



2006

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### Recommended Citation

McLay, Molly (2006) "From Wollstonecraft to Mill: Varied Positions and Influences of the European and American Women's Rights Movements," *Constructing the Past: Vol. 7 : Iss. 1* , Article 13.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/constructing/vol7/iss1/13>

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## From Wollstonecraft to Mill: Varied Positions and Influences of the European and American Women's Rights Movements

### Abstract

This article discusses the women's rights movements that started in Europe and later moved to the USA. It focuses on the variety of different positions and beliefs held by women's rights advocates.

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### From Wollstonecraft to Mill: Varied Positions and Influences of the European and American Women's Rights Movements

Molly McLay

The emergence of feminism in the Atlantic world did not spring solely from the democratic ideas of the new, liberated nation that was the United States of America. Women's involvement in the American Revolution and their rising involvement in the abolitionist movement did indeed give rise to a demand for their own rights and the equality of all women under the law and in the home. However, revolutions had been brewing for quite some time in Europe, and the first ideas and social movements by women and about women's rights occurred over half a century before the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention. The American women's rights movement followed in the wake of the feminist ideas of many European thinkers who emerged from a vast variety of social and ideological contexts. Not a monolithic movement advancing one goal, European feminist thought rather represented an amalgamation of many feminist perspectives. These early 19<sup>th</sup> century British and European feminist thinkers, ranging from abolitionist and moral reformer to utopian socialist and political radical—from Mary Wollstonecraft to John Stuart Mill, respectively—advocated for women's rights from many positions and sought domestic, social, and political reform.

Any discussion of the early push for women's rights must include a discussion of Wollstonecraft, whose landmark 1792 book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was one of the first widely-read arguments for women's equality. Wollstonecraft grew up in the home of an abusive, alcoholic father and later lived in the home of a wealthy widow before founding a girls' school in London in 1784, during the radical ideas raised by the ongoing French Revolution.<sup>628</sup> It was perhaps a combination of her dysfunctional home and her career as a teacher that led her to the intellectual community which began to foster her proto-feminist writings. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* argued that each woman should be able to attain a proper education to make herself respectable and let that decide the level of independence she wants and needs. An avid reader of the time's male philosophers and thinkers, Wollstonecraft turned Rousseau's anti-feminist arguments around into reasons why women should be educated and given the possibility of achieving equality:

if fear in girls, instead of being cherished, perhaps created, were treated in the same manner as cowardice in boys, we should quickly see women with more dignified aspects. It is true, they could not then with equal propriety be termed the sweet flowers that smile in the walk of man; but they would be more respectable members of society and discharge the important duties of life by the light of their own reason. "Educate women like men," says Rousseau, "and the more they resemble our sex the less power will they have over us." This is the very point I aim at. I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves.<sup>629</sup>

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<sup>628</sup> Nancy Hewitt, Jaclyn Abruzzese, *et al.*, "From Wollstonecraft to Mill: What British and European Ideas and Social Movements Influenced the Emergence of Feminism in the Atlantic World, 1792-1869?" (Rutgers University: Spring 2002), 28 March 2005 <<http://www.alexanderstreet6.com/wasm/wasmrestricted/DP44/intro.htm>>. 3.

<sup>629</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, excerpt from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792). Reprinted in Carol H. Poston, ed., *Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, The Wollstonecraft Debate, Criticism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), pp.21-22, 25-28, 57-58-62, 147-48, 191-94. 3.

According to Wollstonecraft, until women are allowed more equality, they will remain in "ignorance[,] rendered foolish [and] vicious."<sup>630</sup> She drew upon ideologies of domesticity and of women as maternal figures to argue that, if allowed to use their minds freely, women would become more loving and affectionate daughters, wives, and mothers.<sup>631</sup>

Like the Republican Mothers in America, Wollstonecraft's vision gave women more access to education, which could in turn make them better fit to rear children. Such arguments for women's education, as well as for other advances such as political, property, and voting rights, became common after Wollstonecraft's work was printed. Though she died young after giving birth to her daughter Mary, who would go on to become famous with her novel *Frankenstein*,<sup>632</sup> Wollstonecraft influenced European and American feminists alike with her women's rights arguments so firmly grounded both in democratic thought and moral concerns.

