

Högskolan Dalarna
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Teacher: Irene Gilsenan Nordin

Female Style and Rhetoric:
Mary Wollstonecraft and Margaret Fuller
Arguing the Rights of Woman

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Mari Berg
Bogserv.14
784 77 Borlänge

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Introduction

The English writer Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), and her American counterpart Margaret Fuller (1810-50) have contributed considerably to the canon of woman's literature. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft contributed with strong and straightforward arguments for women's equal rights to education and rights to develop and practice their own reasoning mind. In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), Fuller continued Wollstonecraft's strive to establish equality between man and woman. Fuller pursued Wollstonecraft's line of arguments, retaining Wollstonecraft's ideas but refining the arguments. Both Wollstonecraft and Fuller wanted to encourage women to be self-reliant, self-supportive and dependent on themselves and not men. The features that Wollstonecraft and Fuller highlight in *A Vindication* and *Woman* are important signs of a beginning feminism, and these literary works certainly deserve to be regarded as part of the awakening modern feminism.

Claiming space in patriarchal hierarchies, as Wollstonecraft and Fuller did, when arguing their feminist opinions, meant that they faced great difficulties. Wollstonecraft and Fuller were met with hostility and received harsh contemporary critique for their radical ideas,¹ and still today some critics fail to recognise the greatness of their pioneering and inventive writings. One example of this is the well-known critic Susan Gubar, who thinks that Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* portrays femininity "like a malady" (Gubar 136). On the contrary, there is plenty of evidence in both *A Vindication* and *Woman* that these writers were well aware of what they were challenging, namely, a male dominated society which restricted the opportunities for women. However, the work of these women has also been praised and appreciated, especially by more recent critics, for example Marie Urbanski and Annette Kolodny. In addition, it is not so controversial to talk about past times and long since

¹ See, for example, Jennifer Lorch's *Mary Wollstonecraft: The Making of a Radical Feminist*, and Larry J. Reynolds' edition of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*.

deceased authors, as it is to discuss contemporary occurrences of rebellious literature. Often new ideas have to fight against ruling paradigms and to write about one's own time perceiving egalitarian flaws in one's society is difficult. However, Wollstonecraft and Fuller succeeded greatly in contributing rebellious arguments for woman's liberation, when they demanded equal rights to education and claimed divinity of the female soul.

This essay sets out to place Mary Wollstonecraft and Margaret Fuller against their historical frameworks and to compare Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* against their historical backgrounds. This essay will in first hand examine their choices of styles and rhetoric. Secondly, attention will be paid to their feminist efforts, their striving to accomplish success in writing, and their great desire for revolution in manners and morals in their contemporary societies. These topics are still interesting today, as the resistance they met as women writers is still a burning question. Furthermore, as the essay deals with highly ethical questions, some well-known philosophers will be employed in the arguments. The contemporary critic and philosopher Martha C Nussbaum is an important source, because she combines ethics and literature theory, which is exactly what feminist writing is about. Nussbaum's question "How should one live?" (23) is an ageless question addressed down through the ages in all kinds of cultures, and it will also be touched upon in this essay. Another important philosopher and psychoanalyst of today is Luce Irigaray who underlines the importance of the question "*Who are you?*" (14). This is a question, which, according to Irigaray, should be asked to the "other," that is, the suppressed female side of humanity. Irigaray sees this question as the most important question men should start to ask women. Finally, the historian Michel Foucault's theory of the history of sexuality will be consulted, when discussing power related questions. Foucault describes how the hierarchy of power works in our Western society, and his theory helps in throwing light on why patriarchal traditions are so difficult to break.

Even though Wollstonecraft and Fuller have proven to be of such great values to the canon of woman's literature, and that they have influenced the woman's movement, as well as the fact that there are obvious historical relations between them, few comparisons of their works have been carried out.² The critic, Marie Urbanski, has in general terms compared the two writers, and this essay offers an extension of Urbanski's comparison, focusing on historical backgrounds and choice of style. First historical backgrounds and reasons for choice of styles will be given for both Wollstonecraft and Fuller. This will be followed by a chapter which introduces a historical general view of problems for women writers in a patriarchal society. After that follows comparisons of similarities and differences between Wollstonecraft and Fuller's approaches to the woman's issue in *A Vindication* and *Woman*. Finally, a conclusion of Wollstonecraft and Fuller's aims and styles will be carried out.

Historical Background - Mary Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft lived during a time of great changes. This was the Age of Reason, when great masses of people in Europe began to react against injustices and oppression. The literature style at that time was still influenced by John Locke's³ ideas about the conduct of man, stressing the fact that man was the product of his environment. Wollstonecraft died when the Age of Reason was developing into Romanticism, and the philosophic atmosphere was permeated by the idea of revolution. Surrounding herself with a circle of philosophical and revolutionary pioneers, Wollstonecraft associated with intellectuals such as the radical philosopher Dr Richard Price, the liberal publisher Joseph Jonson, the thinker Thomas Paine, the painter Henri Fuseli, the atheistic writer William Godwin and the radical Catholic priest Alexender Geddes. At the time of her tragic death, due to the aftermath of childbirth, she was at the height of a successful career as a pioneering woman writer who had published several

² To my knowledge, the only studies carried out are those by the critics Lois N Magner, Nancy M Theoriot, Marie Urbanski, Debra Ann Hartley and Margaret M McGavran.

important works. Moreover, she was strongly impressed during her visit to France by the ideas of the French Revolution. There, she had the opportunity to see in reality how ideas of equality could be implemented in society. Until then, she had been greatly influenced by Rousseau's ideas of the virtues of man,⁴ but during the French Revolution she came to insights that led her to re-evaluate Rousseau's concepts. She experienced how the new French egalitarian laws favoured man but excluded woman. She felt disappointed and her thinking started to develop in new directions. She rejected Rousseau's ideas about woman being inferior to man, and that woman was only created to please man. Thus her personal longings for equality between the genders began to develop, and she undertook the task of enlarging Rousseau's concepts to include woman. Not only was she critical of Rousseau, but also of other writers like Milton and Dr Gregory, whom she saw as responsible for diminishing woman's sphere and depicting woman as an inferior and unintellectual being. Hence, Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication* to persuade her contemporaries that woman had the equal capacity of unfolding a virtuous mind, if only she was allowed to practise reasoning powers and receive proper education, as men were allowed to do.⁵

These ideas of Wollstonecraft made her a highly controversial figure of her time. While she was at the same time part of her society, she also stood apart, observing what we nowadays see as obvious injustices between the genders. However, these injustices were not as evident to Wollstonecraft's contemporaries, or as the critic Catherine N. Parke's discerningly puts it: "It is paradoxical, but not historically unique, that Wollstonecraft's revolutionary insights are sometimes difficult to see precisely because they have become part of the way we see"(103). Furthermore, it is important to remember that the shortcomings we now might see in Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* probably are signs of that one cannot be totally untouched by

³ John Locke (1632-1704), philosopher, economist, political theorist and writer.

