Chapter One

The Land of Chimeras

It is virtually impossible to consider any of Mary Wollstonecraft's works, fiction or nonfiction, without reflecting on Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Scholars of British Literature, writing on Wollstonecraft's novels, are typically concerned with the extent to which her works can be identified with Romanticism and, in this respect, with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Though *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is dedicated to a French diplomat, it is immediately clear that Wollstonecraft's fire is aimed at Rousseau. Throughout the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft takes every opportunity to condemn the notion of woman as it is represented by his character, Sophie, in *Emile*. Wollstonecraft's spirited attack on Rousseau in her political treatise may suggest that Rousseau's influence extends only to her novels. On the contrary, I shall argue that Wollstonecraft learns important political lessons from Rousseau. In particular, Rousseau teaches Wollstonecraft that all individuals are not only human beings, but also either male or female. The second half of their being, their sex, is that which attaches one human being to another and adds a complexity to the individual's natural independence or wholeness. Furthermore, Rousseau teaches Wollstonecraft the importance of natural differences between the sexes and the corrosive effect that the unnatural, corrupted male or female sex can have on the political community. Wollstonecraft, like Rousseau before her, appreciates that a woman's roles of wife and mother, contribute to a healthy individual, family, and community. After considering the valuable lessons that Wollstonecraft gains from Rousseau, I will turn my attention to Wollstonecraft's rejection of Rousseau's political philosophy as the basis for her own. It would be wrong to think this rejection is simply the result of her disagreement about the character of Sophie, or with Rousseau's understanding of women more generally. Wollstonecraft's criticism of Sophie reveals her departure from the fundamental tenets of natural rights theory. Wollstonecraft rejects the notion that women, or human beings more

generally, are motivated by self-preservation and that human communities are formed out of a desire to protect oneself from the aggression of others. In contrast to natural rights theorists, Wollstonecraft believes human beings are motivated by their desire for virtue and that human beings live in civil society in order to foster virtue. While Sophie is the occasion for her engagement with Rousseau, Wollstonecraft's departure from Rousseau is due to a fundamental disagreement on the nature of human beings and the character of their political relationships.

To be sure, Rousseau is one of Wollstonecraft's favorite foes. However, scholars have not overlooked the fact that Rousseau is also one of Wollstonecraft's favorite friends. In considering Rousseau's relationship to his readers, Carol Blum and Mary Seidman Trouille have both remarked on the unique sympathy Rousseau's readers felt for the author. "It was his moral superiority and the moral superiority one could enjoy by adoring him which were important, not any specific doctrine he had put forth."[1] While Blum is primarily concerned with the influence of Rousseau's explicitly political works on the French Revolutionaries, Trouille notices the same affection and sympathy in the female readers of *La Nouvelle Heloise* and *Emile*.[2] Even if their views on women were incompatible with Rousseau's sexual politics, "his women readers still identified with him and with his characters of his novels because they expressed . . . their deepest aspirations and longings—for ideal love, self-fulfilling motherhood, and domestic felicity" (Trouille, 4).

And, indeed, Wollstonecraft is loyal to Rousseau on the basis of her affection for the Solitary Walker. When given the chance, Wollstonecraft defends Rousseau against his critics. She writes,

> A defense of Rousseau appears to us unnecessary—for surely he speaks to the heart, and whoever reading his works can doubt whether he wrote from it—had better take up some other book . . . It is impossible to pursue his simple descriptions without loving the man in spite of the weakness of character that he himself depicts. (Wardle, 131)

Despite their philosophical differences, Wollstonecraft harbors a personal affection for Rousseau.

Other scholars have noted a more substantive connection between Wollstonecraft and Rousseau. Jean Grimshaw argues, "it is above all the philosophy and other writings of Rousseau which form a backdrop of Wollstonecraft's work, and central to this is Rousseau's account, in *Emile*, of female nature, his prescriptions for female upbringing and female virtue."[3] Grimshaw gives an account of Rousseau's presentation of the feminine

condition in *Emile* and discusses Wollstonecraft's disagreement with it. "In the *Vindication*, it was perhaps above all the idea that virtue was *gendered*, that it should be different for women and men, that Wollstonecraft attacked" (Grimshaw, 16). Any suggestion that women are dependent creatures, meant solely for the pleasure of men—a view that some of Rousseau's observations and prescriptions for Sophie seem to endorse—outrages Wollstonecraft. Yet, Grimshaw points out, despite Wollstonecraft's objections, "Wollstonecraft remained attracted to the idea that women have special qualities, which while not in themselves virtues, could lead to virtue" (Grimshaw, 18). Putting aside the *Vindication*, Grimshaw takes up Wollstonecraft's fiction in order to consider evidence that Wollstonecraft fell under the sway of Rousseau's teaching on the differences between the sexes.

Grimshaw's essay is typical of the scholarship on Wollstonecraft's relationship to Rousseau. In her full length treatment of Wollstonecraft's life and works, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Language of Sensibility*, Syndy Conger understands Rousseau's influence in a similar manner.[4] Conger considers the influence of eighteenth-century Romantic novels on Wollstonecraft. From novelists, such as Goethe, Samuel Richardson, and Rousseau, Wollstonecraft adopts the language and ethics of sensibility. Conger tells her readers that in the eighteenth century, sensibility had come to mean "emotional consciousness, a capacity for refined emotion; readiness to feel compassion for suffering."[5] Sensibility was considered the particular trait of women and a complement to men's greater rationality. Conger argues that sensibility plays a steady role in Wollstonecraft's life and works and demonstrates Wollstonecraft's commitment to sensibility in her novels. However, by the time Wollstonecraft writes *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she has come to appreciate the political dangers of feminine sensibility and rejects it as a means to women's improvement. Wollstonecraft's "*Rights of Woman* represents the moment of greatest crisis in that faith [in sensibility] . . . here she tries to disentangle herself entirely from the notion" (Conger, 114).

Eileen Hunt Botting differs from Grimshaw and Conger in that she appreciates the continued influence of Rousseau on Wollstonecraft as Wollstonecraft is writing her treatise on women. Wollstonecraft and Rousseau, Botting explains in *Family Feuds*, are friendly critics of the Enlightenment insofar as they both appreciate that human beings may be motivated by affection for others, rather than merely by self-interest or self-preservation as Thomas Hobbes contends. Wollstonecraft and Rousseau "also argued that the stability, independence, and ethical quality of any political society depended on the cultivation and direction of the affections toward the social formation of future subjects or citizens."[6] Yet, Botting does not see

Wollstonecraft as simply echoing Rousseau's philosophy of the family. "Wollstonecraft persuasively argues that Rousseau and Burke's patriarchal conceptions of the family hinder, rather than foster, the affections that inspire the social virtues, and that her model of the egalitarian family provides a more practical and ethical foundation for affective-social formation, especially in the rising democratic culture of the late Enlightenment" (Botting, 11). It is the sex-role differentiation in Rousseau's philosophy of the family that gives it its patriarchal character and that Wollstonecraft cannot abide in her model of the egalitarian family.

In a similar vein to Eileen Hunt Botting, I suggest that Wollstonecraft continues to appreciate Rousseau's teaching on the importance of the family to the political community. However, in contrast to Botting, I argue that Wollstonecraft also recognizes the importance of the natural differences between the sexes. In particular, Wollstonecraft echoes Rousseau's appreciation for motherhood and domestic felicity and makes use of it in her own demand for political reform in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In this chapter, I will examine those aspects of Rousseau's thought with which Wollstonecraft agrees and which offer support for her own views, in particular, Rousseau's criticism of the corrosive effects of society on the human beings of his day and the great potential for virtue as wife and mother.

