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The Rhetoric of Writing for a Male Audience

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Most writers write with a specific audience in mind, because for almost every topic, there is a set group of people that can be expected to be interested. For early women writers, this audience was primarily composed of men, and therefore, even when writing with the intent to further women's equality, female writers had to be very conscious of the context within which they presented their ideas. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was an eloquently formatted argument addressing the dismal state of female education. Its main purpose was both to shock society and to appeal to the reader's sense of reason and propriety, in order to change what Wollstonecraft saw as an innately flawed system of education. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* was published in 1929, one hundred and thirty-eight years after Wollstonecraft began her vindication. Woolf had a slightly different purpose for writing her piece, championing the need for private and intellectual space for women and striving to make her audience realize the greater lengths society must go in order to reach intellectual equality. Though these women were writing in different centuries, and though women's situations were drastically different, both women had similar foundations as they were consciously aware of their male audience members and consequently made adjustments to the format of their arguments in order to compensate for this. Their awareness of their male audiences is also similarly highlighted by the ways in which they focus upon certain traditional ideals.

Both Wollstonecraft and Woolf begin their essays with reassurances to their male audience members concerning the subject that they are about to broach, that of greater opportunity and educational equality for women. Each must be aware of offending the

male majority, and this shows clearly through their use of language and how the various arguments are presented, masking radically feminist ideals within a soothingly traditional framework, and assuring men that their positions in society will not change. The fact that these works are both essays is extremely significant because the format was geared towards a predominantly male readership. Women, conversely, would have been more apt to read a novel, something that Wollstonecraft was aware of because she later published the novel, *Maria; or, the Wrongs of Women* (Lepore 5). Wollstonecraft's cognizance of her male audience can be seen within the first few paragraphs of her introduction when she concedes that, "the female in point of strength is, in general, inferior to the male" (Wollstonecraft 284). Anatomically, men are stronger than women, and Wollstonecraft assures the men in her audience that she is not attempting to undermine their masculinity. In regards to "strength," to the normative view of masculinity, women will always be "inferior." Her use of the word "inferior" is important because it demonstrates that there will always be at least one way in which women will be weaker than men.

This concession, so to speak, serves two purposes: it strengthens her argument and lends it credibility, as it is common knowledge than men are physically stronger than women, and it also gains male support of her argument by giving them assurances of "physical superiority" and an unchallenged place in society as the protector. Wollstonecraft reassures men that "there is little reason to fear that women will acquire too much courage or fortitude; for their apparent inferiority with respect of bodily strength, must render them, in some degree, dependent on men in the various relations of life" (286). Men have and always will have an important, solid, and unchangeable, role

in society because women will always be dependent upon them to some degree. Wollstonecraft understood that a large part of the aversion to equal education was men's fear of becoming obsolete, of not being needed by women and of losing their secure place as the heads of households. Because she understood this concern, Wollstonecraft "carefully points out that she is not trying to challenge the male-dominated structure of society" (Richey 2). Women's "inferior" strength will always make them "dependent" upon men in one sense. They will need a strong, male arm to lean on in times of trouble, or when re-arranging the furniture.

Wollstonecraft realizes that one of the greatest roadblocks to advancements in women's education is the lack of (male) lawmakers' support, which stems from the fear that, by educating women they will become equals in every sense of the word. Therefore, Wollstonecraft makes a special point to sooth these fears and to assure the audience that she is not suggesting a new way of life, but only a way to help make life easier for men by allowing women to be better wives and mothers. Wollstonecraft rushes to urge men that she will "cordially join in the cry" against women becoming men, against them joining in in such past-times as "hunting, shooting, and gaming" (284). She assures them that the man's place in society will not change, that women will only gain an understanding of "manly virtues" (Wollstonecraft 284). This use of the qualification of the word "virtue" with "manly" is significant because it implies that the "virtues" associated with women—those of chastity, cleanliness, and child-rearing—are not sufficient. The end that female education strives to achieve is to "ennoble the human character" (Wollstonecraft 284). The word "human" here is very important. Wollstonecraft does not say that education will ennoble women, but will "ennoble the