⁴ Rousseau's *Emilius*.

one's society and that one writer cannot be expected to perceive all the weak points of society. In retrospect, it is easier for following generations to sum up different streams of thoughts at any particular time period and to judge who and what had influence on a society then.

Wollstonecraft's Choice of Style

Even today, there are critics who attack Wollstonecraft and depict her as an eccentric fringe figure. The well-known contemporary critic, Susan Gubar, interprets Wollstonecraft's choice of arguments and style as signs of misogyny. An example of Wollstonecraft's seemingly acceptance of the ruling degradation of woman, which she in fact was arguing against, might well be the phrase "[. . .] there is little reason to fear that women will acquire too much courage or fortitude, for their apparent inferiority with respect to bodily strength must render them in some degree dependent on men in the various relations of life [. . .]" (Wollstonecraft 83). This kind of phrase does not necessarily mean that Wollstonecraft was a misogynist, but rather that she did not see all points of patriarchal suppression. Moreover, is it not enough that she was sufficiently brave to battle against the egalitarian flaws that she saw? Might she not have been afraid of being rejected if she had not conformed to at least a part of the prevailing opinions? Excusingly she explains in her introduction to *A Vindication* that "[y]et, because I am a woman, I would not lead my readers to suppose that I mean violently to agitate the contested question respecting the quality or inferiority of the sex [. . .] I shall stop a moment to deliver, in a few words, my opinion"(80). Her strategy of style might have included conformation to parts of the ruling paradigm to affect readers to take into consideration what she had to say, in other words, she knew that she as a feminist woman writer had to veil her arguments in a weave of accepted and new ideas. In spite of her efforts to try to weave

⁵ Biographical notes on Wollstonecraft may be found, for example, in Jennifer Lorch's *Mary Wollstonecraft: The Making of a Radical Feminist*.

together a proposal, she faced harsh critique, which was cast at her in epithets like "hyena in petticoats", and "philosophic wanton" (Finke 155), by her contemporary critics.

Gubar continues this attack on Wollstonecraft, and pays little attention to historical facts when she asserts in her article "It Takes One to Know One": "Though I will be examining a pervasive contradiction in her life and work, in no way do I mean to diminish or disparage [Wollstonecraft's] achievements "(Gubar 135). The contradiction that Gubar points out is that Wollstonecraft at the same time argues for the woman's rights and describes the feminine in condescending terms. However, the contradiction that Gubar notices is rather a sign of Wollstonecraft associating female duties with restriction, and Gubar does diminish Wollstonecraft when she calls her a misogynist. When Gubar chooses to project Wollstonecraft as one individual person who is a misogynist, she evidently overlooks the influence of society. Isolating Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* from its historical context and reducing its contents to what kind of person Wollstonecraft is, makes Gubar's view seem limited. It is crucial to take historical facts into consideration, since all persons through all times are born and moulded as children of their time.

Considering historical facts, it is likely that Wollstonecraft was afraid of being looked upon as an unconscious and inferior female. Wollstonecraft sought to avoid the contemporary stereotypes, for example Rousseau's Sophia, and therefore, she asserted her choice of style as follows:

I shall disdain to cull my phrase or polish my style. I aim at being useful, and sincerity will render me uneffected; for wishing rather to persuade by the force of my language, I shall not waste my time in rounding periods, or fabricating the turgid bombast of artificial feelings, which coming from the head, never reach the heart. I shall be employed about things, not words! And, anxious to render my sex more respectable members of society, I shall try to avoid that *flowery diction* which has slid from essays into novels, and from novels into familiar letters and conversations. (italics added) (82)

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft asserts that she wants to avoid those "[. . .] pretty feminine phrases, which the men condescendingly use to soften our slavish dependence [. . .]" (82). Simplicity was a major aim of Wollstonecraft, as she followed Hugh Blair's rhetorical advice (Allen 320), and she wanted to be forceful, not *flowery*. She wanted to be a part of the male intellectual society, and not merely seen as an inferior woman, thrown upon the intellectually limited female society. Therefore, she argued, inspired by Dr Price, that sexual difference was only bodily and that the soul was sexless.⁶ Moreover, the critic Julia Allen points out reasons for Wollstonecraft's choice of style, as follows: "She operates within Blair's dual rhetoric of both production and critique, using his system to create arguments-thus demonstrating her eloquence-and also taking advantage of his prescriptions to attack the discourses of those with whom she disagrees, showing her powers of discernment and taste" (321). Wollstonecraft's choice of using Blair's rhetoric has led to recent critics regarding her as blunt and even as a misogynist. It seems like the historical impediments of Wollstonecraft have tended to become somewhat forgotten, as time has passed and the conditions of society have changed. Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* is nowadays not so deeply rebellious as in her time, and what remains obvious are those conditions that Wollstonecraft did not revise, and besides, her style has become old-fashioned as Blair is no more the leading rhetorical figure.

It is advisable to take into consideration what the contemporary conditions were during Wollstonecraft's time. There were not many different stylistic or rhetoric models to follow and if one wanted to get published, the prevailing style and rhetoric was male.⁷ In spite of her provocative feminist ideas, Wollstonecraft succeeded in finding a liberal publisher who valued her work worthy to publish. Wollstonecraft wanted to improve the conditions for

⁶ The critic Julia Allen quotes Dr Price and points out that, "divided mind from body, claiming that the soul "is inseparably united with knowledge and virtue, which are themselves inseparable." [. . .] It is this principle that allows Wollstonecraft to detach the concepts of masculinity and femininity from male and female bodies" (322).

women, which is very clear when reading *A Vindication*, and how could she have managed to reach her contemporary audience without confirming at least partwise to the accepted norms of her time? There was very little openness for women writers and the woman's issue, without claiming a deviating way of writing, such as a female style opposing the prevailing male writing style. It was challenging enough to present her defiant view of the oppression towards the female gender.

