstonecraft's first *Vindication*, for example, is directly in dialogue with Edmund Burke's ideas and rhetorical stance (vii). In her Advertisement, the opening of this text, she asserts: "Mr. Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* first engaged my attention as the transient topic of the day..." (3). She sets up the rhetorical context for her argument and then proceeds to refute Burke's position. She claims, Burke's "sophistical arguments," his argumentative progressions are "devious tracks" decked out in "specious garb," delivered in the "questionable shape of natural feelings and common sense" (*VRM* 3). Undoubtedly, Wollstonecraft and the Dissenters of Newington Green

imbibe French revolutionary discourse; this enables her to enter the current debates with a formidable voice, a confident tone that implies rhetorical competence.

In her second *Vindication*, she dedicates her arguments to M. Talleyrand-Perigord, earnestly believing her claims to be so self-evident and "conclusive" that his assent may be secured. In her own words, then, she states: "Consider—I address you as a legislator—whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women?" (87). She appeals to him for a consistent application of the "rights of men" to the rights of *humankind*. In her final sentence she delineates the "effect" her polemic aims for: "I wish, sir, to set some investigations of this kind afloat in France; and should they lead to a confirmation of my principles when your constitution is revised, the Rights of Woman may be respected, if it be fully proved that reason calls for this respect, and loudly demands JUSTICE for one half of the human race"(89). Wollstonecraft's dedication concludes with a specific call to action. Whatever rights are extended to the mass of men as the political outcome of the French Revolution, need be likewise extended to women. She imagines thatTalleyrand will accept her argument and write the new constitution accordingly.

Not only does Wollstonecraft believe her arguments are nonviolable, the attention her polemics receive is considerable. Their publication sets a historical precedent for polemics authored by women who might follow her model and "wrangle" in the public sphere. Miriam Brody comments on the public response to the publication of the second *Vindication:* "Wollstonecraft inspired enthusiasm, outrage, admiration, hostility, eulogies

and barely printable insults" (Introduction. *VRW* 1). Wollstonecraft's polemics have civic effect; they both disrupt and extend rhetorical practice during the Enlightenment.

Criterion Four

Wollstonecraft's Use of the Thesis/Antithesis Topos

Wollstonecraft's theoretical work as it stretches across several of her primary texts incorporates a thesis/antithesis rhetorical frame. In such a frame, the rhetor argumentatively takes "a stand for something and against something else" (Farrell 919). The aim is to accentuate rather than reconcile such opposites. She earnestly marks one side as "good" and the other as "evil" (916). Farrell links this frame as an inventional topos with the classical tradition of "rhetoric in the male mode" (919). While she finds the gendering of rhetorical strategies unnatural—the "word, masculine is only a bugbear"—Wollstonecraft acknowledges the masculine associations that accompany her chosen theory (*VRW* 83). Her project sets bad practice—the rhetoric of sensibility—against a good practice, her refigured and reformed rhetorical theory.

She pointedly rejects the criteria for a rhetoric of sensibility, the mode of rhetorical production sanctioned for women of her age. Wollstonecraft forcefully delivers her indictment of women's reliance upon their sensibility. One always understands what she is for and what she is against. As she defines what she is for, it is apparent that she does not want to feminize civic discourse; instead, she believes women are intellectually quite suited for the rigors of the rhetorical enterprise even if it has historically been cordoned off as unavailable. She campaigns for women's appropriation of rational language and their participation in civic discourse. Her reliance upon the thesis/antithesis

frame is strategic—she appropriates a "masculine" element to authorize her argument; but more importantly, her extensive use of the for-and-against frame suggests her intimate understanding of the agonistic nature of rhetorical discourse as constituted by the men of the western tradition.

Criterion Five

Wollstonecraft Refigures the Modern Tradition

Wollstonecraft's theoretical work moves beyond that of the New Rhetoricians and thus merits canonical status for its strategic innovations. Wollstonecraft's gender, and thus her relation to the language of the public sphere—civic discourse coded as masculine—require her to negotiate the linguistic demands of the forum in ways that male theorists never imagine. As a female rhetor and theorist, she must convince her audience that women can reason, and that their knowledge is legitimate.

As she defends women's right to participate in civic discourse, Wollstonecraft's theory takes up a feminist function. She moves beyond the "legitimate" issues under consideration in the public sphere as she addresses the issue of gender bias in civic discourse. When she does this, she creates a new function for rhetorical practice—civic discourse may be used to radically refigure the very principles that govern it, namely, the principle that only men can speak. Wollstonecraft disrupts civic discourse as she theoretically and practically inserts women as legitimate subjects into the western rhetorical tradition in the modern context of eighteenth-century rhetorical theory and practice.

Another move that marks her theory as feminist and innovative is her strategic appropriation of an empirical epistemology to refigure what constitutes legitimate knowledge, *logos*, in rhetorical discourse. Wollstonecraft follows her male counterparts as she sanctions empirical inquiry and inductive reasoning for the accumulation of knowledge. Whereas classical theorists like Aristotle prefer artistic proofs and only recommend inartistic proofs as effective for the masses, modern theorists embrace inartistic proofs and inductive reasoning as the most natural means of persuasion. Wollstonecraft capitalizes upon the premise that legitimate knowledge arises from observation, experience and reflection. She finds the new criteria for knowledge both suitable and natural for women because women have always spoken subjectively from their personal experience—they have never enjoyed easy access to formal training in scholastic logic with its enthymemes and syllogisms. The shift toward the New Science and an empirical epistemology releases rhetors from the constraints of the more formal logical patterns taught in the universities and thus cordoned off as inaccessible to women.

Throughout the expanse of her rhetorical work, Wollstonecraft supports her claims with evidence that is, in fact, women's experience. Once she authorizes herself as a rational subject, she inserts women's evidence, now arguably "legitimate," into civic discourse and the public sphere through her citations.[7] Such an insertion proves disruptive as it admits "abject knowledge" never before sanctioned as legitimate into civic discourse. Her use of radical citations distinguishes her theoretical work from her male peers and

[7] On the significance of "citations," and "citationality" as a cultural practice, see Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex.*, New York: Routledge, 1993. Butler understands the *citation* of evidence as a determining practice that reiteratively defines *knowledge*, that aligns legitimate knowledge with the sociopolitical interests of the cultural elite who dominate the public sphere. Through *radical citation*, the citing of abject evidence, marginal subjects may radically refigure what is legitimate.

raises the level of her work to canonical status. As a female rhetor with sociopolitical change in view, she is very much a radical feminist theorist and practitioner who aims at nothing less than a "revolution in female manners," and a revolution in women's discourse by extension.

Part Two

Opening Up A Space for Women as Rhetorical Subjects

An extensive body of Wollstonecraft research exists within a variety of fields—educational philosophy, women's studies, feminist theory, literary studies and political science and such research reveals the interdisciplinary nature of Wollstonecraft's intellectual pursuits. She writes as a literary critic, polemicist, political theorist, educational philosopher, novelist and rhetorical theorist. A question that is pivotal to Wollstonecraft research deals with the merits and demerits of holding her work, her life or both up as influential, if not, laudable and worthy of emulation. Controversy surrounded the nature of her work and her life as she lived it; controversy still surrounds the critical reception of her work even as this project refigures the conversation.

William Godwin, her husband and biographer, imagines that Wollstonecraft's life might stand as a model for future generations of women. As author of her *Memoirs*, Godwin offers the biographical narrative as "the fairest source of animation and encouragement to those who would follow [her] in the same career" (5). Further, he imagines:

> [T]he more fully we are presented with the picture and the story of the following narrative, the more generally shall we feel ourselves a sympathy in their fate, and

an attachment to their excellences. There are not many individuals with whose character the public welfare and improvement are more intimately connected, than the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. (6)

Ironically, the intimate biographical detail he offers up for public consumption only works against his authorial intent. Godwin's *Memoirs*, published in January 1798, were "attacked by a flood of condemnatory reviews" (Murray 3).

Wollstonecraft's legacy is negatively rendered as a result of the author's misbehavior, her adamant refusal to live her life according to eighteenth-century standards for female manners, and, in some schools of thought, according to contemporary standards as well. Her love affairs, the attempted suicides, and her pregnancies outside of marriage; her willingness to reason, to participate in masculine modes of production, whether literary, philosophical or rhetorical; plus her harsh critique of "fashionable women" and a rhetoric of sensibility, whether separately or jointly considered, make any attempt to reclaim her contribution to rhetorical theory and practice controversial.

Wollstonecraft does not enjoy the unconditional support of those scholars who are most likely to take up her cause and advocate for her inclusion within the rhetorical tradition. In fact, her legacy suffers most in the hands of feminist historians who search not just for a female rhetor, but for a woman whose intellectual enterprise complements our always-contested ideal(s) of women's discourse. Feminist historians and historiographers do not agree on the criteria for a "good woman" nor the criteria for a "good theory" of women's rhetorical production.

Given that the modern tradition is often constructed as the seedbed for current-traditional rhetoric, historians may understandably resist the recovery of yet another "bad

theory," especially if that theory parallels those of George Campbell and Hugh Blair, the theoretical bad boys of the modern era, as Wollstonecraft's theory certainly does.[8] The modern turn is decisive for the western rhetorical tradition, and whether or not we variously appreciate or shudder at the consequences of the modern turn, Wollstonecraft's full participation in the turn merits our historical attention. Despite the limits of her appropriation of modern principles and strategies, Wollstonecraft yet inserts women as theorists and practitioners into the tradition; she does mark women's proofs as legitimate evidence for civic discourse; she does radically refigure our understanding of modern rhetorical production. As a theorist of her times, and despite her times, Wollstonecraft's work merits historical recognition.

Earlier assessments of Wollstonecraft's theoretical contribution to women's discourse, variously constructed as philosophy, literature or rhetoric, invite a critical rereading of her work. These assessments capture some of the key issues that constitute the controversial context within which this project recovers Wollstonecraft's rhetorical theory. This project extends earlier assessments as it investigates Wollstonecraft's own ideal of "the good woman speaking well," by rereading her struggle for subjectivity from the site of rhetoric and composition studies.

Wollstonecraft's Theoretical Move Toward Subjectivity

As a woman who would reason, Wollstonecraft cannot comfortably speak as an insider within a rhetorical tradition that has historically defined itself against women's

[8] See, Sharon Crowley's *The Methodical Memory: Invention in Current-Traditional Rhetoric.* Crowley sets current-traditional theory against the classical in order to calculate the theoretical damage that the

discourse. Wollstonecraft must face the gendered criterion and strategically contend for women's right to enter the public forum. While she performatively, albeit anonymously, claims women's right to speak in her first *Vindication* (1790),[9] she theoretically and philosophically argues for women's right to reason throughout her second polemic, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

Her primary argument follows this progression: The claim that women cannot reason is the basis for their exclusion from civic discourse. Women naturally possess a reasoning faculty, an aptitude they share with men as members of the human race, but women are not permitted to exercise it. Human beings are purposefully equipped with faculties, and it is their moral duty to exercise them. Since, indeed, women can reason, and it is their moral duty to exercise their reason, they should develop their faculty and enjoy equal access to civic discourse.

Wollstonecraft authorizes herself as a female rhetor and theorist as she opens *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She first announces her topic: "I shall first consider women in the grand light of human creatures, who, in common with men, are placed on this earth to unfold their faculties" (81). Women "partake with [men]of the gift of reason," so if they "not be prepared by education to become the companion[s] of man, [they] will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice"(86). A moral society depends contingently upon the virtue of the individual citizen. If women do not exercise their reason, acquire knowledge and develop a system of ethics, the general health

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Moderns variously inflict upon the ancient art. Campbell and Blair are analyzed as key figures within the current-traditional camp. Crowley's text is exemplary in its critique of the Moderns, or New Rhetoricians.

of the state is at risk. When women are forced by "denying them civil and political rights, to remain immured in their families groping in the dark," their duties will not bind them, for how can a duty be binding which "is not founded on reason?" (88). Civic participation is both the right and the responsibility of the individual. Wollstonecraft authorizes women's right to reason and to participate in civic discourse with premises founded on *innate capacity* and *purposeful creation*.[10] She argues: If "women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from participation in the natural rights of mankind, prove first, that they want reason" (*VRW* 88).

To support her opening claims, Wollstonecraft refutes opposing arguments that contend that women are designed to feel rather than to reason; she also illustrates the extent to which women's stunted development threatens the well-being of society at large. Throughout her *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft maintains her focus on women's natural aptitude for rational thought as she understands that her entire platform rests upon this claim. Unless her audience accepts reason as a human faculty, and women as human subjects, she will not be recognized as a legitimate speaking subject.

Wollstonecraft's strategic attempt to speak herself into a discursive forum that has a distinctively gendered history has inspired a number of thoughtful analyses. Laurie Finke, Mary Poovey and Miriam Brody each analyze the intellectual moves that Wollstonecraft makes as she negotiates her discursive dilemma—how can a woman reason

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[9] *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* is first published anonymously. After its arguments are well received, she releases a second edition with her name attached. Both are published in 1790.

[10] Both of these principles are formulated by John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690. Locke advises us to "imploy those Faculties we have about what they are most adapted to, and follow the direction of Nature, where it seems to point us out the way. For 'tis rational" to do so (IV.xii.11, 646).

in a public space coded as masculine through a medium, rational language, likewise cordoned off as foreign to a feminine sensibility?

While Finke, Poovey and Brody all designate Wollstonecraft's forum of choice differently, they commonly emphasize the perils involved for a woman who appropriates a masculine mode of production. Poovey analyzes Wollstonecraft's move as an attempt to enter a forum for literary discourse; Finke reads her chosen discourse as philosophy, and Brody identifies it as rhetorical discourse. Poovey contends that Wollstonecraft's own acculturation into a feminine sensibility which she identifies as the "ideal of a Proper Lady" impairs her attempt to write herself into the literary tradition (4). The ideal of feminine propriety (the Proper Lady) hovers harpy-like over her work, and insinuates itself into her language. The Proper Lady in Wollstonecraft's head generates stylistic turbulence in her text—war rages between her feminine sensibility and the rational language she appropriates, a medium fit only for the expression of male desire. As Wollstonecraft represses her feminine desire, she abandons her female body. For Poovey, Wollstonecraft argues well where she transcends her femaleness and occupies an "ideal disembodied state" (80). Finke claims that Wollstonecraft tries to write herself into the masculine tradition of philosophical discourse. As she appropriates the masculine, she "must efface herself as a speaking subject and her sexual identity along with it" (160). Brody claims Wollstonecraft clashes with the manly men of the Enlightenment who connect masculine language with rhetorical success and effeminate language with failure. Her discursive dilemma becomes one of body imagery. How can a woman demonstrate masculine excellence discursively? To authorize her speaking, Wollstonecraft removes feminine women to the abject zone of nonmatter, and thus assumes a unique subject position for

herself as "the exceptional woman," one who reasons even at the risk of being labeled "masculine" (109). The emasculating move costs her her body, however, because she chooses a life of reason over a life of passion (120).

Wollstonecraft's theory of rhetorical production recognizes women's historical exclusion from civic discourse, yet it assumes that women are sociobiologically capable of assuming subject positions as female rhetors. Earlier assessments of her struggle for subjectivity variously side-step this premise in their analyses of Wollstonecraft's gendered relationship to the discourse she appropriates. Finke, Poovey and Brody argue that risks are inherent, and that Wollstonecraft is aware of the risks involved, yet they do not adequately account for Wollstonecraft's belief in women's innate capacity for authentic expression within rational language. Such divergent interpretations suggest our complex and always-contested theoretical understanding of women's relationship to modes of production that are constructed as masculine.

Poovey on Wollstonecraft's Psychological Struggle for Subjectivity

In her psychoanalytical narrative of Wollstonecraft's intellectual and emotional development, Poovey reveals the author's early affinity with sentimental expression and sensory experience and then follows her emergent need for increased control of her sensibility, a greater degree of autonomy and intellectual self-sufficiency. Poovey argues that the resolute manner with which she speaks herself into the rhetorical tradition in her second *Vindication* arises as the result of life-long struggle to understand the ideological forces that have shaped her gendered identity and complicated her journey toward subjectivity.

In Poovey's account, the young Wollstonecraft thoroughly imbibes an ideal of feminine propriety, the Proper Lady, along with her female counterparts. Excerpts from her letters and autobiographical accounts of her adolescent years reveal a young woman who very much falls victim to her sentiment. Her refined sensibility plagues her; her self-reflective accounts of her interpersonal relationships with family and friends are "tremorous narratives of suffering and woe" (51-4). She is conscious of her vulnerable state, at times even claims it is an asset, that which sets her apart from less cultivated individuals. Poovey claims: "So enthusiastically did she internalize the values and expectations associated with sentimentalism that she began to embrace her weakness as the trait that made her most 'interesting'" (54).

Poovey aligns the emotional effusions of Wollstonecraft's early correspondence with the delicate fluff of the heroines of sentimental novels, texts that Wollstonecraft later ridicules in her literary reviews. Poovey traces Wollstonecraft's growing awareness of the communicative inefficacy of her own sensibility and the disappointing consequences of constructing social relationships upon such tenuous sentimental ties. Her early interpersonal struggles with friends, families and employers generate insight into the limitations of an overly refined sensibility, sometimes hers, sometimes the sensibility of another. Poovey's developmental narrative reveals the author's efforts to temper her own sensibility, to liberate herself from "the crippling strictures of feminine propriety" (48). Her platform builds as she energetically makes herself over from the "sentimental heroine" into the "masculine image of an intellectual" (55). "Wollstonecraft's career documents the way one woman moved from the status of unreflecting, passive object to that of a self-conscious, articulate and vindicating subject" (48).

Poovey follows Wollstonecraft's psychological struggle to appropriate a voice of authority suitable to civic discourse. According to Poovey, Wollstonecraft's apologetic tone, her tentative assertions and her indirect reasoning in her first *Vindication* reveal the rhetor's lack of confidence in herself as a speaking subject. "The tension between the 'masculine' posture of direct confrontation and the 'feminine' strategy of indirection or persuasion, like the tension between reason and feeling, betrays Wollstonecraft's basic uncertainty about the nature of her voice and its authority" (68). Because she has imbibed the ideal of propriety, her refined sensibility still impedes her desire and hampers any attempt to "launch a frontal assault" against the values of her society (46).

Wollstonecraft's discursive dilemma remains psychological, and its effects can be interpreted via an analysis of her style. Poovey claims that style "represents ideology as it has been internalized and articulated by an individual" (xiii). The Proper Lady in Wollstonecraft's head will not let her comfortably appropriate a masculine style, nor a masculine mode of argument. Poovey cites numerous passages that rveal her psychological trauma played out discursively and diagnosed stylistically. To succeed as a rhetor, she must repress her female desire; her major antagonism in the text is "not an external force but against [herself]—against fear and especially [female] desire" (79). To comfortably write a polemic, she must "transcend her femaleness" and "occupy an ideal disembodied state" (80).

Poovey takes her analysis even further as she contends that Wollstonecraft "actually aspires to *be* a man, for she suspects that the shortest way to success and equality is to join the cultural myth makers, to hide what seems to be to her a fatal female flaw beneath the mask of male discourse" (57). In reaction against the ideal of feminine

propriety, then, Wollstonecraft arrives at the discursive site (the polis) where she must choose between her gendered sensibility, her female body and sentiment, and her desire to speak, to reason along with the men, which necessarily requires that she efface her sexual identity, repress her female desire and ultimately become a man (psychologically, and discursively, that is).

Key claims in Poovey's analysis of Wollstonecraft's struggle for subjectivity are that Wollstonecraft's own consciousness has been thoroughly constituted with the ideal of feminine propriety as prescribed within the culture of sensibility, and having been thus acculturated into a gendered consciousness, she cannot successfully assume a subject position for which she has not been psychologically groomed. Her attempt to appropriate a masculine consciousness, a male subjectivity, and to express female desire in a rational medium appropriate only for male desire necessarily fails. She must efface her sexual identity to appropriate abstract rational language, speak from an "ideal disembodied state," and thereby "become a man" if she is to speak. Poovey concludes:

> It seems clear that the price Wollstonecraft felt her new profession exacted was her female sexuality. This was a price she was more than willing to pay; for if the ideal writer has no sex, he or she is therefore free from both the body's limitations and its demands. (80)

Poovey's analysis raises a number of questions: To what extent does Wollstonecraft resist the cultural forces that constitute her as female, thus feminine, thus capable only of sentimental effusions, thus incapable of expressing her desire in rational language? Does she yet understand herself as essentially determined and destined to fail when she publishes her *Vindications*? How might her primary claim—women have the

innate aptitude for reason—guide our analysis of her dilemma? Also, what factors, besides the repression of female desire might contribute to the uneven, unpolished, thus "troubled" style of her polemics?

Poovey's narrative account of Wollstonecraft's acculturation into the ideology of sensibility focuses upon Wollstonecraft's susceptibility more often than her militant resistance to its determining forces. It is fascinating that she reads various biographical incidents as evidence of Wollstonecraft's feminized sensibility, yet Wollstonecraft's biographers read the same incidents as evidence of her militant resistance to those cultural forces that would make her into a refined lady. Poovey claims that "throughout her youth the only two emotions Wollstonecraft seems to have felt comfortable with were resignation and pity" (52). Mary George, in her critical study of Wollstonecraft's life, claims she resents and purposefully rebels against her "mother's passivity and resignation" (29). "[H]er rebellion [becomes] an active, creative force that [pushes] her to live in critical opposition to her society. Somehow in the process of living, she [becomes] conscious of her need for emancipation, and [proceeds] to act out that emancipation" (George 50). George's account stresses Wollstonecraft's active resistance to the Proper Lady. What Poovey often reads as "proper," her biographers read as "improper," even revolutionary in her rejection of the proper. Wollstonecraft is perhaps best understood then as a woman inevitably constituted by the culture of sensibility, even as she makes it her life's ambition to speak out against those ideological forces that would make her into a Proper Lady.

When Wollstonecraft publishes her *Vindications*, it is reasonable to argue that she no longer understands herself as essentially determined and destined to fail. Numerous

acts of resistance precede the publication of her polemics. At this critical juncture, she believes women have the innate aptitude for reason; she rejects essentialist claims that limit women's discursive aptitude to a feminized sensibility and to sentiment as the essence of women's knowledge. Poovey's analysis depends upon essentialist premises that Wollstonecraft no longer embraces. Even if Wollstonecraft rejects such premises, cultural forces do resist her discourse. She anticipates this resistance and perhaps that is why she publishes her first *Vindication* anonymously. However, she is more confident in her ability, women's ability to reason than Poovey's analysis admits.

Poovey's reading becomes problematic when she claims Wollstonecraft consciously abandons her body, her sexuality, and that she sees this as a necessary consequence of her appropriation of men's language. Wollstonecraft does not believe she has to abandon her body to reason with men. She does not accept the sexual/biological impossibility of expressing either her experience or her passion (that which Poovey labels female desire) through rational discourse. Wollstonecraft believes women can reason.

It is not that she represses female desire, but that she questions whether men's libidinal desire should drive women's rhetorical practice. She finds the expression of female desire as "constructed" within the culture of sensibility offensive, and morally reprehensible. If Poovey looks for libidinal desire, especially as elicited within the culture of sensibility—sweet sentiment and alluring gestures—she is unlikely to discover it as the stuff of Wollstonecraft's polemics. In her treatment of pathos within her refigured theory, she reconstitutes artificial sentiment as a "persevering passion" and marks it as legitimate. Wollstonecraft's refigured *passion* is everywhere evident in both of her *Vindications*.

Poovey's analysis of Wollstonecraft's troubled style links the unevenness with the repression of female sexual desire. As an eighteenth-century woman adamantly opposed to women's reliance upon a rhetoric of sensibility, and sexual politicking of any variety, it is highly unlikely that sexual desire of any kind finds its place in her reformed theory of a good rhetorical practice. The criterion simply does not exist for her. What she understands as desire, male and female, is that constituted by the powerful men who oversee the culture of sensibility. If that is female desire, she does not want to express it. We cannot imagine that she understands female sexual desire as "good," in the way it is often celebrated within contemporary feminist thought. If we accept Poovey's claim, we must then admit that the sole "legitimate" function of women's language is the expression of an essential, female libidinal desire.

Wollstonecraft's unpolished style is typical of the revolutionary "rhetorics of unmasking," as further discussed in Chapter Two. Within a rhetoric of unmasking, the preferred speech is "awkward, overly direct, and embarrassingly impassioned, which is a "noble sign that [she] speaks the language of truth as found in nature" (Landes 47). Wollstonecraft explains her style as follows:

> Animated by this important object, I shall disdain to cull my phrases or polish my style. I aim at being useful, and sincerity will render me unaffected; for wishing to persuade by the force of my arguments than dazzle by the elegance of any language, I shall not waste my time in rounding periods, fabricating the turgid bombast of artificial feelings.... And, anxious to render my sex more respectable members of society, I shall try to avoid flowery diction which has slid from essays into novels, and from novels into familiar letters and conversations. (*VRW* 82)

Her tone is urgent and impassioned; her decision not to polish her sentence structure (round her periods) or style serves her purpose. She believes that the language of truth as found in nature is best expressed in a plain and simple style. The unevenness of her style might suggest repressed sexual desire if, in fact, she cared about her style enough to polish it. Then, if her efforts failed, Poovey's diagnosis may be more convincing.

Finally, another material factor that impacts her style is the rapid pace at which she writes her texts. Wollstonecraft's biographers claim she wrote the *Rights of Woman* within a time frame of six weeks (Godwin 57; Tomalin 105). Here again, her passionate desire to engage the issues at hand determines how much time she will invest in polishing her style. The unwavering support of her publisher, Joseph Johnson, may also have enabled her to push textual concerns to the background. As a radical Dissenter, publisher and writer of revolutionary discourse himself, Johnson was reportedly more motivated to continue a controversial exchange than to achieve rhetorical eloquence (Tomalin 104).

According to Poovey, Wollstonecraft's struggle for subjectivity only succeeds when she takes up a disembodied state. However, Wollstonecraft never imagines that she has to leave her body to become a female rhetor, because she does not understand the culturally constructed feminine body as the essential female body. She performatively abandons that body long before she publishes her *Vindications*. That body as defined within the cult of sensibility is the product of masculine desire and is thus to be avoided.

Laurie Finke's Analysis of Wollstonecraft's Claim to Subjectivity

Finke traces Wollstonecraft's thought process as she maneuvers herself into a subject position within the philosophical discourse of her age. In Finke's analysis,

Wollstonecraft believes "she is writing for an unsympathetic audience—she conceives of and addresses her readers primarily as men, not as other women" (159). The paternalistic philosophic tradition she writes within excludes women as writers and subjects, so to enable herself to speak, "Wollstonecraft adopts the combative rhetorical prose of patriarchal discourse—even as she simultaneously subverts it" (159). She does so because she "could not hope to be published" without it, "however incongruous it might seem for her sex. For *this reason* she is stridently argumentative" (emphasis added 159). To gain her audience's acceptance, Wollstonecraft must appropriate a masculine model, and "efface her sexual identity" (159). Wollstonecraft consistently identifies herself with men and distances herself from women. She "must efface herself as a speaking subject and her sexual identity along with it" as a necessary consequence of appropriating a "masculine rhetoric" (160). She ensures her objectivity as she "stands outside of her feminine experiences" (160).

In this analysis, Wollstonecraft faces the constraints of her forum: she must "efface her sexual identity"; she must stand outside her "feminine experiences"; she must be combative even if it "seems incongruous" for a woman to do so. Finke sets up a series of "musts" and "has tos" so formidable that Wollstonecraft loses all discursive options. She is totally constituted by the determining forces of the philosophical tradition and the consequences are dire. When Finke sets women's bodies, their discourse, their experience so distinctively against men's, her reading hinges upon essentialist distinctions between women's and men's discourse. Combative exchanges are "incongruous for her sex"; she cannot communicate her "feminine experience" in masculine language; she must "efface her identity" because women cannot be objective. All of these criteria, however, belong to

Finke and not Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft does not work from essentialist notions of women's bodies, women's language. That is, she does not do all of the above because she has to; she does this because she believes it suits her mind, her body, her experience as naturally as it does men's.

Finke explains the consequences of Wollstonecraft's necessary surrender: "The illusion of complete objectivity is necessary, but it does not suit her purposes beyond establishing her ability to reason as effectively as a man, thus establishing her authority, because it reinforces as truths masculine notions of women and ensures the secondariness of women"(161). Following Finke's reasoning, to appropriate masculine discourse is to perpetuate its ideas, its values and aims; thus Wollstonecraft takes up the incumbent cause of philosophical discourse—the subjugation of women. Finke understands masculine language as essentially determined and stable, only capable of ensuring the "secondariness" of women. It is tainted and incapable of being reconstituted or being redirected in its aims. It cannot "suit Wollstonecraft's purposes" beyond authorizing her right to speak. Wollstonecraft, however, believes otherwise. She authorizes women as speaking subjects; she demonstrates women's aptitude for reason, but most importantly, she inserts women's ideas, their knowledge, their experience directly into "men's" discourse thus reconstituting it, engendering it and redirecting its effects.

Finke reflects upon Wollstonecraft's efforts: "As Wollstonecraft appropriates and experiments with various kinds of masculine rhetorical poses, she demonstrates just how difficult it is for a woman, even a woman of superior sense, to get outside the language of men, to create a language capable of expressing feminine desire and experience"(163). "The idiosyncrasies of her style that have been criticized in the past are part of a deliberate

rhetorical strategy by which she attempts to forge—out of a hostile philosophic tradition—an alternative language that embodies her thinking about her sex, a feminine rhetoric" (157). In Finke's terms, Wollstonecraft wants to "get outside the language of men"; to "create a language capable of expressing feminine desire and experience"; to shape "an alternate language..., a feminine rhetoric." Rather, Wollstonecraft wants access to the language of men, refigured as the language of all human kind because she finds it quite capable of expressing human desire and experience. She never imagines her goal as the expression of a desire that is "feminine," but she does seek an "alternate language" for women, an alternative to a rhetoric of sensibility. She does seek a rhetorical discourse that admits women as speaking subjects and women's experience as evidence. The word "feminine," however, is as much a bugbear for her as is "masculine." Both are suspect. Wollstonecraft does not engender women's new discourse as feminine. She generally appropriates the "masculine" terms in order to more accurately identify that which she prefers. Her preferred discourse just happens to have masculine associations.

Brody's Analysis of Wollstonecraft's Rhetorical Struggle for Subjectivity

Miriam Brody situates Wollstonecraft's treatment of stylistic principles in the second *Vindication* within the western rhetorical tradition, which, like philosophy is historically constructed as the province of men. She reads Wollstonecraft's dilemma as that of a woman speaking within a "rhetorical tradition that uses body imagery to describe linguistic excellences and failures"—manly men are successful rhetors. The question becomes: How can a woman meet the criteria for rhetorical excellence when her body represents that against which virile discourse defines itself? Brody claims that "the

virtuous quest for truth in language (is) rendered in the Enlightenment reception of classical rhetoric as a masculine excellence, a blend of muscular and intellectual power" (107). Effeminacy is equated with a failure to apprehend truth. Wollstonecraft's struggle is one of "body imagery" (107). Within this context, a woman aspiring for subjectivity faces either "sexual obliteration or textual failure" (108).

Strategically, Wollstonecraft maneuvers herself into the public sphere, and she refigures it as she proclaims herself "the first of a new genus," an ideal she sets against earlier ideals of "the good woman" (106). Like the male rhetors who define themselves against the emasculated male (the effeminate) by removing the lesser discourse to the abject position of the *other*, Wollstonecraft sets the exceptional woman who is rational and productive against the "vicious and sterile" women of fashion. The new female subject is one who depends upon the naming of lesser women as "mediocre" or worse yet, as "women of fashion" (108).

Wollstonecraft uses a thesis/antithesis topos to define herself as a rhetorical subject, and in so doing, she follows the intellectual moves of her theoretical forebears. Thomas J. Farrell in his *The Female Male and Males Modes of Rhetoric*, claims that "the praise/blame antithesis is a basic of traditional male rhetoric" (914). Such "antithetical antagonism seems to be inherent to the male mode of rhetoric" (917). Wollstonecraft's move here reveals her insight into the historical and the local criteria for speaking subjects. She is willing to appropriate the criteria even as it is gendered with masculine attributes. She takes a definite stand against effeminate rhetorics of sensibility; we have no doubt as to what she is for and what she is against. The question remains as to whether or not Wollstonecraft's marginalization of fashionable women is motivated solely by self-interest.

If so, we might hold her accountable for her reckless indifference to the rhetorical plight of those women she moves to the abject zone of nonmatter. Is Wollstonecraft in it for herself, and what are the effects of her removal of fashionable women to the discursive margins of society?

Wollstonecraft's exceptional woman becomes a speaking subject via intellectual development; her subjectivity is not biologically determined. The exceptional women in Wollstonecraft's historical context are those who have enjoyed a masculine education; these women are *exceptions* because they have strategically dodged the constituting cultural forces that would construct all women as ladies of fashion, distinguished by their exquisite sensibilities. Exceptional woman are those who struggle against constituting cultural practices and develop their intellects despite the formidable pressures exerted upon them within the culture of sensibility. These exceptions, women like Catherine Macaulay, function as counterexamples to dominant-culture claims that women are intellectually inferior to men.

There is a significant difference between "exceptions" to the norm, and the privileged associations which "exceptional" connotes. Brody's reading suggests that Wollstonecraft understands herself as exceptional, therefore special, the exclusive case. The exceptions that Wollstonecraft identifies, however, are offered in a context that invites us to imagine that many women, once released from intellectual bondage, may achieve exceptional levels of rational development. Even further, one might imagine the exceptions to become the norm.

In the dedication that opens the second *Vindication*, she claims: "I plead for my sex, not for myself" (85). Wollstonecraft situates herself within the community of women

and of all humankind. This is significant because the "exceptional woman" is held up as an ideal realizable along a developmental continuum. In her discussion of "mediocre," "fashionable," aristocratic," and "exceptional" women, the distinguishing criterion is level of education, the development of their reason. Mediocre women are those who have obtained "a tolerable understanding," without the pejorative connotations (*VRW* 114). Fashionable women are those who invest their energy in developing their sensibilities rather than their minds. Their "lack" here is not linked to their bodies, nor their aptitudes for intellectual development; instead, they remain at a stunted level of rational development. The gap is defined in terms of intellectual development; subjectivity, likewise is contingent upon level of development. As she speaks for her whole sex, her aim is to invite women to take up intellectual pursuits that enable them to speak. Some women will necessarily attain higher levels of development; such women may represent other women in the civic realm. Wollstonecraft recognizes that the ability to reason defines rhetorical subjects; moreover, she claims all human beings have such an aptitude. Thus, even as she embraces reason, she departs from her Enlightenment counterparts as she disconnects biology from subjectivity.

Wollstonecraft understands gender performatively; that is, both men and women may choose to perform the masculine or the feminine. Her understanding of gender is relevant to her strategic move toward realizing a subject position for female rhetors. In her second *Vindication*, she comments:

> From every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women, but where are they to be found? [I]f it be against the imitation of manly virtues, or more properly speaking, the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of

> which ennoble *human* character, and which raises females in the scale of animal being, when they are comprehensively termed mankind, all those who view them with a philosophical eye must, I should think, wish with me, that they grow more and more masculine. (80)

She understands that women's bodies are constituted as feminine, as the "agency that undermines rational discourse" as Brody theorizes it (11); however, she rejects the arbitrary association of minds and intellectual development with the masculine and with men, the cultural coding of rational thought as exclusively "masculine." Her critics may call intellectual pursuits "masculine" if they choose, yet such names only arbitrarily describe an aptitude both men and women possess. Intellectual pursuits are masculine by historical association only. If this aptitude must be labeled masculine, women should "grow more and more masculine."