human character." This forces men to see women as "human" beings, rather than solely as wives and mothers. And, as "humans," they deserve to be given the same opportunity for the same intellectual and moral growth as men. Education, Wollstonecraft slyly urges, will only be beneficial, it will in no way prevent women from taking their traditional place in society, but will only serve to enhance women's, and consequently their husband's, lives. Her proposition is not one-sided, but multi-faceted, and will, while not harming men or their position in society, help to make their lives easier by educating women to better understand and take a more active role in, their place in society.

In an intentional rhetorically savvy move, she allows that "men complain, and with reason, of the follies and caprices of our sex, when they do not keenly satirize our headstrong passions and groveling vices.—Behold, I should answer, the natural effect of ignorance!" (Wollstonecraft 288). This one, simple, quote sums up Wollstonecraft's argument. She sympathizes with her male audience and asserts that she understands the burden of having such silly wives. The "follies" and "caprices" of women are, indeed, grating to men. A "foolish" wife is an embarrassment, something that society laughs at, and a "capricious" and moody wife makes life difficult and unpredictable for her poor, long-suffering husband. However, she then explains, while her male readers are perhaps nodding their heads, that this problem comes from the "natural" "ignorance" that goes along with an unacceptable education. With this single sentence she is simultaneously luring men into a false sense of security by agreeing with their complaints and taking their side (one can almost imagine the chuckles and slaps on the shoulder of the men in the audience), and also slyly mentioning that the bane of their existence, the embarrassment of having a "foolish" wife, can be solved by ridding women of their

ignorance. She argues that women's "follies" and "caprices" are only "natural" because women are not educated as men are, and, if women are not educated or taught to cultivate their intellect, it is unfair to expect them to act with the same virtues as men. Kept in a state of intellectual "ignorance," it is only "natural," it can only be expected, that women will act ignorantly. This is a particularly clever example of Wollstonecraft's attempt to use reason when convincing her male audience. It is interesting to note that this argument that uses such convincing and sophisticated logos was written by a woman, demonstrating that, with the proper educational resources, women can, in fact, conduct themselves intelligently. And, furthermore, this newfound intelligence is one that will address the "follies" and "caprices" that women currently exhibit and eliminate them, making life easier for the members of her male audience.

Woolf presents her arguments for women's equality to her male audience in a surprisingly similar way to Wollstonecraft's. The entire framework of her writing serves to shield her radical ideas and make them appear traditional. She begins *A Room of One's Own* by apologizing for her inability to offer "a nugget of pure truth" and instead can only offer her "opinion upon one minor point" (Woolf 2661). She explains that she cannot give the audience what, perhaps, a man could, but that she can give her meager and unimportant woman's "opinion." This wording immediately places her audience off guard as they prepare to hear not the "truth," not what actually is or should be, but only one woman's "opinion" on a "minor," unimportant issue. Her use of the word "truth" here is significant because it indicates the majority's definition of the "truth." Men, viewed as those who shaped society, were the ones who determined what, exactly, constituted the "truth." She then goes on to caution her readers that she will make "use of

all the liberties and licenses of a novelist" (Woolf 2662). The key idea here is that Woolf is acting as a "novelist," which is significant because the novel was a typically feminine literary form, a fact that Woolf notes at the beginning of her essay when she lists the names of prominent women writers such as Jane Austen, Mary Gaskell, and George Elliot. All of these women are predominately, if not exclusively, novelists (2661).