Historical Background -Margaret Fuller

Margaret Fuller's father read approvingly Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* when he was a young man at Harvard University. Later when he became a father, he raised Margaret Fuller, following Wollstonecraft's advice on education for females. Consequently, Margaret's father tutored her in the contemporary tradition of male education. She was taught philosophy, Latin, modern languages and literatures, especially German. Fuller lived in America during the Transcendentalist period and her work was greatly influenced by the transcendentalist thoughts of the perfectability of man and the belief in individual growth. The foundation of Transcendentalism is to be found in ancient, Eastern and Western metaphysics and in the literature of the philosopher, Immanuel Kant, who says that all cognition is transcendental. He implies that all truth lies beyond the human ability for perception, such as formulation of thought or reflections of observations. Inspired by Kant, Transcendentalism developed into a philosophy concerned about universal principles and primary laws of mind, which form the basis for absolute truth. Fuller focused on the individual's divine nature, believing that regardless of gender, the soul was immortal and when given the right stimulation would develop spiritually. Summarising Fuller's aims, seen from a transcendentalist point of view, what she wanted to achieve when she wrote *Woman* was to reconstruct society based on

⁷ According to Julia Allen, Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was the only rhetoric text widely available to members of the developing middle class in Wollstonecraft's time. See Allen 320.

transcendentalist ideal laws (Urbanski 98). In addition to the transcendentalist influences, she found inspiration in the idealism of Goethe, the English Romantics and ancient Greece. Other important writers who influenced her writing were Fourier, Sand, Sedgewick, Swedenborg and Sue.

Besides the literary and philosophical influences, Fuller got impressions from associating with many other contemporary writers and philosophers, such as, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne and William Henry Channing. Emerson was one of Fuller's closest friends, and it is not easy to say who influenced whom of these two great writers. In the beginning Emerson was the mentor of Fuller, but soon they associated as equals.

Philosophically Emerson, just like Fuller, put strong emphasis on individualism, that each person was unique and should spiritually develop his or her soul. An important concept that Emerson wrote about was self-reliance, which he thought would lead to revolution in religion, education, modes of living, relations and all kinds of different pursuits. The intercontextual relationships between Emerson and Fuller's works are apparent, and the theme of self-reliance can easily be seen in Fuller's *Woman*. However, their friendship was not only supportive, there were actually elements of ambivalence as well, which would become an obvious fact after Fuller's death, when Emerson published her memoirs and in some ways smeared her reputation.

Between 1839-1844, Fuller held her Boston Conversations, a series of classes in conversation for well-educated and thinking women, who wanted to grow intellectually and to speak for themselves. These conversations were a very important occurrence in America, as it was the first time that women had meetings of equal intellectual level as men. These meetings are generally considered to have inspired the emergence of women's clubs and conventions in America,⁸ and the overcoming of women's intellectual isolation. Many of those women participating were involved in the transcendentalist movement, for example, Mrs Lydia Maria

Child, Mrs Lidian Emerson, Mrs Anna Ward, Mrs Elizabeth Peabody, Mrs Sophia Dana Ripley and others. Very likely, Fuller received valuable response on her theories during these conversations, and that response probably helped her to develop the contents of *Woman*. Another major influence on Fuller's thinking was the *Dial*, which she agreed to edit in 1839. The *Dial* was founded in order to publish essays and poems written by the transcendental group. The Transcendentalists felt a need of a freer press than the existing press. It was in the *Dial* that Fuller first published her article *The Great Lawsuit. Man versus Men; Woman versus Women*, which she later developed into the book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*.

Fuller's Choice of Style

Orestes A. Brownson was one of Fuller's contemporary critics and a member of the transcendentalist club. He attacked her choice of style and her way of arguing in his article "Miss Fuller and Reformers" in the following way:

[. . .] Miss Fuller is an *artiste* only in her admiration of art, for she has little artistic skill. Nothing is or can be less artistic than the book before us, which, properly speaking, is no book [. . .] It has neither beginning, middle nor end, and may be read backwards as well as forwards, and from the centre and outwards each way, without affecting the continuity of the thought or the succession of ideas. (Fuller 213)

It is known that Brownson disliked Fuller and when Brownson's offer to publish the Transcendentalists' essays in his journal (*Brownson's Quartely Review*), was rejected by Fuller and Emerson he undoubtedly must have felt humiliated. On top of this refusal, Fuller was chosen as editor for the *Dial*. Not only did Brownson feel rejected as an editor, but probably he as well felt as a man, being compared and found inferior to a woman. These facts in combination with Fuller's choosing to avoid writing in the male dominating style and

⁸ These womens clubs have transformed since then, and are today anti-feminist.

rhetoric, led to Brownson degrading and totally failing to comprehend the whole point of *Woman*. Fuller was very conscious of her choice of style. She made an active choice to try to establish a new kind of style, a more female style, as will be shown below, when she wrote *Woman*. Brownson continues his outrage over Fuller's style when he bursts out in the question: "What does she want?"(Fuller 214). Without realising it, he hits the main argument of Fuller. This is precisely the kind of question Fuller wanted to raise, that men should start to ask what women want, and to open up new fields of pursuits for women. This issue might be carried even more further, Irigaray expresses the very main core of the problem that Fuller addressed:

The only reply that can be given to the question of the meaning of the text is: read, perceive, feel [. . .] *Who are you?* What would be a more pertinent question, provided that it does not collapse into a demand of identity card or an autobiographical anecdote. The answer would be. *And who are you?* Can we meet? Talk? Love? Create something together? Thanks to which milieu? (Irigaray 14)

Irigaray's argument above clarifies how Fuller wanted the meeting between man and woman to be. Open questions put to open hearts and minds in order to create the atmosphere for men and women to have the opportunity of getting to know each other, without restrictions. Fuller exerts this view, when she points out: "That now the time has come when a clearer vision and better action are possible. When man and woman may regard one another as brother and sister, the pillars of one porch, the priests of one worship"(101). Consequently, what Brownson misses when he dismisses Fuller's *Woman* as unimportant and nonsense, is the opportunity to receive answers on his question of what the woman writer wants, and to truly meet femininity, because that is the concept that Fuller strives to convey to her readers. Instead, Brownson keenly propagates the conservation of patriarchy, claiming that woman is inferior to man, created by God to the man's pleasure and comfort (Fuller 215). Brownson

maintains Rousseau's disparaging mannerism, and is so rooted in patriarchal traditions that he cannot see any other alternative way of writing, living or asking. He is unable to leave space for the "other" side of humanity, femininity.

