'We advise her to throw aside her pen'

Hierarchy and Authority in Mary Wollstonecraft's Reviews

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> I often think of my new plan of life; and, lest my sister should try to prevail on me to alter it, I have avoided mentioning it to her. I am determined!—Your sex generally laugh at female determinations; but let me tell you, I never yet resolved to do any thing of consequence, that I did not adhere resolutely to it, till I have accomplished my purpose.[1]
>
> I am then going to be the first of a new genus—I tremble at the attempt yet if I fail—I *only* suffer.[2]

Mary Wollstonecraft's delight at first taking on the role of reviewer is clearly visible in these letters, written to her friend, publisher and soon-to-be editor, Joseph Johnson, and to her sister, Everina Wollstonecraft, in September and November 1787. Her first review for Johnson and Thomas Christie's Anal*ytical Review* would be published in June 1788.[3] Wollstonecraft's 'new plan of life' was to be a paid reviewer for the Analytical: 'new', as she considered it, because it was a profession no woman had hitherto occupied. Wollstonecraft's words reveal her to be a woman of resolute and resilient nature, proud of her literary powers and her unique professional role. She reviewed topics and genres from parenting to botany, from religious polemics to novels. As Mary Waters has observed, Wollstonecraft was the 'first truly professional woman literary critic'.[4]

This essay uses Wollstonecraft's reviews to analyse Wollstonecraft's reviewer persona, uncovering discriminations based on age, gender and class, and unearthing literary rivalries in her reviews, which illuminate Wollstonecraft's complex and sometimes conflicted reviewer persona. She favoured a gratuitously vitriolic treatment of other writers based on personal prejudices, using reviewing to fashion herself as an authoritative, didactic figure, to comment on wider socio-political issues and to promote her career as both reviewer and writer. Exposing this darker persona sheds new light on our knowledge of Wollstonecraft, the woman championed as the 'mother of English-language feminism' in recent criticism and in popular reclamations of her.[5]

Recent critical studies have described Wollstonecraft as a 'mother–teacher', who adopted 'a maternal stance toward the imagined girl readers of the fictions she considers' in her reviews.[6] She has been cast as a literary mentor personifying 'benevolent affection' in her letters to Mary Hays.[7] However, rhetorical paradigms of motherhood do not necessarily reflect Wollstonecraft's view of her professional self. She wrote extensively about the role and duties of mothers and of women in her writings for public audiences, but did not write for publication about her personal experience of motherhood. It was her husband, William Godwin, who heralded her as an 'exemplary' mother to their daughter, a view which has fostered and cemented scholarship's association of Wollstonecraft with the maternal.[8] I argue that analysing her persona and career as a reviewer reveals tensions and incongruencies in casting Wollstonecraft as a mother-figure. Wollstonecraft adapted her rhetoric and exploited the position of the reviewer according to whom she reviewed, to meet public expectations of reviewers but also to suit her own professional and personal needs.

A close analysis of Wollstonecraft's reviews reveals a figure who embraced the authority of the reviewer. While sometimes 'maternal', she also used her reviews to police the reading matter of youthful readers, to discipline young authors and to cast harsh judgements on both neophyte and experienced writers, in turn establishing a hierarchy of writers and cementing her own authority. Ingrid Horrocks posits that Wollstonecraft's reviews of travel writings establish a hierarchy that distinguished narratives that were useful to readers wishing to undertake the same journey from those that provided amusement to readers who enjoyed 'armchair travel'.[9] Horrocks posits that Wollstonecraft judged the latter group to be superior as Wollstonecraft wrote *A Short Residence in Sweden and Denmark* (1796) in the second style. Anne Chandler has identified a hierarchy at work in the length of Wollstonecraft's reviews, short articles were used to 'skewer bad novels' while publications she deemed worthier received lengthier treatment.[10] As this essay will show, Wollstonecraft's hierarchies also included people. By investigating Wollstonecraft's care of 'youthful readers', examining her rhetoric in her references to her own writerly experience (and expertise), and tracing the chains of writers created in her reviews, it will demonstrate how Wollstonecraft's reviews established hierarchies of power between individuals. Pronouncing these hierarchies in her reviews had a consequently augmentative effect on Wollstonecraft's own position as a reviewer and a writer in the Romantic literary marketplace.