Wollstonecraft's belief that women could become better moral figures if educated made its way into the minds of many other thinkers who argued for women's rights as domestic and even social reformers. Though she lived a revolutionary, liberated existence, Wollstonecraft wrote from a slightly more conservative perspective, and that conservatism translated into arguments for equality based on women's special domestic qualities. Even more radical thinkers like Jeanne Deroin believed that "it is as Christians and mothers that women must demand the rank that belongs to them in the church, the state, and the family.... this sacred function as mother...imposes on woman the duty of watching over the future of her children and confers on her the right to intervene in all the activities not only of civil life but of political life as well."<sup>633</sup> These arguments led to reforms within the home and in marriage.

Some thinkers believed that women were not all that fundamentally different from men. Women should be allowed to make both their minds and bodies stronger instead of relying on the old adage that they were the weaker sex. One such thinker was Frances Wright, an Englishwoman who toured the United States in the 1820s and gave speeches on ideas like that of Wollstonecraft. She was particularly excited by American women's growing ability to attain higher education, and her speeches paved the way for other women like Angelina and Sarah Grimke to speak publicly about abolition and other moral issues.<sup>634</sup> Wright said that the source of women's supposed weakness was men's power. She wrote that men are "collectively soothed by the dependence of women; it pleases them better to find in their companion a fragile vine, clinging to their firm trunk for support, than a vigorous tree with whose branches they may mingle theirs."<sup>635</sup> Instead of accepting this weaker state, women should work to strengthen themselves, for "to invigorate the body is to invigorate the mind, and Heaven knows that the weaker sex have much cause to be rendered strong in both."<sup>636</sup> Pleased by the seemingly

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<sup>630</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

<sup>632</sup> Hewitt, "Wollstonecraft," 4.

<sup>633</sup> Jeanne Deroin, "Mission de la Femme dans le Present et dans l'Avenir" (Woman's Mission in the Present and Future), *L'Opinion des Femmes*, 28 January, 10 March, 10 April 1849. Translated by Karen M. Offen. Reprinted in Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen, eds., *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents, Volume I, 1750-1880* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford UP, 1983), pp. 261-63. 2.

<sup>634</sup> Frances Wright, excerpt from "Letter XXIII: Condition of Women," (March 1820) in *Views of Society and Manners in America* (London: Longman, 1821); reprinted in *Views of Society and Manners in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1963), pp. 217-22. 1.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid. 3.

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invigorated minds of American women, Wright continued to speak to the new nation, and her ideas became widely accepted and extended.

Other European thinkers echoed Wright's emphasis on strengthening women's ideological weaknesses. William Thompson and Anna Wheeler wrote in an 1825 pamphlet, "What quality, worth the possession, and capable if being applied to useful purposes for your own independence and happiness, do you possess, of which ignorant man is not jealous?... Of strength of mind in you the ignorant amongst men, that is to say, the bulk of men, are still more jealous than of strength of body."<sup>637</sup> They argued that to achieve equality in rights and happiness, men must lose this jealousy and women must be respected. Their love must "be earned, be merited, not, as now, bought or commanded."<sup>638</sup> Likewise, radical Saint-Simonian women argued for the equality of women in matrimony, going so far as to even refuse marriage if one cannot find a partner who will treat her fairly. In the French women's newspaper *La Femme Libre*, an article attributed to Jeanne Deroin, one of the leaders in the French women's movement, stated: "Let us refuse as husbands any man who is not sufficiently generous to consent to share his power; we want no more of this formula, Woman, submit to your husband!... We demand equality in marriage. We prefer celibacy to slavery!"<sup>639</sup> Other women like Catherine Barnby took this belief further. She argued not only for domestic equality—"emancipation of the hand of woman from mere household drudgery" and "from the tyranny of her husband"—but also for political and ecclesiastical equality. Barnby's works demonstrated that women's internal goodness makes her most fit for social reform and cited women like Harriet Martineau as wonderfully fit reformers in the abolitionist movement.<sup>640</sup> These European feminist thinkers, so adamant on attaining domestic equality for women, inspired other thinkers to advance women into the realm of social reform, and inspired some women out of the home and into a social and sometimes even political arena.