The differences between men and women's educational experiences are also significant. Wollstonecraft notes that men receive a "masculine education" that includes extensive training in rhetoric and logic. An ornamental style and the troped effeminate body are not presented to men as constitutive of the rhetor's available means of persuasion. A preference for plain and simple language has different consequences for men's fuller system of discourse than it does for women's in that figures and tropes and sentiment are the very essence of women's effectiveness; they are powerless without these elements. Wollstonecraft wants to equip women with a fuller system of rhetorical practice. Her motive for establishing reason as a criterion for rhetorical subjects is more than an egocentric power play that situates her apart from other women.

Brody claims that Wollstonecraft "rewrites the idea of a woman's body"; that is, she refigures the role that a woman's body plays within rhetorical production, both in order for women to speak and to enhance their effectiveness (106). Wollstonecraft rewrites the constructed idea of a woman's body as associated with a feminized sensibility. She dismantles the premise that the "feminine" performance belongs essentially to the female body. Her critics often misinterpret the consequence of this move as a gross usurpation of female nature. She believes a feminine sensibility has limited appeal and pernicious effects upon women's health and well being. Her motive is not to diminish women's identities nor to violate nature, but rather, to speciously link women's reliance upon the constructed feminine body with masculine power and patriarchal self-interest.

Conclusion

Wollstonecraft theoretically refigures the criteria for speaking subjects as follows: 1. She erases sex as a criterion for rhetorical subjects. Woman can fully participate in rhetorical discourse. 2. She understands reason/logos as integral to men's and women's rhetorical practice. Women and men alike may participate in civic discourse as long as they develop their reasoning faculties. 3. Once she opens up access to civic discourse, she charges all human beings to develop their God-given abilities. A healthy society depends upon the full participation of individual citizens. Individuals have both the right and the moral responsibility to contribute to society. Civic discourse is an appropriate venue for realizing sociopolitical effect. As Wollstonecraft extends the right of rhetorical production to women, she both reinscribes and refigures the "classical view of rhetoric as crucial to individual development and cultural harmony," a view also embraced by her peers, George Campbell and Hugh Blair (Johnson *Nineteenth.* 50).

Chapter Two

Wollstonecraft's Revolution in Female Manners: Refiguring a Rhetoric of Sensibility

(D)ear young lady...endeavor to attain 'the weak elegancy of mind,' 'the sweet docility of manners,' 'the exquisite sensibility,' the former ornaments of your sex; we are certain that you will be more pleasing, and we dare pronounce that you will be infinitely happier.

Critical Review 1792

It is time to effect a revolution in female manners—time to restore them to their lost dignity—and make them, as part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world.

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

As an eighteenth-century British polemicist, Mary Wollstonecraft writes during a time of sociopolitical upheaval and revolution—a turbulent era that dangerously stimulates the reasoning faculty of this feisty woman who in her adolescence had already imagined that her life and women's lives in general could be otherwise. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792), Wollstonecraft catches the fervor of her era and calls for nothing less than a "revolution in female manners" (133). Her revolutionary platform includes a thorough explication of the British ideology of sensibility, a formidable cultural component that she holds liable for the distinct variety of female manners she seeks to refigure. Her urgent call for a revolution in female manners may be understood as the center of a high-spirited and yet sophisticated theoretical endeavor that disrupts women's discursive practice and thus vitally refigures our understanding of women's contributions to rhetorical theory during the Enlightenment.

Her theoretical endeavor includes an assessment of women's rhetorical practice within the context of eighteenth-century Great Britain. Wollstonecraft explicates the particular elements of a discursive practice that I call a rhetoric of sensibility. She identifies the historical antecedents that help shape a rhetoric of sensibility as a distinct techne, or productive art; she rigorously critiques the British variety of such an argument; then, she recommends alternative rhetorical principles that, in her mind, enhance women's rhetorical practice across public and private space simultaneously. Wollstonecraft claims that the eighteenth-century British discourse of sensibility systemically sanctions women's use of an artfully constructed sensibility as their primary venue for garnering influence, and realizing both public and private effects. She contends that the rhetorical use of an artfully constructed feminine sensibility, the current state of *female manners*, has deleterious effects upon women's physical, emotional and intellectual well-being.

Chapter two, divided into four parts, focuses primarily upon defining and reviewing a rhetoric of sensibility as constitutive of female manners. **Part one** investigates the historical antecedents of a rhetoric of sensibility—women's rhetorical practices within eighteenth-century courtly culture as well as the highly stylized discourse of the female powerbrokers who oversee the salons during the pre-revolutionary era in eighteenth-century France. **Part two** shifts to the British cultural scene where the formulation of physiological and psycho-perceptual principles within the medical and philosophical discourse of the age adds a scientific legitimacy to a British variety of sensibility, a legitimacy that promotes women's refinement of their sensibilities, and the use of their sensibility for persuasive ends. **Part two** also examines the sociocultural practices wherein the theoretical principles of a rhetoric of sensibility are prescribed and

necessarily inculcated by eighteenth-century British women. **Part three** gathers together the elements of a rhetoric of sensibility in order to shape a theory of rhetorical production and thereby support my claim that a *system* of rhetorical production exists and that a rhetoric of sensibility enjoys a *systemic legitimacy* within the British culture of sensibility. To do this, I draw directly from Wollstonecraft's polemics—I extrapolate rhetorical principles from the cultural texts that she, herself, censures as theoretically liable for a rhetoric of sensibility. Excerpts are drawn from educational tracts written for women by educational philosophers such as Dr. Fordyce and Dr. Gregory, as well as other reputable thinkers of the era—Jean Jacques Rousseau, in particular. To formulate a theory of rhetorical production, I examine a rhetoric of sensibility in terms of persuasive appeals—ethos, pathos and logos, and the following canons: invention, style and delivery.[11] I argue that the principles upon which a rhetoric of sensibility depends are both widely disseminated and embraced as legitimate for eighteenth-century women's rhetorical practices. Finally, **Part four** presents Wollstonecraft's rigorous critique of the rhetoric of sensibility as a rhetorically limited and dangerous practice. Argumentative claims from her most notable polemics—the two *Vindications*—as well as her *Thoughts on the education of daughters* inform her critique.

[11] The three appeals or "proofs" are first used to study persuasion systematically by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* (336 BCE). Collectively known as the *Pisteis*, the three appeals originate in the study of persuasive discourse within the Western tradition that recognizes Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as an early, if not the earliest, theoretical site of canonical work on rhetoric. The five canons are first treated within the *Rhetorica Ad Herenium*, the earliest manual of Roman rhetoric, probably written between 86 and 82 BCE The five canons are the lesser arts of the fuller art of rhetoric. The Western tradition within which Wollstonecraft writes is often characterized by shifts in relative importance of the canons and by the changing relationships among them. As this project situates Wollstonecraft within this tradition, both her treatment of a rhetoric of sensibility and her own alternative theory of rhetorical production are conceptualized in these traditional terms.

Part 1

Historical Antecedents to Arguments of Sensibility

When Wollstonecraft calls for a "revolution in female manners," her operative understanding of "manners" may be read as those cultural practices deemed appropriate for women within the eighteenth-century British social scene. As *cultural practice*, female manners encompass codes of conduct, including dress and comportment, along with specific uses of language that are engendered and ideologically prescribed within the culture of sensibility. Cultural practices as strategically appropriated for both civic and private effects are highly rhetorical—women wield them with social identification, cultural inclusion or political influence as the desired effect. Wollstonecraft's diagnosis of a specific cultural practice—women's reliance upon a rhetoric of sensibility—incorporates a review of both discursive (language-based) and nondiscursive (non-language based—visual, as in dress) elements.[12] While all cultural practices are arguably rhetorical, Wollstonecraft focuses upon the practice of those fashionable women of the rising British middle class who artfully construct and utilize a feminine sensibility as the means of garnering influence and realizing sociopolitical effect. Wollstonecraft finds that a rhetoric of sensibility, when deliberately engendered for female rhetors, depends more heavily upon

[12] The use of language-based and non-language based elements marks the rhetorical medium through which appeals are communicated. Visual appeals are traditionally considered under the canon of delivery where the use of gesture comes into play. Gesture is a non-discursive appeal as it stands outside language. The use of figures and tropes within language in the more traditional sense of style also adds a visual dimension to rhetorical persuasion as images are called to mind. the use of figures is discursive in that the appeals are generated through the use of words. In a rhetoric of sensibility, however, style and delivery are enhanced through the use of the visual allure of the ornately draped female body. The female body is a non-discursive medium as it functions outside language, yet it is highly rhetorical in that it is strategically constructed and utilized for persuasive ends—it "means." Whereas language-based appeals are processed intellectually through the apprehension of ideas as constructed in language, nondiscursive appeals are visually apprehended as external images, first seen and then interpreted by one's audience.

visual appeals than do the language-based texts of the male rhetors who historically dominate the rhetorical scene up through the Enlightenment.

One of the most immediate rhetorical antecedents for the rhetoric of sensibility is defined by the aristocratic women of the Old Regime in France in the late eighteenth century under the reign of Louis XIV. In particular, the women of the absolutist court set a historical standard for the civic role that aristocratic women's bodies might play in exhibiting the power and influence of a society's most regal citizens. A rhetoric of sensibility in its reliance upon visual appeals may be linked historically to courtly modes of aristocratic practice, where power and civic effect are realized via an iconic representation of female excellence as the ornately draped female body. Gary Kelly notes the French influence upon British cultural practices: "French gallantry, the linked sexual intrigue and backstairs politics characteristic of the French court, [is] brought back to England by the merry monarch and his cavaliers" (1946). Wollstonecraft regrets that women's courtly discourse is touted as worthy of emulation by fashionable women in Great Britain. She understands courtly connections between alluring female bodies and politically ambitious men as morally debased intrigue, a form of sexual politicking that demeans everyone involved.

Rhetorical Bodies, Courtly Women and Aristocratic Power

To better understand eighteenth-century British female manners as derivative of courtly manners, specifically, the degree to which both rely upon body-centered, visual appeals, Joan Landes' historical work is particularly helpful. In *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Landes investigates the nature of women's

rhetorical production within the absolutist court and the salons during the eighteenth century.

In her historical account of the aristocratic culture of politics, power and public "effect," effect as the civic impact of various rhetorical practices that accompany the rise of the public sphere during the late eighteenth century in France, Landes identifies the French court at Versailles as the locus of civic power and political influence. Further, she claims that the king's own body functions as an iconic locus of the state's political power, a power that exists solely through its reiterative re-presentation; that is, the king's power materializes with the visual display of his assets.

Women's bodies, namely, the aristocratic bodies of the women of the absolutist court, are an integral part of the visual performance, for their bodies both biologically reproduce the monarchy through childbirth and articulate its grandeur through the highly figured display of their aristocratic dress. Given to fashionable parades in the public sphere, the elite women of the absolutist court regally exhibit and thus materially embody the king's civic influence. The materialization of the embellished, thus spectacular, female body evidences the extent of the king's power, both his affluence and his influence. As women's rhetorical function centers upon the sensory appeal of the female body, women's bodies as rhetorically draped "texts" are very much in evidence in the grand spectacle of the royal court. Women's own influence, their political desire, if realized at all, might be indirectly expressed as it travels insidiously through the legitimate circuits of male desire and male influence. Women's rhetorical practice at the court of Versailles centers upon their bodies that serve primarily as venues for exercising King Louis XIV's political power (20).

Women's rhetorical practice also extends beyond biological reproduction and the spectacular display. Through "sexual intrigue or marriage, women achieve a jealously guarded intimacy with the monarch or his personal representatives" (20). These women become "female powerbrokers" who often "serve as conduits or mediators for aspiring courtiers and socially ambitious gentlemen" (20). Women's bodies take up an additional rhetorical function as a discursive medium through which the intimate articulation of men's physical and political desire is enabled. Women's speech ventriloquizes men's political desires within the "theatrical system of communication" that ties all political power to the king's body/person (20). The allure of the female body and rhetorical access to political power are vitally linked within courtly modes of rhetorical production.

Royal family members enjoy a kind of "publicity, a publicness," such that their codes of behavior, dress, personal comportment, forms of pleasure and social attitudes are "mimed by other social groups" (Landes 20-1). Elites throughout Europe appropriate a royal ethos as they adopt the language, behavior and architecture of the court of Versailles (20). As a cultural practice shaped by the aristocracy and thus worthy of emulation, women's strategic use of their bodies as their best rhetorical asset is marked as the legitimate venue for realizing civic effect. The notion that the spectacular appeal of the female body is the surest means to realizing both public and private influence spreads along with the dissemination of French aristocratic culture.

In Great Britain, Edmund Burke, in particular, promotes courtly behavior as an ideal worth emulating.[13] Wollstonecraft critiques the system of gallantry and challenges its British proponent, Edmund Burke, the loudest defender of the chivalric code, in her

Vindication of the Rights of Man (1790). She analogously links the gallant manners of soldiers and aristocrats with the materialization of a highly affected variety of "female manners," as promoted within the British cult of sensibility. In her second *Vindication* (1792), Wollstonecraft extends her critique of courtly manners as she targets women of fashion who "prize appearance above moral substance, romantic fantasy above reality, manners above morals, and reputation above real virtue" (Kelley "Expressive." 1946).

Wollstonecraft's revolutionary vision as articulated within her polemics centers upon a fiery repudiation of both public and private displays of aristocratic splendor, displays likened to those of the absolutist court under Louis XIV. She also rejects all forms of corporeal and linguistic artifice in favor of modest attire and rational, unadorned language. In her view, artfully constructed and strategically utilized aristocratic female bodies desperately need social and moral rehabilitation. Wollstonecraft comments:

> Women, as well as despots, have now more power than they would have if the world, divided and subdivided into kingdoms and families, were governed by laws as deduced from the exercise of reason; but in obtaining it (their power), their character is degraded, and licentiousness spread through the whole aggregate of society. (*VRW* 127)

The aristocratic lifestyle leads to licentiousness, which is the effect of an unjust alignment of political power with a privileged class of individuals who have not earned the power nor the respect they are afforded, but nevertheless do enjoy such tributes merely as a result of unnatural class distinctions. Wollstonecraft charges:

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[13] See, Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1790.

> The preposterous distinctions of rank, which render civilization a curse, by dividing the world between voluptuous tyrants [predominantly men] and cunning envious dependents [predominantly women], corrupt, almost equally, every class of people, because respectability is not attached to the discharge of the relative duties of life, but to the station. (*VRW* 262)

Throughout Wollstonecraft's body of critical works, the spectacular dimension of the courtly—aristocratic—female body is complicitly linked to female corporeal accomplishments as prescribed within the eighteenth-century British culture of sensibility. While Wollstonecraft casually links both with individual moral and civic degeneracy, it is the aristocratic female body that sets a dangerous corporeal standard for fashionable women of the rising British middle class. It disturbs her that more and more British women aspire to be "ladies," because, in her mind, she believes "gentlewomen are too indolent to be actively virtuous, and are softened rather than refined by civilization" (*VRW* 174).

The Salon Influence: Rhetorical Bodies and Florid Language

An equally influential rhetorical antecedent for eighteenth-century British women is shaped by the elite women who rise to social prominence as overseers of the French salons, an emergent social institution wherein "women exercise a considerable degree of power—unmatched in subsequent or prior eras" (Landes 22). Established in France during the seventeenth century, salons flourish there and elsewhere in Western Europe for two centuries. While the salons extend the social life of the institutionalized court, participation expands to include non-nobles. Salon culture remains primarily an elite affair, a "potent alternative to court society." As a public forum, the salon becomes so

all-important in its civic function that the French call it "*le monde*, literally, the world" (Landes 22).

Salon culture brings men of the aristocracy together with writers, artists, scholars, merchants, lawyers and officeholders. The salons become schools for assimilation into aristocratic manners—wit, urbanity, politesse and pleasure are earmarks of salon society. Salon women, les salonieres who oversee the forum, model the appropriate dress, style, manners and discourse for society's newcomers (Landes 22). In this dynamic, women oversee men's acculturation into aristocratic cultural practice.

Landes describes salon culture as "an aristocratic world of spectacular relations, where seeing and being seen [is] an overriding concern," and the "favorite sport [is] to play dress-up" (25). The women who oversee the salons are "literate and informed" purveyors of culture who teach aspiring gentlemen the polish and affability required to succeed in "a world of exteriority—a world dominated by appearances in much the manner of Versailles" (25). Salon culture widely disseminates a royal ethos, its courtly manners, language and dress within a more cosmopolitan public space, and in so doing, more women participate in salon life and appropriate salon discourse.

As a distinct language community overseen by powerful women, the salon as a discourse forum gives rise to its own gendered aesthetic known as *preciosity*. Preciosity comes to signify "female influence and the arbitrary, overly refined and excessive uses of language." The "pleasurable play of language" is a distinct feature of the precious aesthetic (Landes 29). The precieuse utilizes "spirited and pleasurable conversation" (30). Preciosity as cultural practice encompasses the language and comportment of les salonnieres, the women who dictate salon culture.

The cultural practices which courtly women and les salonnieres develop in order to occupy public space and thereby to realize political effect are constrained along gendered lines. In both the court and the salon, the strategic construction of an alluring female body is pivotal to women's practice. The rhetoric of sensibility as targeted in Wollstonecraft's revolutionary platform joins salon discourse in its affinity with artificial female subjectivities, florid language, extravagant dress and pleasurable rhetorical aims. Women's verbal arts within the salon include mediating or powerbroking to open rhetorical venues for masculine influence. Salon language and dress in their florid and highly figured style emulate courtly culture. In rhetorical function and artistic appeals, Landes brings the two forums—court and salon—together as she claims that salon discourse "shares with the wider system of aristocratic artistic representation an aesthetic sensibility" that analogously "unites the verbal and the visual arts" (Landes 29).

The cultural practices appropriated and refined by the women of the court and the salon during the eighteenth century are rhetorical in their political aim and public existence. Women are excluded from full participation in civic discourse, so their discursive practices materialize as the effect of their exclusion from the masculine public sphere and in response to the prevailing ideological premise that women's bodies are rhetorical assets and that their aptitude for eliciting masculine desire is their best strategy for realizing civic effect.

Public Outcry Against The Discourse of the Absolutist Court and the Salon

Within the pre-revolutionary context of late eighteenth-century France, noble resentment toward the rise of the bourgeois gentleman and the disruption of traditional

patterns of social stratification surfaces in public arguments against the salons. The salons are linked with illicit love, the reign of women, and the breakdown of the traditional class system. Within the conservative backlash, the cultural complaint takes shape in political and gendered terms. "Women out of place" comes to signify a corrupted society and "an emasculated state power" (Landes 28). Salon women may enjoy public access and a measure of influence as long as they remember that their gender makes them second-class citizens. Public outcry against the cultural practices advocated within the precious aesthetic comes from a variety of sources but the overarching concern is with the ever-increasing public presence of revolutionary-minded women and the political powerbroking of les salonnieres.

The trouble with salon women is that they "subscribe to an ethos of sociability," and they exist as public women outside the institution of marriage. They also willfully and unnaturally "traverse the male monopoly of pure mind" via their control over the language practices of a discourse community (Landes 30-31). "As rhetorical figure," the precieuse calls up fears "about women's capacity to displace power within a phallic order—an order composed by male social dominance and by masculine authority over the word" (30). Salon women threaten to loosen the male strangle-hold on civic discourse, the most direct venue for political power and social dominance. As salon discourse enjoys an increasing degree of civic influence within a public space, aristocrats and oppositional critics alike rise up against these women who-would-be rhetors.

Oppositional critics, the most vocal formulators of revolutionary thought, note the degree to which style infects politics within the privileged absolutist public sphere and the salons. Within their critical discourse, attacks are also leveled against salon women for

their "frivolity, luxury, and impropriety," understood as incriminating examples of aristocratic excess (26). Public women, and thus all women by extension, are understood as "violators of the order of nature in language, dress and society" (47). The women of the salon are repeatedly accused of artifice and the authorship of stylized discursive practices that are in conflict with nature. The public role of women and the ideal of leisure associated with a salon sensibility are interpreted as corrupting social influences. Highly visible public women of the court and the salons are targeted as "the most egregious examples of aristocratic stylistic excess and imposture" (Landes 47). The outcry against courtly culture extends to include the salons because the salons function as an extension of the court. Salon behavior emulates and thus advances aristocratic cultural practices that are harshly attacked within the revolutionary platform that gains momentum and eventually leads to the Revolution itself.

In an act of discursive resistance, the oppositional critics formulate an alternative model of rhetorical practice that they utilize against the spectacular, highly affected discourse of the court and the salon. The pre-revolutionary bourgeois rhetoric that arises in critical response to the artificial discourse of the court and the salon is "[a rhetoric] of unmasking" (Landes 47). The virtuous citizen/rhetor of the oppositional public sphere aims to awaken society to the falsity of stylistic excess. The preferred speech becomes an "awkward, overly direct, embarrassingly impassioned discourse," which is evidence of the rhetor's virtue, "a noble sign that he speaks the language of truth as found in nature" (47). Rhetorical "appeals to opinion, truth, and reason and virulent attacks on style [become] constituents of a backlash against the privilege of public women in the absolutist spheres of the court and the salon" (49). The imitation of ideal nature as found particularly in

classical art and literature promises to combat the sensualized and artificial universe of absolutist art and society by teaching moral virtues (46).

The dominant associations of public women during the late eighteenth century, then, are "with the spectacular and theatrical functions of the absolutist public sphere" (Landes 50). Public women represent the antithesis of the good citizen in that "the hegemonic system of aristocratic representation [is]associated with a distinctly *feminized* sensibility" (emphasis added 47). The aristocratic *feminized sensibility* as displayed at court and further defined by the women who oversee the French salons also flourishes on the British scene, where it enjoys great favor within the culture or cult of sensibility. Reason is counterpoised against femininity and the order of nature against art.

The feminized sensibility serves, to be sure, as the focal point of Wollstonecraft's revolutionary campaign. Her revolutionary project joins the public sentiment of oppositional critics who formulate the cultural complaint against aristocratic cultural practices in France as she targets the feminized sensibility that is all the rage among the fashionable women of the rising British middle class. Like her revolutionary counterparts, she chastises eighteenth-century British women who emulate the language and dress of the court and the salon, those women of fashion who rely upon a highly affected feminine sensibility to access power and to realize sociopolitical effect. Moreover, she theoretically formulates an alternative model of rhetorical practice that holds principles in common with the pre-revolutionary bourgeois "rhetoric of unmasking." The "mask" in this sense represents the use of unnatural media, the deliberate and conspicuous use of highly figured language and ornate dress to display one's influence and to realize sociopolitical effect. Wollstonecraft, like her revolutionary counterparts, links "masks" with suspect character

and deceitful communication. Her rhetorical goal is to "unmask" language, to strip it of its specious garb, and to re-dress the female body in less ornate, thus more natural attire.

Both of her *Vindications*, for example, may be understood as rhetorics of unmasking—her appeals are often "awkward, overly direct and embarrassingly impassioned";[14] moreover, she attributes her own passionate appeals and directness to the forceful "language of truth as found in nature." She harshly critiques British women who rely upon florid language and the allure of the female body as integral to a rhetoric of sensibility. Beyond this, Wollstonecraft's alternative rhetoric shares the bourgeois utopian vision of universal access to the public sphere, full participation in a rhetorical practice that is founded upon natural principles and rational persuasion. Uniquely—here she stands apart from the oppositional theorists—her vision does not exclude public women, nor female rhetors; rather, it values *nongendered* universal access to civic discourse and advances an ideal of the female rhetor as a refigured and reformed public woman who is not *unnatural*. The "good public woman" is a virtuous female citizen/rhetor who contributes productively to society, participates in civic discourse, and enjoys economic independence as she chooses, even as she diligently takes up her duties as a respectable wife and rational mother.

[14] Landes's use of "embarrassingly impassioned" suggests that the revolutionary theorists are aware of and perhaps uncomfortable with their own *excesses*. They critiqued the royals for their excess of sentiment, and the women of the salons for their stylistic excesses. The revolutionary discourse differs, however, as their passion, their sentiment is authentic, and not artificially constructed for aesthetic effect.

Part Two

Scientific and Philosophical Support for the Culture of Sensibility in Great Britain

With the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* in 1790, Wollstonecraft enters the public sphere and lends her forceful appeals to the public outcry against aristocratic cultural practices—the abuse of power, the violation of human rights, and especially, the morally debased lifestyle. While she renders her complaint most forcefully in a *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, she extends her critique within her second *Vindication* as well. In the *Rights of Woman*, she focuses upon the materialization of a distinctly British variety of female manners. Aristocratic manners and the British variety of female manners have much in common—they are debilitating, unnatural and morally debased. Female manners as prescribed within the British culture or even *cult* of sensibility are widely embraced as legitimate, in much the same manner that the sociocultural practices of the French aristocracy are held in high esteem up until revolutionary critics like Wollstonecraft subject such cultural practices to sociopolitical review and moral censure.

Wollstonecraft's critique of female manners comes at a historical moment when the cultural regard for *sensibility* is at a high point. Public reverence for sensibility—the local authorization of sentiment as the currency for communication, and cultural calls for the cultivation of one's sensibility—arises when the concept receives theoretical support within the philosophical and medical discourse of the period. The model of the body that is developed, evaluated and utilized within medical discourse during the Enlightenment, offers the social theory of a refined sensibility—so integral to aristocratic manners, and to

female manners as utilized within a rhetoric of sensibility—its naturalistic basis in the nervous system (Lawrence 30).

The nervous system gradually assumes dominance in the whole of eighteenth-century physiology. Sensibility is understood as a "property of the nervous system," and its partner "sympathy" stands for the communication of feeling between different bodily organs (Lawrence 27). In the British context, "sensibility denotes the receptivity of senses and refers to the psycho-perceptual scheme explained and systematized by Isaac Newton and by John Locke. Sensibility and sympathy become "foundations of Edinburgh physiology," and as properties of the nervous system, identification of all the factors that affect them becomes central to any theory of normal bodily function (Lawrence 28). The state of one's sensibility along with one's aptitude for sympathy as the communication of sentiment are understood as the combined result of innate features and environmental influences. While John Locke's environmental psychology accounts for variations in the degree of cultivation of one's sensibility, medical scholars like John Cullen and Dr. George Cheyn account for the physiological differences in individual aptitude.

As formulated by John Cullen, one of Edinburgh's most successful medical school teachers, the anatomical, physiological and psychology elements which impact the quality of one's sensibility include: the anatomy of the sense organ; heredity; temperature; vascular influences; state of the nerves; state of the brain; previous sensory impressions and degree of attention (Lawrence 28). Dr. George Cheyne explains aptitude in terms of innate differences in degrees of sensibility, differences that are arbitrarily determined by nature. According to Cheyne:

> There are as many and as different degrees of *Sensibility* of *Feeling* as there are Degrees of *Intelligence* and Perception in *human* creatures; and the *Principle* of both may be perhaps the same. One shall suffer more from the Prick of a *Pin* or *Needle*, from their extreme sensibility, than others from being run thro' the Body; and the *first* sort, seem to be of the *Class* of these *Quick-thinkers* I have formerly mentioned; and as none have it in their *Option* to choose for themselves their own particular frame of mind nor *Constitution* of Body; so none can choose his own Degree of *Sensibility*. That is given him by the *Author* of his *Nature*, and is already determined. (qtd. in Barker-Benfield 9)

One's quickness of thought and degree of responsiveness inhered in the particular quality of one's nerves, their smallness of size, elasticity, compactness and thus their closer union that enables them to transmit subtle impressions uninterruptedly (9). These elements in turn depend upon such factors as climate, diet and exercise, factors rooted in the environmentalist bent of eighteenth-century physiology (Lawrence 28).

A rising interest in the environment as a determinant of man's nature and of civilization generally is of importance as well. Within the new sensualist epistemology, as articulated within the thought of John Locke, in particular, the individual's nervous system mediates between the self and the environment (Lawrence 24). Variations in one's sensibility are the combined developmental result of environmental and innate differences. While an individual's nerves may differ physiologically in their degree of elasticity, speed of vibrations, and the size of particles that make them up, the degree of elasticity and thus the ability to transmit sense vibrations to the brain are susceptible to the Lockean environment (Barker-Benfield 8). Following the premises of John Locke's environmental

psychology, human selves are cultivated, not just born. While one's physiological aptitude is innate, one's sensibility may also be cultivated. During the eighteenth century, this psycho-perceptual scheme, understood as "the culture or even cult of sensibility," becomes a paradigm, meaning not only consciousness in general, but a particular kind of consciousness that can be further sensitized in order to be more acutely responsive to signals from outside the environment and from inside the body (Barker-Benfield vvii).

Scottish social thinkers appropriate "the premises articulated within scientific and medical discourse and soon discern a relation between social life and the quality of the individual's sensibility" (Lawrence 29). Hierarchical distinctions are thus made along class lines and also along gender lines. In multiple forums, influential thinkers including Adam Smith, David Hume, Lord Kames, William Cullen and other Edinburgh literati embrace the common sentiment that polished and civilized classes of individuals naturally possess more refined sensibilities, and greater capacities for expressing their fellow-feeling. In contrast, rude, uncivilized peoples and poor laborers are "hardly sensible—a condition both consequent on, and necessary for, an arduous physical life" (Lawrence 29). Medical writers thus provide the physiological foundation for social theories wherein class distinctions are made legitimate within an ideology of sensibility. The eighteenth-century affinity with the ideology of sensibility sustains the social interests of those most likely to benefit from its legitimation. A refined sensibility is understood as the cultural currency utilized by those powerful elite who for hereditary reasons (innate aptitude) and because of their degree of civility (environmental conditioning) naturally enjoy the regal benefits that are theirs.

The Gendering of Sensibility: Desire and the Femininized Sensibility

Dr. Cheyne's account of the hierarchical degrees of sensibility is of central importance to the culture of sensibility, in particular, to cult members' definition of themselves. Degrees of sensibility not only mark social and moral status, gendered variations in degree of sensibility are predominantly admitted. While men may successfully refine their sensibilities, women's nerves are decidedly more delicate and susceptible (Barker-Benfield xvii). As women are creatures of greater sensibility, they are advised to refine that for which nature suits them. Men, in contrast, are not advised to develop their sensibilities at the expense of the cultivation of other qualities and their participation in larger and more various goals, including the elaboration of a public culture of their own (Barker-Benfield xviii).

Wollstonecraft understands sensibility as a culture, primarily a "culture of women" (Barker-Benfield xxvii). Her *Rights of Woman* offers a systematic analysis of the manners and conduct of middle class women who cultivate their sensibility at the expense of their other faculties. In Wollstonecraft's view, full growth of character depends on the cultivation of head and heart, yet her female contemporaries develop only their hearts, and thus remain intellectually infantile in their ability to reason. She claims: "With respect to the culture of the heart, it is unanimously allowed that sex is out of the question; but the line of subordination in the mental powers is never to be passed over (*VRW* 141). Sensibility is thus presented as a sexual culture—women are directed "into the consequently exaggerated cultivation of sensibility" (Barker-Benfield xxx).

As Wollstonecraft charges, proponents of sensibility seek to prove that "the sexes ought not to be compared; man [is]to reason, woman to feel: and that together, flesh and

spirit, they make the most perfect whole, by blending happily reason and sensibility into one character (*VRW* 154). In this passage, Wollstonecraft sees the call for women to refine their sensibilities as the cultural effect of physiological distinctions between male and female nervous systems. Once distinctions are made along gendered lines, cultural practices arise that extend gender bias throughout the whole of male/female relations. In this context, science contends that men reason and women feel—women have more delicate nervous systems, so an exquisite sensibility arises as their forte. Following this dynamic, a feminized sensibility and sentiment evolve into the constitutive elements of women's discourse.

Sensibility as Promoted Within Cultural Texts of the Eighteenth Century

Increased attention to sensibility and sentiment within the scientific and medical discourse of the eighteenth century directly impacts public discourse as well. These texts both reflect and ideologically sustain the culture of sensibility. Nerve terms such as fibres, sensations, impression, spirits, vapours, strings and vibrations appear throughout popular publications during the period (Barker-Benfield 16-23). Sensation, matter and instinct, along with quickness, perceptions, and delicacy all conceptually constitute the late eighteenth-century's common understanding of the nervous system. These concepts are pervasively appropriated by British writers across the spectrum. Most significantly, the view that women's nerves are naturally distinct from men's making them creatures of greater sensibility becomes a central convention of eighteenth-century literature. The literary works of Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, Frances Burney and Jane Austin, for instance, all offer female protagonists up for public consumption with definitively exquisite

sensibilities. Educational tracts and sentimental fiction, in particular, become ideological repositories for sentiment as the essence of female discourse. Publications written for expressly for women also enter a rapidly developing domestic market. Women's increasing literacy and their novel writing is fundamental to the creation and elaboration of the culture of sensibility (Barker-Benfield xix). These texts are highly instrumental in young women's acculturation, *feminization*, into the cult of sensibility. In the mid-eighteenth century, "narrative fiction along with moral philosophy do more than simply reflect social conditions and relations: these texts produce society" (Mullan 25).

As a woman of her times, likewise determined by eighteenth-century cultural practices, Wollstonecraft admits that she herself has been "educated into an exaggerated sensibility" (Barker-Benfield xxx). Wollstonecraft's own struggle between sense and sensibility suggests the widespread existence of tensions between sensibility governed by reason and sensibility as dangerously given over to fantasy and the pursuits of pleasure (Barker-Benfield 361). In her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft asks: "What is sensibility? 'Quickness of sensation; quickness of perception; delicacy.' Thus it is defined by Dr. Johnson; and the definition gives me no other idea than of the most exquisitely polished instinct" (*VRW* 155). She resists the identification of women with their supposedly finer nervous systems, and she makes her analysis in the nerve paradigm's own terms (Barker-Benfield 16). When women equip themselves solely with their sensibility, "they are reduced to an entirely physiological system, albeit one that is 'refined' and 'exquisitely polished' into a 'delicacy'" (Barker-Benfield 2). "The implicit but clear alternatives Wollstonecraft presents throughout her works are between a woman reared to a cripplingly exaggerated sensibility, utterly dependent and subject to emotional binges,

and herself, the writer, capable of reasoned analysis, physically strong, independently minded, yet inspired with the positive warmth of sensibility" (Barker-Benfield 361).

Wollstonecraft analyzes cultural practices by "rooting out" sexual distinctions; she returns to their site of origin and complicates the fundamental principles that give rise to common-place notions of women's nature. Most importantly, she debunks reason/emotion and mind/body distinctions early on in her second *Vindication.* It is the cultivation of their sensibility as women's only asset and the source of their excellence that Wollstonecraft makes visible, disrupts and strives to alter.

Educating Young Girls: Women's Acculturation into the Culture of Sensibility

Wollstonecraft understands women's ideological acculturation into the cult of sensibility as the appropriation of an elaborate "system of dissimulation," a developmental process that begins early in their infancy and reaches it peak when adult women aptly utilize their sensibility for purposes of pleasure and power (*VRW* 202). Wollstonecraft holds a false system of education liable for women's acculturation. In their homes, in their churches and in their schools, young women are told to refine their sensibilities. Educational tracts and sermons are written expressly for them. Sentimental novels offer sensible creatures for young women to emulate. Young girls assimilate both the values and practices of a feminine sensibility through the modeling of culturally sanctioned behaviors and by imbibing principles dictated within educational tracts.

Wollstonecraft understands cultural texts as powerful instruments of the ideology of sensibility. She claims that the books written for the education of young girls, "all inculcate the same opinions" (*VRW* 225). The weakness of mind and body that prevail as

a criterion for "the good woman" comes as result of a false system of education, including child rearing practices and schooling. The widespread dissemination and inculcation of the ideology of sensibility systemically reifies women's rhetorical practice across time. The sociocultural effect that Wollstonecraft brings under review is the materialization of a distinct rhetorical practice—a rhetoric of sensibility.