I. THE CHIMERA

Rousseau begins Book IV of the *Emile* by declaring, "We are, so to speak, born twice: once to exist and once to live; once for our species and once for our sex."[7] Rousseau goes on to make the point that this is true of females as well as males. "Everything is equal: girls are children, boys are children; the same name suffices for beings so much alike" (*Emile*, 211). In other words, all individuals are comprised of two parts: that part which is human and that part which is male or female. In his *Second Discourse*, Rousseau tells us,

> Every general idea is purely intellectual; if the imagination is at all involved, the idea immediately becomes particular. Try to outline the image of a tree in general to yourself, you will never succeed; in spite of yourself it will have been seen as small or large, bare or leafy, light or dark, and if you could see in it only what there is in every tree, the image would no longer resemble a tree.[8]

The same may be said of human beings. Though we may try to imagine the abstract idea of human being, we always have either a man or a woman in

our mind's eye. Rousseau's project in the *Emile* is, in large part, the task of putting the two parts of the individual together in a way that preserves both the species and the sex and avoids a creature which no longer resembles a human being.

At the outset of the *Emile,* Rousseau promises to educate Emile to be a natural man, as opposed to civil man. "Natural man is entirely for himself. He is a numerical unity, the absolute whole, which is relative only to itself or its kind. Civil man is only a fractional unity dependent on the denominator; his value is determined by his relation to the whole, which is the social body" (*Emile*, 39–40). In his book, *Rousseau, Nature & the Problem of the Good Life,* Lawrence Cooper argues that this numerical unity, or what Cooper calls psychic unity, is the primary attribute of natural man.[9] In contrast to natural man, Rousseau presents us with the man of his day, a fractional man.

> Always in contradiction with himself, always floating between his inclinations and his duties, he will never be either a man or a citizen. He will be good neither for himself nor for others. He will be one of these men of our days: a Frenchman, and Englishman, a bourgeois. He will be nothing. (*Emile*, 40)

Cooper tells his readers that Rousseau presents five types of human beings in his corpus: the divided, corrupt, social man; the virtuous citizen of the ancient austere polis; the inhabitant of the pure state of nature; Jean-Jacques Rousseau of *The Reveries of A Solitary Walker*; and Emile (Cooper, 67). Of these five types of human beings presented by Rousseau, he explicitly names three as natural men: the Savage, the Solitary Walker, and Emile.[10] These three men distinguish themselves from the others by their numerical unity. Although these natural men all enjoy numerical unity, they are not simply identical. As we shall see, the differences between the Savage and Emile become evident at the time of the birth of their sex. This suggests a difference in the degree to which each is affected by his social passions. The numerical unity each enjoys varies in its complexity as a result. I would point out that Sophie is absent from Cooper's list of five human types, which appear in Rousseau's corpus. She is certainly not listed as one of the three natural human beings. In fact, Sophie is conspicuously absent from Cooper's book, leaving the reader with the nagging suspicion that women are unable to attain Rousseau's ideal unity. If women are capable of Rousseau's numerical unity, able to combine the human with the female sex, just as Emile combines the human and the male sex, then woman's unity will differ in its complexity from both the Savage and Emile.

Of the three types of human beings, which Lawrence Cooper identifies as natural, I am particularly interested in the Savage of the pure state of nature and, of course, Emile. Commentators have noticed a certain parallel between the Savage and Emile.[11] By way of introduction to the subject of his treatise, Rousseau tells readers of the *Second Discourse*, "It is so to speak, the life of your species that I will describe to you in terms of the qualities you received, which your education and your habits could deprave, but which they could not destroy" (*Discourses*, 133). Rousseau describes the *Emile* in similar terms. Against the charge that his work is merely a romance, Rousseau tells his critics, "A fair romance it is indeed, the romance of human nature. If it is to be found only in this writing, is that my fault? This ought to be the history of my species. You who deprave it, it is you who make a romance of my book" (*Emile*, 416). While Masters points out the distinction between the two (i.e. the *Second Discourse* is concerned with the development of the species and the *Emile* traces the development of natural man), I would suggest that the similarities, as well as the differences, between the Savage and Emile are instructive.

In the Preface to the *Emile*, Rousseau tells his readers "Childhood is unknown . . . They [the wisest men] are always seeking the man in the child without thinking of what he is before being a man" (*Emile*, 33–34). Rousseau expresses a similar regret in the Preface to the *Second Discourse*.

> How will man ever succeed in seeing himself as Nature formed him, through all the changes which the succession of times and of things must have wrought to his original constitution, and to disentangle what he owes to his own stock from what circumstances and his progress have added to or changed in his primitive state? (*Discourses*, 124)

Like "the wisest men," who seek the man in the child, "the Philosophers who have examined the foundations of society have all felt the necessity of going back as far as the state of Nature, but none of them has reached it . . . They spoke of Savage man and depicted civil man" (*Discourses*, 132). Indeed, Rousseau explicitly identifies the Savage in the earliest stages of the state of nature with childhood. In describing the incredibly slow rate of movement out of the state of nature, Rousseau tells his readers, "Centuries went by in all the crudeness of the first ages, the species had already grown old, and man remained ever a child" (*Discourses*, 157). If childhood, in particular that of Emile, can be compared to the Savage in the pure state of nature, then Emile's subsequent development can be compared to the Savage's gradual movement to civil society. It is important to note that, for Rousseau, the

natural is determined by the beginning (Masters, 5). If Rousseau's task in the *Second Discourse* is "to explain by what chain of wonders the strong could resolve to serve the weak, and the People to purchase an idea of repose at the price of real felicity" (*Discourse*, 131), his challenge in the *Emile* is to imagine a strong individual, who remains free from social passions and, therefore, free from enslavement to the weak. In other words, Rousseau attempts to break "the chain of wonders" in Emile's development and allow him to live as if in an "age at which the individual human being would want to stop development [of the life of the species]" (*Discourses*, 133). Yet, Rousseau does not expect that Emile will ever live as a solitary being, isolated from the political community. Therefore, Emile has something in common with the civil man as well as the Savage in the state of nature. Just as the *Second Discourse* ends with the Savage's entrance into society, so the *Emile* ends by Emile becoming a citizen. This is accomplished by Emile's marriage to Sophie.[12] Rousseau's success in breaking "the chain of wonders" will be measured, therefore, by the character of Emile's marriage to Sophie.

Up until the time of Emile's second birth, the birth of his sex, Rousseau admits that his work has been relatively easy. Emile, like the Savage in the pure state of nature, has few desires. Rousseau is primarily concerned with keeping it that way and with ensuring that Emile satisfies his few desires by himself. Both Emile and the Savage do not feel dependent on anyone. Rousseau has nurtured a healthy *amour de soi* in Emile. *Amour de soi* or self-love, "regards only ourselves" and "is contented when our true needs our satisfied" (*Emile*, 213). This type of self-love is characteristic of the natural man. However, with the birth of his sex, Emile's passions become more numerous. Furthermore, the sexual desires cannot be satisfied by oneself. The second part of our being, our sex, be it male or female, suggests a dependence on or an attachment to at least one other human being. The wholeness, which is to be comprised of the species and the sex is a rather complex unity, due to this fractured character of the sex. The unity is not comprised of two, simple and equal parts. This complexity varies between the Savage and Emile (and, presumably, the complexity will vary in Sophie as well). The Savage undergoes a similar experience. In the pure state of nature, man's sexual desires are general. "Any woman suits him." It is only after a certain degree of contact with other human beings that man's desires become attached to a single object (*Discourses*, 155). The Savage becomes dependent on a particular woman to satisfy his desires. Emile, on the other hand, does not enjoy a time of sexual freedom during which any woman would suit Emile. As fortified by his natural education as he may be, Emile is born into civil society and his sexual desires will be attached to single object. This will make the birth of Emile's

sex more significant than the birth of the Savage's sex. In both the *Second Discourse* and the *Emile*, Rousseau identifies the sexual desire for a particular female as a time of revolution (though for Emile, not the Savage, the desire for a particular object is coincident with the birth of the sex). "This was the period of a first revolution which brought about the establishment and the differentiation of families . . . the habit of living together gave rise to the sweetest sentiments known to man, conjugal love, and Paternal love" (*Discourses*, 164). Rousseau tells us that the Savage man loses some vigor, but his numerical unity is preserved. For Emile, a natural man living in society, the situation is much more precarious.