Literary review culture started in 1749 with the foundation of the *Monthly Review* by Ralph Griffiths. Reviewing quickly became a flourishing and key component of the literary marketplace with six major review periodicals, one of which was the *Analytical Review*, founded in 1750 and in publication until 1800.[11] William St Clair writes that review periodicals 'saw their main role as providing summaries of new books'.[12] Yet reviewing was not so uncomplicated. Purportedly objective, review periodicals became saturated with strongly articulated and subjective judgements of texts. The editors of the *Analytical Review*,

Christie and Johnson, first espoused noble prerogatives that their reviewers would provide sound accounts of new publications, enabling readers to 'judge of a book for themselves'.[13] However, reviews were a means of shaping and influencing public taste, as Jeremy Black observes, leading reviewers to articulate subjective and strong opinions.[14] Reviews were largely written anonymously in an attempt to mitigate the accusation that a reviewer's personality or prejudices coloured their judgement. Many of Wollstonecraft's colleagues at the *Analytical* attached arbitrary initials to their reviews, or no signature at all. However, Wollstonecraft was a 'notoriously autobiographical' writer and assigned the initials, 'M.', 'W.' or 'T.' to many of her articles.[15] These initials bear similarities to how she signed her letters. Thus, Wollstonecraft's reviews expressing harsh dismissals, prejudicial treatment and pretensions to authority are increasingly identifiable as hers, causing reviewing to have a greater impact on her literary career and her reputation.

To influence public opinion, review periodicals used a rhetoric designed to establish their authority and influence the reader into sharing their opinion. Reviewers joined their voices with their colleagues through the first-person plural pronoun 'we', implying that the judgement stated in a review was increasingly legitimised as it was endorsed by colleagues. Secondly, reviewers often articulated their judgements in punitive language. One of Wollstonecraft's colleagues at the *Analytical*, for example, dismissed one work with '[w]hat absurd quackery is here? [...] It is a jog-trot tale'.[16] Antonia Forster writes that alongside providing a summary of a text, review periodicals were designed for entertainment purposes: 'they [readers] may also be paying to be entertained by the rudeness with which some authors or their works are disposed of'.[17] Vitriolic but witty remarks amused readers but also implied the superiority of reviewers over writers through the reviewers' dismissive, seemingly careless, treatment of texts and writers. Mary Wollstonecraft endorsed this attitude, writing in one review that 'scrupulous exactness is never expected in any kind of classing'.[18] Wollstonecraft would have been aware of review culture's trifold agenda; her reviews comprised unforgiving verdicts of texts and of writers, contained acerbic brevity and didactic witticisms, ultimately establishing her literary authority.

This article argues that Wollstonecraft used a review rhetoric which framed her judgement as unquestionable. The didactic authority Wollstonecraft embraced as a reviewer divides critics. Mitzi Myers writes that 'Wollstonecraft explicitly urges women readers to think and feel for themselves'.[19] Wollstonecraft articulated this same ideology in her first publication, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), writing that 'I would have every one try to form an opinion of an author themselves'.[20] However, later on the very same page Wollstonecraft writes that she is 'sick of hearing the sublimity of Milton, the elegance and harmony of Pope, and the original, untaught genius of Shakespeare'.[21] Rather than objecting to the writings of Milton, Pope and Shakespeare, Wollstonecraft reveals her annoyance at the critical clichés other reviewers have made of this trio of writers. The sarcastic language and *tricolon crescens* intensifies her frustra-

tion: it suggests that Wollstonecraft will not follow her fellow reviewers and use these writers as examples of literary eminence. Rather, she will choose different approaches to assert literary ability and reviewer authority.