In her critique of women's educational programs, Wollstonecraft marks the nursery as the originative site for women's indoctrination into the cult of sensibility. In *Thoughts on the education of daughters* (1787), she claims: "In the nursery too, they are taught to speak; and there they not only hear nonsense, but that nonsense retailed out in such silly, affected tones as must disgust;-yet these are the tones which the child first imitates...afterwards they are not easily got the better of—nay, many women always retain the pretty prattle of the nursery, and do not forget to lisp, when they have learned to languish" (8). Young girls thus imitate and refine their "silly, affected tones" so typical of the style and tone utilized within a rhetoric of sensibility.

In their youth, girls also discover the source of their power, the social function that a rhetoric of sensibility serves. Wollstonecraft explains: "[W]hen [women] begin to act a little for themselves; ...they then perceive that it is only through their address to excite emotions in men, that pleasure and power are to be obtained" (225). This passage theoretically summarizes the "line of reasoning" pursued within a rhetoric of sensibility. "Their address" is arguably a strategic rhetorical and textual maneuver. "Pleasure and power," the sociopolitical aim of their rhetorical address is obtained solely through appeals to men's emotions. The excitement of men's emotions encompasses both sentiment and sexual desire. Women's rhetorical practice is socio-biologically linked to a feminized

sensibility and the allure of the female body. As Wollstonecraft notes: "The distinction of sex" that informs a rhetoric of sensibility is "inculcated long before nature makes any difference" (*VRW* 131).

From childhood on, girls are prescriptively molded into sensible women through the false association of ideas, a psycho-perceptual "mishap" that is theoretically explained by John Locke within his highly influential *Essay concerning Human Understanding,* 1690 (II. xxxiii.5, 395).[15] A Lockean epistemology theoretically scaffolds Wollstonecraft's analysis. She understands the *false association of ideas* as an acculturating process wherein young women unconsciously imbibe ideas, and then appropriate principles of belief that are materially built out of these ideas. False ideas and principles alike circulate within the culture of sensibility.

Locke explains *false association* as the "connexion of Ideas wholly owing to chance or Custom; Ideas that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in Men's Minds, that 'tis very hard to separate them" (II.xxxiii.5, 395). The mishap occurs via "the accidental Connexion of two *Ideas*, which either the strength of the first impression, or future Indulgence so unite, that they afterwards [keep] company together in that Man's Mind, as if they [are] but one Idea" (II.xxxiii.7, 396). Locke claims that the false association of ideas set "us awry in our Actions," so those charged with the education of children should "think it worth their while diligently to watch, and carefully prevent the undue Connexion of Ideas in the Minds of young people" (II.xxxiii.8, 397). The associative connections between ideas need to undergo a mid-process review; children, themselves, must examine ideas as they appear in their minds, and check them

using their faculty of *reason*; otherwise, a mishap occurs—young children unknowingly absorb the local prejudices of those inattentive folks charged with their care (II.xxxiii.5, 395).

In the context of her critique of young women's educational experiences, Wollstonecraft charges that the association of the idea of "woman" with the ideas of "weakness, and sentiment" perpetuates false notions of women's nature. Local customs and beliefs are the seedbeds for the habitual association of these ideas, for the false connection of these ideas. Young women take up prejudicial ideas unconsciously and learn irresponsible habits of thought through their education. As Wollstonecraft charges:

> Everything that [young women] see or hear serves to fix impressions, call forth emotions, and associate ideas, that give a sexual character to the mind. False notions of beauty and delicacy stop the growth of their limbs and produce sickly soreness, rather than delicacy of organs; and thus weakened by being employed in unfolding instead of examining the first associations forced on them by every surrounding object, how can they attain the vigour necessary to enable them to throw off their factitious character? (*VRW* 225)

While young girls appropriate fashionable behavior long before they become aware of the illegitimate power it affords them, they readily discern the gendered distinctions made between particular cultural practices. Men are permitted multiple venues for realizing influence—they enjoy moral, civic, and physical liberties denied women. Women must live life second-hand; they must look to men to exercise legitimate influence on their behalf. Women are denied their civil liberties, and encouraged instead to develop that for

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[15] *An Essay concerning Human Understanding.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975. This edition is based

which nature suits them. "[They] are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, *outward* obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of a man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives" (*VRW* 100).

Drawing details from her own acute observation of the cultural practices that shape women into fragile creatures of sentiment, Wollstonecraft theoretically extrapolates the principles that constitute women's rhetorical practice that I here conceptualize as a rhetoric of sensibility. As she articulates the principles upon which women go about realizing "civil effect," she sets a rhetoric of sensibility against a fuller rhetorical practice that she finds more effective and redeeming for women as members of the human race.

Wollstonecraft understands the desire and the need for agency, for realizing sociopolitical effect, for *making meaning* as human desires that are integral to a happy and moral life. Her revolutionary agenda is to radically refigure female manners as such manners constitute eighteenth-century women's rhetorical practice. It is her aim, then, to convince her contemporaries that women's reliance upon their sensibility as a venue for power hampers their attainment of "the good, moral life." To do this, she first defines the cultural practice; that is, she identifies the theoretical tenets of a rhetoric of sensibility. Then, through the careful analysis of both the origins and the effects of these tenets, Wollstonecraft problematizes the rhetorical viability of the practice for realizing women's needs. She also refigures women's needs as part of her critical project. Her ideal of the "good woman" encompasses both private and public functions. She is a virtuous female

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upon the original fourth edition of Locke's *Essay*, edited with an introduction by Peter H. Nidditch.

citizen/rhetor who contributes productively to society, participates in civic discourse, and enjoys economic independence as she chooses, even as she diligently takes up her duties as a respectable wife and rational mother. Charged with the duties of citizen, wife and mother, the good woman's capacity for realizing a "good moral life" hinges upon her right and her responsibility to develop into a whole human being—physically, emotionally and intellectually.

Part Three

The Theoretical Tenets of a Rhetoric of Sensibility

Wollstonecraft's revolution in female manners functions as a feminist challenge to the western rhetorical tradition up to and including the Enlightenment era. As a feminist challenge, Wollstonecraft identifies the genderblindness of civic discourse and calls for the reform of women's rhetorical practice as shaped within the culture of sensibility. Even as a self-educated, eighteenth-century woman, Wollstonecraft's critical method employs a variety of interwoven moves recommended by feminist historians today (Ratcliffe 2). Specifically, Wollstonecraft *rereads* canonical texts on women's education in order to expose their gender bias. She also *extrapolates* principles and strategies from a variety of cultural texts to both reveal the depth and breadth of women's acculturation into the cult of sensibility and to emphasize the dire consequences thereof. This project benefits from Wollstonecraft's early research—her rereading and extrapolating. It extends her work with the conceptualization of a theory of women's rhetorical practice as a rhetoric of sensibility. For this project, I appropriate Krista Ratcliffe's account of the interwoven

moves—recovery, rereading, extrapolation and conceptualization—to constitute the historical method used within this project.[16]

Ratcliffe explains recovery as "the archeological project of discovering lost or marginalized theories of rhetoric" (2). To conceptualize a rhetoric of sensibility, I understand Wollstonecraft's *Vindications* and her *Thoughts on the education of daughters* as variously recovered, but not yet fully understood as constitutive of a theory of rhetorical discourse. Mitzi Myer's research on Wollstonecraft's primary texts, articles published within the *Critical Review*, also constitutes the *recovery* of stylistic principles as employed within sentimental fiction. Myer's recovery of these stylistic elements, elements delineated and harshly reviewed by Wollstonecraft herself, enables my analysis of the canon of style as defined within a rhetoric of sensibility.

Rereading "entails revising our interpretations of canonical and recovered theories of rhetoric" (3). To conceptualize a rhetoric of sensibility, I reread earlier assessments of Wollstonecraft's primary works as contributions to theories of women's discourse variously identified as philosophy, literature or rhetoric. Gary Kelly, Stephen Cox and Mitzi Myers all examine Wollstonecraft's insight into women's use of their sensibility for purposes of pleasure and civic effect. These scholars contribute theoretical "pieces"—various principles and practices; however, they do not bring these principles and practices together to conceptualize a theory of women's rhetorical production known as a rhetoric of sensibility.

I reread Wollstonecraft's primary works along with the earlier assessments of her theoretical work specifically for *feminist purposes*, as defined by Ratcliffe (4). [17]

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[16] See, Krista Ratcliffe, *Anglo-American Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions*. Carbondale: Southern

Specifically, this project reassesses these works in order to foreground how gendered claims and strategies as defined within a rhetoric of sensibility constitute a theory of rhetorical production that has deleterious effects upon eighteenth-century women's intellectual, emotional and physical well-being.

Extrapolating "entails rereading non-rhetoric texts, including essays, etiquette manuals and the like as theories of rhetoric. That is, theories of rhetoric may be extrapolated from women's and/or feminist's critiques of language as well as from the textual strategies of such critiques" (4). Wollstonecraft, herself, extrapolates principles and strategies from a wide assortment of cultural texts that promote women's use of their sensibility for rhetorical ends. She selects theoretical elements from educational tracts and sentimental fiction; she also offers illustrative examples drawn from women's practice as she observes it. In so doing, Wollstonecraft lays the theoretical groundwork for the conceptualization of a theory of rhetorical production. This project gathers the already-extrapolated principles and strategies Wollstonecraft renders for our theoretical attention. Most importantly, this project argues that her careful selection, extrapolation and critique of both principles and practices constitute theoretical moves that warrant her inclusion as a modern theorist within the western rhetorical tradition as she knew it. The main thrust of this chapter, then, is to recognize her theoretical contribution through the conceptualizing of a rhetoric of sensibility.

Conceptualizing may either imply the writing of a new theory of rhetoric or the conceptualizing of "that-which-already-exists" (Ratcliffe 5). This project conceptualizes

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Illinois University P., 1996.

[17] Ratcliffe defines "feminist purposes" as the intent to "foreground how gendered claims and strategies affect rhetorical history, theory and pedagogy" (4).

arguments of sensibility as that-which-already-existed, but for multiple reasons—historical genderblindness on the part of practitioners, theorists and historians alike; along with women's historical exclusion from public discourse and public space—has remained unconceptualized from the site of rhetoric and composition studies (Ratcliffe 5).

Early Assessments of Wollstonecraft's Understanding of a Rhetoric of Sensibility

This project is not the first to identify women's use of their sensibility as the recommended mode of women's rhetorical practice during the eighteenth century in Great Britain. Gary Kelley claims that Wollstonecraft aims her critique at women's reliance upon "sexual politicking," a practice which "serves only to continue women's own weakness and inferiority" (1943). Sexual politicking is an appropriate name for the cultural practice as it places due emphasis upon bodily exchanges that take up sociopolitical functions.

Stephen Cox is a historian who identifies the discursive practice as "an argument of sensibility." Cox characterizes the discourse as "an insidious form of political argument, an artificial rhetoric designed to manipulate its audience into conforming to traditional social structures" (63). Cox's use of "insidious" and "manipulate" appropriately captures the deceptive indirectness of women's rhetorical advances. These arguments are certainly political and rhetorical, but unlike the civic discourse of their male counterparts, women's appeals rely upon cunning and artifice.

A rhetoric of sensibility also takes up a conforming function, as Cox notes, in that its repeated use ideologically sustains the culture of sensibility. Women as sensible subjects both utilize a rhetoric of sensibility and are themselves constituted as sensible

subjects within the socio-reproductive dynamic of discursive practices that define eighteenth-century British culture. Within this dynamic, men control civic discourse and the public sphere and women cunningly maneuver along the discursive margins of public space. Both sexes "conform" as they appropriate their gendered practice and occupy their gendered space as prescribed for them within the culture of sensibility.

Cox identifies a rhetoric of sensibility as a cultural practice, but his theoretical work does not incorporate the wide array of principles and practices articulated by Wollstonecraft within her primary works. Instead, Cox focuses upon the concept of sensibility, its exchange value within the culture of sensibility in general and its conforming function. Cox's theoretical analysis of an artificial rhetoric of sensibility in its reliance upon sentiment and gesture adds important insight to this project.

Mitzi Myers, in "Sensibility and the Walk of Reason," points to Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* as a "pedagogics critiquing female socialization in sensibility" (121). Myers describes Wollstonecraft's text as an act of political resistance—she disrupts the socializing function of the culture of sensibility by admonishing those who conform to radically refigure the form and function of their rhetorical practice. Like Cox, Myers emphasizes the conforming function of women's socialization into the culture of sensibility.

Wollstonecraft's Insight Into the Rhetorical Function of a Feminized Sensibility

Wollstonecraft realizes that women use their sensibility rhetorically as "the available means of persuasion"[18] for specific public and private aims—"[W]hen [women]

[18] I insert Aristotle's classic definition of rhetoric as "the ability to see the available means of persuasion in each and every case" to align women's arguments of sensibility analogously with men's rhetorical

begin to act a little for themselves; they then perceive that it is only through their address to excite emotions in men, that pleasure and power are to be obtained" (225). A rhetoric of sensibility serves as women's culturally prescribed means of persuasion, the venue through which they access power and have "civic" impact. Wollstonecraft recognizes the principles that constitute the practice; she identifies and then positions them within an elaborate "system of dissimulation" (*VRW* 202). These principles of production guide a textual practice systematically utilized by female rhetors for purposes of pleasure and civic power. Arguably, then, these principles as Wollstonecraft purposefully gathers them for critical assessment, can be theoretically formulated into a rhetoric of sensibility. Wollstonecraft lays the groundwork for such a theory even if she does not name the practice, nor identify the elements as constitutive of a rhetorical *theory,* nor even a theory rhetorical production.

This project argues that these principles constitute a gendered mode of rhetorical production that works within a "system of dissimulation" espoused within the culture of sensibility. Wollstonecraft gathers extrapolated principles and practices within her primary works, the textual site of her high-spirited campaign for the reform of female manners. These principles join others from the following sources—Wollstonecraft's literary reviews of sentimental novels; educational treatises written by Jean Jacques Rousseau, Dr. Fordyce, and Dr. Gregory; and her own *Thoughts on the education of daughters*. From these texts, a rhetoric of sensibility is conceptualized by organizing principles within a canonical frame similar to that of Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*.

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practice. Gendered standards exist for men and women alike. Women's reliance upon their sensibility substitutes for the male standard that is cordoned off as "unavailable" to women. See, *On Rhetoric* (1.2.1, 36).

Wollstonecraft's contemporaries understand Aristotle's *Rhetoric,* specifically his divisions of the rhetorical art, as the most influential classical antecedent to their own theoretical work. Eighteenth-century theorists, including Hugh Blair and George Campbell, employ and at times refigure classical divisions within their works.[19] Wollstonecraft recognizes the theoretical line that extends from Aristotle through Cicero and the work of her contemporary, Hugh Blair, as the masculine rhetorical tradition that sets the standards for civic discourse. She is familiar with their theories and recommends their principles to remedy the sorry state of women's civic discourse.[20]

Assessing a rhetoric of sensibility against a classical, masculine standard effectively foregrounds the impact of gender bias upon women's rhetorical practice. Canonical frames formulated by the men who dominate the western rhetorical tradition up to and including Wollstonecraft's era enable us to explore the degree to which women's rhetorical practice downplays those elements that men's practice actively utilizes. Women's rhetorical practice arises as the effect of their exclusion from civic discourse and the public sphere. We might better understand how the culture of sensibility variously defines what constitutes legitimate rhetorical practice along gender lines if we set women's practice—the rhetoric of sensibility—against masculine theories of rhetorical production.

The conceptualization of a rhetoric of sensibility undertaken in this project considers the appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos; along with the canons: the arts of

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[19] See, Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres.*, 1783; and George Campbell. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 1776.

[20] In the *Rights of Men*, Wollstonecraft admonishes Edmund Burke for his reliance upon sentiment and pathetic appeals to aristocratic values within in *Reflections*. Specifically, she regrets that Burke who once was the British "Cicero" of civic discourse loses sight of what constitutes respectable rhetorical practice. Wollstonecraft read Blair's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. In a private letter, dated February 12, 1787, she refers to the text as an "intellectual feast" (qtd. in Kelly 290).

invention, style and delivery. A rhetoric of sensibility incorporates a limited number of canonical elements; its theoretical limitations necessarily impact the rhetor's effectiveness, effectiveness as defined according to classical standards for civic discourse. A rhetoric of sensibility is gendered and thus rhetorically truncated. Specific elements are sociobiologically not recommended for female rhetors. Elements like *logos*, for example, are recommended for masculine minds, male bodies and are suitable for men's civic discourse. In another sense, such arguments capitalize upon *difference*. The allure of the female rhetor's sexed body is understood as an asset—women's bodies are displayed, wielded for rhetorical effect. As a nondiscursive appeal, the troped female body enhances rhetorical effectiveness, may even overshadow the influence of more traditional discursive (language-bound) elements. As women's nervous systems are more delicate than men's, their arguments also rely heavily upon sentiment within pathetic appeals. A rhetoric of sensibility, as women's practice, both relinquishes rhetorical elements understood as integral to men's discourse and capitalizes upon other elements understood as women's best rhetorical assets.[21]

Argumentative Appeals: Ethos, Pathos, Logos

Ethos as a persuasive appeal refers to the rhetor's credibility as perceived by one's audience. Credibility may rest upon the rhetor's virtue, knowledge or both, either as essential to the rhetor's character or as rhetorically constructed for the occasion. In a

[21] Wollstonecraft's commentary is not copious enough to enable a discussion of arrangement, but we may imagine that arranging one's text within a rhetoric of sensibility includes arranging one's body as text as well as the strategic delivery of sentimental progressions.

rhetoric of sensibility, a good woman is credible to the degree that she conforms to culturally prescribed notions of female excellence.

In a *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft vividly describes the criteria for a good woman speaking well. She notes that "gentleness, docility, and a spaniel-like affection are...recommended as the cardinal virtues of the sex" (118). While women are not to be contradicted in company, and not allowed to exert manual strength, they may exhibit these virtues: "patience, docility, good humour and flexibility," virtues "incompatible with any rigorous exertion" of their minds (*VRW* 150). A rhetoric of sensibility incorporates an ethos of feminine fragility and physical dependency.

Educational tracts written specifically for young women offer standards of female excellence worthy of imitation. Wollstonecraft draws excerpts from these tracts in order to argue that their criteria are not suitable. In fact, the standards rest upon false notions of female excellence. Dr. Fordyce, for example, describes the good woman in his *Sermons to Young Women* (1765):

> Never, perhaps does a woman strike more deeply, than when, composed into pious recollection, and possessed with the noblest considerations, she assumes, without knowing it, superior dignity and new graces; so that the beauties of holiness seem to radiate about her, and the bystanders are almost induced to fancy her already worshipping amongst her kindred angels. (*VRW* 197)

Fordyce's image of the "deeply" striking figure sets women up as the objects of male desire. The female celestial body radiates and strikes deeply. The good woman in this scene makes a rhetorically vivid, sensory impression upon her male audience whose desire incites him to act on her behalf. The good woman sets her angelic image before the male

gaze to incite masculine desire and encourage man's sensual and sexual response. Her angelic virtue is that which masculine desire would consume. Wollstonecraft registers her disapproval in her response to this excerpt: "Why are women to be thus bred up with a desire of conquest?" (197).

Within a rhetoric of sensibility, women's knowledge is not intellectual; rather, knowledge is performatively delivered as sentiment accompanied by the ornately draped female body. Fashionable women artfully display their beauty, grace and gentility; they make their physical delicacy and emotional susceptibility manifest. Their rhetorical ability to "strike deeply," as Fordyce explains, is linked to their aptitude for exciting desire in their male counterparts. The female ethos, then, becomes credible as it attends to the emotional susceptibility of both rhetor and audience. As Stephen Cox claims, "The [rhetoric] of sensibility might be very loosely defined as persuasive discourse that tends *to equate intellectual authority with the power to display or elicit emotional susceptibility*" (emphasis added 64). Women's authority comes from their ability to elicit an emotional response from their male audience—a sensual and sexual response to the allure of their female bodies, as well as the strategic expression of sentiment. Cox continues: "Strong feeling is equivalent to argumentative authority" (65). Sentiment substitutes for intellect. The ability to rhetorically code the female body for visual effect constitutes women's cultural knowledge, a knowledge expressed via a nondiscursive media—woman's bodies as rhetorical texts.

Wollstonecraft presents Jean Jacques Rousseau's advice to women. Rousseau limits women's civic effect to their ability to deploy subtle appeals:

> It is by [a woman's] superior art and ingenuity that she preserves equality, and governs him that she affects to obey. Woman has everything against her, as well our faults, as her own timidity and weakness; she has nothing in her favour, but her subtlety and her beauty. Is it not reasonable, therefore, she should cultivate both? (*VRW* 184)

Wollstonecraft critiques the criteria for a credible feminine ethos as prescribed by her contemporaries. She rejects the representation of female character as fragile, weak and dependent. Women are not essentially, that is, *naturally* fragile and weak as the system imagines them to be, nor should they strategically construct themselves as such. A rhetoric of feminine sensibility prescriptively maps fragility and emotional susceptibility onto the female ethos and thus misrepresents what is natural to women. Her concern is that women actually cultivate physical weakness: "Sedentary employments render the majority of women sickly—and false notions of female excellence make them proud of this delicacy" (*VRW* 173).

Pathetic Appeals: Sentiment as the Very Matter of Communication

A rhetoric of sensibility depends heavily upon pathetic appeals as sentiment is the material stuff out of which arguments of sensibility are constructed. Pathos, as an argumentative appeal to the emotions, values and beliefs of the community comes highly recommended for women's discourse. As women supposedly have more refined nervous systems, both rhetor and audience alike understand that emotional susceptibility and a degree of vulnerability are essential to women's practice.

John Mullan in his *Sentiment and Sociability*, a critical study of eighteenth-century sentimental fiction, describes the discursive dynamic through which a feminine sensibility expresses sentiment as the "very matter of communication" (Mullan 16). Sensibility is both public and private; its eloquence promises the "true communication of feelings" (16). "The articulacy of sentiment is produced via a special kind of inward attention: a concern with feeling as articulated by the body—by its postures and gestures, its involuntary palpitations and collapses" (Mullan 16). Virtue is "realized in the capacity to feel and display sentiments, a capacity that is called sensibility," a sensibility that is not so much spoken as displayed (Mullan 61). Its instrument is a "massively sensitized, feminine body; its vocabulary is that of gestures and palpitations, sighs and tears" (61). As it constructs the body, "it fixates upon tears, sighs and meanings beyond words" (Mullan 16). In Mullan's description, the rhetor's emotional susceptibility materializes within a bodily performance that is strategically delivered. In its reliance upon sensory appeals and the allure of the female body, a rhetoric of sensibility incorporates elements similar to those utilized by women of the court and the salons.

According to Wollstonecraft the strategic display of affected sentiment is central to a rhetoric of sensibility. Wollstonecraft defines artificial sentiment against authentic emotions. In *Thoughts on the education of daughters*, she asserts:

> Feeling is ridiculous when affected; and even when felt, ought not to be displayed. It will appear genuine; but when pushed forward to notice, it is obvious vanity has rivaled sorrow and that the prettiness of the thing is thought of. Let the manners arise from the mind, and let there be no disguise for the genuine emotions of the heart. (*TED* 34)

Wollstonecraft makes an important distinction between passionate appeals that arise out of authentic emotions and those artfully constructed sentiments utilized for effect—"the prettiness of the thing." While she herself values "genuine emotions of the heart," she cautions young women that "affection is affected when there is no glow of it in the heart" (*TED* 32). A rhetoric of sensibility separates sentiment (pathos) from thought (logos, words or language). Such an unnatural separation of the two produces an artificial discourse with limited rhetorical appeal.

As Mitzi Myers explains, "Wollstonecraft's real quarrel with women writers centers around affectation, falsity, and imitation," a constructed feminine sensibility that she sets apart from a "true sensibility" ("Sensibility." 133). Wollstonecraft does not reject authentic sentiment, persevering passions, but she does rigorously critique women's use of feigned sentiment that is utilized solely for effect because it endorses weakness and vulnerability as positive traits. She describes women's bodies under the influence of sentiment: "Their senses are inflamed, and their understandings neglected, consequently they become the prey of their sense, delicately termed sensibility, and are blown about by every gust of feeling" (*VRW* 153). Their over-exercised sensibility renders them "ever restless and anxious" (153). "The mighty business of the female life is to please, and restrained from entering into more important concerns by political and civil oppression, *sentiments become events*, and reflection deepens what it should, would have effaced, if understanding had been allowed to take a wider range" (emphasis added. *VRW* 314). Much to Wollstonecraft's dismay, the discursive content of a rhetoric of sensibility consists of "sentiments" swollen into "events."

Logos: Thought, Reason and the Accumulation of Knowledge

An appeal through logos includes the strategic use of facts, evidence, grounds and cases within well-reasoned progressions that support the rhetor's discursive aim. Logos as reason is that which a rhetoric of sensibility shuns. It is treated here, because the cultural texts from which Wollstonecraft extrapolates the principles and practices of a rhetoric of sensibility often define women's practice against men's. These texts advise women not to rely upon logos, reason, as a masculine appeal. Women thus falter incompetently in their attempts to reason because they are not educated to think rationally. Wollstonecraft describes women's attempts to reason in this manner:

> All their thoughts turn on things calculated to excite their emotion and feeling, when they should reason, their conduct is unstable and their opinions wavering—not the wavering produced by deliberation or progressive views, but by contradictory emotions. By fits and starts, they are warm in many pursuits, yet this warmth, never concentrated into perseverance, soon exhausts itself; and exhaled by its own heat, or meeting with some other fleeting passion, to which reason has never given any specific gravity, neutrality ensues. (*VRW* 154)

Women's appeals within a rhetoric of sensibility differ distinctly from more traditional rhetorical modes. Stephen Cox explains: "The rhetoric of sensibility is often an obvious substitute for an argument that attempts to produce conviction by careful analysis of facts and the skeptical testing of hypotheses" (Cox 64). Instead, a rhetoric of sensibility admits "facts of subjective states" (64).

Women's education checks their intellectual development, so they neither know how to reason in the manner of their male counterparts, nor do they see the need to. Women's virtues as prescribed within the culture of sensibility are "incompatible with any rigorous exertion of intellect" (*VRW* 150). For example, Wollstonecraft refers to Dr. Gregory's advice:

> Be ever cautious in displaying your good sense. It will be thought you assume a superiority over the rest of your company. But if you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts, and a cultivated understanding. (*VRW* 201)

Wollstonecraft also critiques Jean Jacques Rousseau's advice for educating young women. Rousseau, like Dr. Gregory, claims that women's influence does not naturally rest in their capacity to reason. Rather than reasoning on their own, women need to stir men to act on their behalf. Rousseau explains the process:

> [T]he strongest [men] should be master in appearance, and be dependent, in fact, on the weakest [women]from an invariable law of nature, which, furnishing women with a greater facility to excite desires that she has given man to satisfy them, makes the latter dependent on the good pleasure of the former and compels him to endeavor to please in his turn, in order to obtain her consent that he should be the strongest. (*VRW* 176)

Within this power dynamic, then, women utilize their beauty to excite male desire because women's ability to excite and satisfy male desire is a law of nature, thus, the source of female power. When men "please in turn," women realize their rhetorical effect. It is

only as men exercise their legitimate power (reason) on women's behalf as their civic representatives in the public sphere that women are capable of exerting their influence.

Rousseau characterizes women's language aptitude as follows:

> The tongues of women are very voluble; they speak earlier, more readily and more agreeably, than the men; they are accused of speaking much more: but so it ought to be.... A man speaks of what he knows, a woman of what pleases her; the one requires knowledge, the other taste; the principle object of a man's discourse should be what is useful, that of a woman's what is agreeable. There ought to be nothing in common between their conversation but the truth. (*VRW* 186)

Logos, language as *knowledge* is that which men speak; pathos as *sentiment* tastefully delivered for aesthetic ends, for pleasure, is that which women "speak." Logos has a civic function—it is "useful"; whereas women's discourse is for amusement—it is "agreeable."

Rousseau also distinguishes between male and female language practices when he offers advice for educating young women. One should not ask young women, "To what purpose are you talking?"; rather, ask them: "How will your discourse be received?" (qtd. in *VRW* 186). Civic purpose is a function of male discourse; aesthetic effect is a function of women's discourse. His definition of women's "reasoning" faculty is quite suggestive: ""Reason in a woman is practical reason, capacitating them to *artfully to discover the means of attaining a known end*, but which would never enable them to discover that end in itself"" (emphasis added 186). Actual inquiry, the discovery of ends, is a masculine enterprise; women are to use cunning, subtlety and the allure of their bodies as the means to their ends.

Rousseau's distinction between the civic and the aesthetic; the truthful and the pleasurable echoes Locke's distinction between a good discourse of order, clarity and truth, and a specious discourse, a rhetoric of pleasure and deceit. The ends of women's rhetorical efforts are vitally linked to pleasing men to utilize their "good discourse" on women's behalf according to Rousseau's theory. In Lockean terms, Rousseau links women's discourse with Rhetorick. Locke comments: ""Tis evident how much Men love to deceive, and be deceived, since Rhetorick, that powerful instrument of Error and Deceit, has...always been had in great Reputation." "Eloquence, like the fair Sex, has too prevailing Beauties in it, to suffer it self ever to be spoken against. And 'tis vain to find fault with those Arts of Deceiving, wherein Men find pleasure to be Deceived" (III.x.34, 508). Rousseau consigns women to a rhetoric of sensibility as he separates their deceitful discourse from men's more redeeming practice.

Wollstonecraft observes women who use their ability to excite masculine desire to strategically disrupt women's attempts to take up the rational language of men. She comments: "What arts have I seen silly women use to interrupt by *flirtation*—a very significant word to describe such a manoeuvre—a rational conversation, which made the men forget they were pretty women" (*VRW* 303). When women rely upon their cunning and their beauty, they "become slaves to their persons, and must render them alluring that man may lend them his reason to guide their tottering steps aright" (262). Should women be ambitious, "they must govern their tyrants by sinister tricks" (262). Wollstonecraft understands the disadvantages that inhere when logos as reason is cordoned off as unavailable for female rhetors.

The Rhetorical Canons: Invention, Style, and Delivery

Rhetoric as a practical art has historically consisted of five inter-related arts of discourse production. These arts include invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. Shifts in the relative importance of the canons and the inter-relationships between them help us understand how time, place, gender and culture impact theories of rhetorical production. The canons represent phases in the orator's development of her text. Wollstonecraft's treatment of a rhetoric of sensibility incorporates principles for the arts of invention, style and delivery. Importantly, phases in the development of one's text within a rhetoric of sensibility include the preparation of the female body as "text" with a persuasive purpose.

Invention: Corporeal Preparations and the Topoi for Spectacular Discourse

Women's art of invention, the strategic gathering of rhetorical claims, includes their "preparation and plans" that rhetorically code the body according to aesthetic criteria dictated within the culture of sensibility. In *Thoughts on the education of daughters*, Wollstonecraft critiques the phases of rhetorical production: "the whole day is mostly spent in preparations and plans, or in actual dissipation" (*TED* 156). Women also engage in "actual dissipation" to physically prepare/weaken their bodies for the delivery of sentiment. Invention includes those physical and intellectual activities that facilitate women's generation of effective rhetorical appeals. Sensible women consider common-place notions, *topoi*, of what constitutes women's authority and their "knowledge" as they prepare their "texts" for delivery.

Style: Troped Bodies and Florid Language

In a rhetoric of sensibility, style extends to include both the troped female body as "text" and sentimental language. Wollstonecraft comments on the importance of women's dress: "[A] woman never forgets to adorn herself to make an impression on the sense of the other sex, and to exhort the homage that it is gallant to pay" (*VRM* 23). Women spend their time "at their glass" as an "instinct of nature to enable them to obtain indirectly a little of that power of which they are unjustly denied a share; for, if women are not permitted to enjoy legitimate rights, they will render both men and themselves vicious to obtain illicit privileges" (*VRW* 89). Because women do not enjoy access to "legitimate" rhetorical strategies, they use their looks to obtain "a little of that power," civic power that they are unjustly denied.

In *Thoughts on the education of daughters*, Wollstonecraft claims:

> There seems at present such a rage for pleasure.... An immoderate fondness for dress is acquired, and many fashionable females spend half the night in going from one place to another to display their finery, repeat common-place compliments, and raise envy in their acquaintance whom they endeavor to outshine. Women, who are engaged in these scenes, must spend more time in dress than they ought to do, and it will occupy their thoughts when they should be better employed. (156-7)

A rhetoric of sensibility thus relies centrally upon the stylistic display of ornamented female bodies, bodies similar in form and function to those utilized by women of the French court and of the salons. Women perform for "compliments" and in order to incite female "envy"—yet another gendered reach for power. The goal is to "outshine" through

a fashionable display. The materials of their discourse, then, include fashionable clothes and painted faces.

Wollstonecraft's commentary on the importance of the ornately draped female body to the cult of sensibility is extensive. The following rebukes are representative: Women's education seeks to make them "alluring mistresses" who are only "anxious to inspire love" (*VRW* 79). Their education "renders them insignificant objects of desire," mere animals (*VRW* 83). "To satisfy [Rousseau's] genus of men, women are made systematically voluptuous" (254). Women are "created to be the toy of man, his rattle" (*VRW* 118). Her contempt for such stylistic principles is unmistakable. The nondiscursive, visual appeal of the ornate female body effectively complements the sentimental diction that defines a rhetoric of sensibility.

Wollstonecraft characterizes the highly affected feminine style utilized within a rhetoric of sensibility in her reviews of popular novels, sentimental fiction written primarily for a female audience and in her *Vindications*. The principles of style articulated within the novels reinforce weakness and fragility as women's excellences. "Soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment and refinement of taste are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness" (*VRW* 82). "Pretty feminine phrases," "pretty superlatives,""false sentiments and overstretched feelings" are standard (82). In her literary reviews, Wollstonecraft generates a list of the common narrative ingredients of sensible discourse. These elements include references to style. They are: "unnatural characters, improbable incidents, and tales of woe rehearsed in an affected, half-prose, half-poetical style, exquisite double-refined sensibility, dazzling beauty, and elegant drapery to adorn the celestial body..." ("Sensibility." Myers 127). As model texts, these

novels contain "matter so soft that the indulgent critic can scarcely characterize it"; these works are "pretty nothings"; "sweetly sentimental"; "milk and water periods"; "insipid trifling incidents"; "much ado about nothing" (Myers 126). Such discourse gives a material dimension to the discursive ideals of a rhetoric of sensibility, ideals that value "the linguistic and structural etiquette of powerlessness, or marginalization, of being emotionally and physically carried away" (Myers 122). John Mullan describes the style quite effectively when he explains that sentimental discourse employs "a decorous yet guilelessly tremulous language of feeling" (63).

Wollstonecraft finds that dissimulation and affectation are essential to codes of dress that a rhetoric of sensibility promotes. In a *Vindication of the Rights of Man*, she states: "The homage paid to the female sex makes those beings vain inconsiderate dolls" (25). Women's vanity develops from the attention that their doll-like bodies elicit. In her own educational treatise written for young women, Wollstonecraft speaks out against cosmetics as yet another form of affectation. She contends against "the whole tribe of beauty-washes, cosmetics, Olympian dew, oriental herbs, liquid bloom and the paint that enlivened woman's face, and bid defiance to time" (38). The use of white and red cosmetics is unnatural as these colors take off "from the expression of the countenance, the beautiful glow of modesty, affection or any other emotion of the mind" (38-9). Cosmetics disguise the woman underneath them; "truth is not expected to govern the inhabitant of so artificial a form" (39). "The false life with which rouge animates the eyes, is not the most delicate kind; nor does a woman's dressing herself in a way to attract languishing glances, give us the most advantageous opinion of the purity of her mind (*TED* 39-40). Simplicity of dress and unaffected manners should go together. They

"demand respect and will be admired by people of taste" (41). In terms of language and dress, Wollstonecraft prefers the natural and pure to the artificial and dishonest. The good woman's character cannot be commercially bought or artfully constructed; she must be so as a result of rational thinking, diligent industry and respectable living. Virtue and morality may not be feigned, nor should they be sacrificed for easy access to lesser forms of more immediate gratification.