> As the roaring of the sea precedes a tempest from afar, this story of revolution is proclaimed by the murmur of the nascent passions. A mute fermentation warns of danger's approach. A change in humor, frequent anger, a mind in constant agitation, makes the child almost unmanageable . . . His feverishness turns him into a lion. (*Emile*, 211)

The birth of Emile's sex, the birth of the second half of his being, is a greater threat to Emile's numerical unity than the birth of the Savage's sex. He no longer resembles the ideal human being, but appears to be a beast. The threat to our numerical unity comes primarily from *amour-propre*. "But *amour-propre*, which makes comparisons, is never content and never could be, because this sentiment, preferring ourselves to others, also demands others to prefer us to themselves, which is impossible" (*Emile*, 213–214). The birth of *amour-propre* is not necessarily coincident with the birth of the sex. Emile is unique in that Rousseau's natural education deters the emergence of *amour-propre* until puberty. In fact, in the corrupt eighteenth century society, which Rousseau observes, *amour-propre* is often awakened quite early in a person's life. However, with the birth of our sex and the attempt to "obtain the preference that one grants" (*Emile*, 214), the birth of *amour-propre* in Emile can no longer be deterred. With the birth of his sex, and inevitably the birth of *amour propre*, Emile is in danger of losing his wholeness, his independence from the opinions of others. "From the bosom of so many diverse passions I see opinion raising an unshakable throne, and stupid mortals, subjected to its empire, basing their own existence on the judgements of others" (*Emile*, 215). Emile is in danger of becoming a fraction. Rather than a human being, Emile would resemble an unnatural creature, comprised of two incompatible parts.

The natural education of Emile offers Rousseau's readers a means to achieve numerical unity, or wholeness, overcoming social vanity. This is a

utopian vision, which Rousseau knows will not be immediately appreciated by his readers. Nonetheless, he perseveres.

> I go forward by the force of things without gaining credibility in the judgment of my readers. For a long while they have seen me in the land of chimeras. I always see them in the land of prejudices . . . Every time that this reasoning forces me to separate myself from those opinions, I have learned from experience to take it for granted that my readers will not imitate me (*Emile*, 253).

Rousseau is wrong to take for granted that he would have no imitators. In a letter to her sister, Wollstonecraft tells her that she is reading Rousseau's *Emile* and that she feels a certain affinity to the author. "He chuses [sic] a *common* capacity to educate—and gives as a reason, that genius will educate itself—however he rambles into that *chimerical* world in which I have often [wand]ered—and draws the usual conclusion that all is vanity and vexation of spirit [in the eighteenth century]."[13] Like Rousseau, Wollstonecraft recognizes the damage that vanity and social prejudices have on human beings and, in particular, on the women of her day.

> One cause of this barren blooming I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men, who considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers; and the understanding of the sex has been so bubbled by this specious homage, that the civilized women of the present century, with few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect. (*VRW*, 7)

Unlike Emile, whose education has protected him from social prejudices, women in the eighteenth century have been educated simply as fractional beings, "basing their own existence on the judgment of others" (*Emile*, 215).

Rousseau imparts to Wollstonecraft the lesson that all individuals consist of the human as well as their sex. The proper combination of these two parts creates a wholeness and independence from the opinion of others. With this understanding, Wollstonecraft outlines her project. "I shall first consider women in the grand light of human creatures, who, in common with men, are placed on this earth to unfold their faculties; and afterwards I shall more particularly point out their [women's] peculiar designation" (*VRW*, 8). Like

Rousseau, Wollstonecraft recognizes that her efforts to establish the humanity of women will not be readily appreciated by all of her readers. She admits her treatise "may be termed Utopian dreams" (*VRW*, 36). Yet, Wollstonecraft follows her chimera, knowing that individuals, who are not comprised of both the human and their sex are likely to be vicious, unnatural creatures.

II. NATURAL DISTINCTIONS

The first lesson that Rousseau imparts to readers of the *Emile* is the importance of motherhood. The neglect of this natural distinction has grave consequences not only for particular women, but also for marriages and the community. Though Wollstonecraft tirelessly argues against the notion that the sexes are different in nature, Wollstonecraft is in agreement with Rousseau on the importance of motherhood. This natural distinction has great potential to protect women from vanity and social prejudices and it contributes to a strong healthy political community.

After condemning the fractional, civilized man, Rousseau begins to consider the education of man beginning at birth. "Civil man is born, lives, and dies in slavery. At birth he is sewed in swaddling clothes, at his death he is nailed in a coffin. So long as he keeps his human shape, he is enchained by our institutions" (*Emile*, 42–43). This declaration echoes Rousseau's well known premise of the *Social Contract.* "Man was/is born free, and everywhere is in chains."[14] In this instance, Rousseau does not go on to consider the threat of political institutions to our freedom, but turns his attention to the social customs of caring for children. Rousseau begins with the rather common practice of swaddling infants. Swaddling clothes, though ostensibly well intentioned, have important consequences on children's bodies and souls. In the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau follows the gradual transformation of the vigorous, robust Savage into a relatively weak civil man. In part, civil man's weakness may be attributed to the practice of swaddling infants and the use of wet nurses, or as Rousseau will call them in the *Emile*, mercenary women. "The original weakness they owe to their Parents' constitution, the care taken to swaddle and cramp all their limbs, the softness in which they are reared, perhaps the use of another milk than their Mother's, everything thwarts and delays in them the first progress of Nature" (*Discourses*, 215). In the *Emile*, Rousseau's concern is correcting the ways in which civil society has cramped man's soul. Again, he condemns the practice of swaddling infants. "Their first sentiment is a sentiment of pain and suffering . . . The first gifts they receive from you is chains" (*Emile*, 43). Rousseau wonders where the practice of swaddling children comes from and attributes it to a

"denatured practice" (*Emile*, 44). Mothers, refusing to breast-feed their children, place them in the care of nurses. Rousseau calls these nurses mercenary women. Just as hiring soldiers is an indication of a weak, corrupt regime, so too is hiring women to breastfeed its children a sign of corruption. Like mercenary soldiers, these mercenary women care more for money than they do for the vitality of the citizenry. In an effort to prevent injury and to save themselves trouble, the mercenary women swaddle the infants. The infants receive their chains and the mothers "devote themselves gaily to the entertainments of the city" (*Emile*, 44). Far from a fanciful, utopian vision, the eighteenth century French woman is a chimera in the mythological sense, a creature which is comprised of two incongruous parts, divided between her inclination and her natural duty.

Rousseau goes on to tell his readers that these corrupt mothers are rather cunning in their abdication of their duty. "I have sometimes seen the little trick of young women who feign to want to nurse their children. They know how to have pressure put on them to give up this whim. Husbands, doctors, especially mothers, are adroitly made to intervene. A husband who dared to consent to his wife's nursing her child would be a man lost" (*Emile*, 45). Despite his greater strength and authority, a husband allows his wife's feigned weakness and yields to her feminine manipulation, allowing her to disregard her natural duty. With this example, Rousseau shows us a link in the "chain of wonders" by which "the strong could resolve to serve the weak, and the people to purchase an idea of repose at the price of real felicity" (*Discourses*, 131). The decision to delegate the natural care of a child to a stranger dissolves the bonds of the family. "Prudent husbands, paternal love must be immolated for the sake of peace; and you are fortunate that women more continent than yours can be found in the country, more fortunate yet if the time your wives save is not destined for others than you!" (*Emile*, 45). Not only does a father forfeit his relationship to his child, but he also forfeits his wife's fidelity.

The continual seeking of pleasure and the attempt to satisfy grotesque, unnatural passions take its toll on the individual, marriage, and also the political community. Rousseau fears that these fractional creatures will eventually stop having babies.