Fuller's choice of style was meant to avoid male style and rhetoric and instead to find a new female style by recapturing ideas of ancient Greek myths and literature, which could promote an emerging female style. Fuller, as Wollstonecraft, was influenced by reading rhetoric literature, Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*. According to the critic Annette Kolodny, Whately suggested that students should learn to express their own thoughts in a natural and rational way (Kolodny 212). Fuller followed Whately's advice, and encouraged women to express their ideas clearly and accurately. However, Whately did not expect that his advice should be followed strictly, deviation could be defensible when greater results could be reached from a different approach (213). Fuller took Whately's rhetorical method to heart, and exercised it extensively when writing *Woman*. She followed her own way of bringing forward arguments, trying to clearly express her thoughts, and deviated when she saw it necessary. Deviation from Whately's Rhetoric is very apparent in her choice of style, as she did not want to write in a male strict and structured writing style (216). She searched for a feminine form, more vaguely outlined, and without start, centre or end. Until recently, critics have failed to understand the conscious choice of style that Fuller made. One example is the critic Nancy Theriot, who praises Fuller's *Woman*, but is confused by Fuller's style. Theriot thinks that, "[a]s a result of her difficult style much of her theory is obscured, and even the clear aspects are so intermingled with the vague, that a definite idea of her total message is almost impossible"(573). It was only when the recent critics Urbanski and Kolodny started to point out reasons for why Fuller chose to avoid male rhetoric, that critics began to alter their views of Fuller's style.

The critic Judith Mattson Bean writes about how Fuller already early in her life struggled with choice of style, Fuller wrote to a friend that "For all tides of life that flow within me, I am dumb and ineffectual when it comes to casting my thought into a form. No old one suits me. If I could invent one, it seems to me the pleasure of creation would make it possible for me to write [. . .] I love best to be a woman; but womanhood is at present too straitly-bounded to give me scope" ("A *Presence* among Us" 81). Later in her life, Fuller discovered how ancient Greek literature could be used to create her new style. This point goes unnoticed by several critics of Fuller's time, and is even missed by some contemporary critics today, for example Theriot. Most likely, these critics expect a male style and rhetoric. This misunderstanding of Fuller's carefully chosen style has led to degradation and rejection of *Woman*. In spite of that Fuller suffered of prejudiced defamation, because of her being a feminist woman writer with an own created style, she has nowadays regained her important position as a feminist woman writer. Fuller is now widely regarded as America's first major female intellectual.

Women Writers' hardships

As implicated in previous chapters, the reception of women writers has not always been favourable. In *The Madwoman in the Attic* Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert write about how women writers have been held back, ridiculed and seen as inferior. They argue that the pen and text belong to the tradition of the author/father. In Freudian terms they explain how both the boy and girl expect to take the father's place, but "*only the boy will one day be allowed to do so*" (Gilbert 49), implying that the girl will experience the restricted sphere of females and that males have access to a larger sphere. Gubar and Gilbert think that the tradition of the author as male has to be challenged by the woman writer, who has to redefine the terms of socialization, find female models and overcome the painful experience that her gender is an

obstacle. Wollstonecraft and Fuller succeed in all these three cases. Both Wollstonecraft and Fuller redefine society in *A Vindication* and *Woman* and they certainly try to manifest that their gender is of equal importance. In the case of role models, Wollstonecraft's outspoken precursor was Catherine Macaulay (Wollstonecraft 210), who also refused Rousseau's inferior view of women. Fuller, on the other hand, certainly found a precursor in Wollstonecraft (Fuller 44).

Regarding woman's problem claiming space in the patriarchal society, Irigaray asserts that "The problem is that, by denying the mother her generative power and by wanting to be the sole creator, the Father, according to our culture, superimposes upon the archaic world of the flesh a universe of language [langue] and symbols which cannot take root in it except as in the form of that which makes a hole in the bellies of women and in the site of their identity"(Irigaray 41). Thus, how are women to fill up that hole of identity? This is the question that both Wollstonecraft and Fuller try to answer. Wollstonecraft clearly formulates her view as follows: "Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience [. . .] their exertions should be to *unfold their own faculties*, and acquire the dignity of conscious virtue" (italics added) (107-09). Fuller's view then is that, "[w]hat woman needs is not as a woman to act or to rule, but as a nature grow, as an intellect to discern, as a soul to live freely and unimpeded, to *unfold such powers* as were given her when we left our common home" (italics added) (20). Wollstonecraft and Fuller seem to carry the same aim, that women must *unfold* their own faculties/powers, but when it comes to style and rhetoric, they differ. These differences are interesting to compare and may be related to historical circumstances linked to psychological aspects and ethical questions.

Comparison of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*

Historical Circumstances

The historical settings are different for Wollstonecraft and Fuller. Wollstonecraft lived during the "Age of Reason" and Fuller during Transcendentalism. Wollstonecraft was more of an autodidact, searching knowledge herself, while Fuller was tutored by her father in a Wollstonecraftian mode. Wollstonecraft was influenced very much by Locke and his view of man as a product of his environment (Wollstonecraft 276), while Fuller firmly believed in development of the individual. It should be acknowledged in a historical context like this that, both writers contributed with facts and arguments, which most likely helped to affect prevailing traditions of society to open up previously inaccessible areas to women.

Furthermore, as Fuller had the advantage of being brought up in a Wollstonecraftian manner, she was already from her infant age formed by a feminist upbringing, and as a result, she had a unique position to continue the development of woman's rights. Fuller also undertook the task of developing a new female writing style. The thought of inventing a new style did not occur to Wollstonecraft, instead she tried to win credibility in the existing male writing tradition, and consequently, Wollstonecraft chose to accept the ruling norms of male rhetoric.