Delivery: Spectacular Gestures, Soft Voices and Gentle Tones

Delivery includes principles to guide the rhetor's strategic use of voice, gesture and tone to enhance the persuasive appeal of her argument. A rhetoric of sensibility depends heavily upon the strategic gestures of the fashionable female body. Beauty, both natural and artfully constructed, is central to women's rhetorical program. Principles for the delivery of the female body are formulated within educational tracts of the era. Jean Jacques Rousseau, for example, claims that a woman's delivery of her rhetorical body depends both upon natural aptitude (beauty as a given) as well as talents developed across time through practice:

> Beauty cannot be acquired by dress and coquetry is an art not so early and speedily attained. While girls are young, however, they are in a capacity to study agreeable gesture, a pleasing modulation of voice, and easy carriage and behaviour; as well as to take advantage of gracefully adapting their looks to time, place, and occasion. (qtd. in *VRW* 186)

Women's "looks," their bodies as visual texts, are thus adapted to the rhetorical occasion. By stylistically ornamenting/figuring the body as "feminine," women present a highly

troped spectacle that they wield as a persuasive ploy. They study "agreeable gesture," and learn to modulate their voices so as to please their male audience. Delivery within a rhetoric of sensibility, as in traditional rhetorical systems, centers upon adapting one's voice, tone and gesture to "time, place and occasion" as Rousseau understands; however, in this theoretical context, women's bodies are visually, textually adapted to the occasion.

In his *Sermons to Young Women* (1765), an educational tract which Wollstonecraft links with the cult of sensibility, Dr. Fordyce formulates principles for a distinctly feminine mode of delivery: "Let it be observed, that in your sex manly exercises are never graceful; that in them a tone and figure as well as an aire and deportment, of the masculine kind, are always forbidding; and that men of sensibility desire in every woman soft features, and a flowing voice, for form, not robust, and demeanor delicate and gentle" (*VRW* 198). Women's gestures are to be graceful and delicate. The appropriate voice is soft, and one's tone should be gentle.

The principles of delivery concerning voice, tone and gesture receive extensive attention within the educational tracts written for young women of the period. Wollstonecraft finds excerpts readily available. As these excerpts illustrate, the rhetorical advice given to women within the cult of sensibility is definitively feminized and culturally bound to women's bodies.

Part Four

Wollstonecraft's Censure of a Rhetoric of Sensibility

Sensibility is not just a fictional ideal articulated within eighteenth-century popular fiction; instead, it is a dynamic constituting ideology with material consequences for women's lives—their minds, their souls, their bodies. Wollstonecraft's critique of the

discourse of sensibility parallels her distaste for women's "real-world" use of a refined sensibility as a means to power. As long as a refined sensibility is prescribed as woman's best asset, women's compliance has an exchange value—power, influence and prestige. As cultural capital, then, and specifically, as women's sole venue for realizing civic and domestic effect, a feminine sensibility is to be had whatever the cost. Thus the "discourse of sensibility" utilizes a "seductive appeal to conformism"; power and influence are available to women as theirs for the taking (Cox 76).

Wollstonecraft acknowledges the "seductive appeal to conformism" as one of several important functions of a rhetoric of sensibility. She states: "The regal homage which [these women] receive is so intoxicating, that until the manners of the times are changed and formed on more reasonable principles, it may be impossible to convince them that the *illegitimate* power which they obtain by degrading themselves is a curse" (*VRW* 103). She also understands that "till mankind become more reasonable, it is feared that women will avail themselves of the power that they attain with least exertion, and which is most indisputable" (147). They are willing to sacrifice strength of mind and body "to libertine notions of beauty" because "the only way women can rise in the world" is through marriage (*VRW* 83). Women who rely upon their sensibility do so because it is ideologically sanctioned, convenient and to some extent, effective.

According to Mary Wollstonecraft, the negative consequences of women's acculturation into the culture of sensibility far outweigh the benefits. While a rhetoric of sensibility is effective, the consequences for women's civic, emotional, spiritual and intellectual well-being are dire. Wollstonecraft's concerns are numerous: 1) A rhetoric of sensibility depends upon the short-term appeal of women's bodies, so women's civic

power diminishes as their beauty fades. Women who are neither beautiful nor affluent are rhetorically impaired from the start. 2) Women sacrifice their physical and mental health as they pursue weakness and delicacy as female excellences. 3) A rhetoric of sensibility reduces male/female relations to a material exchange—the female body satisfies male desire in exchange for sustenance. Wollstonecraft equates bodily exchanges with prostitution. 4) A rhetoric of sensibility stunts women's intellectual development. The "good woman" can only become virtuous, moral, and knowledgeable via physical labor and intellectual exertion. A rhetoric of sensibility does not value either. 5) Women who refine their sensibilities neglect their public and private responsibilities. They are neither good mothers nor industrious citizens. Instead, they enjoy a parasitical relation to society and are a burden to their families.

In sum, women's acculturation into the culture of sensibility and their subsequent reliance upon their sensibility as a rhetorical venue for public and private effect has dire consequences. Wollstonecraft lays bare the material effects of women's reliance upon a rhetoric of sensibility with a sense of urgency and passion that she understands as a noble sign that she speaks the language of truth as found in nature. She holds the entire "system of dissimulation" accountable for gross violations of the human spirit—women's spirit, most directly.

Wollstonecraft disapproves of a rhetoric of sensibility because it only offers influence for the short term. Women learn from their infancy that "beauty is women's sceptre" (*VRW* 132). "Inheriting the sovereignty of beauty," women consequently "[resign]their natural rights that the exercise of reason might [procure]for them, and chose rather to be short-lived queens than labour to obtain sober pleasures that arise from

equality" (*VRW* 146). Because women aspire to be short-lived queens, they do not develop their minds. Drawing her criteria from masculine rhetorics, Wollstonecraft links the rhetor's intellectual development with enhanced effectiveness. Reason may strengthen women's discourse and extend their influence across time. She regrets that women prefer to "reign" for the day rather than enjoy influence throughout their lives.

Women also narrowly limit the terms of endearment that bind them to their husbands with their overemphasis upon corporeal appeals. Wollstonecraft explains: "[T]hey neglect to stamp impressions on their husband's hearts" that are more redeeming and longer lasting than their physical looks (*VRW* 259). All their efforts are spent on preserving "their beauty and wearing the flowery crown of the day that gives them the right to reign for a short time over their sex" (259). Impressions enhance memory; memory sustains effect.

Finally, women who are neither beautiful nor affluent enough to access fashionable attire are silenced and thus denied access to women's primary venue for realizing sociopolitical effect. A rhetoric of sensibility depends upon women's leisure. Women whose social class affords them the leisure time to rhetorically groom their bodies with the best materials—cosmetics, dresses— have an advantage over the working class and the poor. A rhetoric of sensibility is neither effective for the majority of women, nor effective for any woman across time.

Women's reliance upon a rhetoric of sensibility has dire consequences for their physical and emotional health. Bodily strength is not valued by women "as it takes away from their feminine graces, and from that lovely weakness, the source of their undue power" (124). Girls are not naturally sedentary and dependent, but they choose this

behavior because that is what the culture of sensibility promotes. "To preserve personal beauty—woman's glory—their limbs and faculties are cramped, condemned to live a sedentary life" (129). Genteel women "are, literally speaking, slaves to their bodies and glory in their subjection" (131). "Sedentary employment renders the majority of women sickly" (173). If a greater degree of emotional susceptibility and physical weakness correlate with a higher rhetorical exchange value, then women's health is inevitably jeopardized.

Mentally, fashionable women are "ever restless and anxious" because their over-exercised sensibility not only renders them uncomfortable themselves, but troublesome...to others" (153). They are emotionally unstable human beings: "Their senses are inflamed, and their understandings neglected, consequently they become the prey of their senses, delicately termed sensibility and are blown about by every gust of feeling" (153). Women become victims of their own inner-directed attention to their emotions. Emotional vulnerability is not something women should boast of as it makes them physically and intellectually dependent upon men and society by extension.

Wollstonecraft equates a rhetoric of sensibility with prostitution because the discourse is body-centered. She explains: "The state of idleness in which women are educated teaches them to look up to men for their maintenance, and to consider their persons the proper return for his exertions to support them" (168). Defining their market value by corporeal appeal, these women live "confined then, in cages like the feathered race. [T]hey have nothing to do but plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch. It is true they are provided food and raiment, for which they neither toil nor spin, but health, liberty and virtue are given in exchange" (147). Their plumed bodies

are their cultural capital with which they secure their material needs—women's sexed bodies as the cash nexus. The prostitution of women's bodies is sanctioned as a legitimate exchange within the culture of sensibility. Their education "renders them insignificant objects of desire" (*VRW* 83). It makes them "alluring mistresses," nothing more (*VRW* 118). For these reasons, Wollstonecraft claims that bodily exchanges compromise women's quality of life.

Wollstonecraft rejects women's reliance upon their sensibilities because the practice situates men as interpreters of women's experience and legislators of female desire. As man "is ever placed between [woman] and reason, she is always represented as only created to see through a gross medium, and to take things on trust" (*VRW* 143). Understanding is "denied to woman; and instinct, sublimated into wit and cunning, for the purposes of life, [is] substituted instead (145). Women are not allowed "the power of generalizing ideas, of drawing comprehensive conclusions from individual observations, ...the only requirement, for an immortal being, that really deserves the name of knowledge" (145). Together, these passages emphasize the extent to which women must rely upon men's ideas, their understandings, their knowledge of the world—insight necessarily filtered through a "gross medium," the gendered lens of masculine interests. A woman who is not permitted to accumulate her own ideas, her own knowledge through observation, experience and reflection is educated like a "fanciful kind of *half* being—one of Rousseau's wild chimeras" (*VRW* 125).

Wollstonecraft's criteria for the development of a human understanding are Lockean; she appropriates his epistemological sequence of observation, experience and

reflection as the standard course for men's and women's intellectual development alike.[22] Rhetorics of sensibility do not support women's intellectual development along this path or any path, for that matter.

Within the culture of sensibility, women must see the world second-hand, and as a result, they do not develop strategies for coping with the trials of life. "Men are forced to see human nature as it is and are not left [like women] to dwell on pictures of their own imagination (*TED* 100). Wollstonecraft voices her concern: "I have so much compassion for those young females who are entering the world without fixed principles, that I would fain persuade them to examine a little into the matter. For though in the season of gaiety they may not feel the want of them, in that of distress where will they fly for succor? Even with this support, life is a labor of patience—a conflict; and the utmost we can gain is a small portion of peace, a kind of watchful tranquillity, that is liable to continual interruptions" (*TED* 135). Life is a struggle; sound reasoning helps one endure: "Reason must often be called in to fill up the vacuums of life; but too many of our sex suffer theirs to lie dormant" (*TED* 99). "In a comfortable situation, a cultivated mind is necessary to render a woman contented; and in a miserable one, it is her only consolation" (*TED* 101). Wollstonecraft pities those who cannot call upon their reason to help them manage life's challenges intellectually.

In this discussion, Wollstonecraft recognizes yet another function of rhetorical discourse—internal arguments or reasoning can guide the individual through the process

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[22] John Locke discusses the accumulation of knowledge via observation, experience and reflection in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 1690. Wollstonecraft echoes Locke throughout her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. For Locke's discussion of human knowledge, see Book IV; most specifically, Chapter 1; Section 2, entitled: "Knowledge is the Perception of the Agreement or Disagreement of two Ideas."

of private decision making. Female rhetors who develop their reasoning faculties are better able to make sense out of their worlds, to accommodate and adjust to claims that the world lay before them. Private decision making is a vital rhetorical function that a rhetoric of sensibility simply does not address.

Rhetorics of sensibility also undermine women's moral development. While male writers like Dr. Fordyce, Presbyterian minister and author of *Sermons to Young Women* (1765), imagine that women are most angelic when their celestial bodies are "composed into pious recollection," and Jean Jacques Rousseau, in his *Emile*, prescriptively directs women to take up their husband's religious principles on trust, to learn them by rote without examination, Wollstonecraft claims that women can never be truly virtuous or moral by appropriating principles of good behavior second-hand. Virtue and morality are the result of the individual's struggles with life, the result of both experience and reflection. Simple obedience and blind faith are inadequate; rather, women need to fully enter the world, to subject themselves individually to all the experiences possible to men. She comments: "Happy is it when people have the cares of life to struggle with, for these struggles prevent their becoming a prey to enervating vices, merely from idleness" (146). "[I]t is vain to attempt to keep the heart pure unless the head is furnished with ideas, and set to work to compare them, in order to acquire judgment, by generalizing simple ones; and modesty, by making the understanding damp the sensibility" (240). Private virtue depends upon reason, and private virtue, for Wollstonecraft, secures public freedom and contributes to universal happiness (*VRW* 88). Her work ethic links industry with virtue, a respectable pleasure she recommends over sensual gratification: "True pleasure is the reward of labour" (*VRW* 158).

Wollstonecraft contends that male/female relations, social relations widely considered, should not depend upon cunning and deceit as natural. Forcing women to resort to cunning by default undermines morality. She claims: "I am afraid that morality is very insidiously undermined, in the female world, by the attention being turned to the show instead of the substance" (*VRW* 250). Using one's sensibility as a persuasive ploy to excite masculine desire leads to "tyranny, cunning" and a loss of self-esteem (*VRW* 84). Women must "condescend to use art and feign a sickly delicacy in order to secure their husband's affections" (*VRW* 112). The female mind is "tainted by coquettish arts to gratify the sensualist" (115). Women who are "deluded" by the culture of sensibility "sometimes boast of their weakness, cunningly obtaining power by playing on the *weakness* of men; and they may well glory in their illicit sway, for, like Turkish bashaws, they have more real power than their masters; but virtue is sacrificed to temporary gratifications, and respectability of life to triumph of an hour" (*VRW* 126).

Her central concern is that the cult of sensibility advocates a "system of dissimulation" as legitimate cultural practice (*VRW* 202). As women maneuver strategically to access power that is not legitimately theirs, they sacrifice self-esteem, virtue and respectability, and thus corrupt the whole of social relations. What Wollstonecraft imagines as an alternative is a model of human relations where men and women as virtuous and moral citizens, mutually partake of rational exchanges and enjoy unrestricted access to civic discourse and the public sphere.

When women turn their attention to corporeal accomplishments, they ignore their civic and private responsibilities. Wollstonecraft's vision of a healthy society depends upon rational private citizens whose virtue and industry contribute productively to the

well-being of society at large. Every individual has the right and the responsibility to contribute to the whole, to consider the moral and civil interests of mankind (86). Women forfeit their rights and neglect their civic and private responsibilities when they appropriate the discursive practices sanctioned within the cult of sensibility.

As women cultivate their refined sensibilities, they waste their lives away and thus impair society at large. Fashionable women dream "life away in the lap of pleasure; loitering life away merely employed to adorn their person" (113). A rhetoric of sensibility "renders women more artificial and weak characters," "more useless to society" than they "otherwise may have been" (103). "Women who [foster]a romantic delicacy of feeling, waste their lives in *imagining* how happy they should have been with a husband who could love them with a fervid increasing affection every day, and all day (like the herd of novelists)" (117). Thus, the daily activities, rhetorical strategies, sanctioned within the culture of sensibility, especially the turning of sentiment into an "event," are of little use to society. Women's obsession with their appearance is time-consuming and wasteful. "By far too much of a girl's time is taken up in dress" (*TED* 35). Time and money are better spent improving the material conditions of lives of the less fortunate. Happiness within the culture of sensibility is linked to securing and sustaining men's approval rather than the satisfaction of bettering society through industry, sociopolitical activism and, in the private sphere, responsible parenting.

Individuals who enjoy a parasitical relation to the whole, necessarily damage society at large. An over-stretched sensibility promotes a "life of listless activity, and stupid acquiescence, a permanent state of childhood. By their charms and their weakness they become entirely dependent upon men.... They are parasitical and worthy of

contempt (168). "In the fine lady, how few traits do we observe of those affection which dignify human nature! [S]he is still a child in understanding, and of so little use to society, that her death would scarcely be observed" (*TED* 157-8). It is the individual's responsibility not to weaken society by enjoying a relation of economic, intellectual and physical dependency upon society. In contrast, Wollstonecraft asserts: "Independence I have long considered as the grand blessing in life" (85). Independence, moreover, carries with it both rights and responsibilities.

Women need their political and civil rights, including a refigured rhetorical practice, so as to comprehend their role in society. Women will not discharge their duties in a virtuous manner if they look to men's knowledge for their principles. Principles may only guide them if they are theirs as the result of arguments drawn from reason (*VRW* 88). Wollstonecraft forcefully asserts: "[R]eason is absolutely necessary to enable a woman to perform any duty properly, and I must again repeat, sensibility is not reason" (158). The individual's understanding of her rights and responsibilities is contingent upon her intellectual development. If women neglect to development their reason, they may "stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice" (*VRW* 86). Conviction guides behavior; educated participation brings about individual conviction. Individuals will not comprehend their duty unless the freedom to think and participate strengthens their reason. As human beings with the capacity to reason and social beings, women need to recognize the importance of their full civic participation.

Conclusion

The desired end of Wollstonecraft's elaborate critique of the cult of sensibility is her "revolution in female manners" (*VRW* 133). Specifically, she imagines a refigured rhetorical practice that female rhetors might find more redeeming and more effective. She understands women's unfortunate state, a state analogous to that of "slavery," as a consequence of their education and cultural relation to society. She explains: "When therefore I call women slaves, I mean in a political and civil sense; for indirectly they obtain too much power, and are debased by their exertions to obtain illicit sway. Let them share in the advantages of education and government with man, and see whether they become better, as they grow wise and become free" (292). Free women and then follow their development; it "cannot be demonstrated that woman is essentially inferior to man because she has always been subjugated" (123). If you grant women freedom physically, morally, intellectually, politically and economically, women's character will improve (327). Her primary challenge to the purveyors of the culture of sensibility, and the proponents of women's reliance upon a rhetoric of sensibility follows: If "women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from participation in the natural rights of mankind, [including more redeeming modes of rhetorical practice], prove first, that they want reason" (88).

The culture as a whole in terms of modernity is moving away from classical notions of good rhetorical practice. Wollstonecraft is in the vanguard of the male rhetorics as she appropriates an empirical epistemology; she is also revolutionary in proposing that the New Rhetoric include women rhetors as well. Men and women of the eighteenth century set out to conceptualize new discourses, and the gendering of these

discourses becomes the subject of controversy. The language of the New Science appropriates masculine terms. Wollstonecraft, however, understands civic discourse with its earlier masculine associations within the classical tradition as redeeming. She rejects narrow definitions of rhetoric as an effeminate discourse of style. In her view, truth is a woman; nature is a woman, and the voice of reason also belongs to a woman. Wollstonecraft's regendering of reason as a woman is thus revolutionary in this context.

Chapter Three

Wollstonecraft's Theory of Rhetorical Production: The Pisteis

—for I like to use significant words. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Chapter three begins the conceptualization of Wollstonecraft's rhetorical theory with an analysis of her understanding of the pisteis, the argumentative appeals. Pisteis is the Greek plural for pistis, a proof or argument, sometimes called an appeal. The proofs originate in the study of persuasive discourse—Aristotle is the first theorist to use this method of studying persuasion systematically. Treatments of the three proofs shift across time in relative importance and in the interrelations between them. The proofs are variously defined as entechne, in language, and thus constructed relative to time, place and occasion, or atechne, essential to one's character or reality as external to language. For example, Aristotle understands various proofs as adapted to audience, context and subject, but Plato, in contrast, sees the rhetor's virtue as a prerequisite to a good rhetoric (Johnson. "Ethos" 243).

Part one of chapter three presents Wollstonecraft's understanding of *ethos*, appeals based on character; **part two** treats *pathos*, appeals made to community values, attitudes and emotions, and **part three** takes an in-depth look at the principles and textual strategies that constitute her understanding of *logos*, appeals based upon facts, evidentiary matter and logical progressions. Wollstonecraft's analysis includes both principles and strategies. She presents cases as illustrative models of her principles; these cases are sometimes historical, sometimes constructed. The models add a visual dimension to her principles, not unlike those models recommended for rhetorical instruction by her

contemporaries. Hugh Blair, for example, uses prose models to illustrate his principles of style. This project brings together Wollstonecraft's theoretical commentary in the following manner: It gathers principles directly articulated within her primary texts; it draws theory out of her practice by analyzing her textual strategies, and it examines Wollstonecraft's critique of prose passages from various texts, excerpts she either recommends or dismisses. Her rhetorical theory is conceptualized from multiple sources, and through a critical mix of theoretical procedures. Such an extrapolated and woven theory is not presented as an objective rendering of her theory. Rather, the person interpreting the interwoven strategies and principles necessarily influences the resulting theory.[23]

Part One

Ethos

Ethos as a keyword in systems of rhetorical production typically refers to the principle that the speaker must appear to be knowledgeable, sincere, and of good character. The obligation that the speaker present a pleasing character is a maxim considered under many headings. Theorists often treat ethos within discussions of invention, style and delivery where character is readily discernible. As Nan Johnson notes, the criteria for an effective ethos shift across time as theorists differ in their understanding of rhetorical aim as either "instruction in moral good or the facilitation of decisions and action," or perhaps both ("Ethos." 244).

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[23] Krista Ratcliffe makes this important theoretical/ methodological point in her *Anglo-American Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions* (5). Wollstonecraft's theory is determined by the author's own analysis at this historical juncture.

In an idealistic view of ethos, the rhetor's virtue is an essential prerequisite to good speaking; in a more pragmatic view, one's ethos is relative and constructed within one's text in response to context. Wollstonecraft's contemporaries, Hugh Blair and George Campbell, blend the idealistic with the pragmatic in their theories. Both observe that the speaker must convince the audience that he feels the emotions he wants them to feel and that he believes the truths for which he argues.[24] While they do not insist that virtue is a prerequisite, they do emphasize that the speaker cannot persuade his audience if he cannot convey his individual commitment to a position. Campbell and Blair use "sympathy" as a synonym for ethos. The speaker should construct a "sympathetic link" that engages the emotions and moves the will. Sincerity and friendliness are recommended (Johnson. "Ethos." 244-5). By treating "'the consideration which the Speaker out to have of himself,' as [an]inevitable consideration in persuasion, Blair and Campbell reiterate traditional wisdom regarding the necessity for an orator to convey sincerity, goodwill and authority..." (Johnson. *Nineteenth.* 49).

Wollstonecraft's treatment of ethos includes the following elements: 1. She understands knowledge as the product of rational inquiry, traditional book learning, and insight into human nature. She authorizes the accumulation of knowledge and the exercise of reason via the *principle of purposeful creation:* God grants all humans this authority. Finally, she understands the subject positions of "moralist" and "philosopher" as knowledgeable. 2. She offers her criteria for virtue and recommends the authentic, *idealistic*, over the constructed, *pragmatic*. Virtue must be habitual not strategically

[24]Masculine pronouns are standard fare within the texts of Wollstonecraft's contemporaries. Throughout this project, historical accuracy is privileged over contemporary guideline for nonsexist language practices. As gender is very much at issue within her Wollstonecraft's theory, historical accuracy is vital.

constructed. 3. As a female theorist/rhetor, conscious of her gendered subjectivity, she addresses gender bias and shifts her ethos as she addresses male or female "hearers." She strategically constructs her character in view of time, place and occasion—a pragmatic move. 4. She joins Campbell and Blair as she claims benevolence and sympathy are integral to virtuous appeals. 5. Wollstonecraft offers positive and contrastive historical examples of rhetorical eloquence.

Knowledge, Authority and a Credible Ethos

The introduction to her second *Vindication* is very rich rhetorically. This is understandable because everything is at stake for her at this crucial point in her argument; she must theoretically defend her right to speak in the forum. Her textual strategies illustrate the theoretical components of an effective ethos. As she authorizes both her right to speak and the "knowledge" she has accumulated, we learn a good deal about her rhetorical values. She says: "I have turned over various books on the subject of education, and patiently observed the conduct of parents and the management of schools" (79). "After considering the historic page" and "viewing the living world," she now speaks with authority on the subject of women's education. Her knowledge is both textual in that she reads the "historic page," and experiential because she has viewed the "living world."

Wollstonecraft's knowledge comes from both primary and secondary sources; she both reads and observes common educational practices that offer her insight into the theoretical and practical wisdom of her age. Her audience includes men who have a university education where book learning is valued and men who embrace empirical

criteria for knowledge as the result of observation, experience and reflection. She never attends a university, but she reads the educational philosophers, and she observes schooling practices first-hand, so her ethos appears credible.[25]

Knowledge is linked to the exercise of one's reasoning faculty as well. In the same introduction, she speaks to her male listeners: "I presume that rational men will excuse me for endeavoring to persuade [women] to become more masculine and respectable" (83). Further on in her argument, she again directly appeals to these men: "I then would fain convince reasonable men of the importance of some of my remarks; and prevail on them to weigh dispassionately the whole tenor of my observations. I appeal to their understandings; and as, a fellow creature, claim, in the name of my sex, some interest in their hearts" (*VRW* 268). Her male "hearers" should respond well to her use of "reasonable," "respectable" and "masculine." She embraces these attributes and presents herself as a respectable, rational being as well.

She also urges her female "hearers" to develop a rational and thus respectable ethos. She petitions them: "My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their fascinating graces and viewing them as if they were in a perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone" (81). By doing this, she elevates the character of her female readers above the local standard of feminine fragility and intellectual dependency. Her appeals are ingratiating; to women she extends a respectable invitation to first imagine and then, perhaps, to refigure themselves as women of reason.

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[25] Wollstonecraft cites Locke as an authority on child rearing in her *VRW*, (276). Also, in her chapter, "On National Education, she discusses her visits to various academies and boarding schools around the London area. (See, pp. 280-5, in particular). Wollstonecraft's biographers offer various accounts of her visits to educational institutions. Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman* is very much a statement of her educational philosophy—Jane Roland Martin's reading of Wollstonecraft as an educational philosopher is seminal.

Thus far, we see a good rhetor as well read, someone who has accumulated a mature degree of worldly knowledge and is rational in her thought.

Wollstonecraft foregrounds her gender because her sex would no doubt serve to disqualify her as a speaking subject. Her willingness to openly address the gender issue enhances her character. Her audience would wonder how and why a woman can speak on civic matters. She explains her intent:

> Yet, because I am a woman, I would not lead my readers to suppose that I mean to violently agitate the contested question respecting the quality or inferiority of the sex; but as the subject lies in my way, and I cannot pass over it without subjecting the main tendency of my reasoning to misconstruction, I shall stop for a moment to deliver, in a few words, my opinion. (83)

Wollstonecraft admits men and women differ in some respects—women are not as physically strong as men—and then she follows that qualification with her primary claim already foreshadowed in her address to the female listeners: men and women as human beings do, however, both enjoy a reasoning faculty. One's sex should not necessarily impact one's ethos as long as the speaker is a rational human being.

Since her audience may believe otherwise, she must address the issue and defend women's right to speak. For this reason, she cites the ultimate masculine authority on the subject: she claims that God gave her the ability to reason, and thus to speak. God's approval is formidable, and Wollstonecraft does not hesitate to deploy it. She argues that God-given aptitudes are purposefully provided, and all individuals have a moral and spiritual obligation to develop them. It is God's will that she exercise her reason, and writing this polemic is indeed an exercise of her reason. She explains: "Thanks to that

Being who...gave me sufficient strength of mind to dare to exert my own reason, till, becoming dependent only on Him, for the support of my virtue, I view, with indignation, the mistaken notions of my sex" (*VRW* 122). She displaces the authority of men who would claim women cannot reason as she advances the authority of God who created all men and women, but especially *those men* who might refute her claim in the right-here-right-now context of her argument.

Wollstonecraft constructs her authority by appropriating other subject positions that are reputable in the eighteenth century. She discursively, performatively, hails herself as a rationalist throughout her polemics, but more exactly, she claims: "As a philosopher, I read with indignation the plausible epithets which men use to soften their insults; and as a moralist, I ask what is meant by such heterogeneous associations as fair defects and amiable weaknesses?" (*VRW* 119). In this, she encourages women to disconnect sex from the criteria for taking up subject positions previously coded as masculine, if indeed, the only grounds for their exclusion is an aptitude for rational thought. As she occupies the masculine categories of "philosopher" and "moralist," she keeps intellectual company with men like Jean Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith, John Locke and the like. This is yet another of her textual strategies for authorizing women as speaking subjects. Women are more than "women," they are also philosophers and moralists. They may speak with authority on important issues just as their male counterparts do.

Virtue, Sympathy and Benevolence

As a woman rooted in the vanguard of her times, Wollstonecraft embraces sympathy and benevolence as integral to a moral life and an ethical rhetorical practice.

Benevolence and sympathy necessarily must be extended across class boundaries; these elements should rightly drive rhetorical discourse. Arguments that arise from the rhetor's benevolence and extend sympathy have strong appeal. She, herself, illustrates this principle when she reaches out with good will to the women in her audience: "In how many ways do I wish, from the purest benevolence, to impress this truth on my sex; yet I fear that they will not listen to a truth dear bought experience has brought home to many an agitated bosom, nor willingly resign their rank and sex for the privileges of humanity, to which they have no claim who do not discharge its duties" (*VRW* 268).

Her sympathetic appeal carries the *true* sentiment of a woman who has suffered and learned from experience that a feminine sensibility is not women's best asset. Her motive is "the purest benevolence," and her aim is to identify with the women in her audience as fellow victims. Sympathetic gestures like these are proper as long as the sentiment is not constructed. Her sentiment arises naturally as the result of "dear-bought experience." True benevolence accompanies gentleness and humility; it arises "from good sense and resolution, and should not be confounded with indolence and timidity, and weakness of mind, which often pass for good nature" (*TED* 62). Further, she emphasizes: "Universal benevolence is the first duty, and we should be careful not to let any passion so engross our thoughts as to prevent our practicing it" (*TED* 91).

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*, she takes Edmund Burke to task for establishing sympathetic ties that are class-specific. Burke's ethos offends her because he appeals primarily to the values and beliefs of the privileged aristocracy. She admonishes him: "You are going back for your credentials of politeness to more distant times. –

Gothic affability is the mode you think proper to adopt, the condescension of a Baron, not the civility of a liberal man" (*VRM* 170). She continues:

> Misery, to reach your heart, I perceive, must have its cap and bells [aristocratic attire]; your tears are reserved, very *naturally*, considering your character, for the declamation of the theatre, or for the downfall of queens, whilst the distress of many industrious mothers, whose *helpmates* have been torn from them, and the hungry cries of helpless babes were vulgar [lower class] sorrows that could not move your commiseration, though they might extort an alms. (*VRM* 14-15)

Wollstonecraft reprimands Burke for benevolence that is class-bound. Such an ethos is unsuited to the sociopolitical context in which he speaks. The good rhetor is not incapable of feeling sympathy for society's under-privileged nor unwilling to expend one's rhetorical expertise on their behalf.

Benevolence and sympathy must move across class boundaries and arise naturally in a complementary manner along with the exercise of reason. Rational thought and authentic sentiment sustain one another. Those "emotions that reason deepens" are "justly term[ed] the feelings of *humanity*," not to be confounded with "mechanical instinctive sensations" (*VRM* 57). Humanity "discriminates the active exertions of virtue from the vague declamations of sensibility" (*VRM* 57). Benevolence, then, is vitally linked to humane ends, not to oneself, or class interests. Burke's ethos stands as a negative example. He is one of those "finical [men] of taste, who [are] only anxious to secure [their] own private gratifications, and to maintain [their] rank in society" (*VRM* 22).

Finally, Wollstonecraft offers Dr. Price as her ideal of the eloquent rhetor. Price is the minister of a Dissenting Chapel, a liberal intellectual, a fellow of the Royal Society and

a staunch advocate of economic and political reforms (Todd viii). She sets Dr. Price's ethos contrastively against Burke's. She recommends Price as "a man whose habits are fixed by piety and reason and whose virtues are consolidated into goodness" (*VRM* 17). She draws the following image of Price's eloquence:

> I could almost fancy that I now see the respectable old man, in his pulpit, with his hands clasped, and eyes devoutly fixed praying with all the simple energy of unaffected piety; or, when more erect, inculcating the dignity of virtue and enforcing doctrines his life adorns; benevolence animated each feature, and persuasion attuned his accents; the preacher grew eloquent, who only laboured to be clear; and that respect he extorted, seemed only the respect due to the personified virtue and matured wisdom. (*VRM* 18)

Price's "personified virtue and matured wisdom" are integral to his rhetorical eloquence.

Janet Todd contrasts Wollstonecraft's own ethos in the *Vindication of the Rights of Man* with Burke's ethos as rendered by Wollstonecraft. Todd claims that Wollstonecraft delivers herself as "the provoked and impartial rationalist exasperated by the maudlin sentimentality and confusion of an emotional and flawed man" (xii). She is a "rationalist and plain dealer; he [is]a muddled idealist hiding behind notions of natural feelings and common sense, dealing in the mystification of courtliness and art" (xii). While she is "unaffected and serious," Burke is "vain, trivial and effeminate" (Todd xii). As an "exasperated" "plain dealer" who is "unaffected" and "serious," Wollstonecraft's practice, aligns itself, once again, with the pre-revolutionary rhetorics of unmasking. Her discourse attends to urgent matters that need immediate attention. She has no time for polished prose, or affected sentiment. The truth of her discourse demands a rapid delivery.

In sum then, knowledge and virtue are essential elements of a good ethos. Neither may be constructed; knowledge must arise as insight gleaned from "dear bought" experience and reflection; books and schooling may enhance one's knowledge. Virtue develops with maturity; it must be habitual, not affected. Sympathy is essential and benevolence the grand end of one's discourse. Sentiment must arise naturally and accompany rational thought if it is authentic. Sympathy should be extended to all human beings, no matter their socioeconomic status. In her conceptualization of an appropriate ethos, Wollstonecraft breaks with tradition of rhetors as she steps outside the politics of gender and class and admits women into the conversation and attends to the material needs of the masses. A good rhetor facilitates decisions and actions that support an egalitarian vision of moral good.

Part Two

Pathos

The principle of pathos is based upon the rhetor's ability to arouse emotions to inspire identification with one's audience. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle speaks of emotions as mental states which are accompanied by pleasure and pain and which necessarily impact the audience's judgment. Aristotle identifies particular emotions and advises rhetors to consider the emotional state of the audience and the external factors that elicit such emotions (Colavito 493). Cicero extends pathos beyond emotions to include attention to the audience's wishes, thoughts, judgments, and anticipations (494). Later theorists mention pathos as that "vital dimension," a dimension "full of life and conviction" (Colavito 494).

In her discussion of Campbell and Blair as New Rhetoricians, Nan Johnson presents their treatment of pathos as representative of eighteenth-century theorists. Campbell and Blair treat principles comparable to ethos and pathos, not as inventional modes in and of themselves in the Aristotelian sense, but as qualities of discourse relative to style and the selection of materials. "Campbell and Blair stipulate that sensitivity to affective disposition and the presentation of an attractive character in the speaker facilitate emotional responses prerequisite to achieving persuasion, a rhetorical effect that depends on the engagement of the passions in the inducement of the will and the establishment of a general 'communicative principle' that Campbell defines as sympathy" (*Nineteenth.* 49). By treating "the consideration which a speaker ought to have of his 'Hearers,'... as an inevitable consideration in persuasion, 'the pathetic part' of discourse, and the effect of stylistic qualities such as vivacity and beauty, Blair and Campbell reiterate traditional wisdom regarding the necessity for an orator to...assess [and appeal to] the particular nature of the hearer's habits of mind" (Johnson 49).