Wollstonecraft's didactic statement also undermines her previous claim that she would prefer readers to interpret a text independently in a knowingly duplicitous manner. Mary Waters argues that Wollstonecraft 'steers her review audience towards her own view not only of the publication at hand, but of the wider political and social issues under discussion as well'.[22] Reviewing, for Wollstonecraft, was 'performing an important public service'.[23] Developing Waters' judgements, this essay argues that reviewing served a double public and personal purpose: Wollstonecraft's personal agenda and beliefs sometimes countered the public role of the reviewer as she crafted her authoritative literary figure. Her superiority was self-constructed, founded upon the authority granted to a reviewer by virtue of the occupation but which Wollstonecraft deliberately enhanced by various rhetorical strategies and a prejudiced but often complex and inconsistent approach to individual writers' age, gender, class, and writing genre and form. Wollstonecraft enjoyed an enhanced freedom of expression as a reviewer; in her reviews she could voice more radical views which she would only be able to in a publication signed with her own full name later in her career. *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) received both praise and censure, yet its rhetoric and arguments are discernible earlier in her career in her reviews. Imperatives such as 'write no more!', expressions of authority and direct addresses, 'we advise her' for example, and comparisons made between writers demonstrate that Wollstonecraft fashioned herself as an authoritative, powerful reviewer who addressed wider concerns than just the reviewed texts.[24] This article seeks to reveal the value in studying the language of Wollstonecraft's reviews, illuminating the richness of her language as she negotiates fashioning herself as an authoritative figure while providing literary and wider sociopolitical criticism.

One of the ways in which Mary Wollstonecraft steered her readers' opinions into aligning with her own was through adopting the monolithic figure and concomitant authority of a parent rather than the more restricted figure of a mother. Her reviews articulate evident and continuous concern for the effects of novel-reading on youthful readers. For Wollstonecraft, reading was a means by which the young, girls or boys, may be educated:

> reading is the most rational employment, if people seek food for the understanding, and do not read merely to remember words; or with a view to quote celebrated authors, and retail sentiments they do not understand or feel. Judicious books enlarge the mind and improve the heart.[25]

Superior to all other forms of employment, reading is portrayed as fostering logical and moral views; books are a form of education. However, reading may also mislead. Novels, that 'pernicious' form of writing, could be deleterious to impressionable readers.[26] Wollstonecraft's reviews contend that 'young people'

are 'hurt by the perusal' of the novel *Laura* (1790); *Arundel* (1789) will 'injure young minds'; while *Historic Tales* (1790) will 'mislead young people'.[27]

Wollstonecraft eschews gendering readers, signifying the wider implications of literature and the responsibility of the reviewer. Her concern is not restricted to young female readers, contrary to the views of Mitzi Myers and Ina Ferris.[28] Rather, the readers' youth, and therefore their potential and their future, are prioritised over their gender through the terms, 'young readers' or 'young minds'. Furthermore, using gender-neutral terms implies that young girls are not necessarily more susceptible to novels' misrepresentations of character and emotion than young boys. Through this, Wollstonecraft extends and enhances the responsibility of her role as a reviewer and her reviews; her literary criticism has a wider audience of both male and female readers, granting her greater power and authority as she casts herself as a parental figure to youthful readers.

