



Enthymema XXXI 2022

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A Vindication of the Rights of Woman in
Twenty-First Century Spain

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Abstract – Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), is nowadays presented as a foundational text for modern feminism. Its rapid rendering into European languages such as French and German contrasts with the late translation into Spanish, which was not published until 1977. Nevertheless, the twenty-first century has witnessed a renewed interest in the figure of Wollstonecraft and her role as a precursor of the first feminist wave in Europe. Within this framework, this study examines Wollstonecraft's public reception in Spain through contemporary (re)translations of her work. For this purpose, attention is paid to translations into Spanish and other co-official languages published during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, as well as the author's public reception in Spanish newspapers. This research, thus, attests to the recent process of recovery of Wollstonecraft's work in Spain and underscores her iconic role in contemporary local and international feminist discourses.

Keywords – Mary Wollstonecraft; feminism; women's rights; translation history; reception.

Llopart Babot, Sandra. "The Contemporary Reception of a Feminist Icon: Translations of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in Twenty First Century Spain". *Enthymema*, n. XXXI, 2022, pp. 14-26.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.54103/2037-2426/18478>

<https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/enthymema>



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ISSN 2037-2426

The Contemporary Reception of a Feminist Icon: Translations of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in Twenty-First Century Spain

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1. Introduction

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is nowadays presented as a foundational text in terms of its defense of women's rights in the English context in particular and in modern feminism in general. Its rapid rendering into European languages such as French, German, Danish and Dutch contrasts with the late translation into Spanish, which was not published until 1977. Nevertheless, the twenty-first century has witnessed a renewed interest in the figure of Wollstonecraft and her role as a precursor of the first feminist wave in Europe. Within this framework, this paper examines the transfer and reception of Wollstonecraft's feminism in Spain through contemporary (re)translations of her work. For this purpose, attention will be paid to translations into Spanish and other co-official languages published during the first two decades of the twenty-first century; the titles, prefaces and notes accompanying such works, as well as the author's public reception in Spanish newspapers and other press media. As paratexts, such mediations by reviewers, publishers and other agents form "a consciously crafted threshold for a text which has the potential to influence the way(s) in which the text is received" (Batchelor 142). This research, thus, attests to the recent process of recovery of Wollstonecraft's work in Spain and underscores her iconic role in contemporary local and international feminist discourses.

Mary Wollstonecraft's (1759 – 1797) personal and professional life clearly illustrate the hardships endured by European women during the Age of the Enlightenment. There is extensive research on Wollstonecraft's life, work and sociopolitical ideology. Likewise, her life attests to her interest in women's education and access to culture, as well as reaffirming the author's striving for professional independence as a teacher and writer. Her oeuvre, which includes both fiction and non-fiction works, as well as translations and reviews, asserts her position within proto-feminism and her intention to implement her thought on existing legislation and social practices. In regard Wollstonecraft's thought, contemporary scholars such as Mary Nash (73-74) have contended that the author's defense of equality is hindered by her classist conception of society, as she also advocated that women should receive a different education based on their social status. However, following Nuria Brufau Alvira (161), "this, in my opinion, should not prevent us from acknowledging the author's fundamental role in the history of feminism. Even with the limitations imposed by the general ideology of the time—which in some way had to exert its influence on Wollstonecraft—the author offers a sharp critique of some of the arguments put forward against women's capacity for autonomy (vs. heteronomy)".¹

¹ "esto, en mi opinión, no debe obstar para que se le confiera a esta autora el papel fundamental dentro de la historia del feminismo que ocupa actualmente. Aun con las limitaciones que imponía el

The contemporary reception of a feminist icon

Sandra Llopart Babot

In 1791, Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which was published in 1792. Even if the volume has been acknowledged as one of the most important criticisms of Jean Jacques Rousseau's work and an outstanding treaty of social and political theory, it did not have a great impact at the time of publication. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* addresses social injustice and inequality, challenges authority, refuses male domination and "accepts women's lived experience as a valid indicator of their needs" (Gibbels 175). Throughout the text, Wollstonecraft evidences how male domination and social oppression prevent women from achieving autonomy. To achieve independence and "virtue", women must learn to develop independent thinking. Indeed, Wollstonecraft insists that "not only the virtue, but the knowledge" should be the same for the two sexes and should be acquired by the same means. Furthermore, she argues against women's "docile blind obedience" (87) to their husbands. Wollstonecraft also argues in favor of women's participation in civic and professional life.