> As soon as the condition of motherhood becomes burdensome, the means to deliver oneself from it completely is soon found. They want to perform a useless act so as always to be able to start over again, and they turn to the prejudice of the species the attraction given for the sake of multiplying it. This practice, added to the other causes of depopulation,

> presages the impending fate of Europe. The sciences, the arts, the philosophy, and the morals that this practice engenders will not be long in making a desert of it. It will be peopled with ferocious beasts. The change of inhabitants will not be great. (*Emile,* 44–45)

Abstracting what is natural to the sex (in this case, the natural duties of motherhood) from the individual does not create the general idea of the human being. Instead, it creates beasts that no longer resembles the human at all.[15]

Breastfeeding one's own child holds great promise for Rousseau. He allows us to glimpse the salutary effects it has on the mother, her marriage, and for the larger political community. The mother, who breastfeeds her child fulfills her natural duty and enjoys contentment, which is unknown to the fractious, pleasure seeking women Rousseau sees in eighteenth century France. Rousseau goes on to promise that the marriage and family of the mother, who breastfeeds, will be improved. Breastfeeding, and the subsequent care of children begins as a duty assigned to a woman by nature, but it turns out to be her source of happiness. It also appears to fortify the marriage bond and protect it from infidelity, which results from the attempt of a woman to satisfy her vanity. "When the family is lively and animated, the domestic cares constitute the dearest occupation of the wife and the sweetest enjoyment of the husband. Thus, from the correction of this single abuse would soon result the general reform; nature would soon have reclaimed its rights. Let women once again become mothers, men will soon become fathers and husbands again" (*Emile*, 46).

Rousseau does not stop there. He implicitly promises his readers that breastfeeding will restore the political community, as well as the individual and marriage. Breastfeeding creates certain affection between woman and child. Although the corrupted women of Rousseau's day do not want to trouble themselves with the care of their children, they do not want their children's affection to go to another. And, so, the wet nurse is sent away from the child just as soon as her services are no longer needed and the vicious mother "inspire[s] contempt in the children for their nurses by treating them as veritable servants" (*Emile*, 45). The trouble is the mother is unable to replace the wet nurse. Rousseau observes the worst possible outcome. "The mother who believes she replaces the nurse and makes up for her neglect by her cruelty is mistaken. Instead of making a tender son out of a denatured nursling, she trains him in ingratitude, she teaches him one day to despise her who gave him life, as well as her who nursed him with her milk" (*Emile*, 45). Feeling no obligation to the woman who gave him birth or to the woman, who nourished him with her milk, the child will not learn to feel any bond to other

human beings. “Everything follows from this depravity [a mother’s refusal to breastfeed]. The whole moral order degenerates” (*Emile*, 46). We may infer then, that if mothers were to breastfeed their children, the degeneration of the moral order would not occur. Children would learn the proper respect and affection for their mothers, their fathers, and their siblings, which would prepare them for their relationship to other citizens

Like Rousseau, Wollstonecraft begins her treatise by indicting the French and in particular French women. In her dedicatory letter to Talleyrand-Perigord, Wollstonecraft regrets he did not include women in his plan for public education. In the wake of the French Revolution, which many believed would be the triumph of equality for all human beings, women remained subject to the same old hierarchies. Wollstonecraft bemoans the corruption of French morals and attributes it to the continued inequality between men and women. Much to the reader’s surprise, Wollstonecraft begins her radical work on the rights of women by encouraging their traditional roles. Wollstonecraft suggests that improved character of wives and mothers will benefit the political community (*VRW*, 4). Throughout her treatise on the equality of women, Wollstonecraft returns again and again to the differentiation between the sexes and, in particular, to the importance of motherhood. “The care of children in their infancy is one of the grand duties annexed to the female character by nature” (*VRW*, 151). Yet, this natural duty is not so compelling that it will be sustained under corrupt circumstances. Rather than caring for their children as nature would dictate, fractional mothers bend to social conventions. In the eighteenth century, this means giving preference to the first born son, the presumed heir, and often neglecting daughters and younger sons.

> Woman, however, a slave in every situation to prejudice, seldom exerts enlightened maternal affection; for she either neglects her children, or spoils them by improper indulgence . . . Justice, truth, everything is sacrificed by these Rebekah’s, and for the sake of their *own* children they violate the most sacred duties, forgetting the common relationship that binds the whole family on earth together. (*VRW*, 151)

The fractional, weak mother who cares only for her own social position is grossly unnatural. She is unable to raise healthy virtuous children.

“But the nature of the poison points out the antidote” (*VRW*, 19). Wollstonecraft joins Rousseau in suggesting a seemingly simple solution. Mothers should breastfeed their children. Not only will breastfeeding serve to excite a mother’s natural affection for all of her children (rather than the

over indulgent attention to the presumed heir), but it will also encourage greater affection between husband and wife.

> After having been fatigued with the sight of insipid grandeur and the slavish ceremonies that with cumberous [sic] pomp supplied the place of domestic affections, I have turned to some other scene to relieve my eye by resting it on the refreshing green every where scattered by nature. I have viewed with pleasure a woman nursing her children . . . I have seen her prepare herself and her children, with only the luxury of cleanliness, to receive her husband, who returning weary home in the evening found smiling babes and a clean hearth. (*VRW*, 142)

Though *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is often cited as Wollstonecraft's departure from the tenets of Romanticism and the works of Rousseau, Wollstonecraft depends on the feelings of husband and wife to restore the integrity of the individual, the family, and, as a consequence, the political community. The "delight at seeing his child suckled by its mother" is "the natural way of cementing the matrimonial tie" (*VRW*, 142). The alleged convert to the faith of reason is unabashed in telling her readers that her "heart has loitered in the midst of the group, and has even throbbed with sympathetic emotion" (*VRW*, 142–143). The scene Wollstonecraft describes is "the happiest as well as the most respectable situation" (*VRW*, 143).

While Wollstonecraft agrees with Rousseau that the corruption of eighteenth century Europe may be abated by respecting the distinctive traits of women, we begin to see that Wollstonecraft goes beyond Rousseau. Rousseau is confident that if mothers would return to their natural duties, fathers would match their concern for their children. Although Rousseau maintains that the prejudices and practices of his day corrupt men and women alike, from Wollstonecraft's perspective, he places too much responsibility for change on the women. Wollstonecraft holds men, as well as women, responsible for moral change. Because social convention has designated women responsible for sexual propriety, men have been given license to concern themselves only with pleasure. From Wollstonecraft's point of view, they have taken advantage of this license and have neglected their families.

> But 'til men become attentive to the duty of a father, it is vain to expect women to spend that time in their nursery which they "wise in their generation" choose to spend at their glass; for this exertion of cunning is only an instinct of nature to enable them to obtain indirectly a little of that power of which they are unjustly denied a share: for, if women are

> not permitted to enjoy legitimate rights, they will render both men and themselves vicious, to obtain illicit privileges. (*VRW*, 6)

Women, financially and emotionally dependent on their husbands, care only for pleasing them.

> Men are not aware of the misery they cause, and the vicious weakness they cherish, by only inciting women to render themselves pleasing; they do not consider that they thus make natural and artificial duties clash, by sacrificing the comfort and the respectability of a woman's life to voluptuous notions of beauty, when in nature they all harmonize. (*VRW*, 142)

Divided between her socially determined inclinations for pleasing her husband (and, therefore, the fleeting satisfaction of her *amour propre*) and the natural inclination that is distinctive to her sex, woman is deformed. Rather than the Utopian dream, the chimera that Wollstonecraft pursues, woman appears as a chimera in the mythological sense: she is comprised of two incompatible parts, which do not fit together by nature.

In a similar vein to Rousseau, Wollstonecraft notices that the lack of maternal affection will have negative effects on society as well as on the individual and the family. In fact, it reduces mankind to the condition of animals. "The want of natural affection, in many women, who are drawn from their duty by the admiration of men, and the ignorance of others, render the infancy of man a much more perilous state than that of the brutes" (*VRW*, 177). Again, Wollstonecraft's concern is not simply a philosophical one, but also, above all, a real concern for the viability of the species. Indeed, these concerns are linked. "In public schools women, to guard against errors of ignorance, should be taught the elements of anatomy and medicine, not only to enable them to take proper care of their health, but to make them rational nurses of their infants, parents, and husbands; for the bills of mortality are swelled by the blunders of self-willed old women" (*VRW*, 177).