Gender-neutral language is equally evident in the subject position Wollstonecraft took as a reviewer. She joined her voice with her male colleagues through using the ungendered first-person plural pronoun 'we', and did not disclose her gender through her reviewer initials, 'M.', 'W.' or 'T.'. This gender-neutral language is evident in her other works. In *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, Wollstonecraft stated: 'I conceive it to be the duty of every rational creature to attend its offspring'.[29] The title highlights that Wollstonecraft's priority is the welfare and education of girls in this text but the term 'rational creature' is ungendered. 'Rational creatures' are identified as neither mothers nor fathers, rather portrayed as parents or adults. In *Thoughts*, Wollstonecraft implies that raising and educating children is a responsibility of adults of both sexes. In her reviews, Wollstonecraft's avoidance of gender-decisive language repudiates the culturally and legally imposed restrictions on the role of mothers and of women, strengthening Wollstonecraft's voice as a reviewer as no reader may attack or dismiss her for her feminine subject position. Overall, Wollstonecraft is addressing both young female and young male readers, embodying the figure of a guiding yet authoritative parent. She transposes the role of the parent from within the home into the public sphere, demonstrating that reviews provide parent-like guidance through their public and a professional platform. The authority society accords to parents is utilised by Wollstonecraft in her reviews, influencing both the import of her reviews but also the power of her reviewer persona.

While caring for youthful readers, Wollstonecraft's reviews evince an alternate attitude to youthful writers and eschews conceptions of motherliness. These reviews exemplify Wollstonecraft's extreme awareness of the identity of the reviewee and that their identity influenced how Wollstonecraft reviewed them and their work. She reviews works by young writers witheringly, using their inexperience as a point on which to undermine and attack the neophyte writers. Wollstonecraft's disparaging and dismissive review of the young Regina Maria Dalton's *The Vicar of Lansdowne* (1789), illustrates how Wollstonecraft contrasts and emphasises her experience and authority with Dalton's lack of both. Wollstonecraft's review of *The Vicar of Lansdowne* reads as follows:

> As we imagine the author must be a *very* young lady, and deeply read in poetry and novels, we forbear to censure in a sarcastic style; yet we cannot agree with her that this work is *unstudied*; nay, we think that in labouring to *ornament* it, she has rendered many passages unintelligible. If she will listen to the warning voice of experience, we advise her to throw aside her pen, and not attempt to enter the *road of glory*, as she fancifully calls publishing a novel. There is certainly nothing immoral to be found in the volumes, though exquisite sensibility is as usual the cardinal virtue.[30]

Wollstonecraft starts by directing the reader's attention to the 'very *youn*g' age of the author through italicising the adverb and including the observation about age in the opening clause. This suggests that the rest of Wollstonecraft's review is conditioned by the young age of the writer. While youthful readers require a parental figure to guide them, youthful writers are subject to Wollstonecraft's critical vitriol. Dalton's youth is not allowed to be an excuse for the 'unintelligible' novel she has produced. Sarcastic rhetoric pervades Wollstonecraft's review, evident when she quotes the phrase Dalton used to refer to publishing a novel: 'the *road of glory*'. *N*ot only is this phrase abstracted from its original context which renders it increasingly absurd and excessive but it is also italicised, an emphasis which further mocks Dalton's idea of authorship as naïve.

In turn, Wollstonecraft uses the review to allude to her own experience and expertise in the book trade. The cautionary, '[i]f she will listen to the warning voice of experience', purports to be benevolent guidance but enables Wollstonecraft to augment her own authority. Behind 'the warning voice of experience' is the implication that Wollstonecraft has seen other writers' failed attempts in the book trade. Her 'experience' bestows upon her the authority to warn Dalton against authorship. The warning is followed by 'we advise her to throw aside her pen', a phrase which juxtaposes notions of counsel through 'advise' against violent imagery created by 'throw'. 'Throw' suggests a complete and active rejection of the world of writing and is a commentary on the worth of Dalton's labour: her writing is fit only to be discarded. This denunciation is thus not solely a rejection of Dalton's novel but of Dalton's profession. Via the public platform of the review, Wollstonecraft tells Dalton not to write or publish again, a damning ultimatum to deliver to a new writer.