As a "novelist," she immediately relaxes her male audience members by assuring them that this is simply frivolous writing, not unlike women's silly novels. In essence, she implies that the content of what she has to say is not serious. She warns her audience that she will be telling them a fictitious story and one that may or may not contain "truth," which literally means that she may lie, but also indicates that what she has to say may not include the male version of the "truth." She lulls her audience into a false sense of security because she gives the impression of reciting a fairy-tale. Like any good "novelist," her story may contain some truth, but most of it is fictitious and unimportant, mere fluff and fancy. By doing this, Woolf accomplishes her goal of putting her male readers off guard, as the framework of this piece "transforms the text from a direct transmission of facts and ideas into a report of the narrator's meandering, both physically and mentally" (Gan 77). And, if Woolf is merely "meandering" and muddling through half-formed and fuzzy fictitious "ideas," then she is able to better present her argument under the auspices of innocent musings.

Woolf continues to use her self-proclaimed role as "novelist" in order to push her ideas and give her readers no choice but to see the folly of the current social system. She uses her fictitious license in order to bring humor into her argument by declaring that, "I had no wish to enter had I the right, and this time the verger might have stopped me,

demanding perhaps my baptismal certificate, or a letter of introduction from the Dean" (Woolf 2664). This statement would elicit a chuckle from her audience, as the idea is so comically archaic, but at the same time, her audience would be forced to wonder at her even proposing such an argument. Yes, the idea of Virginia Woolf, a respected writer, having to present her baptismal certificate in order to enter a chapel seems inordinately absurd. However, in the same token, her audience must also reflect upon the fact that, though she is a respected writer, she is also a woman, and as such cannot be admitted to places in the university, the library, for instance. Never mind the fact that she is a well-read, intelligent, individual and is familiar with many of the writers and works that line the library's shelves; she is a woman and therefore inferior. She does not have the "right" to enter these buildings on her own.

As a woman, she is limited in where she is allowed to go, as when she writes, "here I pushed into the garden, for, unwisely, the door was left open and no beadles seemed about" (Woolf 2668). The men at the university have "unwisely" allowed a woman to walk unchaperoned through the garden. This statement emphasizes the frivolousness of these rules because it is apparent that she is not secretly plotting to bulldoze the garden, she is simply taking a walk and admiring its beauty. While securely assuring her audience that she is pushing no boundaries, that she is not contesting her "right" to enter the library or the chapel, she makes them question the moral uprightness of this rule. By citing this rhetorical "appeal to tradition," Woolf is questioning the validity of this tradition, but she does so in such a lighthearted way that it makes her readers feel that the act of questioning was, in fact, their idea to begin with.

This awareness of her male audience does not go away as Woolf delves further into her argument. Woolf mocks "all this claiming of superiority and imputing of inferiority" which only "belong to the private school stage of human existence where there are 'sides,' and it is necessary for one side to beat another side" (2691). By invoking images of "superiority" and "inferiority," Woolf makes it clear that there exists an imbalance between the sexes, and this imbalance is created by the men because they have "claimed" superiority, they have not earned it, and they have "imputed" or assigned the role of inferiority to women. However, she then pushes this idea, one that may ruffle the feathers of members of her male audience, by likening this labeling of superiority and inferiority to grade school antics. "Sides" are determined when choosing members of a kickball team, and Woolf is using this term for two reasons. To begin with, to pick a "side" is to be inordinately narrow-minded. Nothing is ever fully black or fully white, and by picking a "side," by believing one "side" completely right and the other wrong, it reflects the person's immaturity and ignorance. By likening sexism to the ill-conceived ideas of children, Woolf guarantees her audience's silence and by default, their tacit compliance and acceptance, as no man wants to be told he is acting childishly.

This is a clever rhetorical move on Woolf's part, as it makes male readers pause and re-think their sentiments. Unable to voice their indignation for fear of being labeled as an intellectual juvenile, the men are forced to sit and fume, and by way of fuming consider the basis of their arguments. On the other hand, her audience may also associate a positive connotation with the word "sides" in that it may remind them of their public school days. Many of the men in her audience would be highly educated, and many would have attended prestigious schools such as Eton. Therefore, choosing "sides" may

remind them of sporting events and mischievous pranks. Viewed in this light, Woolf's use of the word "sides" becomes even more rhetorically shrewd because it evokes fond memories in the male audience and will, in turn, encourage them to view her argument in a more positive light. This thinking will hopefully cause men to consider the social ramifications of picking "sides" and denying women equal rights.