While breastfeeding is a good start to the care of children, raising healthy children and preserving strong families require that women foster their initial maternal instincts and supplement these maternal instincts with human reason. We can begin to identify a fundamental difference in the disposition of Rousseau and Wollstonecraft to nature. Rousseau's understanding of nature depends on human beings' beginnings. In his initial discussion of the importance of motherhood in Book I of the *Emile*, Rousseau is content with the natural inclinations of women to breastfeed and places his hopes for

reform in these simple passions. Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, believes the cultivation of woman's initial maternal stirrings will encourage women to develop their rational faculties. It is only through woman's natural capacity to reason and by applying reason to the care of her family that woman is able to find fulfillment in motherhood. This suggests that Wollstonecraft, in contrast to Rousseau, takes her bearings from a human being's end or perfection. If so, Wollstonecraft will have a much different understanding of human nature and the political community than Rousseau.

Although Rousseau's initial consideration of motherhood relies on the simplest passions, in Book V of the *Emile* Rousseau does suggest that Sophie requires practical reasoning in order to be a compatible companion to Emile. Sophie's ability to distinguish the relative merits of various opinions will contribute to the happiness of the married couple as the family as a whole. In order to appreciate the difference between Rousseau's conception of a woman's capacity to reason and Wollstonecraft's understanding, it is helpful to consider to what end each thinker attributes rationality to women. Rousseau insists Sophie's reasoning is for the sake of others. "A man from the first of these two classes [a man who thinks] ought not to make an alliance in the other [the class of people who do not think], for the greatest charm of society is lacking to him when despite having a wife, he is reduced to thinking alone" (*Emile*, 408). Although Sophie's life is made more pleasant by her ability to reason, Sophie's cultivation of her rationality serves what is good for Emile. After all, "It is not good for man to be alone . . . We have promised [Emile] a companion. She must be given to him" (*Emile*, 357). Not only is a rational woman good for the man who thinks, but it is good for the children of such a couple. "Besides, how will a woman who has no habit of reflecting raise her children? . . . How will she incline them toward virtues she does not know?" (*Emile*, 409, *VRW*, 88). Again, Sophie's capacity for reason is for the sake of others and not for the sake of her own completion.[16] This does not escape Wollstonecraft's notice. Responding directly to this passage from the *Emile*, Wollstonecraft reminds her readers that Sophie's practical reasoning is meant for finding means to an end, but not contemplating the end itself. It is necessarily incomplete and is dependent on Emile's more philosophical reasoning (*Emile*, 377). She is not convinced that Sophie's reasoning will benefit herself or her children. Wollstonecraft considers this "a direct and exclusive appropriation of reason . . . leaving woman in a state of the most profound ignorance" (*VRW*, 87). Wollstonecraft acknowledges no difference between Sophie and Emile—the couple who is Rousseau's hope for political reform— and the fractured, eighteenth-century couples she condemns.

> How indeed should she [make her children "sensible and amiable"], when her husband is not always at hand to lend her his reason?—when they both together make but one moral being . . . and perchance his abstract reason, that should concentrate the scattered beams of her practical reason, may be employed in judging of the flavor of wine, descanting on the sauces most proper for turtle; or more profoundly intent at a card-table, he may be generalizing his ideas as bets away his fortune, leaving all the minutiae of education to his helpmate, or to chance. (*VRW*, 89)

Together Sophie and Emile comprise one moral being. Rousseau intends them to be utopian visions, but to Wollstonecraft they appear to be half-beings who are comprised of the parts from two creatures, but do not make a natural whole. "For surely [Rousseau] speaks to the heart" (Wardle, 131) and Wollstonecraft appreciates his efforts to express women's longings for ideal love and domestic felicity. However, Wollstonecraft will not sacrifice woman's wholeness for the sake of Sophie's domestic happiness as it is offered by Rousseau. For Wollstonecraft, woman must be allowed to develop the full use of her reason. It completes her as an individual. Because motherhood is an occasion for rational activity, motherhood contributes to the wholeness of the woman.

Wollstonecraft is sincere in her hope that women will find greater happiness in motherhood and marriage. She is also hopeful that domestic felicity will go a long way to improving the political community. Yet, Wollstonecraft knows that the wholeness of the individual, as well as the health of the political community, cannot be restored by simply fostering one half of the being, the sex. "And whilst women are educated to rely on their husbands for judgment, this [womanish follies] must ever be the consequence, for there is no improving an understanding by halves, nor can any being act wisely from imitation" (*VRW*, 177). Wollstonecraft appreciates that care must be given to that part of woman, which is human. For Wollstonecraft, like Rousseau, the human is dignified by a freedom from social prejudices and the opinion of others. And, so Wollstonecraft is willing to follow Rousseau farther into "the land of chimeras" in her effort to restore the unity or the wholeness, which women lack.

II. UNNATURAL DISTINCTIONS

Rousseau educates Emile with the intention of preserving his numerical unity, his independence from the opinion of others. Rousseau has been at

great pains to ensure that Emile is able to satisfy his (relatively few) desires by his own power. As Emile becomes a young man, Rousseau further prepares Emile to live among other human beings. Despite Rousseau's apparently nostalgic longing for the state of nature, Emile lives in eighteenth century society and Rousseau recognizes the impossibility of returning to the pure state of nature. "A man who wanted to regard himself as an isolated being, not depending at all on anything and sufficient unto himself, could only be miserable . . . Finding the whole earth covered with thine and mine and having nothing belonging to him except his body, where would he get his necessities? By leaving the state of nature, we force our fellows to leave it, too" (*Emile*, 193).

Rousseau's challenge is to preserve Emile's independence from others as Emile forms relations with a greater number of people. To this end, Rousseau insists Emile learn a trade. It is in his discussion of the importance of learning a trade that Rousseau levels his most damning political criticism against his contemporaries. Though Emile may be of "common genius," he is not of common wealth and, therefore, he is expected to enjoy a genteel leisure. Rousseau anticipates and responds to the protests of the aristocracy. Over and over again, Rousseau justifies a trade for the young aristocrat by promising it will protect him from the reversal of fortune. In this respect, Rousseau takes advantage of his contemporaries' social vanities and their fear of suffering. However, Rousseau offers other reasons for learning a trade. The arguments Rousseau puts forth follow Rousseau's egalitarian, social contract theory of the political community, beginning with the state of nature.

The first reason that Emile must learn a trade is the simple need for self-preservation. Self-preservation is the first law of nature (*Emile*, 193 and the *Discourses*, 127). All human beings are equal in their concern for it and their right to ensure it. Up until this point in Emile's education, Rousseau has been careful not to make a distinction of social rank to Emile. Rousseau will be faithful to this practice in teaching Emile a trade. He gives as his reason that

> man is the same in all stations; the rich man does not have a bigger stomach than the poor one . . . a man of great family is no greater than a man of the people; and finally, as the natural needs are everywhere the same, the means of providing for them ought to be equal everywhere. (*Emile*, 194)

Practicing a trade is one way by which Emile can feed himself. However, Rousseau knows that in the decaying gentry of eighteenth-century France,

material needs are more easily obtained by using other human beings to one's own advantage, by being "pliable and groveling with rascals" (*Emile*, 197). In this regard, readers of both the *Emile* and the *Second Discourse* may notice a parallel between the most precarious stage of the state of nature and the conditions of the eighteenth century France, verging on revolution. Rousseau describes the condition of man in the last epoch of the state of nature. Living among other human beings has multiplied and amplified the desires of man. Despite the varying degrees of wealth, all human beings find themselves grossly dependent on others: "rich, he needs their services; poor, he needs their help, and moderate means do not enable him to do without them. He must therefore constantly try to interest them in his fate and to make them really or apparently find their own profit in working for his" (*Discourses*, 170). Like the corrupted civil man, the Savage in the last epoch of the state of nature will humiliate himself to satisfy his needs. Man's constant attempt to force others to work for his own interest "makes him knavish and artful with some, imperious and harsh with the rest" (*Discourses*, 170). Eventually, the savages in the last epoch of the state of nature will harm others in an attempt to satisfy their desires and the social contract must be instituted.