Campbell, in his treatment of pathos, advises the orator to excite a particular passion or desire in his audience and then to convince the audience that there is a connection between the recommended course of action and the gratification of the passion or desire (*Philosophy* 77-8). In his treatment of persuasion as the speaker's attempt to influence the conduct of his hearers, Campbell theoretically links two faculties, the understanding and the passions. He advises the orator to utilize "an artful mixture of that which proposes to convince the judgement, and that which interests the passions, its distinguished excellence results from these two, the argumentative and the pathetic incorporated together" (4).

Hugh Blair, in his treatment of pathos, claims that the passions—'the great springs of human action'—must be moved or the dynamics of the mind that induce action will not be engaged (192). A vivid engagement of the hearer's emotions is Blair's preferred rhetorical strategy. "To every emotion or passion, Nature has adapted a set of corresponding objects; and without setting these before the mind, it is not in the power of the Orator to raise that emotion.... The foundation, therefore, of all successful execution in the way of Pathetic Oratory is, to paint the object of that passion which we wish to raise, in the most natural and striking manner; to describe it with such circumstances as are likely to awaken it in the minds of others" (192). As Nan Johnson emphasizes, the passions in Blair's schema induce a "sufficient recognition of experiential fact to provoke the will into action" (40). That is— sensory impressions induce emotional responses that enhance the apprehension of experiential facts presented to one's audience.

In like manner, Wollstonecraft offers her "dire bought experience," and presents it vividly before her hearers. The hearer's intellectual and emotional response is generated through sensory detail and illustrative scenarios (40). She echoes Blair when she charges rhetors with the task of setting objects or images before their hearers: "Solitude and reflection are necessary to give to wishes the forces of passions, and to enable the imagination (another faculty) to enlarge the object, and make it the most desirable" (*VRW* 150). The faculty of imagination lends the necessary "paint" to the object, the subject. The goal is to stimulate the hearer's desire as to give rise to the appropriate emotion. She comments: "Those writers are particularly useful, in my opinion, who make men feel for men, independent of the station he feels or the drapery of fine sentiments" (*VRW* 268). Men feel for men when they participate in the emotional experience of the speaker.

Blair and Campbell align their theories of rhetorical production with "theories of the mind, logic, and language that [emerge] from the Baconian-Lockean tradition" (Johnson. *Nineteenth*. 19). Principally, they follow a philosophical approach to rhetoric that examines the nature and aims of rhetoric in terms of the process of the mental faculties. Wollstonecraft also aligns her theory with Baconian-Lockean theories of mind, logic and language. She works with reason and passion as mental faculties that are vitally linked in the production of persuasive discourse. Her treatment of pathos as an argumentative appeal includes the following: 1. Pathos is linked with passion as an innate faculty, and as an innate faculty, passion is to be exercised. Passion is the grand mover of human inquiry and action. Passion motivates action and reason checks it, so both faculties are vitally linked. 2. Women are not encouraged to exercise their passion in a manner that would unfold their reason. Women's faculties are at present developmentally stunted. 3. Passion is the "vital heat" of rhetorical discourse, and as such, it enhances effect. 4. Passion differs from appetite. Appetite as sexual desire, either masculine or feminine, should not drive one's rhetorical discourse.

Passion as a Mental Faculty

Wollstonecraft understands passion as a mental faculty that is meant to be exercised. She believes that all of humankind enjoy a "governing passion," the overarching desire to "call forth and strengthen our faculties to attain experience" (*VRW* 218). To live the good, moral life, one must exercise her faculties. Because "passions are the winds of life," (215) they are vital to rhetorical practice. Passion stirs us to act and reason both dictates and monitors the course of our actions.

Men's intellectual development surpasses women's because society grants that men may give sway to their passions and develop their faculties. Wollstonecraft comments: "[O]ne reason why men have superior judgment, and more fortitude than women, is undoubtedly this, that they have given freer scope to the grand passions, and by more frequently going astray enlarge their minds. If then by the exercise of their own reason they fix upon some stable principle, they have probably to thank the force of their passions" (*VRW* 216). In this dynamic, men's passions stir them to act and their reason facilitates thoughtful reflection. The process moves from desire to reason to reflection to judgment. The sequence gives rise to stable principles, maxims to live by. The faculties of passion and reason work vitally together to facilitate the development of a moral individual through experience and reflection.

The individual needs to respond to passion, to desire, not to depend upon book knowledge alone, because the "passions [need to] gain sufficient strength to unfold [other] faculties" (*VRW* 216). Wollstonecraft questions whether those principles that inform a rhetoric of sensibility are formulated according to this passion-reason dynamic. She suspects that the mental faculties are not properly utilized; instead, the men who shape those principles must depend solely upon book learning, and not follow the proper channels. She comments: "I must therefore venture to doubt whether what has been thought an axiom in morals may not have been a dogmatical assertion made by men who have coolly seen mankind through the medium of books, and say, in direct contradiction to them, that the regulation of the passions is not always wisdom" (*VRW* 216). "Coolly seeing mankind through books" leads to false principles; it is through the individual's passionate engagement with the material world that she formulates stable principles.

In Wollstonecraft's understanding of the accumulation of knowledge and beliefs, the individual is held accountable for exercising her mental faculties. Second-hand knowledge, that which comes "coolly" through books, or to women second-hand through their husbands, brothers and fathers does not meet her criteria for knowledge as stable principles gleaned from the exercise of one's mental faculties, moral principles to guide one's life. She explains: "The world cannot be seen by an unmoved spectator; we must mix in the throng and feel as men feel, before we can judge of their feelings.... We must attain a knowledge of others at the same time we become acquainted with ourselves" (*VRW* 219). Women, like the rich, do not "sufficiently deal in general ideas, collected by impassioned thinking or calm investigation, to acquire strength of character on which great resolves are built" (*VRW* 150). Women have limited access to books, and even less access to worldly experience; thus, they lack knowledge as Wollstonecraft theorizes it: "I very much doubt whether any knowledge can be attained without labour and sorrow" (*VRW* 219).

Pathos as the Vital Heat of Discourse

Wollstonecraft claims that the vital heat that arises naturally during the formulation of one's principles should likewise accompany the persuasive delivery of one's discourse before an audience. In her second *Vindication*, she acknowledges the passionate heat that drives her delivery: "Should I express my conviction with the energetic emotions that I feel whenever I think of the subject, the dictates of experience and reflection will be felt by some of my readers" (82). She continues: "I might have expressed this conviction in a lower key, but I am afraid it would have been the whine of affectation, and not the faithful

expression of my feelings, of the clear result which experience and reflection have led me to draw" (*VRW* 103). Then, she claims that vital heat is more effective than figures and tropes: "I aim at being useful, and sincerity will render me unaffected; for [I wish] rather to persuade by the force of my arguments than dazzle by the elegance of my language." (82). Conviction and vital heat enhance the persuasive appeal of her argument. "[T]ruly sublime is the character that acts from principles, and governs the inferior springs of action (passion as a faculty) without slackening their vigour; whose feelings give vital heat to his resolves, but never hurry him into feverish eccentricities" (*VRM* 5). The good rhetor uses reason to temper passion; vital heat drives the discourse, yet reason caps passion, so it never reaches a feverish level.

Wollstonecraft cites Catherine Macaulay's discourse as exemplary in terms of both ethos and pathos. Wollstonecraft admires Macaulay's ability to balance rhetorical elements:

> I will not call hers a masculine understanding because I admit not of such an arrogant assumption of reason: but I contend that it was a sound one, and that her judgment, the matured fruit of profound thinking was a proof that a woman can acquire judgment in the full extent of the word. Possessing more penetration than sagacity, more understanding than fancy, she writes with sober energy and argumentative closeness; yet sympathy and benevolence give an interest to her sentiments, and that vital heat to arguments, which forces the reader to weigh them. (*VRW* 206-7)

Wollstonecraft mentions Macaulay's "sympathy" and "benevolence," as well as "vital heat"; these are the key elements sanctioned by her male counterparts, Blair and Campbell. "Sober energy" is Wollstonecraft's term for pathos tempered by reason.

Macaulay's mix brings together elements that are conversely gendered—sympathy and benevolence often read as feminine traits, and vital heat and sober energy as masculine. Thomas Farrell in his work on female and male modes of rhetoric claims that female modes accentuate identification with their audience. The female mode is also "more sincere, generally supportive, conciliatory and potentially integrative" (916-7). Sympathy and benevolence are elements with such female associations. In contrast, Wollstonecraft's valuing of "penetration," "argumentative closeness," "vital heat," and "sober energy" link her theoretically to a male mode of rhetoric. As Farrell explains, the male mode lends itself to combat and closure; it "appears framed, contained, more pre-selected and packaged" (911). Wollstonecraft's mixture strips away the gendered associations from these rhetorical moves, associations that theoretically limit rhetorical practices for both men and women. She promotes combative passion, vital heat, and close reasoning, yet she embraces sympathy and benevolence that may be read as softer, more effeminate appeals.

Feverish Heat: Excess as a Pathetic Failure

Wollstonecraft' commentary on vital heat includes a discussion of the ways in which a rhetor's use of argumentative passion, discursive "heat," may run to extremes and mar an otherwise effective discourse. Feverish eccentricities often appear in models of rhetorical production that Wollstonecraft critiques as artificial and ineffective. In such

discourse, "truth is left behind in the heat of the chace, and things are viewed as positively good, or bad, though they wear an equivocal face" (*VRM* 57). In this instance, the rhetor becomes caught up in the energetic pursuit of a victory and a rhetorical imbalance occurs. Passion runs its course and the rhetor's critical perception is inflamed. Burke's discourse is a good model of such an imbalance. She assesses Burke's argument in her first *Vindication*:

> [A]ll your pretty flights arise from your pampered sensibility; and that, vain of this fancied preeminence of organs [passion as a faculty] you foster every emotion till the fumes, mounting to your brain, dispel the sober suggestions of reason.... [W]hen you should have argued you became impassioned, and the reflection inflames your imagination, instead of enlightening your understanding. (*VRM* 7)

Burke's emotional appeals are not tempered by his reason; so his passionate energy becomes excessive.

In another circumstance, a rhetor may become excessively impassioned when in the course of the exchange, the rhetor begins to doubt the merits of his own argument and thus compensates with more passion. She explains: "People assert their opinions with the greatest heat when they [themselves] begin to waver; striving to drive out their own doubts by convincing their opponent, they grow angry when their gnawing doubts are thrown back to prey upon themselves" (*VRW* 21). These are moments wherein passion rises disproportionately and negatively impacts the rhetor's effectiveness. Like the previous example, passionate appeals lose their effectiveness when they are not checked by reason; the two faculties should work together in a complementary manner.

Masculine Desire, Gross Appetites: Pathos as Sensual Appeal

Another instance where pathetic excess mars discourse is in the use of passionate appeals to sexual desire. Wollstonecraft disapproves of the use of pathos as it arises out of or elicits sexual desire. Most specifically, she wants to remove sexual desire from male/female rhetorical exchanges. Vital heat as discursive energy should not be appetite driven; sexual appetites should not inspire rhetorical production, nor should the satisfaction of sexual desire serve as a rhetorical aim. Edmund Burke and Jean Jacques Rousseau often infuse their discourse with too much heat, desire that is driven by excesses of sexual appetite. When they present their ideals of female sensibility before their readers for their assent, their male appetites color their portraits such that they lose their rhetorical legitimacy.

Rousseau confounds the productive relations between reason and passion when he formulates his educational program for Sophie and for women, by extension, in his *Emile*. Wollstonecraft charges that Rousseau draws his ideal Sophie as the object of his masculine desire. His appetite for Sophie so determines his discourse, that she is objectified as the one who satisfies Rousseau's desire. Wollstonecraft claims: "But all Rousseau's errors in reasoning arose from sensibility, and sensibility to their charms women are very ready to forgive. When he should have reasoned he became impassioned, and reflection inflamed his imagination instead of enlightening his understanding" (*VRW* 192). She describes the impact of his appetite upon his discourse:

> And so warmly has he painted what he forcibly felt, that interesting the heart and inflaming the imagination of his readers, in proportion to the strength of their fancy, they can imagine that their understanding is convinced when they only

> sympathize with a poetic writer, who skillfully exhibits the objects of sense most voluptuously shadowed or gracefully veiled; and thus makes us feel whilst dreaming that we reason, erroneous conclusions are left in the mind. (*VRW* 192)

Rousseau's rhetoric depends too heavily upon pathetic appeals unchecked by his reason. His emotions stir his other faculty—his imagination—and he paints Sophie as the object of male desire in a "voluptuous" light. Rousseau's own desire for Sophie stirs him to paint her according to the dictates of his male appetite. Passion not checked by reason, but rather inflamed by imagination, leads him to err in judgment and to indulge in a debased sensuality. Like many of the male theorists she critiques, Wollstonecraft charges that Rousseau's discourse on Sophie is yet another example of those "arguments dictated by gross appetites" (*VRW* 81). Sexual appetites should not be an integral part of rhetorical discourse, nor should pathos constitute the whole of one's appeals.

The Relationship between Female Desire and Rhetorical Production

Wollstonecraft understands appetite as bodily desire that is dangerous if unchecked by reason. Her rigorous critique of sexual appetite as the compelling interest between men and women and sexual politicking as incorporated within a rhetoric of sensibility raises critical questions about Wollstonecraft's understanding of women's sexuality. Does Wollstonecraft deny women their right to a sexually fulfilling life? Does she cordon off passion and force women to abandon their bodies as the necessary consequence of their appropriation of reason? If sexual appetite is removed from women's discourse, what does the production of rhetorical discourse cost women?

Wollstonecraft rejects claims that sexual desire need be the grand mover of human action because of the sociological and psychological harm caused by an emphasis upon female sexuality (Todd xix). Because she argues combatively against male/female relations sustained solely by sexual desire, her critics conclude that she denies women sexual pleasure. Janet Todd explains the thinking here: "In her treatment of sensibility, Wollstonecraft has erased the sentimental construction of woman [endowed with superior sensitivity and delicacy but marred by lesser reasoning capacity] so important through life and literature during the [eighteenth] century" (xix)." " With it went the question of female sexuality and passion and the struggle to express it. For, however inadequately, the idea of a greater female sensibility...allowed women a hint of woman's right to sexual feelings—certainly the opponents of the cult of sensibility thought so when they imagined sentimental ladies falling prey to seducers and their own fantasies" (xix).

Many Wollstonecraft critics note the absence of sexual desire within her revolutionary agenda as formulated in her polemics, and conclude that she rejects female desire and sexual pleasure wholesale. If women are to reason, they must abandon passion. Janet Todd comments on Wollstonecraft's ethos in her second *Vindication*: A "brisk sense of self is preferred to seductiveness"; there is "little room for sexual activity in the energetic life" (xx). Mary Poovey charges: Wollstonecraft "distrusts her own sexuality," and deliberately "turns her argument away from every potentially dangerous acknowledgment that women have sexual or physical needs" (78). The good woman and the good rhetor do not have sexual needs.

The absence of female desire and sexual activity might be defended if we understand her agenda as the conceptualization of an alternative theory of women's

rhetorical discourse. In this context, Wollstonecraft removes sexual desire as unsuited to a good rhetorical practice. The absence of female desire does not constitute the erasure of women's sexuality, but rather, the rejection of sexual appetite as a component of rhetorical discourse. Wollstonecraft critiques sexual desire in her analysis of a rhetoric of sensibility because women's use of their sexed bodies as an appeal to masculine desire pretty much constitutes women's rhetorical practice during this era. The absence of commentary on the need for and merits of sexual pleasure is rhetorically purposeful within the context of her argument, specifically as she seeks to expand women's rhetorical practice beyond pathetic appeals that rest upon sexual desire.

Wollstonecraft is taken to task for encouraging women to value friendship over passion in marriage. She says it is good for men and women to convert sexual passion into a more mature bond based upon respect and companionship. Her critics often cite the following passage: "[W]hen two virtuous young people marry, it would perhaps be happy if some circumstances checked their passion;...and made it...rather a match founded on esteem" (*VRW* 170). She continues:

> Friendship is a serious affection; the most sublime of all affections, because it is founded on principle and cemented by time. The reverse may be said of love. In a great degree, love and friendship cannot subsist in the same bosom; even when inspired by different objects they weaken or destroy each other, and for the same object can only be felt in succession. The vain fears and fond jealousies, the winds which fan the flame of love, when judiciously and artfully tempered are both incompatible with the tender confidence and sincere respect of friendship. (170)

Her critics see her devaluing passion and fearing her own sexuality, yet the strength of her polemic rests upon her skill at pointing out the limits of all-body rhetorics and sexual politicking. To persuade women not to rely upon sexual appeals, she illustrates again and again the instability of relationships that depend upon sexual desire alone and the ineffectiveness of communication that is essentially body-centered. In her discussion of marriage, her goal is to enhance communication and to refigure relations between husbands and wives, so men and women talk to each other, and their marriages better withstand the test of time. Her critique of those marriages built solely upon physical desire comes out of her real-world observations of weak marriages where desire fades and infidelity follows. If all that binds husbands to their wives is their sexual appetite, how is a relationship to last across time? She thinks friendship lasts longer than relations that are limited to sexual desire.

There are a number of key passages within her second *Vindication*, however, wherein she does grant women sexual desire and even though these comments are relatively scarce, they do answer the charge that she denies women their bodies and forces them to choose between reason and passion. For example, Wollstonecraft makes a distinction between desires that are fickle and those that persevere: "[I]t is not against strong, persevering passions, but romantic wavering feelings, that I wish to guard the female heart by exercising the understanding: for these paradisical reveries are oftener the effects of idleness than of a lively fancy" (*VRW* 171). One way to read her distinction here is to claim that Wollstonecraft prefers authentic passion over infatuation and long-lasting mature relationships built upon respect and conversation over short-lived affairs of the body. Her critics must prefer relationships that are short-lived and passionate, over more

sober marital connections designed for long-term satisfaction, and understand romantic infatuation as the only site for the vital expression of female desire if they are to claim that she fears "her own sexuality." She does fear relationships that are essentially sexual, affairs that exclude other modes of connection, especially where conquest is the sole aim or where young people marry for sexual needs alone.

Wollstonecraft does grant women and men legitimate sexual passion. Her commentary is brief and suggestive rather than exhaustive: "With a lover, I grant, she should be so [be a woman], and her sensibility will naturally lead her to endeavor to excite emotion, not to gratify her vanity [artificial emotion], but her heart. This I do not allow to be coquetry; it is the *artless impulse of nature*. I only exclaim against the sexual desire of conquest when the heart is out of the question" (emphasis added *VRW* 148). In this passage, sexual desire is legitimate when it arises naturally between a woman and her lover and when "conquest" alone is not the aim. In another passage, she distinguishes between legitimate exchanges of sexual desire and other forms of flattery. She says:

> The lover, it is true, has poetical license to exalt his mistress; his reason is the bubble of his passion, and he does not utter a falsehood when he borrows the language of adoration. His imagination may raise the idol of his heart, unblamed, above humanity; and happy would it be for women, if they were only flattered by the men who loved them; I mean, who love the individual, not the sex. (*VRW* 197)

Her qualifications are similar to those she utilizes throughout her treatment of pathetic appeals. She values sentiments and vital discursive heat when both are natural, authentic and heart-felt. She admonishes women and men not to rely on false sentiments artfully constructed for rhetorical effect. She also opposes feverish excesses of passion, discursive

appeals unchecked or tempered by reason. Finally, she rejects the use of sexual desire as either the motive for or ends of a rhetorical exchange; in particular, as a substitute for a fuller system of appeals that includes a refigured ethos and logos, as well. Wollstonecraft does not abandon emotions, sentiment nor passion even though she rigorously rejects a rhetoric of sensibility. She does not force women to choose between sexual desire and virtuous living; instead, she carefully distinguishes between the legitimate modes of passion and desire and the more artificial appeals that are appetite-driven, specifically, the strategic use of those "love-like phrases of pumped up passion" (*VRW* 176). Wollstonecraft does sanction sexual desire as the artless impulse of nature. It serves no legitimate purpose, however, as a rhetorical appeal.

Given the aim of her polemic, and the theoretical tools available to an eighteenth-century rhetorical theorist, her inattention to the merits of female desire is both warranted and excusable. Why should she promote female desire within an argument whose primary claim is that the objectification of women as objects of masculine sexual desire has debilitating effects upon women's psychological, emotional and physical well-being? Why would she reinscribe the very claims she seeks to refute? As Todd reminds us, Wollstonecraft opposes claims of sex as the grand mover of human action because of "the social and psychological harm caused by an emphasis upon sexuality" (xix). At this point in time, women's discursive practice centers almost totally on desire and in trying to refigure the discourse, it is not surprising that she gives little theoretical attention to sexual desire. Given that her project attempts to write women into the rhetorical scene, she believes her choice not to incorporate principles that advise the rhetor to elicit sexual desire marks her theory as both serious and respectable. An appropriate summary of her

theoretical understanding of the relationship between sexual desire and rhetorical practice may be simply interpreted as—rhetoric is not the ability to see the available means of seduction in each and every case. In this regard, she differs decidedly from Rousseau and other proponents of a rhetoric of sensibility.

Part Three

Logos: Semantic and Syntactic Consistency, and Reason as Evidentiary Matter

The fundamental sense of the Greek term, logos, is *word*. A logical appeal might first be understood as "an appeal to the consistency in our use and meaning of words" (Yoos 410). Second, we might appeal to logos, not as *word*, but as logic—that is "the logical relations that exist between terms—we appeal not to the meaning of sentences and their terms but to the logical form that binds and relates them" (410). They often consider the logical relations exist between terms within sentences and between sentences within progressions. Logical relations are rhetorical when and where the validity of logical operations is at issue.

Eighteenth-century theorists are very much concerned with consistency in the speaker's use and meaning of words; their concerns are addressed most often in their theoretical treatment of the canon of style and may be noted in their preference for clear and distinct ideas, and a plain and natural style. They often consider the logical relations between terms and sentences within their discussions of the mental faculties as constitutive of the human mind and the associative nature of human cognition. Specifically, logical thought follows the laws, the logic, of nature. Sound reasoning moves through the formation of ideas; the comparison of ideas through associative links, relational

operations; and the judging of the relations between those ideas. Right reasoning follows a Baconian-Lockean empirical progression, moving from observation and experience to reflection and judgment.

Logical appeals within the context of the New Rhetoric are often understood as appeals to reason presented as premises, to logos as reason. In this sense, "the appeal is to premises, warrants, evidence, facts, data, observations, backing, support, explanations, causes, signs, commonplaces, principles and maxims" (Yoos 411). During the eighteenth-century, the epistemological sense of logos is "reason as fact or data, reason as inductive argument, that is evidentiary support for the probability of a hypothesis" (412).

The Eighteenth-Century Turn Toward Empirical Reasoning

As eighteenth-century theorists, George Campbell and Hugh Blair incorporate the epistemological tenets derived from the New Science as formulated within the philosophical works of Bacon and Locke. Nan Johnson explains that underlying Campbell's method is the "notion that the principles of rhetoric are a consequence of the nature of mental activities and that to study one is to come to know the other" (21). When Campbell discloses the "secret movements" of the human mind and traces "its principle channels," (*Philosophy* lxvii) he does so as a "means of coming to a more scientific and critical understanding" of the principles of eloquence (Johnson 21). Faculty psychology is the source of Campbell's notion that minds are divided into compartments. The rhetorician needs to understand the nature of the individual faculties—the understanding, the imagination, the will and the passions—and how the mental processes are linked together in an intimate, dynamic chain. Campbell's philosophy of rhetoric

holds that "the aims of enlightening the understanding, pleasing the imagination, moving the passions and influencing the will constrain the nature of rhetorical proof, shape the substances of types of discourse, and constrain the stylistic processes of rhetoric" (Johnson 22). Campbell links the mental faculties with the rhetorical process in this manner: "particular faculties activate discrete intellectual and emotional responses; particular rhetorical forms and techniques facilitate these functions" (21). Rhetorical materials are adapted as to engage the faculties within a proper sequence with the desired result in mind.

Campbell's theory is based upon faculty psychology that assumes that ideas develop as a consequence of the associative nature of the mind's activities (resemblance, contiguity and causality). Campbell's model of the mind is Lockean. According to Lockean associationism, persons receive data about the world via their senses. The data is stored as ideas in one's mind. The mind attends to its ideas and through relational thought processes, knowledge is generated. Locke explains: Knowledge is "*the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas*" (IV.i.2, 525). Complex ideas result from relational thinking—the comparing and judging of one's ideas. The mind draws inferences and deductions through the logical dynamics of associative links. The mind relies upon empirical experience as the source of its ideas and reason to guide associative relations. Locke explains: "Some of our *Ideas* have a natural Correspondence and Connexion one with another; It is the Office and Excellency of our Reason to trace these, and hold them together in that Union and Correspondence which is founded in their peculiar Beings" (II.xxxiii.5, 395). Significant moves in terms of logos include the rhetorician's obligation to the empirical veracity of experience and the

associative nature of our mental activities (Crowley 28). The rhetor's task is to maintain the associative links in the structure of discourse in an attempt to bring experiences before the hearer's mind, and to hold ideas in their natural relations one with another.

Campbell's idea of truth is synonymous with empirical credibility, that which is consistent with or can be inferred from observation and experience. He defines "logical truth" and discusses *logos* as "evidence" in Book I, Chapter V of his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Logical truth rests upon "the conformity of our conceptions to their archetypes in the nature of things," perceived "immediately" or "mediately" (*Philosophy*. 35).

Campbell maps his evidence categorically under the intuitive and the deductive. Intuitive evidence is apprehended and thus assented to most readily; it includes intellection, consciousness and common sense. Deductive evidence subdivides into demonstrative proofs and moral reasoning (the realm of rhetoric). Demonstrative proofs admit certainty; they are absolute and can be experimentally demonstrated through enactment. They admit no degree of uncertainty as they are the "necessary relations of our ideas (*Philosophy* 43). Only counter-demonstration can refute them.

Under moral reasoning, Campbell treats experience, analogy, testimony (oral and written) and calculated chances (probability). His sub-categories move along a continuum from more certain to the less certain. Certainty decreases with distance from experience. We know and accept as true that which we perceive most readily and most intensely because we have observed it, experienced it and reflected upon it. The more "work" involved in apprehending, the less reliable the evidence is. Campbell's progression parallels Locke's criteria for certainty that likewise moves along a continuum marked by

degrees of assent.[26] Campbell designates empirical evidence as "the kind of proof that [is] most appropriate to rhetoric: moral reasoning [is] based on information gathered by the sense as this was mediated by the associative powers of the mind" (Crowley 21). He embraces analytic methods of reasoning from experience, consciousness and common sense. He sanctions the use of evidence that appeal to natural intellection: evidence from direct experience; evidence from analogy; evidence from testimony, the presentation of individual observation and experience (*Philosophy.* 35-61).

In his appropriation of an empirical epistemology within his treatment of evidence, Campbell deems syllogistic or dialectical reasoning as contrary to natural inquiry, so he shifts away from syllogistic or enthymemic proofs recommended by classical theorists and designs "a new set of common topoi based upon categories of natural logic; experience, analogy and testimony" (Johnson 24-5). As Campbell explains the importance of logic to rhetoric: "The speaker must always assume the character of the close, candid reasoner: for though he may be an acute logician who is no orator, he will never be a consummate orator who is no logician" (*Philosophy* 61).

Wollstonecraft's treatment of logos includes the following theoretical moves: 1. A definition of the nature of reason: Reason is an innate faculty meant to be exercised. The capacity to reason links humans with God. Reason is gendered female throughout the expanse of her work—another radical move as reason is rendered "masculine" within the discourse of the New Science. 2. Lockean principles inform her theory of reasoning as a natural process. 3. Wollstonecraft distinguishes between true and faulty lines of

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[26] Locke discusses the Degrees of Assent in Book IV, Chapter XVI of his *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 1690. Specifically, in section 10, his principle is: "Traditional Testimonies, the farther removed, the less their Proof."

reasoning. She holds the following suspect: unexamined prejudices; received truths sanctioned by tradition and false ideas generated via the false association of ideas. All three are used interchangeably to represent evidence that is "suspect." 4. Refutation begins with responsible "inquiry," that is, the tracing of the opposition's claims to their source, the *rooting out* of false claims through the discovery of the prejudice, false idea, upon which they are founded. 5. The sources of evidence include: observation, experience, illustrative cases, historical and fictional; analogies; and citations, standard and radical.

Logos: On the Nature of Reason

Following the principles of faculty psychology widely adopted by eighteenth-century theorists, Wollstonecraft defines reason as an innate mental faculty. Crowley notes that reason as a faculty is privileged in modern epistemology, (157) and most definitely, Wollstonecraft joins her contemporaries in her commitment to logos as the dominant faculty within her theory. She claims that "reason is the simple power of improvement; or, more properly speaking, of discerning truth" (*VRW* 143). Reason is also an "emanation of divinity, the tie that connects the creature with the Creator" (143). Reason concerns the human aptitude for and the means of one's intellectual development. The capacity for rational thought is that which distinguishes humans from other life forms. Her reverence for reason is thus two-fold: it is both a divine aptitude and the venue for discovering "truth." Reason thus holds sway over the lesser faculties—the imagination, passion and the will.

Wollstonecraft departs from her male contemporaries as she addresses reason as *female* throughout her polemics. She states: "Reason tells me that [the many attributes of God of which we can form no conception] cannot clash with those I adore—and I am compelled to listen to her voice" (134). When she appeals directly to women in her *Rights of Woman*, she again marks reason as female: "Let us then if not bastardized by being the younger born, reason together and learn to submit to the authority of Reason—when her voice is distinctly heard" (*VRW* 204). When women hear the voice of reason, it is a woman's voice. This disruption is particularly bold. Her motives may be variously interpreted. First, this could be yet another attempt to disrupt men's stranglehold on reason and rational discourse as "masculine," therefore theirs. Renaming reason as female must shock her readers, male and female. Or, she may be reversing power along gendered lines; that is, seizing absolute control of reason as women's aptitude, rational discourse as their discourse. Finally, she could be strategically inviting women to imagine that the voice of reason is theirs—a woman's voice, and it may be audible if they simply listen. The final analysis complements her ethos elsewhere, specifically, where she addresses her female "hearers" and calls them "rational creatures." There also, she invites them to imagine themselves as rational beings.

Reason as a Natural Process that Leads to the Accumulation of Knowledge

Wollstonecraft explains how knowledge is rightly and naturally accumulated in order to mark the differences between the limited knowledge permitted to women and that permitted to men. She explains: "The power of generalizing ideas, of drawing comprehensive conclusions from individual observations, is the only acquirement, for an

immortal being, that really deserves the name of knowledge" (145). The process demands that the head be "furnished with ideas, and set to work to compare them, in order to acquire judgement, and by generalizing simple ones; and modesty, by making the understanding damp the sensibility" (*VRW* 240-1). She appropriates Locke's progression for the accumulation of knowledge. She recommends that young women have ample opportunities for developing their intellects. In her educational treatise for educating daughters, she advises parents:

> Above all, try to teach them to combine their ideas. It is of more use than can be conceived, for a child to learn to compare things that are similar in some respects, and different in others. I wish them to be taught to think—thinking, indeed is a severe exercise, and exercise of either mind or body will not be first entered on, but with a view to pleasure. (*TED* 22-3)

Children develop into capable thinkers/reasoners gradually. The knowledge they accumulate must be the result of their own reasoning process; otherwise, the ideas they have are mere prejudices. Young people acquire wisdom and virtue "by the exercise of their own faculties" (*VRW* 213); "the honey must be the reward of the individual's own industry" (221). Parents should not simply "lay precept upon precept" and expect to make a youth wise by a transfer of parental experience. Such knowledge is only a "borrowed fallacious light," incapable of guiding the youth because it is not the result of the youth's own experience and reflection. The reasoning process includes reflection. She claims: "It is reflection that forms habits and fixes principles indelibly on the heart; without it, the mind is like a wreck drifted about by every squall" (*TED* 111). Wollstonecraft's theory of human understanding with its emphasis upon empirical inquiry and the faculty of

reason situates her squarely within the theoretical strand of Enlightenment theorists known as the New or Modern Rhetoricians.

She defines true knowledge against the more specious varieties. Prejudices are ideas and beliefs appropriated blindly by the individual; these "beliefs" are taken up without being examined. A "prejudice is a fond obstinate persuasion for which we can give no reason; for the moment a reason can be given for an opinion, it ceases to be a prejudice, though it may be an error in judgement" (*VRW* 220).

Another form of prejudice is knowledge handed down through the ages. The questioning of ancient truths, in this context, many of the principles and strategies promoted by classical theorists, is another epistemological move shared by the New Rhetoricians who embrace empirical inquiry as the way to "truth." [27] Wollstonecraft describes ancient knowledge: "Moss-covered opinions assume the disproportioned form of prejudices when they are indolently adopted only because age has given them a venerable aspect, though the reason on which they were built ceases to be a reason, or cannot be traced. Why are we to love prejudices merely because they are prejudices?" (220). "I declare against all power built on prejudices, however hoary" (*VRW* 104). Wollstonecraft joins her male peers in her distrust of knowledge as a body of ancient beliefs transmitted across time and revered for their "hoary" nature. Old knowledge passed on is called into question and subjected to scientific inquiry.

It is the individual's right and responsibility to inquire into the origins of their beliefs, to test them against observation and experience and to determine their validity through reflection. She explains: "It is the duty of a parent to preserve a child from

receiving wrong impressions. As to prejudices, the first notions we have deserve that name; for it is not till we begin to waver in our opinions, that we exert our reason to examine them—and then, if they are received, they may be called our own (*TED* 20-2). Heaping precepts upon precepts (syllogistic reasoning) leads to blind obedience, not knowledge (*VRW* 213). She rejects the use of topics for investigating problems or discovering arguments for her discourse. As Howell describes this earlier method—you sit in "your armchair and [think] up proofs drawn from such topics as adjuncts, contraries, or similitudes" (262). Wollstonecraft recommends, instead, the empirical examination of the realities of nature.

Wollstonecraft's textual strategies are offered as models of right inquiry and right reasoning. She often traces her inquiry in order to authorize her claims or to refute conclusions drawn by her opposition. Rousseau, for example, claims that young girls are naturally sedentary; they prefer dolls and domestic activities. Wollstonecraft's traces her inquiry into Rousseau's claim:

> I have, probably, had an opportunity of observing more girls in their infancy than J. J. Rousseau. I can recollect my own feelings, and I have looked steadily around me; yet, so far from coinciding with him in opinion respecting the first dawn of female character, I will venture to affirm, that a girl, whose spirits have not been dampened by inactivity, or innocence tainted by false shame, will always be a romp, and the doll will never excite attention unless confinement allows her no alternative. (*VRW* 130)

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[27] W. S. Howell makes this claim in his *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (262).

In this passage, Wollstonecraft uses her own observation of young girls at play, her own feelings as a young girl that afford her insight into how girls think and feel about dolls, and her "steady" contemplation of empirical data around her to authorize her knowledge of women's development. Her criteria—observation, inquiry, reflection and judgment— are the standard steps for empirical inquiry.

Wollstonecraft's project broadly understood as the conceptualization of a theory of rhetorical production is presented as the result of her own inquiry, an inquiry into the deplorable state of women's lives, into their nature and into the type of rhetorical practice that they are subsequently "suited for." Both George Campbell and Hugh Blair open their theoretical treatises with a testimonial as to the source of their theoretical knowledge; both claim that individual inquiry including observation, experience and reflection led them to their principles. Any principles they choose to appropriate from their theoretical forbears are subjected to empirical standards. Blair and Campbell do not simply reiterate the principles formulated by the ancients; they must trace the origins of ancient principles in order to root out error and to discover new knowledge.