Not only did Woolf and Wollstonecraft share the same basic foundation for writing their essays to support male popular opinion, they also present very similar arguments centered upon promoting seemingly traditional ideals, though Woolf conceals her argument behind metaphor and history, and Wollstonecraft writes that the benefits of educating women would include an enhancement of traditional roles as wives and mothers and preys on men's fear of becoming a cuckold. Wollstonecraft attempts to convince her audience by emphasizing "reasons why they will benefit from the revolution in female manners and issues rational but memorable challenges, both inciting them to want change and pointing to how it can come about" (Smith 8). In essence, she presents her argument as beneficial to both men and women, and emphasizes that what she is proposing is harmful to none, making it difficult for her audience to argue. By seeming to champion the traditional view, Wollstonecraft utilizes the logic of the time period to argue that "the chaste wife, and serious mother, should only consider her power to please as the polish of her virtues, and the affection of her husband as one of the comforts that render her task less difficult and her life happier" (292). A "chaste" and "serious" woman is one highly prized by society, however, if a woman is truly "serious," it would follow that she should not be focused upon "pleasing" her husband, but upon properly raising her children.

Ultimately, education will allow women, “by possessing such substantial qualities,” to gain their husband’s love and they will not be forced to “conceal” their “affection, nor to pretend to an unnatural coldness of constitution to excite their husbands’ passions” (Wollstonecraft 293). This will push a woman to be her husband’s moral equal, and she will not feel the need to “pretend” or “conceal” anything from her husband. Wollstonecraft makes sure to point out that, “like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty” (283). This argument, concealed in metaphor similarly to Woolf’s arguments, forces men to consider the present social norms associated with femininity. If men want their wives to be “serious” mothers, then there needs to be more to a woman and her character than beauty. Though traditionally beauty and physical attraction were the most important aspects of a relationship, in order to have a stable family, men must realize that beauty is not all that matters. This shift away from superficiality will, in essence, get rid of the aforementioned “follies” and “caprices” of the female sex because if a woman is valued for her intelligence rather than her beauty, she will not fear losing her husband’s love as she ages and loses her beauty. The educated woman will be secure in the knowledge that she has her husband’s respect and “regard” and can be secure in her place as wife and mother without the crippling vices of jealously and vanity.

In addition to her argument that advanced education creates competent wives and mothers, Wollstonecraft mentions that if women are not educated, it can create problems down the road if something should happen to their husbands. As long as the man is living, there is a chance that the lack of the mother’s education will not be an issue. Since one parent is educated, it follows that the children will be brought up with a pure,

caring mother and a strong, intelligent father. However, Wollstonecraft brings up the very valid point that the husband "may die and leave her with a large family" to take care of (298). Interestingly enough, Wollstonecraft presents this particular facet of her argument almost as though it is a story, which links back to Woolf's technique of presenting her work as fiction. Wollstonecraft creates a fictional scenario of a family that has lost its father, and by highlighting it as a plausible one, forces men to seriously consider the consequences of the lack of female education.

If a woman "has only learned to please men, to depend gracefully on them" how is she expected to raise a family by herself (Wollstonecraft 299)? It would follow, logically, that her first step would be to search for a husband. If this becomes the case then "the mother will be lost in the coquette, and, instead of making friends of her daughters, view them with eyes askance, for they are rivals" (299). The mother's focus will be upon flirtation rather than on being the ideal, "serious" mother. This in turn, would lead to competition with her daughters and would result in their growing up without the necessary moral guidance. The woman's youth gone and "encumbered with children," she may, perhaps, fall "prey to some mean fortune-hunter, who defrauds her children of their paternal inheritance, and renders her miserable" which is every husbands nightmare (Wollstonecraft 299). The thought of his children being "defrauded" of what is rightfully theirs simply because the mother is not morally strong enough to raise them on her own would make any man uneasy. And so, Wollstonecraft cleverly declares that, the intelligent man would want his wife to be educated in order to be a better mother to his children, and to be able to make an intelligent decision on her choice of partner should she ever need to remarry.