Civil man, most particularly the aristocratic and the bourgeois man, of the eighteenth century is in the same predicament as the Savage in the last stage of the state of nature. Civil man has numerous desires, which seem to multiply with his wealth. He becomes more and more dependent on others to satisfy these desires. So, his wealth serves to degrade and weaken man. Rousseau admonishes his contemporaries for feeling invulnerable to the coming revolution.

> You trust in the present order of society without thinking that this order is subject to inevitable revolutions . . . Who can answer for what will become of you then? All that men have made, men can destroy. The only ineffaceable characters are those printed by nature; and nature does not make princes, rich men, or great lords. (*Emil*e, 194)

Far from being protected from the revolution by their wealth and power, the aristocracy is the most vulnerable. "That vanquished king who, full of rage, wants to be buried under the debris of his throne may be praised as much as one pleases; I despise him. I see that he exists only by his crown, and that he is nothing at all if he is not a king" (*Emile*, 194). To those who consider themselves empowered by their social rank and hereditary power, Rousseau asks, "How will you despise the baseness and the vices which you need to subsist? You depended only on riches, and now you depend

on the rich. You have only worsened your slavery and added your poverty on top of it. Now you are poor without being free" (*Emile*, 197). Rousseau distinguishes between the man who has recourse to a trade and the rascal who lives at the expense of others.

> You no longer need to be a coward and a liar with the nobles, pliable and groveling with rascals, basely obliging to everyone, a borrower or a thief . . . The opinion of others does not touch you. You do not have to pay court to anyone; no fool to flatter . . . That rogues have the conduct of great affairs is of little importance to you. (*Emile*, 197)

The reversal of fortune, in the extreme case of revolution, or even the threat of a reversal renders a man weak and dependent. As we will soon see, Rousseau identifies a dependence on public opinion with effeminacy.

On the verge of a new civil society, Rousseau promises freedom and independence to those who will minimize their desires and provide for them with their own labor. It is a promise that he makes to the Savage entering the social contract, as well as the civil man of his own time. Stripped of their claims to material wealth, a man enters civil society. "A man and a citizen, whoever he may be, has no property to put into society than himself" (*Emile*, 195). This is also true of Emile, who is entering the already formed civil society. Rousseau knows that Emile will claim the wealth that his father has already acquired and Rousseau is quick to disregard it.

> You owe others more than if you were born without property since you were favored at birth. It is not just that what one man has done for society should relieve another for what he owes it; for each, owing himself wholly can pay for himself and no father can transmit to his son the right to be useless to his fellows. (*Emile*, 195)

To live by the riches of another is to diminish that other person's means of self preservation and degrade oneself. If equality is to be maintained in civil society, all men must work for their own self-preservation and respect that right of others. "To work is therefore an indispensable duty for social man. Rich or poor, powerful or weak, every idle citizen is a rascal" (*Emile*, 195).

Throughout the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft joins Rousseau in his condemnation of the eighteenth-century aristocracy. Wollstonecraft

appreciates the political lessons taught by Rousseau in the *Emile:* artificial power serves to weaken men rather than to strengthen them.

> Birth, riches and every extrinsic advantage that exalt a man above his fellows, without any mental exertion, sink him in reality below them. In proportion to his weakness, he is played upon by designing men, till the bloated monster has lost all traces of humanity. (*VRW*, 45)

Seeking a chimera, a fanciful, utopian vision of human beings, Wollstonecraft meets instead with chimeras in the mythological sense, fractional creatures that do not exist by nature. Wollstonecraft shares Rousseau's fear that human beings have been so degraded by their eighteenth-century civilization that they are unable to restore their natural dignity. "Educated in slavish dependence, and enervated by luxury and sloth, where shall we find men who will stand forth to assert the rights of man; or claim the privilege of moral beings, who should have but one road to excellence?" (*VRW*, 45)

Wollstonecraft's reproach of eighteenth-century society does not end with the decrepit male aristocracy. She explicitly compares women to the aristocracy and condemns them as well. Wollstonecraft turns to Rousseau's critique of aristocracy and the solution he outlines for Emile as a guide for the women of her day. "Consequently, the most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart . . . This was Rousseau's opinion respecting men: I extend it to women" (*VRW*, 21).[17] In putting forth this solution for women, Wollstonecraft faces the same difficulties from women as Rousseau anticipates when insisting Emile learn a trade. Women enjoy their power, however degrading it may be.

> Still the regal homage which they receive is so intoxicating . . . it may be impossible to convince them that the illegitimate power, which they obtain, by degrading themselves, is a curse, and that they must return to nature and equality, if they wish to secure the placid satisfaction that unsophisticated affections impart. (*VRW*, 21–22)

Despite women's dependence on the good esteem of their husbands, Wollstonecraft appreciates that women of her day have been educated to see their weakness as a source of power. "Taught from infancy that beauty is woman's scepter, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, seeks only to adorn its prison" (*VRW*, 44).

Wollstonecraft has been attentive to the tutor Rousseau and learns her lesson well. Rousseau issues parents the difficult task of caring for their children without turning them into little tyrants. Parents must be on guard immediately upon the birth of their child. Because the infant cannot satisfy his desires, he cries. "From these tears we might think so little worthy of attention is born man's first relation to all that surrounds him; here is formed the first link in that long chain of which the social order is formed" (*Emile*, 65). As the child gets older, Rousseau suggests never allowing a child to give orders. "But if he is allowed to give orders to adults, the child will feel 'how pleasant it is to act with the hands of others and to need only to stir [his tongue] to make the universe move' (p. 68)."[18] Women, who Rousseau suggests remain children (*Emile*, 211), are also weak and, as Wollstonecraft constantly points out, enjoy acting with the hands of others. The fractional, weak character of eighteenth-century men gives women power over men.

> Women, it is true, obtaining power by unjust means, by practicing or fostering vice, evidently lose the rank which reason would assign them, and they become either abject slaves or capricious tyrants. They lose all simplicity, all dignity of mind, in acquiring power, and act as men are observed to act when they have been exalted by the same means. (*VRW*, 45)

Again, Wollstonecraft describes the women of her day in chimerical, monstrous terms. Concerned only with her beauty, women seem part human being and part exotic bird.

> And, why do they not discover, when "in the noon of beauty's power," that they are treated like queens only to be deluded by hollow respect, till they are led to resign, or not assume, their natural prerogatives? Confined then in cages like the feathered race, they have nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch. It is true that they are provided with food and raiment, for which they neither toil nor spin; but health, liberty, and virtue, are given in exchange. (*VRW*, 55–57)

Just as Rousseau recognizes the decline of Europe's aristocracies and anticipates their inevitable demise, Wollstonecraft knows the woman who reigns by her beauty is also vulnerable to a reversal of fortunes. And, like Rousseau, she wonders what type of woman will replace the feathered creatures. "But, where amongst mankind, has been found sufficient strength of mind to

enable a being to resign these adventitious prerogatives; one who, rising with the calm dignity of reason above opinion, dared to be proud of the privileges inherent in man?" (*VRW*, 56).

"It is time to effect a revolution in female manners—time to restore to them their lost dignity—and make them, as part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world" (*VRW*, 45). Wollstonecraft appreciates that the fate of humanity depends on liberating men and women from their passions that enslaves them to others. Their constant attempt to satisfy their vanity, or to use Rousseau's word, *amour propre*, has made men and, particularly, women vicious, fractional creatures. Wollstonecraft regrets that women, unlike men, have nothing to do, but seek pleasure.