These historical differences affected their style of writing extensively. Wollstonecraft's tone leans toward disillusion and indignation, revealing a voice of an outraged idealist: "Rousseau [. . .] insinuates that truth and fortitude, the corner-stone of all human virtue, should be cultivated with certain restrictions, because, with respect to the female character, obedience is the grand lesson which ought to be impressed with unrelating rigour. What Nonsense!"(108). Wollstonecraft's choice of style led to her being accused of expressing her opinions in a contemptuous and blunt way. Fuller's tone, on the other hand, reveals the optimistic expectation of Transcendentalism: "In so far as soul is in her completely developed, all soul is

the same; [. . .] Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism" (68). Fuller's choice of style caused her to be blamed for being unstructured and vague. These reactions on Wollstonecraft and Fuller's styles lead to the question: what is an appropriate style then for a woman writer? That is difficult to answer, when a male, strict and concise style is too blunt, and a female, unstructured and dialogic style is too vague. However, the answer is not to be found in what style that is appropriate, but what kind of prejudices exist against women writers. The rejections of Wollstonecraft and Fuller's *A Vindication and Woman* because of their styles might be a sign of what suppression these women writers suffer from, especially as they discuss ethical and philosophical questions which confront the privileges of men. Moreover, critics, who accuse Wollstonecraft and Fuller of too blunt or vague styles, very likely expect a style adjusted to the male writing tradition, and that the text, in order to be credible, should be delivered by a man. Only the fact that the authors were women, most likely affected some critics to become much more critical before even opening the covers of *A Vindication and Woman*.

Revision of the Fall

The choice of style should not be a question of appropriate style according to the writer's gender. Instead, a much more urgent question should be considered, the philosopher Martha C Nussbaum formulates that question as follows:

How should one write, what words should one select, what forms and structures, and organization, if one is pursuing understanding? [. . .] Style itself makes its claims, expresses its own sense of matters. Literary form is not separable from philosophical content, but is itself, a part of content-an integral part, then, of the search for the statement of truth. (3)

When Wollstonecraft and Fuller chose writing style they knew that their choices would affect the interpretations of their philosophical contents, and to justify their feminist arguments, they

sought truth and support in the divine order as they both address God as the only Supreme Being over man and woman. Wollstonecraft defends her view in the following way:

These [demands] may be termed Utopian dreams. Thanks to that Being who impressed them on my soul, and 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 that enslave my sex. (122)

Fuller asserts her view in the following way: "It is not the transient breath of poetic incense that women want; [. . .] It is for that which is the birthright of every being capable to receive it,-the freedom, the religious, the intelligent freedom of the universe, to use its means; to learn its secret as far as nature has enabled them, with God alone for their guide and their judge" (36). In other words, Wollstonecraft and Fuller dared to oppose the traditional Christian and patriarchal view of woman's lot in life. Traditionally, the Christian view advocated that the divine force had given woman the task to be man's companion, to please and obey him as his subject. Wollstonecraft and Fuller did not approve of this religious orthodox view and they chose to firmly oppose to this, as they saw it, prejudice. Wollstonecraft confronts the literal meaning of the Genesis in the following way:

Probably the prevailing opinion that woman was created for man, may have taken its rise from Moses' poetical story; yet as very few, it is presumed, who have bestowed any serious thought on the subject ever supposed that Eve was, literally speaking, one of Adam's ribs, the deduction must be allowed to fall to the ground, or only be so far admitted as it proves that man, from the remotest antiquity, found it convenient to exert his strength to subjugate his companion, and his invention to show that she ought to have her neck bent under the yoke, because the whole creation was only created for his convenience or pleasure. (109)

In order to win her audience's approval, Wollstonecraft had to convincingly contrast her own deep religious belief to the traditional Christian view. She defied the patriarchal, established

and orthodox writings, such as the Bible and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, because they pictured woman as an inferior, beautiful thing belonging to man, and not as the immortal being as Wollstonecraft thought her to be. She dismissed the biblical interpretations of the Fall as suppressive patriarchal behaviour, which hampered the liberation of woman, and revised the story of the Fall to be an antiquated myth. Her rejection of the biblical patriarchal interpretations shines through in several places in *A Vindication*, and what is more important, she firmly rejects the old orthodox values to assert her own new religious feminine creed. Her philosophy includes woman among the immortal beings, who are divinely guided by God. As she saw it, she had to oppose the orthodox Christian view of woman, because it has hindered, and still does, women through centuries to gain the same rights as men. She had to convince man that woman was of equal dignity regarding eternal divinity. This view is supported by the critic William Richey, who draws the conclusion that Wollstonecraft's revision of the Fall implied that " Eve and her daughters have fallen--not because they have gained a knowledge of good and evil-- but because men have prevented them from acquiring all wholesome forms of wisdom" (36).

Fuller supported Wollstonecraft's view of woman having an immortal soul, and indeed she too objected to the traditional orthodox interpretation of the Fall, as follows:

[. . .] when not one man, in the million, shall I say? No, not in the hundred million, can rise above the belief that woman was made for *man*, when such traits as these are daily forced upon the attention, can we feel that man will always do justice to the interests of woman? Can we think that he takes a sufficiently discerning and religious view of her office and destiny, *ever* to do her justice, except when prompted by sentiment, accidentally or transiently, that is, for the sentiment will vary according to the relations in which he is placed. (20)

This indicates that Wollstonecraft and Fuller carried the same line of argument regarding the traditional patriarchal view of woman as inferior because of divine reasons. However, Fuller

uses biblical references not only to oppose patriarchy, she in fact uses interpretations of the Bible in several quotations to show her own belief in God, for example: "Be ye perfect, [. . .] But, among those who meditate upon this text, there is a great difference of view [. . .]" (9). This means that she expands the new female Christian view, which Wollstonecraft initiated, with help of reinterpretations of the Bible. That is, she shows that the Bible is not only a question of rejection for feminists, but can be used to support a feminist too. So, before she rejects the old orthodox views, she uses biblical references to show that she approves of Christianity, but not as the readers are used to, her aim is to introduce another kind of Christian view. This expansion significantly shows that Fuller takes Wollstonecraft's view a step further.