Though Wollstonecraft emphasizes the link between exceptional mother's and education, she also touches upon the idea that the women who are the least educated are the ones that are the most likely to stray in a marriage, "such ignorant beings, indeed, will be very excusable when, not taught to respect public good, nor allowed any civil rights, they attempt to do themselves justice by retaliation" (282). In other words, a jealous woman, hurt and angry over her husband's infidelity, will attempt to re-claim her feelings of self-worth by "retaliation," by cheating on her husband in return. A "weak" woman will not be able to survive her husband's infidelity, but will crumble, resulting in a lack of attention to her motherly duties and a consequent "weakening" of the familial foundation. Wollstonecraft is "berating both men and women for the current status of women," as the immorality of the husbands leads to that of the wives (Hodson 286). She is careful not to place all of the blame upon the men, but to allow women to carry part of the burden of responsibility in order to gain the support of her male audience, who would never deign to read a piece of literature that degraded their sex.

Wollstonecraft argues that women will not view their duty, their place in society in a serious manner "unless they comprehend, unless their morals be fixed on the same immutable principle as those of man, no authority can make them discharge it in a virtuous manner" (282). "Weak" women do not have strong "fixed" morals, and will be easily swayed towards the temptations of immorality. And, despite a husband's best efforts, if a woman's intellect is not cultivated to "comprehend" her place in society, the woman cannot be counted upon to follow "authority" because they will not understand the importance of virtue. Women must be taught and must learn these virtues and practice them in the same way that men do in order to be effective. Without it, women

will be easily swayed to adultery, as it is "more rational to expect that she will try to please other men; and, in the emotions raised by the expectation of new conquests, endeavor to forget the mortification her love or pride has received" (Wollstonecraft 292).

Virginia Woolf's rhetorical strategies are very similar to those of Wollstonecraft's. Although Woolf is "much more elusive, and her arguments persuade or seduce rather than convince" with logic, both women are writing with traditional social mores in mind (Andrew 97). Woolf uses clever metaphors and makes references to history to allow her readers to reflect upon society and male and female roles. Woolf, "knowing that men will not be persuaded by her argument if she makes her most important claims first, argues to those claims rather than from them" (Andrew 97). She begins *A Room of One's Own* as a conversational story, though everything she says has a deeper, hidden meaning. She describes the decadence of the men's luncheon, "the partridges, many and various, came with all their retinue of sauces and salads, the sharp and the sweet, each in its order; their potatoes, thin as coins but not so hard; their sprouts, foliated as rosebuds but more succulent" and then compares it to that of the women's dinner, "it is the nature of biscuits to be dry, and these were biscuits to the core" (Woolf 2665, 2669). Though she presents her descriptions of these two meals as nothing other than her observations during her day wandering around the university, if the differences in men's and women's education can be summed up in the differences between plump partridges and bland biscuits, it becomes immediately clear to the reader that the current education system is unacceptably unequal. One of the most important facets of education includes the various and numerous resources available. The appeal, for example, of many schools of higher learning stems from their ability to provide for a wide range of

interests and abilities. By invoking the seemingly neutral image of food, Woolf is presenting women's educational inequality as nothing more than a casual observation when, in fact, she is pointing out that one cannot expect the same level of excellence from women and men when their resources are so drastically different.