Social reform became a major reason for the push for women's rights, first in Europe and then in the United States. For some thinkers, women had a special knowledge and care for the downtrodden because of their maternal qualities, and these qualities should be taken to the public sphere. For example, women like French journalist Flora Tristan saw the dangers of prostitution and believed that equality could not only free them to help the prostitutes, but could also free the prostitutes themselves from being dependent upon men for sex and income. "What morality can the woman have who is not her own master," she asked, "who has nothing of her own, and who,

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<sup>637</sup> William Thompson and Anna Wheeler, excerpt from *Appeal of One Half the Human Race, Women, Against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, To Retain Them in Political and Thence in Civil and Domestic Slavery; In Reply to a Paragraph of Mr. Mill's Celebrate "Article On Government"* (London: Richard Taylor, 1825). Reprinted in Marie Mulvey Roberts and Tamae Mizuta, eds., *The Reformers: Socialist Feminism* (London: Routledge and Thoemmes Press, 1995), pp. 187-92, 196-202. 2.

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

<sup>639</sup> "Jeanne Victoire," (attrib. to Jeanne Deroin) "Appel aux Femmes" (Appeal to Women), *La Femme Libre (The Free Woman)*, 1 (1832): 1-3. English translation by Anna Wheeler originally published in Robert Owen's *The Crisis*, 15 June 1833. Reprinted in Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen, eds., *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents, Volume 1, 1750-1880* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford UP, 1983), pp. 146-47. 1.

<sup>640</sup> Catherine Barnby, "The Demand for the Emancipation of Woman, Political and Socially," in *New Tracts for the Times, or, Warmth, Light, and Food for the Masses* 1:3 (1843), pp. 1-6. Reprinted in Marie Mulvey Roberts and Tamae Mizuta, eds., *The Reformers: Socialist Feminism* (London: Routledge and Thoemmes Press, 1995), pp. 1-6. 3.

all her life, has been trained to avoid the arbitrary by ruse and constraint by enticement?"<sup>641</sup> It was not enough for women to remain in the home; their motherly qualities could be taken further and could help those in need, if only they were given the opportunity. In Tristan's words, "destiny has created us To [sic] preserve the household and virtuous women."<sup>642</sup> The formation of women's societies helped aid the social reform agendas of women, but they were sometimes met with staunch opposition. Even after France had achieved universal suffrage, its legislature passed a decree outlawing the presence of women and children at the meetings of public associations.<sup>643</sup> Women like Anna Knight condemned those in support of the decree, writing a scathing letter to an adamant minister and proclaiming that "what we lack is a little more cautious sensibility and, especially, that sympathy for all, which are the preeminent qualities of woman."<sup>644</sup> Such beliefs preceded the outburst of women's clubs in the United States and gave them a social agenda—the sympathy that is so embedded in women's nature could be used to help reform major social afflictions.

One particular social reform movement in which women played a major role was the abolitionist movement. Women like Frances Wright and even Mary Wollstonecraft, traveling to America and speaking about their ideas to public forums, encouraged women to start speaking out about certain social concerns. The Grimke sisters and Paulina Wright Davis, the latter of whom attended the American Equal Rights Association meeting in 1869, were some of the women whom Wright and Wollstonecraft inspired.<sup>645</sup> However, as cited by Catherine Barmby, British and European women were precursors to the American abolitionist movement. After all, slavery had been abolished for quite some time in England. Harriet Martineau wrote about comparisons between the English and American abolitionist movements in *The Martyr Age of the United States*. She called for women's activism in the movement and praised those English and American women who were already active, like the Grimke sisters and Maria Weston.<sup>646</sup> She noted that "it is a totally different thing to be an abolitionist on a soil actually trodden by slaves, and in a far-off country, where opinion is already on the side of emancipation, or ready to be converted; where only a fraction of society, instead of the whole, has to be convicted of guilt..."<sup>647</sup> For this she gives credit to not only American abolitionists, but to American women abolitionists. It is especially hard to be a woman and an active abolitionist in a country where women's rights have not been achieved. Of this she wrote, "We sometimes, but not often, hear it said, 'It [women speaking about abolitionism] is such an odd, unladylike thing to do!' We concede that the human soul, in the full exercises of its most god-like power of self-denial and exertion for the good of others, is emphatically, a very unladylike thing."<sup>648</sup> To speak out against slavery may include debunking what is usually thought to be woman's place.