Wollstonecraft, likewise, authorizes her theoretical principles through an early testimonial to their origins. The evidence that she brings before her listeners in her second *Vindication* is the "faithful expression of [her]feelings, of the clear result which experience and reflection have led [her] to draw" (*VRW* 103). Her method, like those of her peers, meets the criteria for sound theoretical reasoning: "The mind must be strong that resolutely forms its own principles" (*VRW* 92). Enlightenment theorists take their inquiry quite seriously. Logos, as the path to knowledge and truth is a key player in their mode of inquiry.

Refutation and the Logical Dismantling of One's Opposition

Wollstonecraft uses empirical reasoning to formulate her ideas, to support her claims and also to dismantle claims made by her opposition. Wollstonecraft strategically refutes claims made by Edmund Burke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Dr. John Gregory and Dr. James Fordyce. Her use of logos in these instances illustrates her sense of theoretically appropriate strategies for rebuttal. She both articulates criteria for effective refutation and demonstrates the process herself. Miriam Brody finds Wollstonecraft's reasoning within her refutation "pragmatic and seldom unconvincing" ("Introduction." *VRW* 49).

Wollstonecraft discusses refutation in the opening pages of her *Rights of Woman*. She announces her intent and delineates her approach. To "clear[her]way" she will ask "some plain questions"(91). First, it is "necessary to go back to first principles in search of the most simple truths, and to dispute with some prevailing prejudice every inch of ground" (86). Claims made about women's nature and their destiny within the mortal realm of being are "prevailing prejudices" that may be dismantled if she goes back to their origins, the simple ideas upon which men built these arguments. She means to contest the premises upon which such prejudices rest by pointing out the false ideas at their source.

As an eighteenth-century empiricist, she finds truth readily discernible. She explains her method: "I have always been fond of tracing to its source in nature any prevailing custom" (*VRW* 235). Following principles of empirical inquiry as formulated by Bacon and Locke and embraced by her contemporaries, Wollstonecraft searches for truth by examining the particular ideas that constitute the rhetorical premises upon which her opponents build their arguments. She must go back to the early formulation of those ideas that constitute the claims that Rousseau, Burke and her other opponents deploy.

She is confident that she can illustrate errors in their reasoning and thus the false nature of their conclusions if she retraces their line of reasoning.

She claims that reasoning runs into error when it is "entangled with various motives of action" (*VRW* 91). Deeply rooted prejudices cloud reason and "spurious qualities[assume]the name of virtues" (*VRW* 191). "Men, in general, seem to employ their reason to justify their prejudices, which they have imbibed, they scarcely trace how, rather than root them out" (*VRW* 92). She critiques her opponents and their claims by questioning their willingness to formulate their own ideas, to take moral responsibility for those claims they all too often appropriate without examining. Many of their claims are "imbibed" as ancient truths without testing their validity in the nature of things. Such intellectual laziness leads to erroneous, "clouded" reasoning. The conclusions drawn from these progressions are frequently received as plausible because "they are built on partial experience, on just, though narrow views" (92).

In particular, opinions on female character and education are often "speciously supported" (175). "Numerous are the arguments, brought forward with a show of reason, because supposed to be deduced from nature, that men have used morally and physically to degrade the sex" (164). Thus, to effectively refute one's opponent, the rhetor must return to the point of origin, to the very ideas that constitute the premises upon which arguments are made. A dismantling of the argumentative structure and a thorough critique of the thought process that leads to its development is recommended.

Wollstonecraft defines faulty reasoning as she analyzes arguments posed by Edmund Burke in her first *Vindication*, and by Rousseau, Dr. Gregory, Dr. Fordyce and

others in her second *Vindication*. Burke's reasoning is difficult to unravel due to the entangled nature of his logic. She says,

> I glow with indignation when I attempt, methodically, to unravel your slavish paradoxes, in which I can find no first principle to refute; I shall not, therefore, condescend to show you where you affirm in one page what you deny in another and how frequently you draw conclusions without any previous premises:—it would be something like cowardice to fight with a man who had never exercised the weapons with which his opponent chose to combat, and irksome to refute sentence after sentence in which the latent spirit of tyranny appeared. (*VRM* 8)

Rather than a progression founded upon first principles that she may retrace critically, she finds contradictions, and tyrannous affirmations that he does not support. In her frustration, she charges: "I perceive that from the tenor of your reflections, that you have a mortal antipathy to reason; but, if there is anything like argument, or first principles, in your wild declamation, behold the result—that we are to reverence the rust of antiquity, and term the unnatural customs, the sage fruit of experience: nay, that if we do discover some errors, our feelings should lead us to excuse [them] (*VRM* 8). Burke pronounces or declaims rather than reasons; he asks his hearers to simply accept his claims because of their ancient origins. He relies upon sentimental appeals rather than sound reasoning to bring his hearers to conviction.

In a *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft brings Burke's polemic into critical view once again. She explains: "It is impossible to converse with people to any purpose who only use affirmatives and negatives. Before you can bring them to a point to start firmly from, you must go back to the simple principles that were antecedent

to the prejudices broached by power; and it is ten to one but you are stopped by the philosophical assertion that certain principles are as practically false as they are abstractly true" (220). Here she speaks of the difficulty she has finding common grounds upon which to work with her opposition. To find such grounds, one must be willing to examine whether one's premises or prejudices are in effect "true" or "false," rather than stubbornly insisting upon their verity without examining them. In her view, "the man who cannot modify general assertions, has scarcely learned the first rudiments of reasoning" (*VRM* 35).

In a summative assessment of her criteria for sound reasoning, she ruminates on Burke's deficiencies:

> What is truth? A few fundamental truths meet the first enquiry of reason, and appear as clear to an unwarped mind, as that air and bread are necessary to enable the body to fulfill its vital functions; but the opinions which men discuss with so much heat must be simplified and brought back to first principles; or who can discriminate the vagaries of imagination, or scrupulosity of weakness from the verdict of reason? Let all these points be demonstrated and not determined by arbitrary authority and dark traditions, lest a dangerous supineness should take place; for probably, in ceasing to enquire, our reason would remain dormant and delivered up, without a curb, to every impulse of passion, we might soon lose sight of the clear light that the exercise of our understanding no longer kept alive. (*VRM* 19)

Obstacles to right reasoning include "arbitrary authority," "dark traditions" and passion as a faculty, obstacles typically cited within Enlightenment critiques of aristocratic privilege

and ancient modes of logical inquiry as advocated by her classical forbears. The faculty of reason is sanctioned as legitimate, whereas both the imagination and the passions become suspect faculties, suspect if indeed the rhetor permits either faculty to wrongly influence or supersede reason. Wollstonecraft faults Burke for becoming too impassioned, for perpetuating ancient models of governance founded upon notions of chivalric ideals. Rather than assess the merits of "dark traditions" through inquiry into the nature of things—the natural rights of man, the nature of woman—Burke simply repeats customary thoughts on his subject. His motives are thus ideologically suspect. Burke makes "sentiments and opinions current in conversation that have no root in the heart, or weight in the cooler resolves of the mind" (*VRM* 9). Burke's discourse is often characterized as "wild declamation," wherein he pronounces rather than reasons his way through his argument.

In a *Vindication of the Rights of Man*, Wollstonecraft discusses her method for dismantling Burke's text. She explains: "I find it almost impossible candidly to refute your sophisms, without quoting your own words, and putting the numerous contradictions I observed in opposition to each other. This would be an effectual refutation" (*VRM* 63). She intends to "show [Burke] to [himself] stripped of the gorgeous drapery in which [he has] enwrapped [his] tyrannic principles" (38). She asks him to reflect upon his thinking process that she defines as sophistic since he often relies upon stylistic flourishes and sentiment rather than sound reasoning. She speaks to Burke:

> Did [reason] not sometimes wave her hand, when you poured forth a torrent of shining sentences, and beseech you to concatenate them—plainly telling you that the impassioned eloquence of the heart was calculated to affect than to dazzle the

> reader, whom it hurried along to conviction? Did [reason] not anticipate the remark of the wise, who drink not at the shallow sparkling stream, and tell you that they would discover when, with the dignity of sincerity, you supported an opinion that only appeared to you with one face; or, when superannuated vanity made you torture your invention? (63)

Her aim is to slight Burke's text for its "sophistic" features, so she uses "dazzle"; a "torrent of shining sentences" and the "shallow sparkling stream" to highlight his faulty reasoning. Burke depends upon glitz; his argument lacks the depth that sound reasoning might afford it. Finally, she tells him that she can quite capably discern the errors in his reasoning and the flaws in his text. She reprimands him for his vanity and asks him what happened to his reasoning faculty during the production of his argument as he seldom exercises it properly.

Wollstonecraft finds Rousseau's discourse deficient in a number of ways. Although she "warmly admires" his genius, she "mean[s] to attack" the "principles upon which [Sophia's] education [is] built" (*VRW* 107). Rousseau, like Burke, often "depends upon the deluding charms of eloquence and philosophic sophistry." His "eloquence renders absurdities plausible, and his dogmatic conclusions puzzle, without convincing, those who have the ability to refute them" (*VRW* 128). Rousseau's mighty sentiments are "lowered when he describes the pretty foot and enticing airs of his favorite (Sophia)" (107). He is "prone to eloquent periods" and "voluptuous reveries" (107). His discourse unfortunately consists of the "transient effusions of an overweening sensibility" (107).

In order to illustrate Rousseau's sophistry, she cites passages from his *Emile*, and then explains her approach: "I have quoted this passage lest my readers should suspect I

warped the author's reasoning to support my own arguments" (*VRW* 176). She emphasizes the importance of using her opposition's text, "his own words" to illustrate the nature of his discourse (175). Direct quotations strengthen her claims regarding Rousseau's discourse.

She then defines her own method against his. Her argument "flows naturally" from "simple principles"; she "speak[s] the simple language of truth, and rather ...address[es] the head than the heart" (*VRW* 85, 110). In contrast, Rousseau does "not go back to nature, or his ruling appetite disturbs the operations of reason, else he would not [draw] these crude inferences" (180). If Rousseau had reasoned properly and not let his emotions drive his thoughts, he surely would have discovered the "truth" about women's nature. His relationship to his subject is troubled because he cannot step outside his masculine desire and speak impartially about Sophia. As a result, he speaks "nonsense," rather than the truth (*VRW* 108). If she is to accept Rousseau's notion that women are to be prescriptively subjugated, his "arguments must be drawn from reason; and thus augustly supported"; he must prove that women "want reason" if he is to refute her argument (*VRW* 88). Wollstonecraft's refutation is typically robust, often self-righteously shameless, but, as Brody reminds us, seldom unconvincing.

Wollstonecraft On the Different Sources of Evidence

As she begins her campaign for the reform of female manners in her second *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft openly proclaims that proof must be brought forth, or "the stronghold of prescription will never be forced by reason." She intends to produce "irrefragable arguments drawn from matters of fact to prove [her] assertion" (*VRW* 88).

Wollstonecraft presents as "knowledge" those facts that are the result of her own experience and observation. As evidence to refute Rousseau's claim that young girls naturally prefer sedentary activities, dolls, specifically, she argues: "I have, probably, had an opportunity of observing more girls in their infancy than J. J. Rousseau. I can recollect my own feelings, and I have looked steadily around me" (*VRW* 130). As a woman, who was once a young girl, and who has been around young girls more than Rousseau, her observations and experience authorize her counter claim that women are not naturally sedentary. Rather, prescribed inactivity dampens their spirits, and confinement allows them no alternative (130).

She also refutes Rousseau by offering a variety of illustrative counterexamples of women's aptitude for intellectual development. She presents the following list of accomplished women as proof that women can become rational beings if they are educated accordingly: Sappho, Catherine Macaulay, the Empress of Russia and Madame d'Eon (*VRW* 175). These women have acquired resolution and courage from having received a nontraditional education. Men who have been placed in a similar situation, a similar class, have likewise acquired a similar character (175). As historical examples, these women illustrate the effects of a "masculine education" upon women's intellectual development. Intellectual development is thus linked with education and disconnected from women's nature.

Illustrative Cases, Real and Imaginary

Wollstonecraft draws illustrative cases that demonstrate the consequences of a misguided philosophy of women's education. After she thoroughly delineates the

principles of educational programs prescribed by Rousseau, Fordyce, and Gregory, she offers a case example of the ideal that their programs promote. Most effectively, she draws her women according to real-world dimensions based again upon her own experience and observation. Her reasoning is: If we follow their educational programs, this is the sort of woman we produce:

> I once knew a weak woman of fashion, who was more than commonly proud of her delicacy and sensibility. She thought a distinguishing taste and a puny appetite the height of human perfection, and acted accordingly. I have seen this weak sophisticated being neglect all the duties of life, yet recline with self-complacency on a sofa, and boast of her want of appetite as a proof of delicacy that extended to, or, perhaps, arose from, her exquisite sensibility; for it is difficult to render intelligible such ridiculous jargon. Yet, at the moment, I have seen her insult a worthy old gentlewoman, whom unexpected misfortunes had made dependent on her ostentatious bounty, and who, in better days, had a claim on her gratitude. Is it possible that a human creature could have become such a weak and depraved being? (VRW 132)

The weak, depraved and cruel woman is reportedly drawn in likeness to one of her employers. She is drawn as the typical case. Wollstonecraft extends her case and claims: "Women are everywhere, in this deplorable state" as a result of their insufficient education (*VRW* 132). Wollstonecraft sets vivid images of women's deplorable state before her "hearers" as to arouse their indignation and disgust. She wants them to see the cruel "effects" of women's reliance upon their sensibilities.

She also constructs cases that illustrate how women's intellectual development impacts their ability to be good mothers. First, she offers a case wherein the woman's education is neglected, drawn again, according to her opponents' ideal. In this scenario, a woman who is trained to be obedient marries a sensible man. He dies and leaves her with a large family. She must then educate her children, form their principles, secure their property, yet she has never thought or acted for herself. She has only learned to please and to depend upon her husband (Rousseau's ideal). With a large family, other men do not find her so attractive. She falls prey to fortune hunters; she is unable to educate her sons and to impress them with respect. Sorrow and poverty accompany her to the grave (*VRW* 137-8). Her pitiful scenario is built upon the principles espoused by her opposition. Her case actively illustrates the dark consequences of their program: If you do not equip women to handle parenting responsibilities, they will fail when fate calls upon them to discharge their parental duties. Society will victimize these women and their children.

Immediately following her dark case, she constructs a positive example of a woman who has been adequately educated. She asks her readers to imagine a woman of "tolerable understanding," who has permitted her body to grow into "full vigour," and exercised her mind (140). Her husband respects her; he is virtuous; their marriage is based upon friendship. She is widowed, but bears the burden. She is a good mother, good teacher. "She lives to see the virtues that she endeavored to plant on principles, fixed into habits, to see her children attain a strength of character sufficient to enable them to endure adversity without forgetting their mother's example" (140). She may say as a consequence of her aptitude and accomplishments: "Thou gavest me a talent and here are five" (140). In this scenario, the woman develops a healthy body and mind and is thus

capable of rearing moral children who follow their mother's example. Her case delivers the good mother who is the fortunate recipient of a masculine education.

After she presents her contrastive cases, she argues for their acceptance. "Women, I allow, may have different duties to fulfill; but they are human duties, and the principles that should regulate the discharge of them, I sturdily maintain, must be the same" (141). Even though her cases are constructed for rhetorical effectiveness and require the hearers to imagine hypothetical cause and effect dynamics, she claims: "[These] are not overcharged [cases]"; they are "very possible." "Something similar must have fallen under every attentive eye" (*VRW* 138). While these cases are not narratives of a specific woman's demise, she draws a general portrait by combining elements from cases that "have fallen under [her]attentive eye."

Yet another general case is drawn to illustrate the effects of a poor education upon women who never marry. In this instance, the woman must depend upon familial charity for support. Once her father is gone, she lacks provisions for independence and must be a burden to her brother and his wife. She is often disliked and resented by her brother's wife because of her dependent state. After drawing this case, she claims: "These are matters of fact, which have come under my eye again and again" (*VRW* 159). Thus, Wollstonecraft draws cases, real and imaginary, to illustrate the consequences of alternative proposals for women's education. Her intent is to draw life portraits of the material consequences of neglecting women's education, to emphasize their validity through sensory detail and to urge her hearers to reject her opponents' views.

Not only does Wollstonecraft draw illustrative scenarios, she strategically stacks her empirical detail within parallel syntactical structures, so her evidence forcefully

challenges her opposition. An effective example is found in her first *Vindication* where she pummels Burke for his indifference to the plight of the masses, the poorer folks, who suffer under the British system of hereditary property laws. While Burke maintains that the British system is a virtuous one, she cites the "pernicious consequences," and the "unnatural crimes" that the system invites. She cannot imagine how Burke can call the system virtuous, so she gathers evidence to refute him. Speaking directly to Burke, she draws the "pernicious effects" that together constitute a corrupt dynamic. She charges:

> You must have seen the clogged wheel of corruption continually oiled by the sweat of the laborious poor.... You must have discovered that the majority in the House of Commons was often purchased by the crown.... You must have known that a man of merit cannot rise in the church, the army, or navy unless he has some interest in a borough.... All these circumstances you must have known, yet you talk of virtue and liberty. (*VRM* 21)

Her forceful sequence consists of events that Burke must know about, that he "must have seen"; events that together support her claim that the property system is not based upon "virtue" and "liberty," but rather upon unjust principles and practices. Her parallel sequence of corrupt practices builds to her primary claim that the system is unjust. She insists that Burke has witnessed such events; the evidence has passed before his eyes. She compels her hearers to follow her inductive progression from the particular(s) to the general. The parallel syntax also adds vital heat to her facts. This passage is a forceful example of an effective logical progression that combines vital heat and empirical evidence (pathos and logos).

Citations: Customary and Radical

Wollstonecraft also draws heavily upon works authored by reputable thinkers of the times, primarily male philosophers and intellectuals, including Thomas Day, Adam Smith, John Locke, Dr. David Hume and Dr. Samuel Johnson. She authorizes her claims by linking her thoughts to authorities on the subjects under consideration. As she introduces her citations, she maintains that they are appropriate for her discourse because they make her own reasoning less idiosyncratic. For example, she cites Thomas Day's *Sandford and Merton: History of Sandford and Merton* (1748), a children's book that is widely read and admired. Wollstonecraft and Day share the view that young women's minds and bodies should develop a "degree of vigour that is seldom found in the female sex" (*VRW* 127). She remarks on their common views: "I am happy to find that the author of one of the most instructive books that our country has produced for children, coincides with me in opinion. I shall quote his pertinent remarks to give the force of his respectable authority to [my]reason"(127). Here, she comments directly on the use of citational practices to lend authority to one's argument.

Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1723) is cited several times in her second *Vindication*. She utilizes Smith's colorful account of Louis XIV's claim to fame—his gracefulness, beauty and noble voice—as a pejorative model of aristocratic excellence. Louis XIV was not known for positive traits such as industry, valor or benevolence. His aristocratic accomplishments which Smith critiques are analogously linked to women's frivolous accomplishments in Wollstonecraft's own polemic. Just as Smith critiques Louis XIV's habits, she critiques the habits of women of leisure. When she brings Smith's thoughts on the general laws of morality into her argument, she

announces his ideas in this manner: "To support my opinion, I can produce very respectable authority; and the authority of a cool reasoner ought to have weight to enforce consideration, though not to establish a sentiment" (*VRW* 248). After the citation, she simply states: "I perfectly coincide with this writer" (248). She is often forthright in announcing what she is about to do, why she does it, and why it is sensible to do so.

While most of Wollstonecraft's citations are traditional and customary in that they are the reputable thoughts and ideas of *male* authorities, educational philosophers, moral theorists and social and political thinkers, she does cite and thus name a few women as authorities upon such subjects. Catherine Macaulay is her premiere example. While Macaulay "has been suffered to die without sufficient respect being paid to her memory," her work merits attention for her "profound thinking" (*VRW* 210). Rather than cite passages, she notes: "Coinciding in opinion with Mrs. Macaulay relative to many branches of education, I refer to her valuable work, instead of quoting her sentiments to support my own" (210). This intellectual move is significant in that she cites a woman writer as an authority on the subject of education, and authorizes her argument by linking her claims to those of another female philosopher. She recommends the entire text to her audience. Wollstonecraft writes Macaulay's thoughts into the intellectual company of Adam Smith, John Locke and Dr. Johnson.

Wollstonecraft's Strategic Use Of Analogies

Gary Kelly claims that Wollstonecraft utilizes a system of comparisons that might be described as a "sociological method of argument" ("Expressive." 1945). In this method, "social experience as well as comparison and reflection" work to give "moral

meaning to language" (1945). Wollstonecraft compares one social group with another, women to slaves, to the rich, the poor, and to soldiers in "order to bring out the universal origin of fashionable follies and vice in mistaken systems of education and social conditioning" (1945). She brings women and slaves analogously together in terms of their economic dependency and their inhumane and oppressed state within the social system. Soldiers and women both suffer under the system of gallantry that prizes appearances above moral substance, romantic fantasy above reality, manners above morals, and reputation above real virtue (Kelly 1946). Deluded by vain words and empty performances, women and soldiers neglect to exercise their reason and humane feeling to achieve moral autonomy and independence of mind (Kelly 1946). Particular groups of individuals are brought comparatively together in order to illustrate the effects of local habits, customs and beliefs upon their well being. By bringing these groups analogously together, she is able to move from particulars to claim a more general systemic error exists. She moves inductively from analogous particulars to a more pervasive, general critique of eighteenth-century British culture and society. Wollstonecraft utilizes a comparative and reflective criticism, a method that is the chief method recommended by empirical philosophers of her times. Kelly's commentary reveals yet another level at which Wollstonecraft conceptualizes logos as the use of inductive lines of reasoning.

Interestingly, Kelly notes that her method, this kind of thinking, is most appropriate for women because it allows them to use the knowledge that their "contracted education" makes available (1946). The materials of her thought arise from experience, and as Wollstonecraft herself notes, "the little knowledge which women of strong minds attain, is, from various circumstances, of a more desultory kind than the knowledge of

men, and it is acquired more by sheer observations on real life" (*VRW* 23; qtd. in Kelly 1946). Women's knowledge is culturally constructed as both personal and desultory, so the arguments Wollstonecraft shapes are accordingly personal and desultory. Women's limited experience is transformed into an advantage in this analysis (Kelly 1947).

An empirical epistemology formulated by the masculine minds of the New Science enables her to express her "female experience," her female mind. This is significant as feminist critiques of Enlightenment epistemology, and Wollstonecraft's appropriation of it, posit tensions between rational discourse (the objective) and female experience (the subjective). Instead, Kelly notes a complementary relationship between women's knowledge, their personal and desultory logic, and the empirical school of thought, specifically in that women's observation and experience are legitimate sources of knowledge. As Kelly contends, the *Vindication* is not an "impersonal logical argument"; rather, it is a "collection of familiar essays, enlivened personal recollections, observations, illustrations, quotations, and allusions—[Wollstonecraft's] own knowledge and experience" (Kelly 1947). As empirical philosophers admit examples, cases, testimony, analogy and inductive reasoning, women's knowledge seems suited for the discourse. Wollstonecraft's own knowledge, the evidence she offers, and her structural presentation of the evidence meet the criteria for *logos*, as logic in terms of syntactic consistency, an appeal to "the logical form that binds and relates terms" (Yoos 410) as theorized within eighteenth-century empirical modes of reasoning and sanctioned by her male contemporaries.

Conclusion

Wollstonecraft's treatment of the pisteis encompasses the following theoretical moves: In terms of ethos, appeals to character, the good rhetor, male or female is knowledgeable and virtuous. The rhetor's knowledge is the product of her own inquiry into the nature of things, a "mature wisdom" accumulated via observation, experience and reflection. The virtuous rhetor extends "fellow feeling," authentic sympathy; benevolence motivates her discourse. Pathetic appeals are linked to passion as a mental faculty. Passion, the "winds of life," is always tempered by reason. Pathos is the "vital heat" of one's discourse; it enhances effect as it enables the "hearers" to forcefully feel the rhetor's own passionate conviction. Too much vital heat leads to a feverish excess, and ineffectual discourse. Pathos as authentic sentiment should not be confused with appeals motivated by sexual appetite. The rhetor's sexual appetite does not generate vital heat; rather, it generates "excess."

Logos in terms of semantic consistency, the regular use of *words*, is treated within her discussion of style. Logical relations between ideas and sentences are determined according the principles of faculty psychology and association psychology. Inductive progressions constitute the logical relations between ideas as facts, evidentiary materials, and the claims that they give rise to. Inductive inquiry is used to guide refutation and to present one's best case. Sound evidence is empirical—facts, experience, analogy, testimony. Nonevidence includes prejudices, false ideas, moss-covered opinions and any matter not subjected to the test of empirical reason.

Wollstonecraft's innovative moves include the following: Women may possess the knowledge and virtue, sympathy and benevolence required of the good rhetor.

Women are capable of utilizing pathetic appeals as "vital heat," authentic passion, thus refiguring the role that their bodies play in rhetorical production. Women's experience may be cited as reputable either as respectable testimony (published in books) or empirical evidence, truth based upon the rhetor's observation and experience. The turn toward an empirical epistemology, Wollstonecraft's appropriation of Lockean principles of scientific inquiry, opens up a discursive space for her theoretical moves. Specifically, the privileging of the faculty of reason enables her to become a rational subject; the refiguring of reason as inductive logic enables her to mark women's knowledge as legitimate, to insert women's experience into civic discourse and thus vitally refigure the rhetorical tradition.

Chapter Four

Wollstonecraft's Theory of Rhetorical Production: The Canons

—for I like to use significant words. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Chapter four continues the conceptualization of Wollstonecraft's rhetorical theory with an analysis of her principles for the five canons of rhetoric. The five canons or arts of rhetoric are first treated within the *Rhetorica ad Herenium*, the earliest and most complete manual of Roman rhetoric, probably written between 86 and 82 BCE. The manual explicitly discusses the canons—invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery—otherwise known as the lesser arts of the greater art of rhetoric (Enos 603). The five canons represent phases in the orator's development of her text. Over time, each of the five canons is variously elaborated in the treatises that constitute the Western tradition of rhetorical theory. The western history of rhetoric is often characterized by shifts in the relative importance of the canons and by the changing relationships and interrelationships among the five sub-disciplines of the full discursive art.

Howell identifies three theoretical strands that constitute the rhetorical scene during the Enlightenment. He posits that rhetoric during the seventeenth and eighteenth century lends its name to three distinct enterprises, and thus acquires an ambiguity that afflicts it throughout modern criticism. The three strands may be distinguished from one another by their specific treatment of the canons. One of these theoretical groups seeks to "recover in the name of Cicero what Ramus had taken from it in the name of reform," invention, in particular (79). The English Ciceronians include John Ward, Thomas Farnaby, William Pemble and Thomas Vicors (Howell 80-1). Working against the

narrower Ramistic rhetoric of arrangement and style, these theorists restore canons and thus revive the fuller art according to Ciceronian criteria. Another group extends the Ramistic turn in its emphasis upon "the flowers of style and the graces of delivery" (79). In the eighteenth century, this strand reduces rhetoric such that gesture and voice (delivery, refigured as elocutio) are its proper and sole responsibility. Thomas Sheridan is a central figure within the British Elocutionary Movement.

In Howell's terms, the last of the three strands is the New Rhetoric, and it is within this cluster that we find George Campbell, Adam Smith and Hugh Blair. These theorists seek to create a New Rhetoric that is to be as comprehensive as the Ciceronian. However, the New Rhetoric understands that the Ciceronian principles for the invention of subject matter, for the organization of ideas (arrangement), and for the development of style are unsuited to a democratic and scientific age. The New Rhetoric "corresponds in spirit to the new inductive logic of the era, and grows up as the theory of topics and common places for invention is challenged repeatedly between 1662 and 1750" (79). Although recent work suggests that stylistic change in the eighteenth century is a complex matter, Howell argues that the demand for simple rhetorical forms and a plain style in an era of popular government and tremendous scientific achievement becomes more and more urgent (Howell 79-80).

As Wollstonecraft's theory shares much in common with the New Rhetoricians, I classify her treatment of the rhetorical canons within the context of George Campbell, Hugh Blair's treatment of the same elements. As in chapter three, her theory is conceptualized through an analysis of her principles and her textual strategies. The discussion brings together principles directly articulated within her primary texts; it

extrapolates theory from her practice by analyzing her textual strategies; and it presents the theoretical advice she gives within her critique of historical models of rhetorical discourse. The chapter is divided according to the canons: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. Wollstonecraft's understanding of the canons is readily ascertained from her direct commentary. She speaks most directly on matters of style and arrangement in both of her polemics. Invention is seldom rarely labeled as such, but she often considers the discovery of own's ideas within her discussion of inquiry. She discusses memory as a faculty and the storehouse of one's ideas. Her treatment of memory aligns itself with the principles of faculty psychology and occurs most regularly in her discussion of style as she considers striking figures and strong sensory impressions as conducive to memory. Her comments on delivery are gleaned as she reflects upon her own voice and tone as deployed within her polemics.

Invention

In rhetorical studies, invention is usually understood as a process of creation, discovery or problem solving, an "explicit and organized way of discovering the content of [one's] discourse" and making judgments (Young 349-50). The formal art of invention consists of heuristic procedures, discovery strategies for producing one's discourse. The strategies' function is to "prompt memory, observation, and inference in the conduct of inquiry" (Young 351). The full art of invention offers a set of procedures and an explanation essential for their understanding and use. Invention offers procedures for making one's fundamental choices in composing an argument along with procedures for assessing the resulting composition (351). The art may also be understood as a "collection

of intellectual moves," available for use within a "dynamic, highly adaptive, by and large unpredictable process" (352). The invention phase guides the rhetor through the strategic generation of materials for one's argument.

Invention in classical rhetoric generally works from the assumption that knowledge is found in the collected wisdom of one's community. Teaching and learning begins with community wisdom and proceeds toward new discoveries by testing them against collective wisdom. Inventional devices in classical theories depend heavily upon readily acceptable statements. One classical inventional scheme involves topics or commonplaces to which rhetors resort as a means of asking a systematic set of questions. The topics are a set of argumentative strategies that are available to trained rhetoricians. Ancient inventional theory depends epistemologically upon the assumption that knowledge is possessed in common by all members of the community, and that rhetoric is the art that studies the generation and reception of effective public discourse (Crowley 4).

John Locke's assessment of topical invention as advanced by the ancients, the classical theorists, in his famous *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) has a significant impact upon the New Rhetorician's treatment of the canon of invention. The new logic questions the propriety of allowing topics to be considered as possible sources of scientific proofs for propositions under investigation (293). Instead, rhetoric "must argue from the facts of the case, not from suppositions that may represent mere popular misconceptions and prejudices" (Howell 443). Locke's "vision of a severely judicious, openly mathematical approach to the evaluation of probabilities, and his accompanying preference for factual as distinguished from topical materials in public addresses" sets a new standard for the reliability of content and sources of one's evidence in discourse

(Howell 501). Arguments from probability also must involve the examination of all alternatives and be disciplined by mathematics. Inquiry replaces invention in arguments from probability. Inductive evidence as proofs drawn from the experience of particulars usurps the place of topical invention in modern discourse theory (Crowley 29). Enlightenment rhetorical theorists either refigure or displace the canon of invention.

In an analysis of the philosophical origins of Campbell's rhetoric, Vincent Bevilacqua points to Campbell's distinction between investigation and the communication of subject matter and his attenuation of traditional invention in favor of a notion of rhetorical management. Campbell understands empirical analysis as a universal mode of investigation applicable to all subjects, so the topoi of the ancients and invention become inappropriate and generally superfluous (4-5). Campbell further stresses that rhetorical subject matter must come from intellection, consciousness, common sense, experience, analogy and testimony (*Philosophy*. 35-55). "The inventional obligation of rhetoric is to develop subject matter in conjunction with those types of evidence that appeal most directly to natural intellection," (Johnson. *Nineteenth*. 24). "Campbell does not contest the traditional notion of invention as discovery so much as he redefines what it is to discover" (24). He designs "a new set of common topoi consisting of the categories of natural logic: experience, analogy, and testimony" (25).

Bitzer contends that invention is not "ousted" from rhetorical production, but, rather, it is refigured. Campbell chooses to "regard empirical procedures as the inventional and investigative routes appropriate to all discourse treating matters of fact and human affairs. In this way he [brings] empirical procedures within his theory; that is

to say, he [includes] invention while assigning it the essentially empirical mission of accurately drawing knowledge from observation and experience" (xxix).

Crowley claims that Hugh Blair ousts invention from rhetoric on the grounds that appropriate arguments on any subject may be found by investigating that subject itself rather than by rhetorical means (11). He rejects classical topical invention and instead advises rhetors to "think closely of their subject (*Lectures* 402). Only a thorough knowledge of one's subject and one's "profound meditation upon it" can generate one's arguments (402). Rhetors should "lay aside their common places" because they can "never produce useful discourse on real business" (401). Crowley claims that Blair thus places "the entire process of invention beyond the province of rhetorical study, arguing that the art of rhetoric can only teach people how to manage the arguments they have discovered by other means" (11). Crowley does not believe that Campbell has retained a refigured invention that still remains inside rhetoric. Apparently, invention must be not just be about the generation of ideas as the materials of one's discourse, it must include the art of strategically selecting and arranging those ideas in view of audience, occasion and purpose.

Wollstonecraft on Invention

Wollstonecraft follows her contemporaries as she embraces the new empirical epistemological principles as guidelines for discursive inquiry. As discussed in her treatment of logos, she appropriates Locke's criteria for knowledge based upon observation and experience, sensation and reflection. The individual must conduct her own inquiry into the nature of things rather than accept ideas on trust from others or common beliefs. The New Rhetoricians discover truth via inquiry into the nature of things

in the world. They understand legitimate evidence (the stuff of discourse) as the end product of inductive analyses. Wollstonecraft faults rhetors who do not utilize the new scientific method in investigating their subjects. For example, she critiques Rousseau: "He then sought solitude, not to sleep with the man of nature, or calmly investigate the cause of things under the shade where Sir Isaac Newton indulged contemplation, but merely to indulge his feeling" (*VRW* 192). Rousseau needs to inquire into the causes of things in order to accumulate the materials of his discourse. He depends upon ancient principles about women's nature, unexamined beliefs that need to be tested according to empirical standards, and for this reason, his arguments fail.

Inquiry as Materially Motivated

Interestingly, Wollstonecraft understands invention as materially motivated; that is, inquiry is vitally driven by a human desire that is innate. Each human being is equipped with the faculties for inquiry—reason, passion, imagination and will—and they need to investigate the nature of things both in order to survive and to fulfill her responsibilities as social beings. She explains: "Self-preservation is, literally speaking, the first law of nature, and...the care necessary to support and guard the body is the first step to unfold the mind, and inspire a manly spirit of independence" (*VRM* 15). When the individual ignores this innate need to inquire into the nature of things, quality of life is diminished. The individual neglects her responsibility to self and to society. Inquiry is the individual's responsibility, not merely an intellectual privilege reserved for the social elite. She refigures invention as inquiry and universalizes the practice as suited for all human beings.