Now, it may, in fact, be true that "there was no reason to complain of human nature's daily food, seeing that the supply was sufficient and coal-miners doubtless were sitting down to less," but it does not necessarily excuse the social inequalities of the time (Woolf 2669). Her reference to coal miners is significant because she is attempting to point out that the women at the university are fortunate enough to have food. She does not want to make the women sound ungrateful, as they are happy to be given the opportunity to study at the university. However, at the same time, this reference highlights the drastic differences between coal miners and the world of academia. The food that the women are supplied with is "sufficient" for "daily" bodily needs. However, these women are not eating simply for physical strength, but also for mental. There is, or at least should be, a direct correlation between the strenuous, advanced, intellectual atmosphere at the university and the quality of food. In addition, if women are treated only as "coal miners" while the men are considered to be the best and the brightest, the up-and-coming physicians, law-makers, and scientists of the day, it serves to demonstrate the huge discrepancies between how male and female students are viewed.

Woolf is pointing out that, it cannot be expected of women to reach the educational standards of men when they are not taken seriously and treated with the same level of respect. Woolf innocently quips that "one cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well," but it is clear from her previous explanation of the

luncheon and dinner that this statement is not quite as innocent as it appears (2669). From her previous descriptions, it is clear that the women have not "dined well;" they may have dined adequately, but they have not "dined well." If human beings cannot "think well" if they have not "dined well," then the reason that those studying in the men's college have out-performed those in the women's college is largely based upon the fact that they are treated as intellectual superiors. Women are, even in Virginia Woolf's modern age (in comparison to Wollstonecraft's) still treated as second-class citizens, and they cannot be expected to perform at a first-class level if they are not given the same generous resources and respect to prove themselves worthy.

However, Woolf does not keep her metaphors within the safe realm of food. She is, at times, certainly very bold, and one must wonder how she slipped certain metaphors past her male readers without them roaring in contempt. For example, Woolf mentions that she saw a cat with no tail wandering around the university. She muses that "it is strange what a difference a tail makes" (Woolf 2666). And it is. The comparison that Woolf is making here is the great "difference" that gender makes. The opportunities available to men are three times those available to women. Access to education is not based upon intelligence and merit, but upon sex. The most idiotic of men has a wealth of opportunities available, while the most intelligent of females is encouraged to have no other aspiration than to become a wife and mother. That is not, of course, to say that these roles are not honorable and important, but anything becomes mundane and uninspiring when one's choice is taken away. Many women would feel suffocated by the roles of wife and mother if they had no other option. Once women realize that there is a world of opportunity available to them, motherhood becomes a choice rather than a

necessity, resulting in happier, contented families. She goes on to say that the cat is "a queer animal, quaint rather than beautiful" (Woolf 2666). In the same sense, a woman is seen as sub-human. She is not brilliant and "beautiful" like men, but "quaint," referring to the mundane nature of women's roles in society and the requirement that they melt gracefully into the woodwork. She is "queer" because she is a part of society, but she is not a fully-functioning member of that society in the same respect as a man. This is, indeed, a "strange" way to order society by refusing intelligent individuals functioning roles in society simply because of their sex.

Another subtle way that Woolf presents her argument is by blaming past generations for the struggles that the present generation must go through. The catch in this argument is that by discussing the lack of preparation and foresight that women had, she is, in fact, pointing out how limited these women were due to the tight restraints placed upon them by men. The women of Woolf's generation had to struggle because the women of yesterday were not even allowed the opportunity to struggle. For example, Woolf laments the women's inability to get anything more than thirty thousand pounds, and she says that the women "burst out in scorn at the reprehensible poverty of our sex" (2670). However, though she says that they are "scorning" their sex, in reality, they are scorning the inequality that exists in society, the inequality that prevented them from obtaining greater funds than they did. They are "scorning" their "poverty," but it is necessary to look at the social restrictions that were placed upon women in order to bring about this poverty. Through her exploration of this issue, Woolf carefully crafts and draws out the truth that the men have, in reality, prevented the intellectual, economic, and independent growth of the women. Women were not given a choice like men, "The

world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing?" (Woolf 2676). Just as in Wollstonecraft's argument, Woolf is not attempting to undermine the traditional roles of wife and mother, but she is attempting to convince her male audience that women deserve to have the same opportunities available to them as men.