The Virgin Mother as a Female Model

Another advancement which Fuller makes in the new female concept of Christian religion is that she revises the myth of the Virgin Mary, transforming this Christian front figure into a model for immortal female souls. Fuller thinks that the Virgin Mary is an example of a virtuous mind, who should be acknowledged for her true spirituality. Fuller declares that

Woman self-centred, would never be absorbed by any relation; it would be only an experience to her as to man. It is a vulgar error that love, a love to woman is her whole existence; she also is born for Truth and Love in their universal energy. Would she but assume her inheritance, Mary would not be the only virgin mother. Not Manzoni alone would celebrate in his wife the virgin mind with the maternal wisdom and conjugal affections. The soul is ever young, ever virgin.
(103-04)

Here, it seems as if Fuller tries to bestow the whole human species with the potential of the Virgin Mary's qualities of a pure and spiritual mind. The critic, Kimberley Vanesveld Adams, focuses on Fuller's view on the Madonna, and she thinks that Fuller makes efforts "to

harmonize the roles of the 'Virgin' and 'Wife/Mother' in her writings as well as in her life"(386). This might be a reasonable argument. However, Adams also thinks that Fuller tries to depersonalise God as a fatherly figure, and that she fails to break the patriarchal limits, because Fuller defines woman's divinity within the existing patriarchal representation of God (389). The case is rather this, that Fuller is not trying to establish matriarchy, and thus she does not repersonalise God as feminine. Fuller aims in *Woman* at claiming rights for role models of different energies, masculinity as well as femininity (69). Fuller is, in other words, implying that masculinity and femininity are innate in all souls, and that, in turn is a sign of how Fuller views sexual difference. Fuller seems to believe in androgyny. This point is also supported by the critic Nancy Theriot, who argues for the possibility of Fuller believing in androgyny, in the following way: " [. . .] because all spirit contains these two aspects, there is sameness to spirituality which transcends an individual's gender" (569). This implication leads to the conclusion that Fuller is not discussing a power struggle of which God should rule, a male or a female. Fuller maintains that she does believe men and women to have both qualities, masculinity and femininity, and consequently, it becomes important for Fuller to confirm models that represent both energies. In Fuller's time, masculine characters dominated all areas, therefore, Fuller tries to establish a feminine role model when revising the concept of the Virgin Mother. These are the reasons why Fuller depersonalises God as the only divine source, and represents man and woman in terms of divine energies, emanating from both feminine and masculine divinities. In other words, Fuller wanted to include the feminine energies in the transcendentalist concept of perfectability.

Convictions Differently Vindicated

Fuller did, as mentioned above, extend Wollstonecraft's ideas. While Wollstonecraft mostly revealed her rejection of patriarchal dominion in *A Vindication*, for example those of

Rousseau and Milton, Fuller focused more on finding supportive evidence for her feminist theories in *Woman*. Wollstonecraft probably felt a need to sharply criticise the patriarchal tradition and to assert woman's rights as a natural cause of human capacities, supported by divine arguments, that is, Wollstonecraft found support in natural theories by Locke and the sermons by Dr Price.⁹ Even though, the philosophical sources are evident and outspoken, Wollstonecraft not often quotes or refers to them, she rather focuses on rejecting the sources she disapproves of. Wollstonecraft's main focus on rejection, and sparse attention to backing up her own theories by supporting quotes or examples, is one reason why Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* is easier to dismiss than Fuller's *Woman*. Wollstonecraft's lack of supportive examples and quotations makes her more vulnerable to being ignored. Consequently, when she sets out to win entry into the male writing sphere, she runs the risk of being looked upon as a woman writer who only tries to be masculine, that is, to compete with men on their terms, trying to be accepted within their norms. The problem of Wollstonecraft's attempt of trying to win credibility in the male writing tradition is that it is not a very successful solution to try to be a part of the male writing tradition when one is a woman writer. In this respect it is interesting to notice the view of the psychoanalyst Irigaray, who claims that "[t]here is a genealogy of women within our family: on our mother's side we have mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers, and daughters. Given our exile in the family of the father-husband, we tend to forget this genealogy of women, and we are often persuaded to deny it" (Irigaray 44). Wollstonecraft is not attentive to, or perhaps aware of, the importance of claiming equal rights for women to grow intellectually by shaping a woman's tradition. Instead, she even asserts that, "[f]rom every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women, [. . .] but if it be against the imitation of manly virtues, [. . .] may [women] every day grow more and more masculine" (81). Thus, Wollstonecraft assumes that women have to compete with

⁹ Dr Price (1723-91), dissenting minister and moral theologian, liberal advocate of parliamentary reform.

men in the patriarchal establishment, and it seems as if she lacks the insight of how essential it is for women writers to shape a corresponding female tradition.

Fuller, on the other hand, affirmed her arguments by referring to heroines, both contemporary actual persons and ancient Greek mythological characters. Thereby she demonstrates an awareness of the importance of the female tradition. Fuller wanted to be considered as a woman speaking in a female voice, and not as a woman speaking as a man. This is part of the revolution in manners that Fuller wanted to achieve. Fuller is therefore, compared to Wollstonecraft, not so easily brushed aside, because she presents plentiful evidence for her theories. She is not a sole female voice arguing her thoughts. The myths of ancient Greece provided Fuller with a rich material to mould female archetypes, she states her view on ancient Greek myths as follows:

We are told of the Greek nations in general, that woman occupied there an infinitely lower place than man. It is difficult to believe this when we see such range and dignity of thought on the subject in the mythologies, and find the poets producing such ideals as Cassandra, Iphigenia, Antigone, Macaria, where Sibylline priestesses told the oracle of the highest god, and he could not be content to reign with a court of fewer than nine muses. Even victory wore a female form.

(31)

Fuller uses ancient Greek myths to support her opinions of how masculine and feminine features are composed. Fuller finds, for example, masculinity represented in Apollo and Vulcan, and femininity in the Muse and Minerva. The critic Theriot also discusses Fuller's application of these Greek characters, as follows: "[Fuller] describes this [sexual] difference by calling the intellectual aspect of soul "Vulcan" in man and "Minerva" in woman, the intuitive aspect "Apollo" in man, and "Muse" in woman. [. . .] So the essence of sexual difference involves a unique elucidation of spiritual powers contained in all souls" (Theriot 569). Theriot argues that Fuller wants to exert that man and woman are sexually different, but

at the same time have equal spiritual powers. Thus, it might be pointed out that, Fuller's view on Apollo/Vulcan and Muse/Minerva, signifies a belief in corresponding energies of man and woman, that is, a sort of gender relation based on androgynous sameness. Furthermore, Fuller's use of Greek myths clearly shows the influence of the concept of dualism, which was central to Transcendentalism.