A similar approach of using the writer's youth to belittle them is evident in Wollstonecraft's review of Silviana Pastorella's *The Cottage of Friendship* (1788):

> The romantic unnatural fabrication of a very *youn*g lady, we suppose, from the little knowledge of life which appears, and as her playmates will find neither instruction nor amusement in this ridiculous pastoral, as it is called, we advise her to throw aside her pen and pursue a more useful employment.[31]

Once again, the reader's attention is drawn to '*very* young lady' through the italicisation and Wollstonecraft sustains this infantilisation through the derogatory reference to Pastorella's acquaintances as 'playmates'. Wollstonecraft again

paints an image of a young, inexperienced writer who wrote for simple amusement and did not labour to become an author. Echoing the same phraseology as Dalton's review, Pastorella is told to 'throw aside her pen'. In both reviews, Wollstonecraft attempts to end these neophyte writers' careers. Her stance as a reviewer is one of experience and authority while the reviewees are characterised as infant-like, inexperienced writers.

However, Wollstonecraft's reviews are informed by a series of inclinations and biases. The two reviews above illustrate Wollstonecraft's tendency to speculate upon the biographies of the writers she reviews in order to provide evidence to dismiss them. Such speculations are necessary as they allow Wollstonecraft to use reviews for wider sociopolitical commentary. This is exemplified in her review of Miss O'Connor's novel, *Almeria Belmore* (1791). Not content with simply delineating the age or the acquaintances of the writers, Wollstonecraft fictionalises Miss O'Connor's appearance: 'we will, to heighten the scene, suppose her fair'.[32] Wollstonecraft also dramatises an interaction between the young 'authoress' and an older clergyman: Miss O'Connor used her beauty to secure the clergyman's approval to publish her work. However, Wollstonecraft's description of Miss O'Connor is as fictional as the novel *Almeria Belmore*. The description of Miss O'Connor as 'fair' is a literary device requisite because it enables Wollstonecraft to use her reviews for political and social commentary, to comment upon male susceptibility to female beauty and the superficiality it incites in women. Ina Ferris writes that reviews often contained a 'figural slide from text to body'.[33] This article argues that Wollstonecraft takes this slide a step further, from text to body to society. Wollstonecraft undertakes this 'slide' deliberately and frequently. Miss O'Connor becomes a sacrificial figure through which Wollstonecraft articulated political arguments about the position and aesthetic valuation of women in contemporary society. These arguments would later find expression in their own text, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, where women 'taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison'.[34] Women can be their own greatest adversary to their emancipation and equality. *Vindication* was written five years after the review of Miss O'Connor, yet it is in the reviews that readers can see Wollstonecraft challenging convention and using literature as a tool to incite social and political change.

However, on occasion Wollstonecraft's reviewer persona was unexpectedly conservative. Her prejudices and attentiveness to the reviewee are strikingly apparent in her review of the working-class poet Elizabeth Hands. Her review of Hands' poem, *The Death of Amnon* (1789), demonstrates that Hands' inferior social class caused Wollstonecraft's censorious review:

> As there is a respectable number of subscribers prefixed to this volume, we may be excused, if we do not lend a hand to support an humble muse, whose chief merit is a desire to please;—but, if we cannot praise the attempt of a servant-maid of low degree, to

> catch a poetical wreath, even after making due allowance for her situation, we will let her sing-song die in peace.[35]

Wollstonecraft's prejudice against a writer from an inferior social class is evident. By contrast, many other prominent public figures supported this poem, which Wollstonecraft does acknowledge. The names of Edmund Burke, Anna Seward, the poet laureate Thomas Warton and Charles James Fox appeared in *The Death of Amnon*'s subscription list.[36] The *Monthly Review* saw this impressive list of subscribers 'as testament to the poetic achievement of the writer'.[37] Wollstonecraft's review thus counters popular opinion and eschews liberal progressivism, ironically writing that reviewers will not 'lend a hand to support' Hands.