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<sup>641</sup> Flora Tristan, chapter on "Prostitutes," in *Promenades in London* (London: W. Jeffs, 1840), pp. 109-29, 132-33, 144-48. Reprinted in Doris Belk and Paul Harold Belk, eds. and trans., *Flora Tristan, Utopian Feminist: Her Travel Diaries and Personal Crusade* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993), pp. 67-73. 2.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>643</sup> Anne Knight, "Au Pasteur Coquerel" (To Pastor Coquerel), (Paris, 1848). Translated by Karen M. Offen. Reprinted in Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen, eds., *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents, Volume 1, 1750-1880* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 250-51. 1.

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>645</sup> Hewitt, "Wollstonecraft," 11.

<sup>646</sup> Harriet Martineau, excerpts from *The Martyr Age of the United States* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan, 1839). Reprinted in Deborah Anna Logan, ed., *Writings on Slavery and the American Civil War* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), pp. 44-80. 2.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Although women speaking out about abolitionism may have been a novelty in some places, according to Martineau, "the main constituents in the relation of teacher and taught are ignorance on one side and knowledge on the other. They had been too long accustomed to hear the Bible quoted in defence of slavery, to be astonished that its authority should be claimed for the subjugation of women the moment she should act for the enslaved."<sup>649</sup> Martineau guessed that it was only a matter of time before women would be accepted and even remembered as an important part in the abolitionist cause.<sup>650</sup> Coming from a French standpoint, Jeanne Deroin wrote, "...the abolition of privileges of race, birth, caste, and fortune cannot be complete and radical unless the privilege of sex is totally abolished. It is the source of all the others, the last head of the hydra... By their duty and their devotion, women must constantly demand the right of citizenship."<sup>651</sup> Women's rights became necessary to grant women access to activism in the abolitionist movement, and for many women, the enslavement of African-Americans as workers became equivalent to the enslavement of their own kind as wives, mothers, and daughters.

For some, women's rights could solve social woes, but for others, women's rights could be more than just agents of social justice: the movement could free women of enslavement in all capacities. However, even these types of more radical women's activists sought changes from vastly different perspectives and positions. Among the most radical of these positions was that of the social experimentalist. Some thinkers used women's rights as a means of advancing their agenda of forming a utopian society, or used their plans of developing a utopian society as a means of advancing women's rights. Charles Fourier, a staunch French critic of industrial society, saw how women were being degraded and sought a way to remedy that injustice. He noted that, according to industrial civilization, women were non-productives, domestic parasites who did nothing to contribute to the economic good.<sup>652</sup> Instead, women were property themselves. He asked, "Is not a young woman a mere piece of merchandise displayed for sale to the highest bidder as exclusive [sic] property?"<sup>653</sup> Infuriated with such truths, he made the claim that so many other women's rights activists were making for different social causes: "Social progress and historic changes occur by virtue of the progress of women toward liberty, and decadence of the social order occurs as the result of a decrease in the liberty of women."<sup>654</sup>

To remedy such societal ailments, Fourier and others like him created utopian societies—"phalanxes," as Fourier called them. They divided work, land, and income amongst in members to establish intercommunity connection and hopefully a good "economy [which] can spring only from large combinations."<sup>655</sup> Communities like these became common not only in Europe but

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<sup>649</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

<sup>651</sup> Deroin, "Mission," 3.

<sup>652</sup> Charles Fourier, "Of the Vices of Civilization," *Théorie de l'Unité Universelle*, (1822), reprinted in *Selections from the Works of Fourier*, edited by Charles Gide and translated by Julia Franklin (London: Sonnenschein, 1901, reprinted New York: Gordon Press, 1972), pp. 89-90. 1.