Recent research has also acknowledged Wollstonecraft's posthumous volume *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* as a philosophical work in its own right. However, as noted by Elisabeth Gibbels (2020, 173), the book failed to have the same international impact, probably because of some editors' decision to destroy its connection to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Anyhow, the reception of Wollstonecraft's posthumous work, though worth mentioning, falls outside the scope of this study, even if it may prove an interesting subject matter for future research.

2. Mary Wollstonecraft's early reception in Spain

The early translation and reception of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in countries such as Germany and France informed its reception in other European nations. As noted by Gibbels (178), in Spain, the reception of the volume was informed by the French translation. However, at the time of publication of the volume, the Spanish government had taken severe measures to prevent the circulation of revolutionary ideas from France after the French Revolution:

Beginning on a small scale with border seizures of books and prints, restrictive measures soon became more institutionalized: exactly a year after the storming of the Bastille, an updated index of prohibited and expurgated books, including revolutionary writings, was published; a severe press law was promulgated [in] 1791 forbidding the publication of any periodicals except the two official gazettes and the *Diario de Madrid*, and in 1793 a blanket ban was declared on any mention, whether critical or favourable, of the events occurring in France. (Kitts, 351)

Moreover, as noted by Gibbels (179), after the author's death in 1797, the posthumous publication of *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798) and William Godwin's account of his deceased wife's unconventional life had a tremendous negative impact on the reception of the rest of the author's work in England and Europe: "Everywhere, Wollstonecraft's writing faded from public discourse, while the scandal around her person persisted".

For these reasons, the first Spanish translation of Wollstonecraft's masterpiece was published as late as 1977. However, partial translations and chapter summaries had been published in the *Diario de Madrid* by journalist Julián de Velasco in 1792. De Velasco, who used the French version as reference for his translations, favorably reviewed the volume, even if he omitted

pensamiento general de la época —que de alguna manera había de ejercer su influencia en Wollstonecraft—, la autora ofrece una aguda crítica a algunos de los argumentos esgrimidos en contra de la capacidad de autonomía (vs. heteronomía) de la mujer."

The contemporary reception of a feminist icon

Sandra Llopart Babot

any reference to Wollstonecraft's criticism of aristocracy, monarchy and the church. Actually, de Velasco's review referred to Wollstonecraft with male or neutral appellations, such as "nuestro autor" [our author], "el autor" [the author], "Wollstonecraft," "M.W.," or "nuestro filósofo" [our philosopher] (Kitt 354). The motifs behind this kind of intervention may follow the line of de Velasco's choice to omit key fragments of the original text, which presumably sought to overcome censorship and add reliability to the text's arguments.²

Contemporary research has also demonstrated that Spanish writer and translator Francisca Ruiz de Larrea (1875 – 1938) was an admirer of Wollstonecraft's work. Ruiz de Larrea, the wife of the German writer and philosopher Johann Nikolaus Böhl de Faber, was a polyglot, as she had been educated in England and had later lived in France shortly. The Spanish writer had produced partial translations of Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1795) in her personal notebooks. These texts had been generally attributed to Ruiz de Larrea herself until Guillermo Carnero's research (1982) identified them as "translations or adaptations" of Wollstonecraft's original work.