Wollstonecraft refers to Hands as a 'servant-maid of low degree'. Hands' social class is made explicit to the reader, implying that she has not had the education to write poetry and, moreover, that Wollstonecraft believes people from lower social classes cannot and should not write poetry. In turn, this speaks to the ability of literature to transgress or surpass class boundaries, a quality of literature which Wollstonecraft opposed. Hands' lack of education and inferior social status is reinforced by the belittling and trivialising reference to Hands' poem as a 'sing-song'. The 'sing-song' nature of the poem is then echoed ironically in the style of Wollstonecraft's review. Wollstonecraft's half-rhymes of 'excused' and 'muse' and the assonance of 'please', 'degree', 'wreath' and 'peace' create a jaunty yet dissonant tone. This style implies that Wollstonecraft is not treating this reviewee or her text with serious consideration. Hands' low social status was a point of attack which enabled Wollstonecraft to criticise her works with derision and assume the superior literary and social position. Thus, it becomes apparent that Wollstonecraft knowingly emphasised whatever facts, age or class about the writers she believed disadvantageous to their literary ability in order to dismiss them and their works. Wollstonecraft's damning review of Hands casts her as an elitist figure who opposed such rags-to-riches transformations achieved through literature.

Hierarchies are also evident in Wollstonecraft's treatment of established writers. The critical and popular successes of Charlotte Smith and Ann Radcliffe did not prevent Wollstonecraft from articulating her own criticisms of their works nor from establishing hierarchies between herself and these writers. Yet, Wollstonecraft's criticisms of Smith and Radcliffe are submerged and couched in reviews of other writers, a careful and tactical means of critique.

In 1790, Mary Wollstonecraft reviewed Helen Maria Williams' novel *Julia* (1790). Wollstonecraft's review begins by stating that 'Miss W is already known to the literary world as a poet', signalling awareness of Williams' prior literary success.[38] It also implies a familiarity with the poet through the informal abbreviation of Williams' surname, insinuating the reviewer's own connections with established and popular writers. (Williams and Wollstonecraft only became personally acquainted in France in 1793.) Wollstonecraft praises *Julia* and 'warmly recommend[s] the novel to our young readers'.[39] But, hidden amongst this praise is a more damning review of another writer, Charlotte Smith:

> Miss. W. is probably a warm admirer of Miss Smith's novels; but if, in descriptions of nature, and lively characteristic conversations, she falls far short of her model, the reader of taste will never be disgusted with theatrical attitudes, artificial feelings, or a display of studied unimpassioned false grace.[40]

Displaced in a review of Williams, Smith's novels are deemed as theatrical and full of excessive and absurd emotion. These criticisms are also evident in Wollstonecraft's reviews of Smith's works. In her earlier review of Smith's *Ethelinde* (1789), Wollstonecraft observes that the tale 'has the faults and beauties so obvious in *Emmeline*'.[41] In turn, Wollstonecraft's review of *Emmeline* (1788) observes that it 'has the same tendency as the generality, whose preposterous sentiments our young females imbibe with such avidity'.[42]

Wollstonecraft's underhand means of criticising Smith's novels are evident in her actual reviews of Smith's works. *Emmeline* receives a lengthy review which, if Chandler's argument that Wollstonecraft granted better works longer reviews holds true, suggests that Wollstonecraft liked this novel. However, this article advances the opposite argument as the review comprises a lengthy plot summary. Forster writes that the 'giving of extracts may harm the sale of books' and implies reviewers were aware of this.[43] However, Wollstonecraft's attack on Smith surpasses including an extract. Wollstonecraft rather provides a precis of *Emmeline*'s plot in her own words, subsuming Smith's narrative voice with her own narration. A rivalry between the writers becomes apparent as Wollstonecraft imposes herself on Smith's writing, laying claim to Smith's voice and dominating Smith's novel with a detailed retelling of it.