Wollstonecraft links invention and inquiry with material necessity throughout her works. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*, she explains: "The vulgar, and by this epithet I mean not only to describe a class of people, who, working to support the body, have not had time to cultivate their minds; but likewise those who, born in the lap of affluence, have never had their invention sharpened by necessity are, nine out of ten, creatures of habit and impulse" (15). To be a creature of habit and impulse is to live in a "vulgar state," to fall short of one's duties to self and society. Those who fail to develop their own belief depend parasitically upon local habits, customs and beliefs that are suspect. She continues:

> To argue from experience, it should seem as if the human mind, averse to thought, could only be opened by necessity; for, when it can take opinions on trust, it gladly lets the spirit lie quiet in its gross tenement. Perhaps the most improving exercise of the mind, confining the argument to the enlargement of the understanding, is the restless enquires that hover on the boundary, or stretch over the dark abyss of uncertainty. These lively conjectures are the breezes that preserve the lake from stagnating. (*VRM* 19)

In this passage, she joins the Enlightenment call for the discovery of new knowledge, to inquire into the very limits of human understanding, rather than to rest upon ancient habits of thought and beliefs as the foundation of knowledge. It is necessity that motivates human kind to discover new knowledge; without necessity, material or otherwise, the lake (the mind) and society, by extension, stagnate.

This belief informs her argument for women's intellectual and economic liberation. She comments: "Nothing, I am sure, calls forth the faculties so much as the being obliged

to struggle with the world; and this is not a woman's province in a married state" (*TED* 100). The institution of marriage supposedly safeguards women as it holds men liable for meeting women's material needs. This is not good, however, because it is unnatural. The material effects of not developing one's own "fund of ideas"—knowledge, including moral principles—include all the consequences Wollstonecraft attributes to a rhetoric of sensibility.

Inquiry is Not Enthusiasm

Wollstonecraft contrasts *enthusiasm* as another inventional process whereby the rhetor discovers ideas and beliefs as the matter for their discourse with right inquiry. She warns against the enthusiastic invention of ideas as discursive material:

> But, from experience, I am apt to believe...that quickness of comprehension, and facile association of ideas, naturally preclude fecundity of research. Wit is often a lucky hit; the result of a momentary inspiration. We know not whence it comes, and it blows where it lists. The operations of judgement, on the contrary, are cool and circumspect; and coolness and deliberation are great enemies to enthusiasm. (*VRM* 57)

Here, she echoes Locke in her distinction between rational inquiry and enthusiasm, an eighteenth-century term for the reckless appropriation of dubious opinions and beliefs. Locke warns against enthusiastic invention in Book IV of his *Essay*:

> Though the odd Opinions and extravagant Actions, Enthusiasm has run men into, were enough to warn them against this wrong principle so apt to misguide them both in their Belief and Conduct: yet the love of something extraordinary, the Ease

> and Glory it is to be inspired and be above the common and natural ways of Knowledge so flatters many Men's Laziness, Ignorance and Vanity, that when once they got into this way of immediate Revelation; of Illumination without search; and of certainty without proof, and without examination, 'tis hard to get them out of it. (IV.xix.8, 699-700)

Enthusiasm is suspect because there is neither "search," nor "proof," nor "examination." As a substitute for inquiry, enthusiasm "rises from the conceits of a warmed or over-weening Brain" (IV.xix.7, 699). It "takes away both reason and revelation, and substitutes in the room of it, the ungrounded Fancies, of a Man's own brain, and assumes them for a Foundation both of opinion and Conduct" (IV.xix.3, 698). Right inquiry is guided by reason; enthusiasm, however, generates "odd opinions," and leads to "extravagant actions." Like Locke then, Wollstonecraft understands inquiry as a serious enterprise. In her treatment of inquiry as invention, she sees inquiry stirred first by material desire, and desire checked by reason subsequently leads to the formulation of responsible ideas, the legitimate materials of one's discourse.

Invention in the Service of Critique

The New Rhetoricians' rejection of classical topics and common places uniquely enables Wollstonecraft, as a feminist theorist, to critique the community knowledge (inventional topoi) embraced within the culture of sensibility. Rather than beginning with existing beliefs about women's intellectual aptitude, she is able to call these beliefs into question, to dislodge prevailing prejudices, to uproot those local habits, customs, and beliefs that she holds liable for women's unfortunate demise. The new inquiry offers her

the means by which she may call ancient knowledge, community knowledge, into question.

Wollstonecraft describes inquiry as critique: "I have always been fond of tracing to its source in nature any prevailing custom" (*VRW* 214–15). She traces the prevailing belief that women are ill-equipped for rational inquiry to its source in nature, and discovers that it is unsubstantiated. Wollstonecraft is thus suspicious of earlier inventional procedures precisely because the premises they start with conflict with the "truth" of her own inquiry. As treated earlier in my discussion of rebuttal, empirical inquiry enables her to validate the truthfulness of her own observations and experience without the community stamp of approval required within earlier systems. As a woman, moreover, it allows her to inquire into the origins of her gendered experience of women's plight in eighteenth-century Britain. It is inductive inquiry that fuels her causal analysis of women's acculturation into the cult of sensibility. In her critique, she links the materialization of a rhetoric of sensibility with women's acculturation into the culture of sensibility and thus causally disconnects a rhetoric of sensibility from the female body.

Wollstonecraft understands invention refigured as inquiry as a material necessity; inquiry serves both personal and civic ends. Inquiry is materially grounded in the human need for self-preservation and intellectual development. She universalizes invention by holding everyone liable for their own intellectual development, the accumulation of a fund of ideas and knowledge. Women share the human need for self-preservation and intellectual development. For this reason, women need to accumulate a fund of ideas and principles, the materials of their discourse. Like her contemporaries, Wollstonecraft understands community knowledge, as associated with classical invention, as suspect until

premises are subjected to the test of empirical inquiry. Belief is assent that arises from the individual's own investigation of the subject at hand, and it becomes the material of persuasive discourse as it is thus presented for the audience's analytical consideration. She contrasts right inquiry with other inventional procedures, including the false association of ideas and enthusiasm.

Arrangement

As the second canon, arrangement in rhetorical theory is that topic in which "the fixed features that define a discourse intersect with the rhetor's immediate needs" (Fahnestock 33). Arrangement theory includes a "naming of parts" and a rationale for each part along with inventional heuristics for constructing the part in accord with the rhetor's needs (33). In general, arrangement theories offer ideal patterns and then show how a pattern is adapted to a particular circumstance (36).

As Howell notes, eighteenth-century rhetorical theorists most often consider Cicero's canonical principles exemplary (75). Cicero posits that orations contain six specific parts that are utilized in response to audience and occasion. Cicero's parts include: an exordium, the introduction and interest-generating part; a narration, the history of the case; the partition, or the division of the case into its constitutive arguments; the confirmation and refutation, arguments for and against; and a peroration, where the rhetor sums up and arouses pity. Classical theorists understand arrangement as rhetorical rather than fixed; that is, the inclusion or exclusion of a particular part depends upon the audience's predisposition to the case and their knowledge of it.

For the New Rhetoricians, the logical relations of ideas and the principles of textual arrangement by extension, follow the principles of faculty psychology and associational thinking. These theorists tie their preferred arrangements to the movements of the minds that formulate and organize propositions into series. Replicating the relational thought process wherein observation gives rise to ideas that are then comparatively and contiguously analyzed, argumentative discourse represents the mind's placement of propositions in relation one to another. Structural links are analogously drawn between the workings of the mind and the workings of one's discourse. The rhetor necessarily places propositions in natural relations, one with another and judgment is thus enabled. As Crowley explains, one's audience is convinced by "the naturalness of the logic [the fitness of the ideational relations as constructed] presented in the discourse" (51).

George Campbell links rhetorical reasoning with empirical evidence; he prefers analysis as a means of both inventing and arranging his discourse (Crowley 44). The arrangement of a discourse, following the principles of cognitive association, should directly reflect the kinds and sequence of the processes that created it: resemblance, contiguity, causation, and order in space and time. To compose one's discourse structurally is to replicate the natural order followed in reaching one's conclusion (Crowley 44-5). Campbell designates analysis as the method to be employed. With this process the rhetor may "ascend from particulars to universals.... The analytic is the only method that we can follow, in the acquisition of natural knowledge, or whatever regards actual existences" (*Philosophy.* 62). The proper method of arrangement replicates the method used during inquiry.

Hugh Blair blends classical thought with the modern in his treatment of arrangement. As Crowley explains: "[I]n the midst of a Ciceronian treatment of arrangement, he use[s] Cartesian language to recommend that rhetors make a clear and distinct statement of the proposition and its division when 'laying down the method of the Discourse'" (52). Blair's rules for the partition include the following: 1. The parts into which the subject is divided should be distinct from one another. 2. The division must follow the order of nature; that is, it should proceed from simple to complex. 3. The parts of the division ought to exhaust the subject. 4. The terms of the division should be expressed as concisely as possible. 5. The number of parts should be kept small. (*Lectures* 389-90). Rules one and two are particularly modern notions according to Crowley, (52) and I would add rule five in support of Howell's claim that the New Rhetoricians also prefer fewer parts, "simpler formulas for the construction of their speeches," than their classical antecedents (Howell 698).

Blair recommends a right method for ordering one's discourse. He states: "In all kinds of Public Speaking, nothing is of greater consequence than a proper and clear method" (237). He also writes that "no discourse, of any length, should be without method; that is, everything should be found in its proper place" (237). Synthesis and analysis are both suitable methods of arrangement. The synthetic is "suited to the train of Popular Speaking...when the point to be proved is fairly laid down, and one Argument after another is made to bear upon it, till the hearers be fully convinced"; the analytic is better "when the hearers are much prejudiced against any truth, and by imperceptible steps must be led to conviction." Analysis is understood as a "hidden method," in that the

rhetor progressively brings the hearers to his point as "the natural consequence of a chain of propositions" (402-3).

Howell explains that the New Rhetoric as it seeks to describe the method of communication to be used in the world of scholarship and science, recommends the natural movement of discourse from a factual statement to its successive logical consequents. The New Rhetoric rejects the scholastic theory of arranging ideas in a strict descending order of generality or in a syllogistic or enthymematic formulation (291). The basic pattern of rhetorical argument for the new age leads the audience to recognize intuitively the truth of the author's statement or to establish the truth from related facts or truths. The process is not syllogistic; it is in accord with the process of inference as Locke describes it (Howell 444).

Wollstonecraft on Arrangement

Wollstonecraft formulates and practices an eclectic combination of classical and modern principles for ordering one's discourse. Having read Plato, Cicero, Quintilian and Blair, she understands the principles of arrangement pressed upon her as traditional constraints. She incorporates in form, in function or in spirit many of the principles of order espoused by classical theorists before her. Her texts also follow the epistemological dictates of empirical inquiry and the natural logical progressions as adopted and theoretically formulated by her contemporaries. As a woman who would reason, she also admits structural elements that have been linked to women's modes of ordering thought. Specifically, Kelly and Donovan link her textual strategies with principles of arrangement

culturally coded as feminine. In practice her principles of arrangement may also be aligned with revolutionary discourse and the rhetorics of unmasking.

Wollstonecraft Appropriates Classical Principles of Arrangement

Gary Kelly claims that a *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* "has no formal structure; rather, it 'embodies,' as she would say, a mind in action, and so the movement of her prose, true to the aesthetics of sensibility, is an immediate rendering of her mind in the living word. There is no necessary beginning to her argument, and it ends rather than concludes" (1947). In many ways, Wollstonecraft's argument works at structural cross purposes. She both appropriates classical form and refigures it with purposeful and natural digressions. Kelly's comments focus upon Wollstonecraft's points of departure from more formal structural divisions. Kelly, however, does not recognize her structural affinity with the ancients; in particular, her own commentary on the structure of her *Vindications*.

Wollstonecraft's respect for and understanding of the structural constraints set for her text by her classical antecedents is most apparent at the beginning of her polemics. In her introductions, specifically, she articulates principles for arranging one's discourse and announces her intent to follow the criteria. Her forthright attention to these principles authorizes her right to speak and appeases her audience's anxiety. As a competent rhetor, she understands the structural principles pressed upon her by theorists who precede her. Fortunately, her insight into the constraints of the tradition that precedes her along with a well-founded anxiety and subsequent desire to meet the traditional criteria for a speaking subject inspires her to begin with explicit theoretical commentary on the canon of

arrangement, commentary that is ours for analysis. Wollstonecraft, like Blair, pays critical attention to classical principles of arrangement. By examining Wollstonecraft's textual strategies according to the Ciceronian frame of the six-part division of one's text, we may more readily measure her desire to participate in the western theoretical tradition.

The Exordium or Introduction

Early on in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft states: "It is the very essence of an introduction to give a cursory account of the contents of the work it introduces" (81). After defining the aim of an introduction, she lays her plan before us. She states her aim: "I wish to persuade women to endeavor to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings who are only objects of pity, and that kind of love which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt" (82). Furthermore, she would "persuade [women] to become more masculine and respectable" (83). Her aim as articulated above maps the trajectory of her discourse. Specifically, she critiques a rhetoric of sensibility as constituted by the elements listed in her thesis statement, and then she encourages women to develop their reasoning faculties, to become "more masculine and respectable" (83).

These opening moves situate her approach to arrangement within the western classical tradition often constructed as a "male mode" of structuring an argument. Farrell notes that male modes of arrangement state their thesis at the outset, and build upon "strong, explicit assertions" (915). Traditional male modes of rhetoric also structure their

text with a praise/blame format (914). Wollstonecraft's clear distinction between the good and the bad in her thesis statement is not negligible. She is adamant and forceful when she refutes her opponents and rejects a rhetoric of sensibility. She also recommends that women appropriate the more "masculine and respectable" modes of production. At the outset then, Wollstonecraft defines the function of an introduction and then complies with traditional ordering of her ideas. She states her thesis and maps the direction of her argument by topically forecasting her refutation and confirmation.

The Narration or History of the Case

If Wollstonecraft is to follow the traditional six-part structure, her introduction should lead to a narration wherein she presents the history of her case. The case, in this instance, concerns the dire circumstances in which she finds eighteenth-century women. She sets up the context for her argument in great detail; she situates her polemic within the local conversations about the rights of men and calls for sociopolitical reform in Great Britain. As a savvy rhetor, she effectively enters the Burkean parlor and constructs the discursive site where her claims might be inserted.

While she does not formally announce her "narration," or the case history, as she does her introduction, her discussion fulfills the rhetorical function of a narration as she defines the issue and sets up the context for her appeals. In *Some Thoughts on the education of daughters*, and in both *Vindications*, she variously narrates the history of her case quite effectively. At the opening of the *Rights of Men*, she explains that Burke's *Reflections* is the "transient topic of the day," a topic she feels compelled to discuss because his arguments simply "beg a reply" (3). In *Some thoughts on the education of*

daughters, she opens with: "It is true, many treatises have already been written; yet it occurred to me, that much still remains to be said" (*Preface* 3). In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she traces the events that give rise to her plea to Talleyrand to extend the rights of men to women. She takes advantage of the revolutionary moment to "set some investigations" into the rights of women "afloat in France" in the hopes that they might lead to "a confirmation of [her] principles when [their] constitution is revised..." (89). What becomes obvious across all three of these texts is Wollstonecraft's formal attention to the narrative part of rhetorical discourse. She is consistent in her arrangement, and her consistency enables us to extrapolate a theoretical principle of arrangement from her practice.

She further fulfills the function of the narrative part with her review of positions espoused by current thinkers on the subject or an assessment of the reception of those positions—Burke's position on the French Revolution, for example. She identifies the "gap" that her argument addresses. For example, in the *Rights of Woman*, she defines the issue that her polemic addresses. She does not "overlook works written for women's improvement," yet these texts "have a tendency to subordinate women" and are thus inadequate (*VRW* 79-80).

In her polemics, she generates her audience's immediate interest when she urgently constructs the rhetorical context for her claims: "From every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women, but where are they to be found?" (*VRW* 80). In the *Rights of Man*, she begins: "[M]y indignation was roused by the sophistical arguments that every moment crossed me in the questionable shape of natural feelings and common sense" (*VRM* 3). Wollstonecraft does not use the term "narration" to name a structural

component of her polemics; however, both in function and in spirit, she wittingly meets the narrative needs of her audience and effectively sets up the context for her argument. Her readers understand how it is that her case comes before them, its origins; its sociopolitical relevance to matters under review in the polis; as well as the trajectory of the argument she will advance.

The Division of the Case

The division of one's subject traditionally follows the narration. Wollstonecraft formally announces her divisions in her second *Vindication*. Her plan is to divide her subject "naturally" (81). She will "first consider women in the grand light of human creatures, who, in common with men, are placed on the earth to unfold their faculties; and afterwards [she] shall more particularly point out their particular designation" (*VRW* 81). The naturalness of her plan lies in her movement from the purposeful creation of human beings, to the subsequent fulfillment of said purposes. First, women, like men, are created with aptitudes or faculties, and second, the implication of their creation is that women acknowledge and fulfill the intent behind the design. She will discuss women's nature and that for which it their nature suits them. In this manner, her organizational pattern follows a natural progression. Her orderly pattern of purposeful creation and subsequent development aligns itself with the principles of natural arrangement embraced by the New Rhetoricians. In *Rights of Woman*, then, Wollstonecraft follows this structure in the broad sense—she opens with assertions about women's nature and then notes discrepancies between their nature and contemporary prescriptions for their educational development. In announcing her divisions, she meets ancient arrangement criteria, and in

choosing a natural progression, she joins her contemporaries. Such a negotiation between the two theoretical camps is as typical of her work as it largely is of the New Rhetoricians.

The Confirmation and Refutation

Within the confirmation and the refutation, the rhetor presents arguments for and against the issue under consideration. Wollstonecraft expends most of her rhetorical energy developing these two elements. She refutes the principles that define women's rhetorical practice according to a rhetoric of sensibility. True to the dictates of classical theorists, Wollstonecraft combatively refutes the premises that support the opposition's claim that women should depend upon their feminine sensibilities for garnering influence and realizing sociopolitical effect. She examines claims made by her opponents thoroughly, so her readers come to a full understanding of the opposition's case. Her argumentative demeanor is combative and relentless; she grants only minor claims concerning the effectiveness of the discourse and the facility with which women may wield it. She is prone to indignant exclamations and brisk retorts. Her strong, explicit assertions, and her adversarial stance places her squarely within the Western tradition of masculine modes of rhetorical production. Farrell notes that "antithetical antagonism seems to be inherent to the male mode of rhetoric" as is "verbal combat" (916-17).

Wollstonecraft consistently follows the antithetical pattern of refutation and confirmation, but the two parts are not cleanly divided. They are woven together, treated simultaneously throughout her polemics. Her confirmation arises more often than not out of the analytical detail she generates while refuting her opponents. She does not structurally divide the confirmation and refutation; rather, she consistently pummels her

opposition across chapters, and simultaneously offers alternative principles as claims under examination give rise to more redeeming principles.

Peroration or Conclusion

The subtitle of Wollstonecraft's final chapter of her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* announces her intent to conclude her argument. Chapter thirteen is entitled: "Some Instances of Folly which the Ignorance of Women Generates; with Concluding Reflections on the Moral Improvement that a Revolution in Female Manners might Naturally Be Expected to Produce." Traditionally, the peroration sums up the rhetor's position, and the limits of the opposition's case and then utilizes pathetic appeals to stir action. Wollstonecraft uses SECTIONS I through V of her final chapter to summarily illustrate women's weaknesses as the material consequence of the opposition's platform. In SECTION VI, she begins with the following: "It is not necessary to inform the sagacious reader, now I enter on my concluding reflections, that the discussion of this subject merely consists in opening a few simple principles, and clearing away the rubbish which obscured them" (324). She praises her readers, announces the pending conclusion and then diminishes her opposition by calling their principles "rubbish" that needs to be hauled away.

The summary of her position incorporates the following claims: Moralists unanimously agree that the exercise of reason gives rise to moral principles and individual virtue. Public virtue is an aggregate of private virtue. Women need to exercise their reason, to develop moral principles that then enable private virtue and thus contribute to public virtue. The tyranny of men renders women foolish and vicious (326). At present,

women's faults are "the natural consequence of their education and station in society" (327). If women share the rights of men, they will emulate the virtues of men (327). She ends with a pathetic appeal to her audience: "Be just then, O ye men of understanding" (328). Her closing chapter comes full circle in that it summatively presents the negative effects of a rhetoric of sensibility. She restates her primary claims and then diminishes her opposition's case by calling their claims "rubbish." Her pathetic appeal is directed to those men who have it in their power to free women, to act. As "men of understanding," they surely will respond in a "just" manner.

Points of Departure from Classical Principles of Arrangement

Wollstonecraft's commentary together with her rhetorical moves suggest that she well understands the traditional divisions of rhetorical discourse. Although she does not herself construct a text that is as neatly divided as she forecasts, she does announce her desire to deliver a well-structured piece. The seriousness with which she opens her polemics, and then articulates her pending plan of discursive action is important even if her plans do not always reach fruition. Her seriousness is constant, but for various reasons—the expediency with which she writes and publishes; her affinity with the New Rhetoricians and the revolutionary theorists, and even her lack of formal rhetorical training—her structural plans fall through when measured against classical dictates. Her polemics do not, as Gary Kelly notes, deliver tightly sequenced arguments that meet the structural criteria of a classical oration (1947). This may mark her efforts as structural failures if we forget that as an art the classical principles of arrangement are understood as flexible rules.

Considering these principles flexible, an attempt to theoretically account for her principles of arrangement in relation to historical context and the epistemological position from which she speaks may prove more insightful. Wollstonecraft, as a New Rhetorician, negotiates between the ancients' advice on arrangement and the epistemological dictates of the New Science. She follows her male contemporaries as she simplifies structural requirements and moves toward a more natural presentation of her materials. Her principles of arrangement shift with the values of her times.

Her critics often interpret Wollstonecraft's points of structural departure from the classical principles of arrangement as evidence of textual failure. For example, Wollstonecraft's refutation and confirmation are topically repetitive. We might arguably account for the absence of a more formal frame by recognizing her structure as the natural evolution of her thoughts as permitted and sanctioned within the New Rhetorics of her age. An immediate rendering of the opposition's claims and her subsequent reprisal come off as more authentic according to principles of associational psychology and relational thinking. Rhetors may resist the constraints of artificial forms when they interfere with accurate and authentic communication. Wollstonecraft's ordering of her confirmation and refutation purposefully departs from the ancients and such a departure, though perhaps more entangled and more repetitious, less "tidy" than those texts written by her contemporaries who did enjoy university training, is very much suited to the discursive aims and values of Enlightenment discourse theory.

Her arrangement also aligns itself in principle with revolutionary rhetorics of unmasking. As Janet Todd explains: "*The Rights of Men* was so hurriedly written it would be surprising if it was not rambling and disorganized" (xiii). "The apparent

disorganization [is] part of the message," and this "may also be said of the *Rights of Woman*." "Clearly the style [and structure is] a common one for polemicists desiring to make their work appear gut reaction and to present themselves as moved by honest indignation and forced to print by absolute conviction and exasperation" (Todd xiii). Wollstonecraft's form is highly effective and legitimate when read within this revolutionary context and within the epistemological dictates of the New Rhetoric.

Wollstonecraft's Account of Her Structural Digressions

Her commitment to natural progressions is everywhere evidenced by what her critics often call her digressions or desultory shifts. In her own words, she defends the irregular shifts as "natural," and in many instances, even warns her readers that she is about to go off somewhere, with a higher purpose, of course. For example, she admits: "It is wandering from my present subject, perhaps, to make a political remark; but as it is produced naturally by my train of reflections, I shall not pass it over silently" (*VRW* 106). In this passage, her awareness of classical dictates (not to wander) mediates with her epistemological principles (that which arises naturally is good and true)and her revolutionary urgency (quick delivery is more important than polish) such that the theoretical tension between the competing principles warrants commentary. In her first *Vindication* she notes: "A wild wish has just flown from my heart to my head, and I will not stifle it, though it may excite a horse-laugh" (149). In *Some thoughts on the education of daughters*, she stops to note the following: "I have almost run into a sermon,—and I shall not make an apology for it" (109). In *Rights of Woman*, she notes: "I am aware that this argument would carry me further than it may be supposed I wish to

go; but I follow truth" (125). Thus, the immediate rendering of an insight or a truth as it naturally arises takes precedence over the artificial and customary constraints of a pre-established or fixed order. The right order of one's discourse necessarily replicates the method that leads to their natural discovery. Her move is typical of her theoretical approach to arrangement, and though it is decidedly eighteenth-century in its preference for the immediate, the authentic and the natural, critics often interpret her digressions as her failure to arrange her discourse according to classical criteria, or they link her principles of arrangement to her gender and then variously account for the structural variations as typically feminine, either to celebrate women's ways of arranging discourse or to excuse them (See, Farrell 913, and Kelly, "Expressive." 1947).

Women's Ways of Arranging Discourse

Gary Kelly claims that the immediate rendering of her thoughts in a "personal and desultory" manner may be understood as a "woman's way of expressing truth" ("Expressive." 1947). Her arrangement is "desultory," more illustrative than argumentative and marked by a "repetitive form" (1947). Kelly does not present these features as evidence of women's untutored or undisciplined thought process. He interprets the elements as typical of women's knowledge (personal experience) and the manner in which women deliver it (desultorily). Kelly hails it as a "woman's way" of rendering an argument and offers it as an accomplishment rather than a limitation. In this view, Wollstonecraft consciously remains true to her sex and her use of such elements demonstrates her fidelity to women's discourse. To support his analysis here, he cites Wollstonecraft's own discussion of women's educational experience. She states: [T]he

little knowledge which women of strong minds attain, is, from various circumstances, of a more desultory kind than the knowledge of men, and it is acquired by sheer observations on real life" (*VRW* 23). Kelly interprets her in this manner: "She [is] an ardent auto-didact and [believes] that those kinds of thinking which [work] for her would work for all women" (1946).

If we accept Kelly's interpretation, we agree that Wollstonecraft thinks a "little knowledge" is effective enough, and that a "desultory" method is adequate. Women should understand their education and their polemical method as both distinct from men's and sufficient for their sex. Kelly, in fact, reads the personal and desultory nature of her *Vindication* as elements of a polemical success for women rhetors who would stay true to their sex and capitalize upon the gendered mode of inquiry and rhetorical production that is culturally and biologically sanctioned as legitimate for their sex.

Wollstonecraft, however, does not endorse a "little knowledge," and a "desultory" method for women's rhetorical training. While she does, indeed, offer the personal as her evidence, thus making the most of what her female experience affords her, and she does proceed in a natural, if at times desultory manner, she only endorses such elements when understood as legitimate within the empirical epistemology of her times, not because they are women's modes of production. The fact that there exists a complementary relation between women's personal experience and experience as understood by the natural philosophers, Bacon and Locke, and the New Rhetoricians who embrace their ideas, is coincidental, as is the complementarity between inductive reasoning and analysis as natural logic and women's natural thought processes. Wollstonecraft does not consciously endorse the personal and the desultory as "natural and good"; rather, she understands

them as limiting if left in an untutored or undisciplined state. Since she herself comes about her learning "in snatches," the personal affords her insight into the limits of women's educational experience, an experience that she immediately extends through self-discipline. She does marshal the results of her experience effectively as evidence for her claims, yet *female* experience (as Kelly defines it) alone is not enough to equip her for the task at hand—the writing of a polemic. She also studies the ancients and looks to her contemporaries to enhance her production with the theoretical principles and strategies she needs in order to enter the debates of her times. She pursues a more masculine educational program herself, one that obviously far exceeds those prescribed for women.

Still, more significantly, Wollstonecraft rejects limiting women's intellectual expertise to the "personal" and their reasoning skills to the "desultory." She comments: "To do everything in an orderly manner is a most important precept." Women's education is disorderly—negligent "guesswork." It consists of the "random exertions of a sort of instinctive common sense never brought to the test of reason," a process that "prevents their generalizing matters of fact; so, they do today what they did yesterday, merely because they did it yesterday." Men, from their infancy, are "broken into method," and enjoy a "degree of exactness." Women's knowledge comes "in snatches," and it depends upon "sheer observations on real life," and not from "comparing what has been individually observed with the results of experience generalized by speculation" (104-5). In the course of their educations, women "too soon" shift to "manners and customs"; instead, knowledge should "be brought to the test of judgement, formed by comparing speculation and experience" (105). Women's educational experience turns their attention toward corporeal matters. Women are not taught the analytical method that is a keyword

for a disciplined approach to inquiry based upon the new empirical epistemology as embraced by her contemporaries, Campbell and Blair. It is training in "method" that women lack and that women need in order to make the personal legitimate and to make their reasoning process more intellectually lucrative. She identifies women's "disregard for order" as a chief cause of their enslaved status in private and public affairs (*VRW* 104). Wollstonecraft may digress from the formal features of classical discourse, yet she is certainly rigorous and *methodical* in her refutation and confirmation.

Kelly does not address her critique of the "personal" and the "desultory"; instead, he understands her arrangement of the *Rights of Woman* as typically female. Wollstonecraft is adamant about her right to speak and argue as a woman. She rejects intellectual distinctions based upon her sex. Kelly wants to support her attempt to write embodied as a woman, but this should not imply that Wollstonecraft embraces *difference* as essentially determining of a women's rhetorical production. Wollstonecraft's critique of those elements that Kelly marks as "female" works against his claim here, and undermines such an interpretation.

The epistemological shift toward empirical observation and induction and natural progressions in the seventeenth century provides a philosophical justification for Wollstonecraft's use of the personal and for her often "desultory" shifts in subject matter. Although Kelly explores these elements as representative of a "woman's ways of expressing truth" (1947), the terms of his analysis enable another interpretation as well. He claims:

> [I]n both *Vindications*, especially the second, she jumps (the root sense of

> desultory) from argument to observation to reflection to lyrical flight to trenchant sarcasm, but always comes up with the great and little truths which issue from the mind's active confrontation with the perplexing worlds of private and public experience. The characteristic movement in her prose, as of her mind—and this is seen in her familiar letters as well as her published work—is a rhythmical rising towards and falling away from moments of insight, which are embodied in language as maxims or 'simple truths,' 'deduced from simple reason.' Her truths are crystallizations of personal experience and reflection in the form of universal statements. (1947)

While Kelly links this approach with indirection as women's modes of arrangement, his descriptive analysis also suggests that Wollstonecraft's method follows the Lockean principles for the formulation of knowledge. Out of the particulars of experience, she draws hers ideas—she moves from observation to reflection following an inductive line of reasoning. Kelly uses key terms that situate her squarely within the empirical school of her age. Again, there is a complementarity between Kelly's use of "personal" and the empirical experience and observation, and between Kelly's use of "desultory" and the natural, inductive thought pattern as promoted within the New Science. My point here, is that Wollstonecraft is more interested in following the dictates of a Lockean epistemology than she is in advancing the merits of the "personal" and "desultory" nature of women's discourse. In her view, women's current educational experience is unsatisfactory for women in general. Even if she capitalizes upon what little knowledge she snatches along the way, she wants women to adopt the analytical method that their male counterparts are broken into early on as she notes.

Thus, Kelly extracts those elements that most obviously make her principles of arrangement akin to those embraced by her male contemporaries. Specifically, she follows her mind's natural progression as she moves from observation and experience to reflection and judgment. She guides her readers through a series of inductive progressions that move from particulars to general claims. Although Kelly does link her method with the natural method prescribed by her male contemporaries, he mistakenly claims that she is satisfied with women's current "expertise." Kelly says she practices "the chief methods for pursuit of higher knowledge recommended by the empirical philosophers," but he does not continue to analyze the extent to which those chief methods require her to reach beyond women's realm of understanding (1946). There are distinct differences between women's undisciplined approach as Wollstonecraft describes it and the analytical method espoused by the empirical philosophers. Wollstonecraft would agree with Josephine Donovan's assessment that it "is a lack of education rather than a particular affinity with sentiment that leads women to dwell upon feelings in their writing" (209). Women's relationship to the elements Kelly mentions—the personal and the desultory—may be similarly understood when we consider Wollstonecraft's rejection of essentialist claims regarding women's aptitudes and their discourse.

While Kelly concentrates upon elements of arrangement that appear more suited to "female" writers, Wollstonecraft moves beyond these limits as she attends to the demands of more traditional principles of arrangement, principles espoused by the classical theorists who precede her and by the New Rhetoricians who are her contemporaries. Though she does not rigidly adhere to the structural criteria as delineated by her predecessors, she does comply both in function and in spirit. She does follow the prescriptions of her

contemporaries who likewise seem lax in their principles of arrangement relative to the ancients. Wollstonecraft's departure from the tightly crafted six-part division of a text is not so much a "failure" as it is typical given the general epistemological shifts that typically undergird modern rhetorical theory. Wollstonecraft's departures may be read as part of her deliberate attempt to negotiate between the tradition before her and the theoretical demands of the New Science.

Her theory of arrangement most definitely reaches beyond the prescriptive limits of women's range of expertise as noted by Kelly, and it strives to do more than simply adhere to classical principles. The unevenness of her arrangement may suggest her indecisiveness on matters of arrangement, or perhaps it is a strategic attempt to satisfy the demands of multiple forums. It may suggest a conflicted sense of loyalty to the classical tradition, a tradition she taught herself, one she respects and knows she must work with if she is to speak. It also arises ideologically out of a discursive climate wherein rhetorical theorists of the New Rhetoric embrace an empirical epistemology and refigure their principles of arrangement accordingly. Wollstonecraft mediates between the ancients, and the moderns.

Not only does she accept that empirical inquiry is simpler, more natural and more authentic, she follows the inclinations of her own reason, fueled by her passion with a moral urgency that is typical of polemical discourse of the revolutionary era. As I noted within my earlier discussion of revolutionary rhetorics that arise in reaction against arguments of sensibility, the simple language and often uneven, forceful delivery of claims signifies the moral urgency of the discourse. Despite her early attempts to map her argument and to forecast the trajectory of her text, Wollstonecraft normatively fires off

her claims as they "naturally arise" as a result of the felt moral imperatives that drive her inquiry and analysis. Because the issue at hand warrants immediate attention, the consequences are dire, the audience must overlook the structural imperfections that otherwise mar the rhetorical performance. As a revolutionary theorist and polemicist, Wollstonecraft's rapid-fire rate of production sets its own structural criteria, wherein the higher good of immediate relief from the injustice at hand supersedes the audience's need or desire for a more linear, rigid and polished form.

Style

As a rhetorical canon, style is concerned with "the arrangement and depiction of words in a discourse" (Purcell 698). The use of tropes allows for "the creativity of the rhetor; they reassign, exploit and create meaning" (698). Figures "facilitate organization, expression, comparison and description and provide rhetors with strategies that make language persuasive" (699). As the New Rhetoricans took up the subject of style, they knew the three distinctions made by Cicero. Eighteenth-century rhetoricians knew Cicero's standard distinctions between the plain style (to instruct); the middle style (to delight); and the grand style (to move). The grand style with its emphasis upon the figures and tropes contrastively makes the plain and middle style appear less rhetorical. As a result, oratory becomes associated in the popular view with stylistic intricacy, flowery diction, and conscious ornament. The New Rhetoric summons the plain and the middle style back to rhetoric and to discourse in general. It also tends to disparage the grand style for its showy and extravagant forms. The natural perversions of the grand style are the focus of the New Rhetorician's critical attention (Howell 446).

The loosening of classical authority over rhetorical principles during the seventeenth century includes a significant refiguring of the canon of style. The emergence of the theoretical preference for a "plain" style is often linked with the scientific epistemology, under the new philosophy of Bacon and Locke. In 1667 Thomas Sprat calls for the use of a plain and simple prose in scientific treatises in his *History of the Royal Society* (Donovan 213). The Royal Society of London was an informal organization of scholars and scientists drawn together in the common conviction that "the inductive method as propounded by Francis Bacon was destined to create a new order of human knowledge and to bring vast improvements in the conditions of human life" (Howell 448). Stylistic reform is central to the Society's program, and Sprat's words describe the Society's constructive action in regard to it.

