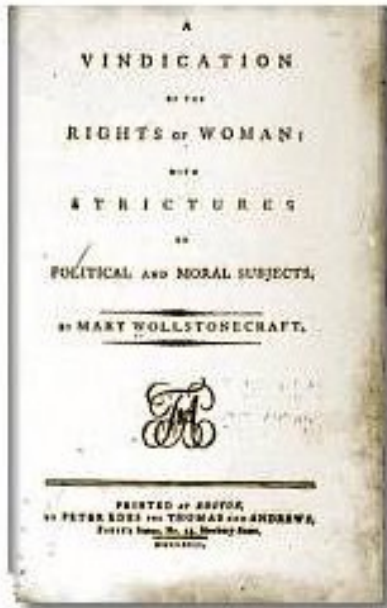


## **ECHOES of the ATLANTIC REVOLUTION**

*Enlightenment ideas influenced various reform movements that challenged existing notions of social relations, which contributed to the expansion of rights seen in expanded suffrage and the abolition of slavery. (5.3.1) The global spread of European political and social thought and the increasing number of rebellions stimulated new transnational ideologies and solidarities. Demands for women's suffrage and an emergent feminism challenged political and gender hierarchies. (5.3.IV)*



### **Mary Wollstonecraft ~ Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)**

*Written by the 18<sup>th</sup> century British feminist, this is one of the early works of feminist philosophy. In it, Wollstonecraft responds to those education and political theorists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century who did not believe that women should have an education. She argues that women ought to have an education commensurate with their position in society, claiming that women are essential to the nation because they educate children and because they could be “companions” to their husbands, rather than mere wives. Instead of viewing women as ornaments to their society or property to be traded in marriage, Wollstonecraft maintains that they are human beings deserving of the same fundamental rights as men. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as male suffrage was gradually extended in many countries, women became increasingly active in the quest for their own voting rights. Not until 1893, however, in New Zealand, did women achieve suffrage on a national level, yet American (1920) and British (1928) women did not win the same rights until the end of World War I*

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## Chapter II. The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed

To account for, and excuse the tyranny of man, many ingenious arguments have been brought forward to prove, that the two sexes, in the acquirement of virtue, ought to aim at attaining a very different character: or, to speak explicitly, women are not allowed to have sufficient strength of mind to acquire what really deserves the name of virtue. Yet it should seem, allowing them to have souls, that there is but one way appointed by Providence to lead mankind to either virtue or happiness. If then women are not a swarm of ephemeron triflers, why should they be kept in ignorance? Men complain, and with reason, of the follies and caprices of our sex, when they do not keenly satirize our headstrong passions and groveling vices...

...Behold, I should answer, the natural effect of ignorance! The mind will ever be unstable that has only prejudices to rest on, and the current will run with destructive fury when there are no barriers to break its force. Women are told from their infancy, and taught by example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives...





### **William Wilberforce ~ Abolition Speech (1789)**

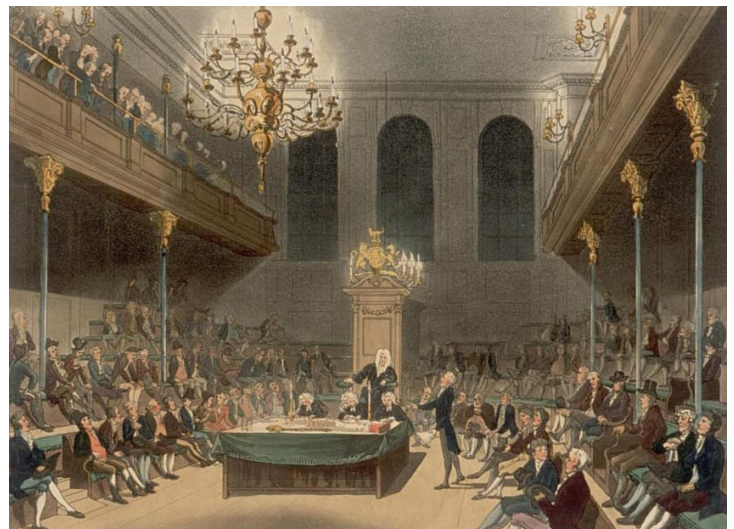
*Wilberforce was an English politician who became the voice of the abolition movement in Parliament. Around 1785, he underwent a gradual but intense religious conversion, remaining in Parliament and deciding to serve God in public life. In early 1787 he was introduced to Thomas Clarkson who had written an *Essay on Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1785), thus beginning an active collaboration that would last over fifty years. This document excerpts one of two accounts of his famous speech, delivered in the House of Commons on May 12, 1789. In that year Wilberforce began to regularly introduce bills in Parliament to ban the Slave Trade. Finally, in March 1807, the *Abolition of the Slave Trade Act* abolished the slave trade in the British colonies.*

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As soon as ever I had arrived thus far in my investigation of the slave trade, I confess to you sir, so enormous so dreadful, so irremediable did its wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for the abolition. A trade founded in iniquity, and carried on as this was, must be abolished, let the policy be what it might, let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest till I had effected its abolition.

Such enormities as these having once come within my knowledge I should not have been faithful to the sight of my eyes, the use of my senses and my reason, if I had shrunk from attempting the abolition: it is true, indeed, my mind was harassed beyond measure; for when West-India planters and merchants retorted it upon me that it was the British parliament had authorized this trade; when they said to me, "It is your acts of parliament, it is your encouragement, it is faith in your laws, in your protection, that had tempted us into this trade, and has now made it necessary to us." It has become difficult, indeed, what to answer; if the ruin of the West-Indies threatened us on the one hand, while this load of wickedness pressed upon us the other, the alternative, indeed, was awful. It naturally suggested itself to me, how strange it was that providence, however mysterious in its ways, should so have constituted the world, as to make one part of it depend for its existence on the depopulation and devastation of another. I could not therefore, help, distrusting the arguments of those, who insisted that the plundering of Africa was necessary for the cultivation of the West-Indies. I could not believe that the same Being who forbids rapine and bloodshed, had made rapine and bloodshed necessary to the well-being of any part of his universe. I felt a confidence in this principle, and took the resolution to act upon it: soon, indeed, the light broke in upon me....

....Having heard all of this you may choose to look the other way but you can never again say that you did not know.



### **Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) QUESTIONS**

- What is the most important phrase in this text? Why is that phrase important?
- What does Wollstonecraft say about the “acquisition of virtue” in the first paragraph?
- Are women/girls a “swarm of ephemeral triflers?”
- What is Wollstonecraft saying here about intelligence and ignorance? And social skills?
- What does she imply about the relationship between strength of mind and happiness?
- What does the writing style (choice of words, tone, length of sentences) suggest to you about this writer?
- What is worth remembering about this text/discussion? About what girls/women have been told historically?
- What are the causes of gender stereotyping? Explain the effects of gender stereotyping on society.

### **Wilberforce’s Abolition Speech to Parliament (1789) QUESTIONS**

- What is the most important phrase in this text? Why is that phrase important?
- How does Wilberforce describe and characterize slavery?
- What moral decision does Wilberforce put to British parliament?
- What impact does religion have on Wilberforce’s motives and methods? Identify vocabulary within the source to demonstrate your answer.
- What word or phrase best describes the tone of Wilberforce’s speech?