A deliberately convoluted yet undermining means of critique is thus apparent in Wollstonecraft's reviews of Smith. She does not dismiss these works in one or two sentences as she has done for others—an example of her acerbic brevity would be her single sentence review of *Continuation of Yorick's Sentimental Journey* (1788): 'It is sufficient to say, that this imitation of Sterne, is on par with many other imitations of that author—born only to die'.[44] Rather, Wollstonecraft shrouds her critique in a review of another writer and also imposes her own voice on Smith's novels. Her criticism becomes increasingly damning as readers can connect reviews and texts through the chains of writers invoked. These chains expand Wollstonecraft's reviewer coverage of published works, aggrandise her reviewer persona and authority by voicing opposing views on popular writers and texts directly and indirectly under review.

A further means of establishing a hierarchy and critiquing reputable writers is identifiable in Wollstonecraft's identification of imitative writing. Texts judged to be copies or imitations were, as expected, deemed inferior to their source text, but identifying imitations provided Wollstonecraft with a way to critique the source text alongside the one reviewed. Sustaining her censure of Charlotte Smith, Wollstonecraft criticised how Smith's *Celestina* 'copies, we can scarcely say imitates, some of the distressing encounters and ludicrous embarrassments, which in Evelina [*sic*], etc. lose their effect by breaking the interest'.[45] Smith is

criticised for replicating Burney's novel. Yet, comparing Smith unfavourably to Burney does not elevate Burney's text within Wollstonecraft's literary judgement; *Evelina* is not the reviewed text, but it is grouped and equally deemed 'ludicrous'. Through identifying patterns of imitation, Wollstonecraft manages to expand the content of her reviews to incorporate genres of writing or groups of writers, casting the net of her literary criticism wider and commenting on works not directly under review.

In a similar manner, Wollstonecraft's last review, dated May 1797 and published three months before her sudden death, used imitation to compare Mary Robinson's *Hubert de Sevrac* (1796) to Ann Radcliffe's novels:

> In writing the present romance Mrs Radcliffe appears to have been her model; and she deserves to rank as one of her most successful imitators; still the characters are so imperfectly sketched, the incidents so unconnected, the changes of scene so frequent, that interest is seldom excited.[46]

Robinson's work is critiqued for its 'imperfectly sketched' characters and 'unconnected plot'. Notably, Robinson is also judged to be a 'successful' imitator of Radcliffe, implying that the original work is of similarly poor quality. A review of Radcliffe by Wollstonecraft appears in the same edition of the Anal*ytical. Ac*knowledging that Mrs Radcliffe is a 'celebrated' writer, Wollstonecraft writes that, '[t]he nature of the story obliges us to digest improbabilities, and continually recollect that it is a romance, not a novel'. Once more, Wollstonecraft deploys the techniques of shrouding the criticism of an established writer in another writer's review. She crafts a review of Radcliffe which seemingly chimes with popular opinion but ultimately ensures her voice is heard critiquing established writers elsewhere.

Her career as a reviewer bore a direct influence on her career as a writer, despite her professed anonymity. Nowhere is her autonomy, or egoism, her authority and her influence more evident than in a complimentary review she wrote of her own translation of Jacques Necker's *On the Importance of Religious Opinions* (1788). Of Necker, she stated that 'the style is laboured'.[47] This comment results in praise of the translator (herself): 'These remarks will account for some liberties occasionally taken, and we think very properly, by the translator'.[48] As a neophyte writer herself in 1789, this accolade was timely as Wollstonecraft was establishing her literary career and also illustrates Wollstonecraft's resourcefulness. She had the means of praising her own work and did so. Both practically and rhetorically Wollstonecraft aggrandised her presence and authority within the *Analytical* and the literary marketplace.