> Men have various employments and pursuits which engage their attention, and give a character to the opening of the mind; but women, confined to one, and having their thoughts constantly directed to the most insignificant parts of themselves, seldom extend their views beyond the triumph of the hour. (*VRW*, 44)

In a similar vein to Rousseau's project of educating a strong and whole, independent, natural man, Wollstonecraft is confident that woman can also be revitalized. "But were the understanding once emancipated from the slavery to which the pride and sensuality of man and their short-sighted desire, like that of the dominion in tyrants, of present sway, has subjected them, we should probably read of their weakness with surprise" (*VRW*, 44).

In her attempt to apply Rousseau's education for Emile to the women of her day, Wollstonecraft adopts Rousseau's suggestion that Emile learn a trade. Just as Emile is to liberate himself from social prejudices, Wollstonecraft expects that women will liberate themselves from their husbands and their own vanity through occupation. Rather than expecting women to "loiter with easy grace" throughout the long day, Wollstonecraft suggests that "[W]omen might certainly study the art of healing, and be physicians as well as nurses" (*VRW*, 147–148). She goes on to suggest that women may even pursue occupation in politics and business. She is primarily concerned with saving women from both "common and legal prostitution" (*VRW*, 148). Were women able to support themselves, they

> would not marry for support, as men accept places under government, and neglect the implied duties; nor would an attempt to earn their

> subsistence, a most laudable one! sink them almost to the level of those poor abandoned creatures who live by prostitution. For are not milliners and mantua-makers reckoned the next class? (*VRW*, 148)

In advocating women's employment, Wollstonecraft hopes to free them from their constant concern for the opinions of others, in particular those of their husbands, and foster an independent, whole person.

It is worth stopping to consider whether or not Wollstonecraft would consider managing a household and caring for children suitable occupation for women. As I have already demonstrated, Wollstonecraft has a true appreciation for marriage and motherhood. By adhering to the natural duty of women to care for their infants, women develop a concern for their children and other members of society. By turning their attention away from themselves, women keep a check on their social passions. In the simplest terms, motherhood gives women something else to do than vainly soliciting the fawning attention of their all too often indifferent husbands. For this reason alone, motherhood can be understood to be noble occupation. In addition to keeping in check women's social passions, Wollstonecraft understands motherhood as an opportunity to develop what is natural, but unique to human beings: reason. Mothers, indeed fathers, may feel a primal love for their children. For Wollstonecraft, these emotions are simply not enough. The tasks of caring for one's family require the guidance of reason and scientific investigation. In this way, women are able to develop their own reason. Under the right conditions, the family has great potential to restore humanity.

However, wives and mothers are unable to exert a positive influence if they are weak and fractional creatures, consumed by their passions and constantly trying to please. Depending on another person for subsistence encourages this character. As we will see in the last chapter of this book, this is reason enough for Wollstonecraft to argue for married women's employment. There is further reason for Wollstonecraft to advocate that women seek employment, one less philosophical and more practical. Wollstonecraft knows, even in the eighteenth century, that women cannot count on marriage. Unmarried women, either spinsters or widows, were left to the mercy of other men, most likely brothers. Wollstonecraft describes this as an "equivocal and humiliating situation" and the problem continuously emerges throughout her treatise on women's rights (*VRW*, 48, 65, 148). This is an important difference between Rousseau and Wollstonecraft. To be sure, Rousseau's political reform depends on the improved character of women. However, Rousseau places his hopes for reform in the marriages they will make. Indeed, we only know Sophie through her relationship to Emile and it

is difficult to imagine her without Emile. Wollstonecraft also appreciates the importance of the virtue of women in political reform. However, she expects that they will contribute to their communities as individuals as well as wives and mothers.

Wollstonecraft has followed Rousseau into "the land of chimeras." Wollstonecraft recognizes that we are born twice: once for the species and once for our sex. A whole individual, as well as a strong political community, depends on the proper combination of these two halves. If one half or the other is perverted by its passions, the individual becomes less than human and the political community is populated by beasts. Wollstonecraft, along with Rousseau, encourages the natural affection women have for their children. Sacrificing women's conventional pleasures for the sake of their children is sure to bring about a healthier individual and society. In addition to this Wollstonecraft imitates Rousseau's lessons for Emile and suggests that women find means to support themselves, liberating themselves from the esteem of others. As we further consider Rousseau's prescriptions for Emile's trade, it begins to look as if Wollstonecraft can proceed no farther into Rousseau's land of chimeras.

Not just any trade will do for Emile. The trade that Emile chooses must foster his numerical unity. Rousseau immediately rules out the possibility of Emile becoming an embroiderer, a gilder, or a varnisher, like Locke's pupil (*Emile*, 197). Emile's trade "must not demand from those practicing it qualities of soul that are odious and incompatible with humanity . . . But let us always remember that there is no decency without utility" (*Emile*, 197). Anticipating the corrupted responses of his eighteenth century readers, Rousseau is strict in his definition of utility. He excludes the possibility of "professions that are idle, futile, or subject to fashion, such as a that of a wigmaker, which is never necessary and can become useless from one day to the next, so long as nature does not cease providing us with hair" (*Emile*, 198). There is one principle by which to judge the utility of Emile's trade. "He has to have a trade that could serve Robinson Crusoe on his island" (*Emile*, 198).

Rousseau places what, at first, seems to be a further demand on Emile's trade. Not only must Emile choose a trade which is compatible with humanity, he must choose a trade which is compatible with his sex.

> Give a man a trade which suits his sex . . . Every sedentary and indoor profession which effeminates and softens the body neither pleases nor suits him. Never did a young boy by himself aspire to be a tailor. Art is required to bring to this woman's trade the sex for which it is not made.

> The needle and the sword cannot be wielded by the same hands. (*Emile*, 199)

As it turns out, the trades which are incompatible with humanity are the same as the trades, which are incompatible with Emile's sex: the embroiderer, the wigmaker, the tailor. These trades are all subject to fashion.

Rousseau briefly considers the trade of farmer for Emile, but he rejects it on the ground that the farmer is more dependent on fortune and men than the artisan. The latter "is as free as the farmer is slave. [The farmer] is dependent on his field, whose harvest is at another's discretion. The enemy, the prince, a powerful neighbor, or a lawsuit can take his field away from him" (*Emile*, 195). It is decided that Emile is to be a carpenter instead. It is important to note that at this point, Emile's development differs quite radically from the Savage. The Savage experiences a second revolution, which Emile, does not (not yet, at least). "Metallurgy and agriculture were the two arts the invention of which brought about this great revolution. For the Poet it is gold and silver, but for the Philosopher it is iron and wheat that civilized men, and ruined Mankind" (*Discourses*, 168). Thanks to Rousseau's decision that Emile is to be a carpenter, Emile is protected from further, devastating corruption.[19]

Rousseau's plan to preserve Emile's wholeness, his independence from the opinion of others, seems to work. Sophie and her mother visit Emile at the carpentry shop where he is employed and they ask Emile to leave with them. Emile refuses based on the commitment he made to the older carpenter. If he were to leave work, his master's livelihood would be at risk. Breaking his promise to his master would violate the fundamental law of nature: each individual has a right to self-preservation. Sophie's mother suggests that Emile use some of his inherited wealth to compensate Emile's master for the work would leave unfinished. "Doesn't this young man, who is so prodigal and who pours out money without necessity, any longer know how to find money on suitable occasions?" *(Emile*, 438). Even if her mother does not, Sophie appreciates that use his wealth in order to avoid honest labor would "enslave his soul to riches; Emile would accustom himself to putting his riches in the place of his duties and to believing that one is excused from everything provided one pays" (*Emile*, 438). Just as Rousseau predicts, Emile's trade protects his wholeness, his numerical unity. He does not submit to the will of another nor does he depend on his riches.