Lockean language theory has a significant impact upon the reformulation of principles of style by the New Rhetoricians. Locke feels that a man's knowledge of things is the vital source of his right conduct, persuasion being in vain if the individual is ignorant, and unnecessary if knowledge is had. A theory of discourse need recognize the necessity of an accurate correspondence between words, as verbal phenomena, and ideas or conceptions, as intellectual phenomena, as well as the attendant necessity of an accurate correspondence between ideas and the things of the physical world (Howell 497). Discourse is effective if it is linguistically adequate in transferring accurate ideas of things from person to another without distortion, deceit or unwarranted difficulty (Howell 497). In Locke's words, the "*ends of Language in our discourse with others,*" are these three:

> *First, To make known* one Man's Thoughts or *Ideas* to another. *Secondly*, To do it *with* as much ease and *quickness* a possible; and *Thirdly*, Thereby *to convey* the

Knowledge of Things. Language is either abused, or deficient, when it fails in any of these three (III.x.23, 504).

A key principle here is this: the persuasiveness of a discourse is a side effect of its expository fidelity to idea and fact—fidelity is the major standard for argumentative discourse (Howell 496).

Locke writes that figurative language and the artifices of conventional eloquence should be excluded from discourses that have truth and knowledge as their subject matter, information or instruction or improvement as their aim and the learned community as their audience. In Locke's view, rhetoric is highly censurable as far as it is a party to the use of misleading or distorted ideas, and so far as its artifices of style misdirect the judgment via their ability to stir the passions (Howell 490-1). But, rhetoric is laudable so far as it teaches order and clearness, and "so far as it acts either under the auspices of wit and fancy to provide literary pleasure in nonscientific writings or under the auspices of reason to make truth itself entertaining and delightful to people who are not trained to be scholars" (491). Locke comments on the rhetoric's affinity with stylistic flourishes: [B]esides Order and Clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of Words Eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong Ideas, move the Passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheat..." (III.x.34, 508). Modern rhetoricians heed Locke's warning as they formulate their stylistic principles.

George Campbell does not treat style as if the tropes and figures are its dominant ingredients, and the grand style as the most desirable kind; instead, he understands style as founded in grammatical truth, that is, in the conformity of the speaker's ideas to those

linguistic usages that are reputable, national and present (*Philosophy.* 151). The problem of meaning is one of the most urgent tasks of the New Rhetoric. Once grammatical truth is achieved, style has purity, and next need aim for perspicuity in addressing the understanding and for vivacity in addressing the imagination, the passion and the will (Howell 602-3). Purity requires "that the words employed belong to the language, and that they be construed in the manner, and used in the signification, which custom hath rendered necessary for conveying the sense" (*Philosophy*. 35). On perspicuity, Campbell states: "If he does not propose to convey certain sentiments into the minds of his hearers, by the aid of signs intelligible to them, he may as well declaim before them in an unknown tongue" (216). Vivacity is vital because "lively ideas have a stronger influence than faint ideas to induce belief" (73). Lively ideas "command closer attention, operate more on the passions and are longer remembered" (74). Campbell's affinity for the natural over the highly figured and ornamental is clearly stated in his ideal of eloquence: "Never does the orator obtain a nobler triumph by his eloquence than when his sentiments and style and order appear so naturally to arise out of the subject, that every hearer is inclined to think, he could not have either thought or spoken otherwise himself...." (*Philosophy* 121).

Hugh Blair's fifteen lectures on style deal with perspicuity, ornament; the general characters of style; the methods by which a good style might be attained and a review of the accomplishments of Addison and Swift as stylists. Blair understands style as "the peculiar manner in which a man expresses his conceptions, by means of Language" (*Lectures* 66). Perspicuity and ornament are the two heads under which good style is classified. Blair emphasizes three qualities as essential to perspicuity: purity, propriety and precision. Good sentence structure demands clearness and precision, unity, strength

and harmony. The goal is to "communicate in the clearest and most natural order, the ideas that we mean to transfuse into the minds of others" (*Lectures* 67). Ornamental figures enrich language, confer dignity upon style, and offer a much clearer and more striking view of one's subject. Blair gives practical advice for improving one's style: study your material; practice often; read the best authors; avoid servile imitation; adapt one's subject to one's hearer's; and do not sacrifice clarity to ornament (See, *Lectures* XIV; XIX).

Wollstonecraft on Style

Wollstonecraft prefers a plain style with natural syntactical structures or "loose periods." Sentences are commonly referred to as "periods" during the era; loose periods are often contrasted with round ones. The plain style may be set against the Ciceronian in its use of "the loose period" (Donovan 213). The Ciceronian round period implies a "closed, 'circular' or syllogistic logic, congenial to a world view which rest[s] upon a closed system of verities," and thus a closed system of rhetors or "cultural insiders"—the "educated, elite of males" (213). She sets the round period against the loose:

> The loose period attempts to express the order in which an idea presents itself when it is first experienced. It begins, therefore, without premeditation, stating its idea in the first form that occurs; the second member is determined by the situation in which the mind finds itself after the first has been spoken; and so on throughout the period. Each member being an emergency of the situation. (Donovan 213)

Donovan links the method with an "inductive, empiric logic, appropriate to seventeenth-century European society, which [shifts] toward the experientially verifiable and away

from received premises as the source of truth" (213). Also, the developmental nature of the syntactical structure as found in the "loose period" is associational—links arise out of the natural relations between ideas as they come into one's cognitive "view." Again, the loose period is understood as more accurate, more authentic and natural than the carefully crafted "rounded periods" of the ancients. Donovan's analysis includes the insight that women writers benefit from the stylistic shift toward plain styles. Women's autobiographical discourse—letters, diaries and the like, already afford them ample practice in the plain vernacular and the "loose period," that gains popularity at this historical juncture. Donovan's commentary supports Kelly's claims that the new epistemology admits as "legitimate," specific discursive elements, gendered as "female," elements that women both understood and can utilize with an adeptness that is habitual (Donovan 212).

Wollstonecraft's often-cited pronouncement of her position on matters of style appears early on in her *Rights of Woman*. She announces her stylistic intentions:

> I shall disdain to cull my phrases or polish my style. I aim at being useful, and sincerity will render me unaffected; for wishing to persuade by the force of my arguments rather than dazzle by the elegance of my language, I shall not waste my time in rounding my periods, or in fabricating the turgid bombast of artificial feelings. ... I shall be employed about things, not words! I shall try to avoid that flowery diction that has slided from essays into novels, ...and conversations. (82)

In this famous passage, she aligns herself with the New Rhetoricians of the era who share her preference for simple and plain diction. Her rejection of "rounded periods" implies a preference for the "loose" alternative by default. Keywords that align her theoretically

with her contemporaries include her endorsement of the sincere, the unaffected, the useful, as well as an emphasis upon truth as found in "things" not in "words."

In order to be employed about things rather than words, it is essential for her to guard against deceptive language practices. Like her contemporaries, her project includes a sincere attempt to restore integrity to language, to rid it of its deceptive garb, the garb she links with a rhetoric of sensibility. She herself, asserts: "—for I like to use significant words" (86). This statement resonates with Enlightenment values. In his analysis of Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman*, Kelly analyzes her attempt to maintain the integrity of language. Signification is the matter at hand, and Wollstonecraft speaks seriously about the rhetor's liability for truthful signification.

According to Kelly, Wollstonecraft's approach to language is an effort to "restore human and moral meaning to language" (1945). She promotes a close, if not immediate, correspondence between words and the "physical and moral realities" they represent. Kelly claims she fulfills her responsibility in two ways. She contrasts pairs of words or phrases: 'elegance' with 'force"; 'dazzle' with 'persuade'(1945). Kelly does not link the antithetical relation between the two terms with the Western tradition, but he sees the restorative function behind her analysis. The combination sets the preferred term against the lesser term. The lesser term is semantically suspect in that its use is deceptively motivated or its meaning unreliable. The term is guilty of infidelity to the "thing" it would signify.

Kelly identifies her second strategy as an "etymological" approach to language; that is, she reaches to the "roots of words in order to recapture their original correspondence with things, or [explores] all the related meanings of a word in order to

find the hidden connections between different aspects of physical and moral reality" (1945). He points to her use of *vain* and *partial* in her first *Vindication*, and I would add her analysis of *natural* in her second *Vindication*. Her aim is to "ignore," or as she would say, to root out the original sense of her terms, to trace them back to their origins in nature, to rid them of "the encrustation of time, taste, and fashion" (Kelly 1945). At the local level of word choice, issues of semantic import, Wollstonecraft's principles complement her ideas on arrangement. She consistently recommends the simple and natural as closer to the truth, and thus less deceptive and corrupt.

As treated within my earlier discussion of a rhetoric of sensibility, Wollstonecraft rejects the stylistic flourishes that form the linguistic matter of sensible discourse. As she explains: "[Those] pretty superlatives, dropping glibly from the tongue, vitiate the taste, and create a sickly delicacy that turns away from simple unadorned truth" (*VRW* 82). The phrase "simple unadorned truth" ties her theoretically to Enlightenment rhetoricians. "Truth" does not wear ornate garb; rather, it lies close to nature in a bare state. Stylistic skill hinges upon one's ability to lay one's "naked" ideas out before her audience.

On this issue, Miriam Brody links her ideas to those of Enlightenment rhetoricians in an important manner. Enlightenment rhetoricians understand the restoration of semantic "truth" as part of their larger project to perfect society. These theorists "[conceive] that prose might be ameliorative in society's ongoing mission of reforming itself—one's writing style [is] extricated in moral choices" (119). "Wollstonecraft [merges] the ameliorative project of the Enlightenment, perfecting society through language, with rhetoric's traditional disparagement of ornamentation" (119). Wollstonecraft embraces the ameliorative function as integral to her theory of rhetorical

production. The ameliorative is determining in her critique of arguments of sensibility; her argument is fueled by her felt-sense of moral imperative. The well-being of both the individual and society lies in the balance. Concerning matters of style, her principles are consistent. The linguistic imperative is to cleanse language, to restore its semantic integrity and to thereby enhance the accurate transmission of ideas. She appropriates Lockean language theory, its aims and values, and thus joins Campbell and Blair as she emphasizes the importance of clear and distinct ideas, set in a historically relative plain style.

Wollstonecraft's on Imitatio: The Analysis of Prose Models for Instructional Ends

Hugh Blair's lectures on style are the most extensive within the rhetorical tradition. As a contemporary of Blair, Wollstonecraft appropriates a number of his intellectual moves as she discusses the imitation of prose models for instructional purposes. In Lectures XXI through XXV, Blair considers prose passages composed by Addison and Swift; he uses analysis to formulate stylistic principles. *Imitatio* as the analysis of prose models and the selection of models for imitation is central to his pedagogy. Wollstonecraft likewise recommends the use of prose models for instructional purposes.

Wollstonecraft claims that the discursive models made available to young women set principles operatively before them for imitation. She is concerned that sentimental novels, all the rage during the eighteenth century as women's preferred and prescribed reading material, do not offer worthy principles for young female writers to imitate. The "reading of novels makes women, and particularly ladies of fashion, very fond of using strong expressions and superlatives in conversation; and, though the dissipated artificial

life which they lead prevents their cherishing any strong, legitimate passion, the language of passion in affected tones slips forever from their glib tongues, and every trifle produces those phosphoric bursts which only mimic in the dark the flame of passion" (*VRW* 317). She links these texts with women's appropriation of a rhetoric of sensibility, and thus decides to use them as negative examples in order to undermine their influence.

Wollstonecraft discusses an effective method for instructing young women in a proper style: "The best method, I believe, that can be adopted to correct a fondness for novels, is to ridicule them; not indiscriminately, for then it would have little effect; but, if a judicious person, with some turn of humour, would read several to a young girl, and point out both the tones, and apt comparisons with pathetic incidents and heroic characters in history, how foolishly and ridiculously caricatured human nature, just opinions may be substituted for romantic sentiments" (*VRW* 316). Wollstonecraft advises her readers to critique prose models by measuring them against natural standards. The critic is to judiciously and humorously compare the language and tone of the inferior model to real life examples. The critic might ask: To what extent do the characters compare in nature and manner to "heroic characters in history," and to what extent are the sentiments the text expresses rendered authentic according to our understanding of true "pathetic incident"? Wollstonecraft does not want women to appropriate the stylistic patterns that the sentimental novel markets to them. Because she understands that the novel is very popular, she does not completely dismiss the genre; rather, she strategically uses it as a negative example of stylistic principles.

Wollstonecraft also assesses prose passages from texts written by popular writers on women's education. Her critique of educational tracts focuses upon their strategic use

of figures and tropes. She believes that writers who consciously choose language that is highly stylized do so in order to disguise their less than honorable motives. Truthfulness is lost with the ever-increasing presence of ornamental garb. What follows is an exemplary passage drawn from Dr. Fordyce's educational tract. Wollstonecraft first offers the prose model; then, she takes up the role of discerning critic and assesses Fordyce's style. Her move here parallels that of Hugh Blair, who presents prose models and then analyzes their effectiveness. In the following passage, Fordyce imaginatively invokes the voice of nature to address men on the subject of women's innate aptitude:

> Behold [says Nature] these smiling innocents [women], whom I have graced with my fairest gifts, and committed to your protection; behold them with love and respect; treat them with tenderness and honour. They are timid and want to be defended. They are frail; oh but do not take advantage of their weakness! Let their fears and blushes endear them. Let their confidence in you never be abused. But is it possible, that any of you can be such barbarians, so supremely wicked, as to abuse it? Can you find in your hearts to despoil the gentle, trusting creatures of their treasure, or do anything to strip them of their native robe of virtue? Curst be the impious hand that would dare to violate the unblemished form of chastity! Thou Wretch! Thou ruffian! Forbear; nor venture to provoke Heaven's fiercest vengeance. (qtd. in *VRW* 197)

Fordyce's understanding of women's nature incorporates several key elements that Wollstonecraft finds ineffective. Specifically, Fordyce presents women as weak, innocent, fair, fragile, dependent and in need of man's protection. He constructs male/female relations according to a code of gallantry that she holds liable for women's stunted

development. As gallant defender of women's chastity, their virtuous reputation, Fordyce's emotions rise to a height that Wollstonecraft finds offensive. Her review of his prose style follows:

> I know not any comment that can be made seriously on this curious passage, and I could produce many similar ones; and some, so very sentimental, that I have heard rational men use the word indecent, when they mentioned them with disgust.... Throughout there is a display of cold artificial feelings, and that parade of sensibility which boys and girls should be taught to despise as the sure mark of a vain little mind. Florid appeals are made to heaven, and to the *beauteous innocents*, the fairest images of Heaven below, whilst sober sense is left far behind. This is not the language of the heart, nor will it ever reach it, though the ear may be tickled. I particularly object to the love-like phrases of pumped-up passion, which are everywhere interspersed. If women be ever allowed to walk without lead-strings why must they be cajoled into virtue by artful flattery and sexual compliments? Speak to them the language of truth and soberness, and away with lullaby strains of condescending endearment. It moves my gall to hear a preacher descanting on dress and needlework; and still more to hear him address...*the fairest of the fair*, as if they had only feelings. (*VRW* 196)

Her critique begins with an urgent reproof as often utilized within revolutionary discourse. She targets Fordyce's "parade of sensibility," and his reliance upon "pumped-up" language to appeal to his audience. His attitude is condescending; his style borders on the "indecent." Clearly, she prefers the "language of truth and soberness," unadorned and respectable. If Fordyce aims to persuade women, he needs to move beyond artfully

constructed sentiments and acknowledge that women are moved by more than their "feelings." He must speak to them like rational beings. Wollstonecraft points out his shortcomings, and suggests how his style might be rendered more effective. Her analysis is pointed; she sets a higher standard for rhetors to meet. Her frustration comes through forcefully as she writes: "It moves my gall to hear a preacher descanting" on subjects that are outside his experience and to do so in a manner that reveals his limited insight into women's true nature.

She assesses Fordyce's prose—His "discourses are written in such an affected style, that were it only on that account, and had I nothing to object against it *mellifluous* precepts, I should not allow girls to peruse them, unless I designed to hunt out every spark of nature out of their composition, melting every human quality into female weakness and artificial grace.... In declamatory periods Dr. Fordyce spins out Rousseau's eloquence; and in most sentimental rant, details his opinion respecting female character" (*VRW* 195). His faults are so serious she advises her readers not to use his tract.

Her use of "declamatory periods" to mark his style is typical; she often labels inferior texts "mere declamation," to suggest faulty reasoning. Such texts rely upon hearty proclamations; they assert that such and such is true but offer no evidence of their inquiry, nor do they replicate the thought process that leads to their claims. Declamations treat their subjects at the surface level only, and this makes them highly suspect.

Other writers whose prose she analyzes include Rousseau, Gregory and Burke. Her comments on Gregory's style in *Legacy to His Daughters* include the following: His easy familiar style is particularly suited to the tenor of his advice, and the melancholy tenderness which his respect for the memory of a beloved wife diffuses through the whole,

renders it very interesting; yet there is a degree of concise elegance conspicuous in many passages that disturbs this sympathy; and we pop on the author, when we only expected to meet the—father" *(VRW* 199). She first approves of his "easy, familiar style" and his tone, but is disappointed later when his prose shifts into an elegant style that is conspicuously crafted. To use the language of a father complements the close, natural father-daughter relation suggested by his title, yet the "author" artfully reveals himself when his language departs from the natural.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*, she advises Edmund Burke on matters pertaining to style. She assesses his stylistic faults and articulates her own guidelines for the argument at hand. She extracts a number of representative passages from Burke's text for analysis. The following passage drawn from Burke's *Reflection on the French Revolution* is representative. First she cites his passage; then she cleans his language—rehabilitates his style. In Burke's passage, the King and Queen of France are being led through the streets of Paris after the French Revolution:

> Whilst the royal captives, who followed in train, were slowly moved along, amidst the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, and all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women (*Reflections* 106; qtd. in *VRM* 30).

Burke's aim is to elicit sympathy for the monarchs and to incite repulsion in his readers through his use of monstrous images of public women. The market women who take to the streets as part of the parade of the dethroned monarchs are horrid, shrill, frantic, and vile abominations of women's natural state. Wollstonecraft critiques his prose:

> Probably you mean women who gain their livelihood by selling vegetables or fish, who never had had any advantages of education; or their vices might have lost part of their abominable deformity, by loosing their grossness. The Queen of France—the great and small vulgar, claim our pity; they have almost insuperable obstacles to surmount in their progress towards true dignity of character. (*VRM* 30)

Wollstonecraft cleans Burke's prose by removing the figures. She strips away the horrific images and renames his "furies of hell" as fish and vegetable venders. If these women are "deformed" in that they are uneducated, so is the Queen of France, who is "vulgar" due to her life of luxury and her immoral treatment of the French populace. Burke characterizes the masses as uncivilized and horrid in their treatment of the French monarchs, who, because of their rank, deserve to be revered and honored. Wollstonecraft redeems the common women as humble human beings who for want of an education remain in a vulgar state, a state for which that the monarchs and the French government are liable. She lowers the monarchs to a "vulgar" state by linking lowness with a life of luxury and immoral governance. Whereas Burke's rhetoric depends upon highly stylized language, she utters the truth in simple terms. Wollstonecraft sets her preferred style—the simple, unadorned truth, against Burke's highly figured language. She models the style she promotes, and as she cleans Burke's language, her discourse takes up an ameliorative function.

Memory

Memory in classical treatises is often referred to as "the storehouse of knowledge," the mental faculty that holds one's ideas. In its broadest sense, "memory means the mental

faculty that holds information about past events, ideas, person, things or learned behavior" (Calendrillo 435). Parallel to the art of invention, Quintilian understands memory as an art, a trainable strategy and also as the storehouse of ideas supplied by invention. Memory is often understood as having two parts, one innate or natural, the other artificial or trainable (435). Classical theorists use inventional art to stir memory, to recall material prior to constructing texts; to recall topical patterns and to facilitate the recall of a prepared text as part of its delivery (436).

George Campbell understands memory as a faculty for both the storage and the recall of one's ideas. "Memory is the only original voucher extant of those past realities for which we had once evidence of sense. Her ideas are, as it were, the prints that have been left by sensible impressions" (47). One's memory is "the sole repository of the knowledge received from sense" (47). Vivid ideas are more easily retained. The natural connection of the several links of the associative chain of ideas renders the remembrance easier. Memory is enhanced when "order in place" is preserved. He states:

> As to order in time...Method, it consisteth principally in connecting the parts in such a manner as to give vicinity to things in the discourse which have affinity; that is, resemblance, causality or other relation in nature; and thus making their customary association and resemblance, as in the former case, co-operate with their contiguity in duration [retention] or immediate succession in the delivery [recall]. (77)

In his discussion of Common Sense, Campbell connects memory with assent. He distinguishes between "those lively signatures of memory, which command an unlimited assent, or those fainter traces that raise opinion only" (41). Men are quite capable of

distinguishing them for the purpose of judgment and conduct (41). For the New Rhetoricians generally, memory is both the storehouse of one's ideas and the faculty that enables the recall of one's ideas. Those ideas that arise from strong impressions make deeper imprints upon one's memory. Rhetors need to recall ideas stored in their memories for the materials of their discourse. Rhetors also must be able to stimulate the audience's own memories through associative recall. Memory plays a vital role in both the generation of ideas for one's discourse and the accurate communication of those ideas from the rhetor's mind to the hearer's mind. If there is an "art" involved here, it is the strategic ability to accurately replicate the natural relations between ideas during delivery. The rhetor needs to set ideas and images before the "hearers" as to trigger their own memories and facilitate identification with the rhetor's ideas based upon the recognition of the "truth" of their natural relations.

Wollstonecraft on Memory

As a New Rhetorician, Wollstonecraft recognizes memory as both the storehouse of one's ideas and a faculty that facilitates the recall of one's ideas for communicative ends. Through a habitual association of ideas, one's memory is stocked. She comments: "When the ideas and matters of fact are once taken in, they lie by for our use, till some fortuitous circumstance makes the information dart into the mind with illustrative force, that has been received at very different periods of our lives. Like the lightning's flash are many recollections; one idea assimilating and explaining another, with astonishing rapidity" (223). Using faculty psychology, she explains the process of cognitive recall: "One idea calls up another, its old associate, and memory, faithful to the first impressions,

particularly when the intellectual powers are not employed to cool our sensations, retraces them with mechanical exactness" (*VRW* 224). The associative links that generate ideas and situate them within the "storehouse" likewise retrieve the ideas with relational exactness. The faithfulness of the recall process determines the quality of one's ideas. Perspicuity and vivacity enhance memory and recall and thus determine rhetorical assent. Wollstonecraft's commentary on memory as a faculty is brief, but precise enough to locate her as a New Rhetorician.

Delivery

Delivery incorporates principles for the rhetor's strategic use of voice, gesture and tone to enhance persuasion. Cicero's respect for the art of delivery is passed on to Blair and the New Rhetoricians in consort. For Cicero, "Delivery,..., has the sole and supreme power in oratory" (255). Truthfulness over imitation is valued: "[E]very emotion of the mind has from nature its own peculiar look, tone and gesture" (256). Blair appropriates Ciceronian elements. He comments: [Delivery] is intimately connected with what is, or ought to be, the end of all Public Speaking, Persuasion; and therefore deserves the study of most grave and serious speakers..." (204). Blair values the natural over the affected. He explains: "The capital direction, which ought never to be forgotten, is to copy the proper tones for expressing every sentiment from those which Nature dictates to us, in conversation with others; to speak always with her voice; and not to form to ourselves a fantastic public manner, from an absurd fancy of its being more beautiful than a natural one" (44).

Wollstonecraft on Delivery

Wollstonecraft consistently values the natural over the affected in all aspects of her theoretical work. She turns to nature as the source of her ideas and the principles that guide her inquiry. Natural landscapes also take up a therapeutic function; she turns to them when she needs to be revitalized. She explains: "[A]fter having been fatigued with the sight of insipid grandeur and the slavish ceremonies that with cumbrous pomp supplied the place of domestic affections, I have turned to some other scene to relieve my eye by resting it on the refreshing green everywhere scattered by Nature" (259). Wollstonecraft values purity, truthfulness and natural order, and thus by extension, we might arguably expect her to sanction the use of natural gestures, and tones that authentically express her ideas and sentiment. She claims: "Nature must ever be the standard of taste" (*VRW* 253). In her critique of rhetorics of sensibility she protests that too much attention is "being turned to show instead of substance" (*VRW* 250). Catherine Macaulay's delivery is offered as a model for imitation, as she writes with "a sober energy" and "vital heat" that is authentic (210).

Wollstonecraft reflects upon her own delivery in the following passage: "I might have expressed this conviction in a lower key, but I am afraid it would have been the whine of affectation, and not the faithful expression of my feelings, of the clear result which experience and reflection have led me to draw" (*VRW* 103). She notes: "[S]hould I express my conviction with the energetic emotions that I feel whenever I think of the subject, the dictates of experience and reflection will be felt by my readers" (*VRW* 82). She wishes to "persuade by the force of her arguments" rather than "dazzle by the

elegance of [her]language" (*VRW* 82). Her delivery may be forceful and passionate but never artificially so. Theoretically, she believes that the vital heat that drives her delivery fixes stronger impressions upon the minds of her readers; thus, she forcefully delivers the "truth" of her discourse.

Conclusion

In her treatment of the canons, Wollstonecraft negotiates between classical precepts, the epistemological tenets of the New Science and those principles and strategies sanctioned within the revolutionary rhetorics of the era. She keeps close company with the New Rhetoricians as she shifts her critical attention across the canons.

In her treatment of invention, she rejects community knowledge and classical topoi as the source of one's ideas and lines of argument. Empirical inquiry replaces invention. Inquiry is a natural process, materially driven and thus universally employed. All individuals have the right and the responsibility to inquire into the nature of things, to develop a fund of ideas and to participate in private and public exchanges. Inquiry is also not enthusiasm, nor the false association of ideas. There is a natural and thus proper method for generating ideas; unexamined ideas do not constitute knowledge. Inquiry may also be used for the refutation of false ideas and the critique of community knowledge, ancient beliefs or unexamined "truths."

Wollstonecraft's principles of arrangement arguably reiterate Ciceronian guidelines in form, function and spirit. She respects classical dicta and utilizes Ciceronian heads within her polemics. She also departs from these formal constraints by relaxing the borders between the parts. Rather than interpreting such border blurring as a structural

failure, we might understand her digressions as legitimate according to other standards. New Rhetoricians call for more natural patterns of arrangement following the inductive patterns of the New Science. Revolutionary theorists associate an unpolished arrangement with the higher "truth" of the rhetor's message. Wollstonecraft acknowledges her digressions as both more natural and more "truthful." She always takes "the necessary path to truth."

Lockean language theory influences Wollstonecraft's understanding of an effective style. She values order, clarity and accuracy. Like the New Rhetoricians, she calls for a plain and natural style. She cautions against deceptive language practices; she searches for simple unadorned truth and thus links the integrity of language with civic virtue and morality. She uses prose models to illustrate positive and contrastive examples of her preferred principles. Wollstonecraft models her methods for stylistic instruction. She demonstrates how to restore integrity to language as she strips Edmund Burke's prose of its deceptive garb.

Memory is a storehouse for one's ideas and a faculty that helps the rhetor accumulate and then accurately recall ideas as discursive matter. Through right inquiry ideas follow a chain of associative links that deliver them accurately to memory as a storehouse. Ideas that enter accompanied by strong sensory impressions last longer because they make deeper impressions. Upon recall, the associative links are triggered and then sustained with a mechanical exactness. They both enter and depart from memory following the dictates of right inquiry and natural cognitive relations. Wollstonecraft aligns herself with the New Rhetoricians in her treatment of memory according to the principles of faculty and association psychology.

Nature is the standard for the delivery of one's discourse. Nature dictates proper voice and tone and gesture as suited to authentic exchanges. Every sentiment has its proper medium for authentic expression. Rhetors should guard against the affected and the unnatural. A forceful and passionate delivery may enhance the truth of one's discourse but not if reason does not monitor delivery and thus mark one's voice tone and gesture as legitimate.

Conclusion

On The Use of Significant Words

This study has argued that Mary Wollstonecraft's contribution to the modern tradition as a minor tradition within the western theoretical line consists of two divergent theories of rhetorical production: a *lesser* rhetoric of sensibility that she admonishes women to refigure, and a *reformed* modern rhetoric that stands conceptually as her hybrid. Her reformed modern theory is arguably a hybrid in its eclectic merger of the following elements: principles and strategies drawn from the classical tradition that precedes her; values and strategies employed by revolutionary rhetoricians of her era; modern epistemological tenets and criteria for inquiry, knowledge and truth; and, finally, radical feminist principles and aims that locate women as knowledgeable subjects within the western rhetorical tradition as she understands it. More concisely, her work is best understood as feminist, revolutionary and modern.

As a feminist, Wollstonecraft speaks on "behalf of her sex" when she strategically assumes her subject position as a woman who-would-be a rhetor. She uses the master's tools—reason and rhetorical discourse—refigured as *human* tools, to insert women as rhetorical subjects into the modern tradition, and to mark women's knowledge as legitimate evidence. Wollstonecraft maintains her identity as a woman who reasons while she defends women's right to "wrangle" in the public sphere.

Her work is also revolutionary; that is, good rhetors use their discourse in the service of sociopolitical reform and for moral purposes that extend across class lines and gender lines. She herself uses her rhetorical expertise to call for the radical reform of

"female manners" in both private and public domains. Her theoretical project focuses upon the revolutionary potential of women's rhetorical practice within the fuller range of female manners as *cultural practice* during the eighteenth century. As a revolutionary rhetor, Wollstonecraft discharges her polemics with a fiery urgency that reveals her passionate commitment to egalitarian causes and her sincere belief that her words, women's words by extension, may signify—they may resonate with "truth."

Finally, her work is thoroughly modern in that she embraces the empirical epistemology of the New Science as delineated primarily by John Locke in his *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. In her treatment of both the pisteis and canons, she aligns herself theoretically with George Campbell and Hugh Blair as dominant figures of the modern rhetorical tradition. Beyond this, Wollstonecraft's theoretical project may be understood as an intellectual enterprise whose modern aim is to refigure and revitalize women's aptitude for signification within the western tradition of rhetorical discourse.

The struggle for meaning, for truthful signification, is rhetoric's primary charge during the modern era. In a *Vindication of the Rights of Man*, Wollstonecraft expresses her own desire for truthful signification. She notes—"for I like to use significant words" (46). She understands the ability to secure meaning through language as a signifying medium as that which distinguishes humans from animals. The ability to accumulate ideas and to formulate principles out of those ideas is every individual's right and responsibility. Wollstonecraft's theory takes a modern turn as she restores women's right to signify through their appropriation of a reformed and thus more effective mode of rhetorical production. As the moderns cleanse language of the encrustations of time, fashion and custom in an effort to restore human and moral meaning to language, so does

Wollstonecraft cleanse the lesser rhetoric of sensibility of its artificial and deceptive elements and encourage women to signify anew in discursive terms that are both more human and more moral. No longer are women to acquiesce to oppressive cultural forces formulated by those specious ideologues of the culture of sensibility who would bind women's signification to bodily terms that limit women's civic influence to their strategic ability to entice men to speak on their behalf. Instead, women may follow her lead and reform themselves and society by extension as they develop their faculties and assert their natural right to use significant words.

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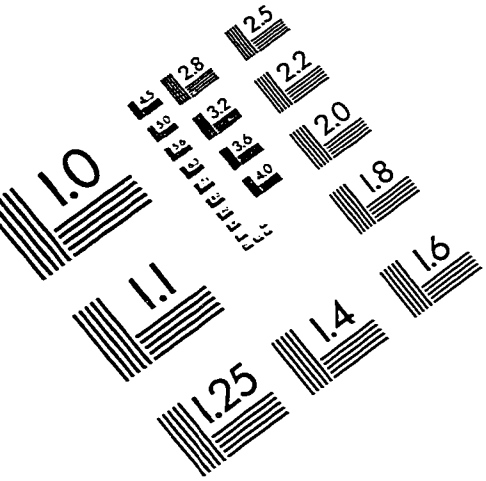
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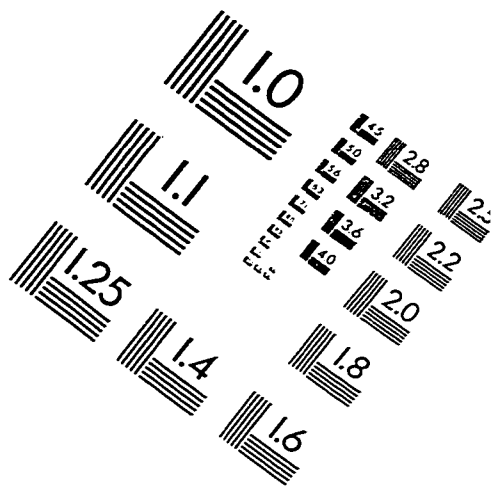
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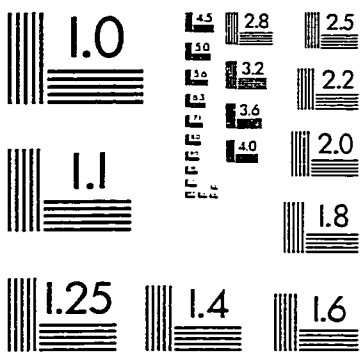
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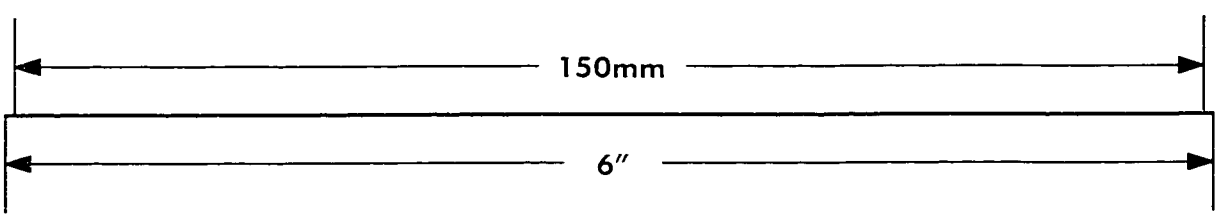
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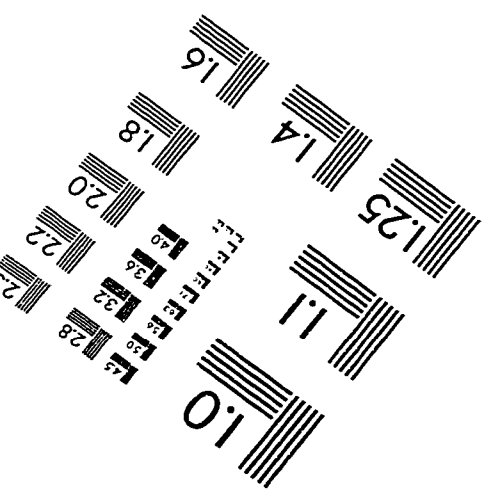
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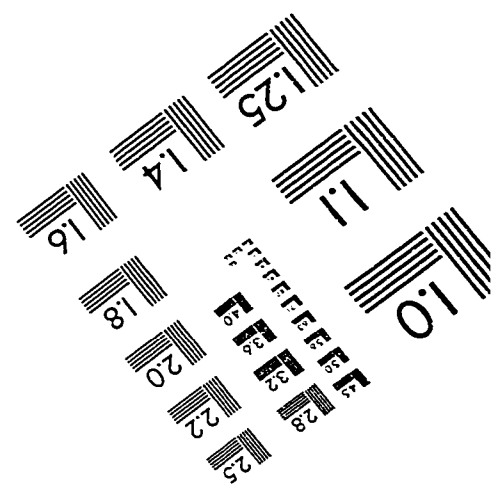












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