Woolf laments the mother, musing that, "if she had gone into business" the daughters would have had money available to them and could have, perhaps, spent a lifetime "in the shelter of one of the liberally endowed professions" (2670, 2671). Here is another example of how Woolf takes advantage of her self-proclaimed role as fiction writer. It's almost as though the story is of a woman looking back on her life. Had she "gone into business" and followed her dreams, not only would she be better off, but she would have been able to pave the way for others to follow their dreams. It's reminiscent of a modern-day fairy-tale, as the dreams of attending a royal ball or of financial independence appear to be equally unattainable. Yet, because she did not have a fairy godmother, this woman who had dreams of going into business instead became a wife and mother. The problem is that women are forced to choose, as they cannot make "a fortune" and also bear "thirteen children—no human being could stand it" (Woolf 2671). In other words, men are able to have professions; they are able to go to work and make money because they have dutiful wives at home making sure that their home life runs smoothly.

Women, on the other hand, do not have this luxury because "you cannot, it seems, let children run about the streets" and, if women were to work too, there would be no one to raise the children (Woolf 2671). Women do not have dutiful wives waiting at home to

"bear thirteen children" and therefore, they lose their opportunity to make their monetary "fortune." It is also important to note that women during this period were not legally allowed to own their own property or to control their own bank accounts. Everything they had was their husbands,' so all their hard work would have been for nothing. This is, in effect, "the central cause for woman's oppression" (Squier 273). Taking these legalities into account, it is not surprising that for most women, their "fortune," instead of being financial independence, becomes the legacy of their children, which would be fine were it not for the fact that children grow up and leave, and then the women are left bereft. It is quite interesting how Woolf follows the historical facts through to their present-day application. Women's current lack of education is due to a reluctance to break away from the past. For, if a woman wants to have a family, she must give up her dream of a career and vice versa. Men, on the other hand, can have it all.

Woolf continues to develop her historical analysis by citing the example of Shakespeare's fictitious sister, which allows her to, once again, present her argument under the guise of simple imaginative musings. Woolf states, promptly and without preamble, that "it would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare" (Woolf 2672). It would have been "impossible," given that the only options available to women of this period were marriage, a convent, or, if you were wealthy, spinsterhood, and if you were not, prostitution. However, even knowing this, Woolf goes on to examine what, exactly would have happened to the gifted sister of Shakespeare, had he had one. She would have been "as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of

reading Horace and Virgil" (Woolf 2673). In essence, Shakespeare's sister would have had no opportunity to develop her intellect, to fuel her desire for "adventure" and to put her "imagination" to creative and productive use; she would have had no outlet for her genius. By creating the possibility of such a woman, Shakespeare's "equally talented but silenced sister, Woolf suggests a ghostly presence of feminine creativity" (Ferrante 28). This speculation of a probable path of a fictional woman in history serves two purposes. It allows her to shield her argument in historical speculation, while forcing her readers to ponder today's issues of inequality, to realize what society is losing by stifling the potential genius of half the population.

Both Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf were extremely important to the advancement of women's education and equality of the time. Both argue, though Wollstonecraft perhaps a bit more bluntly, that "women need to be more detached from their involvement with their families, they need to a certain extent greater self-centeredness to enable themselves to grow as an individual and thus improve the quality of domestic life" (Gan 73). Women must be allowed to view themselves as separate entities from their families, to distance themselves enough to gain some semblance of self-sufficiency and to allow them to take a more active role in society. The use of traditional values plays a large role in how both women format their arguments, though Wollstonecraft focuses her essay upon men's fear of losing their traditional wives and mothers, while Woolf conceals her argument within history and metaphor. The fascinating thing about these writers is their mastery of language and awareness of and ability to manipulate rhetorical arguments that allows them to both further their cause and avoid offending their male audiences. These two women demonstrate the intelligence of

their sex, and their ability, though faced with a hostile audience, to make their voices heard.

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