It is worth returning to and emphasizing the implication that the activities Rousseau deems appropriate for women are those, which are subject to fashion, such as the tailor.[20] It is not entirely clear how Rousseau imagines

that Sophie will avoid corruption, for these are the trades that he has called "odious and incompatible with humanity" (*Emile*, 197). Of course, Sophie engages in them for her own pleasure and not for financial profit, and so the possibility of her becoming, as a result, dependent on the whims of others is diminished. Still, Sophie's occupation, her sewing and embroidery, is not one that Rousseau would permit Emile. Wollstonestract, who agrees with Rousseau about the dangers associated with these occupations (even suggesting that hatmakers and dressmakers are just barely more respectable than prostitutes! [*VRW*, 148]), rejects them for women as well as men. Rousseau, on the other hand, not only permits these activities to women, but he also suggests that women are better suited for the activities, which are odious to humanity. Rousseau offers his readers an example of women's inability to perform those trades that are compatible with humanity. While visiting Emile at the carpentry shop, Sophie takes an interest in Emile's work. "The silly girl even tries to imitate Emile. With her frail white hand she pushes a plane along a plank. The plane slides and does not bite" (*Emile*, 438). Sophie, who "ought to be a woman as Emile is a man—that is say, she ought to have everything which suits the constitution of her species and her sex in order to fill her place in the physical and moral order" (*Emile*, 357), is unable to perform the trade which preserves Emile's wholeness.[21] At the very least, this suggests that the wholeness or the unity which is forged by combining the species and the female sex cannot be formed in the same manner as the wholeness comprised of the species and the male sex.

Wollstonecraft appreciates that Rousseau's prescription for wives and mothers are a strong palliative for the fractured, corrupt women of the eighteenth century. Yet, Wollstonecraft also knows what Rousseau recognizes as well, being unable to provide for oneself, being dependent on another or on public opinion is humiliating and degrading. In designating to women the trades, which are subject to fashion, Rousseau suggests women are unable to achieve the same numerical unity that Rousseau prescribes for Emile. In order to determine, how and if numerical unity is forged for the female, it is necessary to turn to Rousseau's treatment of women in the *Emile* and in the state of nature. Furthermore, Rousseau insists that Emile learn a trade in order to protect himself from certain social revolution. Emile's trade allows Emile to live in a more egalitarian social order, based on natural rights, rather than conventional hierarchies. Rousseau seems to exclude women from this regime. Rousseau's treatment of Sophie is disappointing to Wollstonecraft, for it reveals a fundamental problem in Rousseau's egalitarian philosophy of *The Discourse on Inequality* and *The Social Contract*.

9. Wendy Gunther-Canada, *Rebel Writer: Mary Wollstonecraft and Enlightenment Politics*. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 2001), 9. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.
10. Virginia Sapiro, "Wollstonecraft, Feminism, and Democracy: 'Being Bastilled'" in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Maria J. Falco. (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 36.
11. George S. Fraser, *Alexander Pope* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 36. Wollstonecraft quotes Alexander Pope quite often and seems to be well acquainted with his poetry. While Pope is revered for his witty satire, he is not considered a particularly original philosopher. His general ideas are that of Aristotle.
12. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, in *The Discourses and Other Political Writings*. Edited by Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1997), 113. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: the Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 137. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.
2. Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 56–57. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.
3. Jean Grimshaw, "Mary Wollstonecraft and the Tensions in Feminist Philosophy," *Socialism, Feminism, and Philosophy: A Radical Reader*. Edited by Sean Sayers and Peter Osbornee. (London: Routledge, 1990), 14. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.
4. Gary Kelly's *Revolutionary Feminism: The Mind and Career of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 41.
5. Syndy Conger, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Language of Sensibility* (London: Associated University Presses, 1994), xxxi. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.
6. Eileen Hunt Botting, *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2006), 12. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.
7. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*. Introduction, Translation and Notes by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 211. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.
8. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, Edited and Translated by Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 148. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.

9. Laurence Cooper. *Rousseau, Nature & the Problem of the Good Life*. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.
10. Following Cooper, I will refer to the human being in the state of nature as the Savage. To call him natural man would be confusing and misleading, as natural refers to the quality of an individual's soul and not his or her physical location. I do not intend any negative connotation with this designation.
11. Roger Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 4. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.
12. In his book, *Love and Friendship*, Allan Bloom notes that the problem of Book V of the *Emile* is how to care for another person as one cares for him or herself. Bloom suggests that this is the equivalent to the political problem of the *Social* Contract: how obedience to the law one gives oneself guaranteed (p. 91).
13. Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*. Edited by Ralph M. Wardle (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 145. Wollstonecraft's emphasis. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.
14. Jean- Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*. Edited by Roger D. Masters and Translated by Judith R. Masters. (New York: St Martin's Press: 1978), 46. Parenthetical citations refer to this edition.
15. Rousseau returns to women's roles as mothers in Book V in the *Emile*. He is adamant that it is women's "proper purpose to produce [children]" (*Emile*, 362). In a footnote to this passage, Rousseau explains that it is necessary for each woman to bear four children, given the infant mortality rate, in order to maintain the current population. While today we are liberated from this concern for the survival of the species, Rousseau's treatment of women is very much informed by this practical concern.
16. See Denise Schaeffer, "Reconsidering the Role of Sophie in Rousseau's *Emile*, *Polity*, Vol. XXX, no. 4, Summer 1998. Schaeffer acknowledges that Sophie is a failure of the unified soul as it is attributed to the Savage in the state of nature. However, Sophie's fractional character contributes to the wholeness of the family. Considering the rich and complex wholeness of the family results in a better understanding of Rousseau's view of wholeness. Schaeffer's thoughtful and convincing defense of Sophie would fall on Wollstonecraft's deaf ears. Wollstonecraft would not accept the premise that the sacrifice of Sophie's wholeness or independence is necessary for the happiness of the family.
17. This is not to imply, however, that Wollstonecraft agrees with Rousseau in every respect about which a good education consists. As we shall see in the next chapter of this section, Wollstonecraft and Rousseau differ fundamentally in the place they accord to virtue and reason.
18. Mary P. Nichols, "Rousseau's Novel Education in the *Emile*," *Political Theory*, Vol. 13, No. 4, November 1985.
19. In her book, *Gendered Community: Rousseau, Sex and Politics*, Penny Weiss suggests that feminist critics of Rousseau exaggerate the difference between

a craftsman, a carpenter in the case of Emile, and a wife. Weiss minimizes the difference between the two roles by suggesting the wife is more free of social convention than is usually recognized and by arguing that the craftsman is less free than Rousseau would have us believe. The exclusion of the wife or household manager from the public sphere also leaves her independent of it. Furthermore, in managing a house, a woman learns a set of skills which is easily transferred to various circumstances. Should a woman's father or husband die, she is able to use her skills in her new home and is not dependent on any one man. Although the craftsman is presented as a free man, who must only rely on his own hands in order to learn a living, Weiss reminds her readers that the craftsman is part of a larger *social* scheme that requires the division of labor. From the point of view, the craftsman is equally dependent on social convention as the wife or household manager (Weiss, 20).

20. Although Rousseau designates some as trades more appropriate for women than men, Rousseau does not encourage women to seek employment outside the home. Rousseau is clear that their virtue is best preserved as wives and mothers. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that one of the qualities which characterizes Rousseau's ideal woman, Sophie, is her love of sewing. "What Sophie knows best and has been most carefully made to learn are the labors of her own sex, . . . like cutting and sewing her own dresses. There is no needlework which she does not know how to do and which she does with pleasure. But the work she prefers to every other is lacework, because there is none which results in a more agreeable pose" (the pose struck while doing needlework) (*Emile*, 394).
21. Rousseau does not describe Sophie as natural when describing her compatibility to the natural man, Emile. See also *Emile*, 363.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 32.
2. The only natural right that Wollstonecraft ascribes to woman in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is the love that a dutiful wife deserves from her husband (*VRW*, 67).
3. Rousseau begins the *Emile* with this very declaration. "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man" (*Emile*, 37).
4. Because Wollstonecraft is committed to reason and virtue as the defining traits of human beings, we might expect Wollstonecraft to condemn Emile. After all, Emile is meant to embody man's natural qualities. He is independent and good. Rather than cultivate reason and virtue in his young pupil, Rousseau deters the awakening of Emile's passions and limits them