Thus, Fuller sees ancient Greek literature as a measure of promoting discussions of ethical questions regarding the rights of woman. Fuller in fact states that the Greeks "[. . .] saw every thing in forms, which we are trying to ascertain as law, and classify as cause [. . .]" (62). Likewise, Nussbaum supports her ethical theory by examples from ancient Greek literature. Nussbaum is interested in both the ethical philosophers and the tragic poets of the ancient Greek, whom she thinks address the same question: "[. . .] namely, how human beings should live" (15). Nussbaum argues that thinkers like Sophocles, Euripides, Democritus and Plato provide answers for how one should live. Fuller pursues the same kind of question in *Woman*, that is, how the ancient Greeks morally viewed the conduct of human life. Moreover, Nussbaum continues with pointing out the ancient Greeks' anxiety over irrationality: "[w]hat is measurable or commensurable is graspable, in order, good; what is without measure is boundless, elusive, chaotic, threatening, bad"(107). Fuller knew that her style would seem confusing to those who expected a traditional male style, so she used ancient Greek literature to make her transcendental approach to feminism more graspable and measurable. This application lay probably near at hand, as Fuller is a Transcendentalist and as such, interested in the ancient Greeks views on ethics, moral and eternal laws. Self-culture was important for the ancient Greeks in order to obtain concordance with the divine eternal laws. In other words, Fuller assumes the same ethical positions as the ancient Greeks and is, therefore, not as easily dismissed as Wollstonecraft.

Addressing Men or Women -A Power Related Question

Wollstonecraft mainly chose to address men in *A Vindication*. The reason might be that she found her intellectual stimulation in associating with distinguished male philosophers. She even dismissed women as generally incapable of distinguishing themselves as intellectuals in history, and that a few prominent women so far might have been "male spirits confined by mistake in female frames" (120). It was therefore natural for Wollstonecraft to consider herself as a member of the male intellectual society, which she saw as a domain that women should be allowed to enter. Consequently, Wollstonecraft uses a male, concise and straightforward rhetoric in *A Vindication*, for example, when she strongly confirms her detest against the ruling oppression of woman: "[. . .] but attacking the boasted prerogative of man - the prerogative that may emphatically be called the iron sceptre of tyranny, the original sin of tyrants, I declare against all power built on prejudices however hoary" (204).

In contrast to Wollstonecraft, Fuller mainly addresses women in *Woman*, which can be observed in Fuller's argument:

I believe that women are the best helpers of one another. Let them think; let them act; till they know what they need. We only ask of men to remove arbitrary barriers. Some would like to do more. But I believe it needs for a woman to show herself in her native dignity, to teach them how to aid her; their minds are so encumbered by tradition. (101)

Wollstonecraft and Fuller's statements, just above, imply that the choice of style, when discussing women's issues, is related to questions about power. Foucault's theories about power may be applied on the question why the patriarchal tradition is so difficult to dethrone. He thinks that "[p]ower is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations"(94). Foucault also claims that power emanates from different levels of society and is not centred but permeates the whole society,

and he thinks that the power structure of society is present in all units of society, all the way into the inner circle of the family (94). Foucault's theories of power in combination with Irigaray's theory of woman genealogy, offer an interpretation of what Fuller means when she urges women to be the helpers of each other, to relate to each other and not to men. That interpretation might be that Fuller asserts a new kind of power structure, a female one. Fuller further displays her view on power structures when she claims "[. . .] now the time has come when a clearer vision and better action are possible. When man and woman may regard one another as brother and sister, the pillars of one porch, the priests of one worship" (101). Fuller's choice of arguments and style in *Woman* shows that she is highly aware of the power structure in her society, this becomes even more obvious when she says "[. . .] women had not less power for their want of light and noble freedom. But it was power which hurt alike them and those against whom they made use of the arms of the servile; cunning, blandishment, and unreasonable emotion" (101). In Fuller's view, the suppressive patriarchal power hurts woman and if the destroying force of patriarchy is to be dethroned, man and woman have to regard one another as equals, allowing women to exercise their faculties as well as men. Though, as she believes in the Transcendentalist concept of dualism, Fuller is aware of that it is not a question of changing patriarchy into matriarchy. This is one reason why she argues the rights for both genders to exercise their faculties.

Wollstonecraft is also attentive to power related issues in her contemporary society, and asserts her view on power as follows: "[p]ower, in fact, is ever true to its vital principle, for in every shape it would reign without control of inquiry. Its throne is built across a dark abyss, which no eye must dare to explore, lest the baseless fabric should totter under investigation" (270). Wollstonecraft perceives power in society as difficult to dethrone because it is invisible and widely spread. Her view on power is similar to Foucault's theory of power as inherent in all institutions of society (Foucault 94). The critic Laurie A. Finke supports this view as well,

and points out that "[Wollstonecraft] realizes that the authority of books, of the written word, powerfully perpetuates the myths of male superiority and female weakness precisely because it is a discourse controlled by-and for-men" (171). Wollstonecraft aims at releasing woman from her involuntary chosen state of childhood (154) and urges woman to "resign the arbitrary power of beauty" (103). Wollstonecraft argues vigorously against woman exercising power through weakness, that is, manipulating through coquettish arts. She thinks that woman instead should begin to assert her power in the same way as men, through developing a virtuous mind: "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). Wollstonecraft seeks to obtain equal powers for woman and man by recommending development of a virtuous mind, regardless of sex. She is convinced that once woman get the same opportunities to education as men, in other words power to the written word (Finke 172), the oppression of woman will disappear, because the soul is sexless.

Wollstonecraft and Fuller's choices of addressing men and women respectively are due to their differing views on sexual differences. Wollstonecraft thought that women should be more like men and conform to male virtues, in other words, she aimed at neutralisation of the genders. Fuller, on the contrary, thought that women should aim at developing their own female powers, that is, the genders should co-exist as different and at the same time corresponding energies. These different views on sexual difference are part of the answer why Wollstonecraft chose a male style and Fuller a female style when arguing the equal rights of woman.