<sup>653</sup> Charles Fourier, "Degradation of Women in Civilization," *Théorie des Quatre Mouvements et des Destinées Générales*, (*The Theory of the Four Movements and of the General Destinies*), 3d ed. (originally published in 1808, this ed. 1841-1848). Republished in *Oeuvres Complètes*, I (Paris, 1966), pp. 131-33, 145-50. Reprinted in Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen, eds., Karen M. Offen, trans., *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents, Volume One, 1750-1880* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 40-41. 1.

<sup>654</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>655</sup> Charles Fourier, "The Phalanstery," compiled from *Théorie des Quatre Mouvements* (1808), *Le Nouveau Monde Industriel et Sociétaire* (1829), *Théorie de l'Unité Universelle* (2nd ed., 1838), *La Fausse Industrie* (1835-36) and the *Manuscrits de Fourier* (1851), reprinted in *Selections from the Works of Fourier*, edited by Charles Gide and

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also in the United States, and Europeans like Fredrika Bremer observed their development with great pleasure, imagining a new state in which “the female consciousness of life becomes [sic]...most beneficial in the councils of the community.”<sup>656</sup> Bremer accurately predicted that “these small socialist communities [would] not sustain themselves longer than they are sustained by the noble spirits who infuse into them their energetic life of love,” but she also saw that they, “during a short successful period, exhibit that which social humanity may become when all shall be influenced by a noble and beneficent spirit.”<sup>657</sup> These almost utopian communities, though short-lived, were glimmers of hope evidencing what might happen if women’s rights could be gained.

While some feminist thinkers wanted to form sharing communities in which women’s qualities could be instrumental and enjoyed, others wanted women to exist in the traditional public sphere, especially in such promising democracies as the United States. Many European women began to examine themselves as political and legal beings, and they were disappointed in the inequalities they found there. Barbara Leigh-Smith (then Bodichon), part of London’s Langham Place Circle, researched a number of laws aimed at unmarried and married women. Single women had the same property rights as men, but married women were their husbands’ properties. If a single woman had only daughters, she could divide her estate among them equally at her death, but if she had at least one son, the son would receive her land and the daughters would only be given personal property.<sup>658</sup> Even after women’s work in the abolitionist movement, men still did not give their cry for equality merit. After a known orator met with her to discuss the topic of women’s rights, she wrote in her diary:

[Wendell Phillips] told me that the W.R. Movement had made immense progress since 1850. He knows twenty women at least who can gain their living by lecturing in Lyceums.... [He] himself says when Lyceums come to him he says, “Yes, I will lecture for you: 50 dollars for Literature or Abolition, or WR for nothing.”<sup>659</sup>

Other women were outraged as well, like Fredrika Bremer as she made evident in her novel, *Hertha or the Story of a Soul*. Hertha speaks to her sister, whose father has prevented her from marrying the man she loves, and she is furious at the submissive position she is placed in because of her sex. Hertha says, “It is this injustice towards us, as women, which provokes me, not merely with my father, but with the men who makes these country’s unjust laws, and with all who contrary to reason and justice maintain them, and in doing so contribute to keep us in our fettered condition.”<sup>660</sup> Hertha cries that she will go to the king himself and demand that he

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translated by Julia Franklin (London: Sonnenschein, 1901, reprinted New York: Gordon Press, 1972), pp. 137-44. 1-2.

<sup>656</sup> Fredrika Bremer, *The Homes of the New World: Impressions of America*, Translated by Mary Howitt (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853), 2 vols., pp. 2:615-23. 3.

<sup>657</sup> Bremer, *Homes*, 5.

<sup>658</sup> Barbara Leigh-Smith [Bodichon], *A Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women, Together with a Few Observations Thereon* (London: J. Chapman, 1854), pp. 3-11. Reprinted in Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen, eds., *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents, Volume I, 1750-1880* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 300-05. 1.

<sup>659</sup> Barbara Leigh-Smith [Bodichon], excerpts from *An American Diary, 1857-58*, Joseph W. Reed, ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 139-41, 157, 160. 3.

<sup>660</sup> Fredrika Bremer, *Hertha or the Story of a Soul*, translator Mary Howitt (New York: Putnam, 1855). Reprinted in Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen, eds., *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents, Volume I, 1750-1880* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 319-23. 2.

change his laws which keep her from giving all of her service to God and His people.<sup>661</sup> Though perhaps the fictional Hertha did not make it to the king, real European women made real attempts to attain equality, and these attempts were not in vain, for soon, women in America, the democratic society with the most promise in granting women's rights, made their campaign a national affair.