Enabled by her subject position as a purportedly anonymous reviewer, Wollstonecraft's reviews become impassioned, ardent, implicit and explicit criticisms of works and writers she saw as threatening the education and welfare of the young and perceived as deleteriously affecting the standard of literature, her own profession. The strength of Wollstonecraft's personal views saturates her reviews as she crafts an authoritative, experienced and powerful reviewer persona. She

may profess to allow readers to form their own opinions of works and writers, but the rhetoric and content of her reviews reveal her disingenuousness. Young and unknown writers, such as Dalton and Pastorella, are expected to adhere to Wollstonecraft's 'advice' and abjure from writing. For Wollstonecraft, valuations of others' writerly ability are informed by the age and social position of the writer, exemplified in her treatment of Hands. Hands' lack of social status meant that little curbed Wollstonecraft's vitriol. Meanwhile, her criticism of established popular writers, Charlotte Smith and Ann Radcliffe, is couched, displaced from reviews of their own works and hidden in reviews of other writers' works. Thus, by different means, hierarchies of literary ability come to the fore in Wollstonecraft's reviews and, as the reviewer but also a writer, Wollstonecraft ensures she stands supreme.

To conclude, this article returns to Wollstonecraft's letter to her sister from November 1787 which opened this essay. Although I have painted a rather unforgiving portrait of Wollstonecraft, it is evident that Wollstonecraft was delighted with her new professional role and was determined to succeed. Her new employment occasioned her to declare to Everina Wollstonecraft, with glee and trepidation: 'I am then going to be the first of a new genus—I tremble at the attempt yet if I fail—I *only* suffer'.[49] This sentence is often quoted in isolation and used, as initially done so here, to show Wollstonecraft's singularity, determination and independence. However, when a larger portion of the letter is revealed, it highlights that Wollstonecraft's professional success was important to her for reasons other than the independence and public platform it would provide for her:

> M^r^ Johnson [...] assured me that if I exert my talents in writing I may support myself in a comfortable way. I am then going to be the first of a new genus—I tremble at the attempt yet if I fail—I only *suffer*—and should I succeed, my dear Girls will ever in sickness have a home—and a refuge where for a few months in the year, they may forget the cares that disturb the rest.[50]

Wollstonecraft desired to succeed as a reviewer because it would enable her to provide for and protect her motherless younger sisters. As such, her public, professional and political concerns are intertwined with her ability to fulfil private, domestic duties. Reviewing was her means of achieving this. Her exacting persona, authority and status were necessary to guide women and 'young readers' on whom the future emancipation and equality of women rested. Some writers and their texts were sacrificed as casualties to Wollstonecraft's purportedly emancipatory, progressive socio-political agenda. Nevertheless, her reviews are a darker, more complex part of Wollstonecraft's oeuvre. Prototypical of Vind*ication in* their rhetoric and arguments, her reviews attempted to excise specific writers from the realm of literature and fulfil her own literary, oftentimes elitist and ageist, agenda.

Notes

1. Letter from Mary Wollstonecraft to Joseph Johnson, Henley, 13 September [1787], in *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. by Janet Todd (Allen Lane, 2003), p. 134. This edition will henceforth be referred to as *MWCL*.
2. Letter from Mary Wollstonecraft to Everina Wollstonecraft, London, 7 November [1787], in *MWCL*, p. 139.
3. This article uses Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler's compilation of Wollstonecraft's reviews as it is the most expansive collation, containing 435 reviews identified as Wollstonecraft's and published by the Analytical Review. Todd and Butler's *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Volume 7: On Poetry—'Analytical Review'* (Pickering, 1989), will henceforth be referred to as *Works*, VII.
4. Mary A. Waters, *British Women Writers and the Profession of Literary Criticism, 1789–1832* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 3.
5. Thomas Ford, 'Mary Wollstonecraft and the Motherhood of Feminism', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 37.3/4 (2009), pp. 189–205 (p. 189).
6. Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780–1830* (Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 8; Mitzi Myers, 'Mary Wollstonecraft's Literary Reviews', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. by Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 82–98 (p. 84).
7. Waters, *Profession of Literary Criticism*, p. 3.
8. In a letter written to Amelia Opie after Wollstonecraft's death, Godwin laments the consequences Wollstonecraft's death will have on their daughter: 'She was the best qualified of any person I ever saw. What a woman!'—William Godwin to Amelia Alderson, 29 October 1797: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 55, fol. 19r.
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