The Age of Reason versus Transcendentalism

The critic, Nancy M. Theriot, compares Wollstonecraft and Fuller's works from a historical view based on the differences between Liberalism and Romanticism. Theriot thinks that

Woman has more potential than *A Vindication*, in the following way:

Because [Fuller] didn't accept the empirical mind/body relationship, Fuller was able to ask more basic and still relevant questions about women and men [. . .] It is precisely because [Fuller] views the individual holistically that she suggests that women must be separate physically as well as spiritually from the male control. (572)

Theriot thinks that Wollstonecraft's view of the mind as separate from the body hinders the emancipation of woman, because woman has to discover her self-definition in female terms and not through male traditions. Theriot's arguments are reasonable, however she misses the importance of recognising the woman writer tradition, that it is crucial to give credit to feminism in a chronological fashion. Therefore, it might be fair, as an addition to Theriot's arguments, to acknowledge Wollstonecraft as one of Fuller's precursors, rather than discussing which of their works is the best. A more interesting question to raise, regarding Wollstonecraft and Fuller's historical accomplishments, is to appreciate these writers for their courage to challenge established views in their own times, and not at least in what ways and why.

Theriot concludes her article by claiming that Fuller's *Woman* seems more "[. . .] basic and timeless, and less contradictory and short-sighted" (573). Theriot also thinks that she has observed "not only the intimate connection between these two theories [of Liberalism and Romanticism] and their unique intellectual environments, but also the limitations of liberalism and possibilities of romanticism in considering feminist issues" (573). On the contrary, it may well be argued that the philosophical streams of the Age of Reason/Liberalism was continued and further developed in Transcendentalism/Romanticism, and that, Fuller's view on woman

is both liberal and romantic, because Fuller adopted several of Wollstonecraft's ideas and continued to develop the feminist issues that Wollstonecraft discussed.

Conclusion

At the time of her death, Wollstonecraft was at the height of a successful writing career, and had published several important works. She had also succeeded in challenging some of the ruling patriarchal prejudices of her time, since she followed her career as a woman writer and philosopher. She wanted to show new ways of how a woman could lead her life, not accepting the prejudiced restrictions of patriarchy. She was, in fact, far a head of her society when she wrote *A Vindication*. Fuller then, accomplished during her life, not only in pursuing and refining Wollstonecraft's arguments, but also in initiating spheres for women's intellectual conversations and for female entrance to rhetorical devices. Fuller may be regarded as one of Wollstonecraft's successors. These two women writers are related to each other as pioneering feminists discussing ethical and moral questions. Traditionally the text is said to belong to the paternal culture, but Wollstonecraft and Fuller have contributed to building the female text by historically contributing to women's writing tradition. Their strivings result in a noteworthy historical chronology of feminist ideas: first came the demand that women should have equal rights because of all souls' divinity regardless of sex, and out of that first demand grew the claim of woman's own sphere in society, maintaining woman's divine features.

The concept of "self-understanding" is a leading theme in both Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* and Fuller's *Woman*. Nussbaum's question "How should one live?" and Irigaray's question "*Who are you?*" describe the main problem addressed by Wollstonecraft and Fuller. These questions are related to the perspective of how we as human beings should live together in society, how man and woman should live together, and how both mankind and womankind can be developed simultaneously. Fuller and Wollstonecraft deal with these questions of how

the genders should relate to each other, but they approach the issue in different ways. Fuller is influenced by Transcendentalism, finds support in Greek myths and chooses to develop a female style of writing in *Woman*. Wollstonecraft is affected by Liberalism, seeks support in the concept of natural rights and accepts the male prevailing rhetoric while writing *A Vindication*. Wollstonecraft and Fuller knew that their choice of style would affect the interpretations of their writings. The great importance of style is argued by Nussbaum as follows: "[. . .] if we are talking about real things, it does matter, and matter deeply, whether we say this or that, since human life, much though we may regret the fact, is not simply a matter of free play and unconstrained making" (220) Style does matter, as we have seen by the reactions to both Wollstonecraft and Fuller's works.

Nowadays, Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* might seem to display shortcomings, because Wollstonecraft thought that women had to enter the male domain of education and to exercise their reasoning minds in the same way as men. Fuller did not exert the same view as Wollstonecraft. Fuller believed that women had to refer to each other. As formulated in Irigaray's theory of woman genealogy, it is not enough to demand equal rights as a woman, one also has to demand the right to develop the special faculties it means to be a woman without being reduced to an inferior level. These facts partly explain why Wollstonecraft chose to address mainly men in *A Vindication* and why Fuller chose to address mainly women in *Woman*. Related to this matter of which audience to address are Foucault's theories of how the power of society resides within every single relationship, and is rooted in our society's matrix. This is part of the problem why women writers have such difficulties in being acknowledged as competent and valued for their actual work, because the authoritative writing tradition is male. Wollstonecraft and Fuller recognise how the power structure works in their societies, and try to affect the ruling attitudes of their contemporary societies. Fuller does this by writing *Woman*, a vaguely outlined, manylayered and multivoiced book. She

wanted to come forward as a woman speaking her mind in a female way, and not as a woman trying to compete with men on their terms. She wanted to create a female writing sphere and style. Fuller tries to revise the foundational structure of society by showing poetical and philosophical evidence for woman's divine capacity, and at the same time arguing the importance of sexual difference in dualistic terms. Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, perceives the power structure as maintained by the paternal tradition of the text, therefore she urges woman to demand equal rights as the male writing sphere. The fact that Wollstonecraft aimed at spiritually neutralising the genders has led to her being called a misogynist and masculine. However, she should not be dismissed as a misogynist because she failed to notice the importance of maintaining woman's special divine faculties. She was simply as every other woman in a patriarchy suppressed by dominant views on women as inferior, which clouded her otherwise clear insights. Her accomplishments should not be diminished because of that, rather, *A Vindication* should be seen as a contribution to the canon of woman's literature, as a courageous attempt to challenge deeply rooted male traditions. Hence, both Wollstonecraft and Fuller may be regarded as pioneering feminist writers, who urgently advised their contemporary societies to equalise the power to be spread among both man and woman, in order to obtain spiritual balance.

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