In 1848, the Seneca Falls Convention was held in America, and a resolution was drawn to start, among other things, a campaign for national woman suffrage. All of the domestic, moral, social, and economic reforms argued so vehemently by British, French, and other European thinkers had manifested themselves in a great new burst and form of feminist speech. Jeanne Deroin and Pauline Roland, French feminists who were imprisoned for their political activism, wrote letters from their prison cells to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony lauding their convention work and showing support and excitement for the American involvement in the international women's rights movement.<sup>662</sup> In a similar gesture of support, Harriet Taylor Mill summarized the resolutions of the 1851 Worcester Woman's Rights Convention and then gave her own opinions about the movement. She stated that anyone with some sense of political justice should see that women should not and could not be excluded from the "common rights of citizenship."<sup>663</sup> She concluded her article with a statement to those who believed women's place was in the home:

Many persons think they have sufficiently justified the restrictions on women's field of action, when they have said that the pursuits from which women are excluded are unfeminine; and that the proper sphere of women is not politics of publicity, but private and domestic life.... We deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or any individual for another individual, what is and what is not their "proper sphere." The proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest which they are able to attain to.<sup>664</sup>

Taylor Mill's future husband, John Stuart Mill, would have a similar view and would apply his training as a philosopher to make one of the finest and final arguments of the early European women's rights movement. Arguing in the domestic and the political realm in his 1869 work *The Subjection of Women*, Stuart Mill reiterated an argument which so many feminist thinkers had made before him; that "the moral regeneration of mankind will only really commence, when the most fundamental of the social relations is placed under the rule of equal justice, and when human beings learn to cultivate their strongest sympathy with an equal in rights and in cultivation."<sup>665</sup> Coming full circle to Mary Wollstonecraft's original concerns with overall

<sup>661</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>662</sup> Jeanne Deroin and Pauline Roland, "Letter to the Convention of the Women of America," 15 June 1851, in Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage, eds. *History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. 1, 1848-1861* (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1881), pp. 234-37. Reprinted in Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen, eds., *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents, Volume 1, 1750-1880* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 287-290. 1.

<sup>663</sup> Harriet Taylor Mill, excerpt from "Enfranchisement of Women," *Westminster Review* (July 1851): 295-96. Reprinted in Ann P. Robson and John M. Robson, eds., *Sexual Equality: Writings by John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor Mill, and Helen Taylor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 178-203. 4.

<sup>664</sup> Taylor Mill, "Enfranchisement," 6.

<sup>665</sup> John Stuart Mill, excerpts from *The Subjection of Women* (New York: D. Appleton Co., 1869), pp. 48-52, 71-82, 177. Reprinted by Edward Alexander, ed., *The Subjection of Women* (New Brunswick: N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2001), pp. 26-8, 41-43, and 92. 4.

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equality for women, Stuart Mill proves that not only is the movement still going strong seventy years later, a man can have equally strong hopes for women's equality.

The European women's rights movement, beginning with Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792 and continuing through with John Stuart Mill in 1869, was a cornucopia of positions, perspectives, and arguments. Some thinkers sought women's rights to attain equality within marriage. Others sought women's rights for the ability to abolish marriage. Some thinkers believed women's maternal equalities made them perfect social reformers and argued for women's rights solely to give them that opportunity. Others believed women were people and that, regardless of their sphere, should have equality with men. Some thinkers kept their arguments in the domestic sphere, while others went beyond it into the realms of social reform, economic restructuring, and political equality. Despite their differences, all of the thinkers would probably agree that society could not truly progress until women had equality and that America, with its revolutionary foundations in democracy, was the perfect place for them to try to achieve those goals. It is also likely that the American women's rights movement could not have occurred without the widespread publication and travel of these European thinkers and their ideas. The European women's rights movement preceded an equally strong American women's right movement, but more importantly, it crafted an important tie between nations in exchanging ideas and support for women's rights and all social causes.

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