Likewise, in 1911 the independent periodical *La Mañana* published an article by José Guimón on the evolution of feminist movements. The article identified Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* as the seed which had sparked the debate about women's social, intellectual and political emancipation in England: "In England, Mary Wollstonecraft, in her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), demanded the equality of the two sexes in the name of human freedom and justice; and since then, the social, intellectual and political emancipation of women began to be discussed there" (1).³

3. Early translations of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

As has been already stated, the first Spanish translation of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* dates from 1977. The translators were Charo Ema and Mercedes Barat, and the work was published as *Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer*. Catalan publisher Debate, which had emerged as a publishing house interested in non-fiction works, published the volume for the collection *Tribuna Feminista*. This translation was produced in the midst of the third feminist wave in Spain, which was instigated by organizations such as the Frente de Liberación de la Mujer (Women's Liberation Front), founded in 1976. As for the reception of this early translation, even if it did not significantly impact the Spanish readership of the time, periodicals such as *El País* (29), *Cuadernos para el diálogo* (64) and *Cambio 16* (62) picked up the publication of the volume. More precisely, a short review published in *Cuadernos para el diálogo* praised the publisher's edition to translate "a great classic of world literature" ["un gran clásico de la literatura universal"] (10).

While the work was re-edited in 1998 by the same publisher, in 1994 Cátedra produced their own translation of the text, which was carried out by Carmen Martínez. While Cátedra's decision to publish their own translation of the volume is symptomatic of the renovated interest in the author's contribution to the struggle for women's rights, this edition had little impact in the Spanish press.

² English translations are provided for all quotations of text originally published in Spanish. For short quotations, square brackets are used; long quotations are translated in footnotes. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's own.

³ "En Inglaterra, Mary Wollstonecraft, en su libro *Reivindicación de los derechos de la mujer* (1792), reclamó la igualdad de los dos sexos en nombre de la libertad humana y de la justicia; y desde entonces comenzó a discutirse allí la emancipación social, intelectual y política de la mujer."

The contemporary reception of a feminist icon
Sandra Llopart Babot

4. Twenty-first century translations of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

While Cátedra's 1994 edition of *Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer* is already an indicator of the growing relevance of Wollstonecraft's work in the modern era, the twenty-first century has seen a dramatic increase in the publication of translations and editions of the author's writings. As for peninsular editions and re-translations, the first twenty years of the new millennium have witnessed a total amount of eighteen editions of texts written by Wollstonecraft. To these, we may add a recent edition of *Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer*, published by Alma Editorial in 2021. These numbers may appear striking considering that, prior to the twenty-first century, only three editions of Wollstonecraft's work had circulated in Spain.

As Table 1 illustrates, ten out of the nineteen contemporary editions are versions of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which has always been rendered into Spanish as *Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer*. In this respect, in 2005 Tres Cantos published a re-translation of the work, carried out by Marta Lois. This version was also circulated by Taurus in 2012, Círculo de Lectores and Akal in 2014, Montena in 2019 and Penguin in 2020. A further indicator of the increasing relevance of the volume in twenty-first century Spain is the fact that Cátedra published a re-edition of Carmen Martínez's translation in 2019 for their collection *Feminismos*. As for translations into co-official languages, a translation into Galician was published in 2004 (*Vindicación dos dereitos da muller*) carried out by M.^a Fe González and Joan Josep Mussarra produced the Catalan version of the text in 2014, *Vindicació dels drets de la dona*.

Year of publication	Title of the target text	Translator	Publisher	Target language
2004	<i>Vindicación dos dereitos da muller</i>	M. ^a Fe González Fernández	Servizo Galego de Igualdade	Galician
2005	<i>Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer</i>	Marta Lois	Tres Cantos	Spanish
2012	<i>Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer</i>	Marta Lois	Taurus	Spanish
2014	<i>Vindicació dels drets de la dona</i>	Joan Josep Mussarra	L'Art de la Memòria	Catalan
2014	<i>Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer</i>	Marta Lois	Círculo de Lectores	Spanish
2014	<i>Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer</i>	Marta Lois; introduction by Alfredo Brotons	Akal	Spanish
2018	<i>Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer</i>	Carmen Martínez	Cátedra	Spanish
2019	<i>Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer</i>	Marta Lois	Montena	Spanish
2020	<i>Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer</i>	Marta Lois	Penguin	Spanish
2021	<i>Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer</i>	Marta Lois	Alma	Spanish

Table 1. Twenty-first century translations and editions of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Table 2 displays other works by the author published during the twenty-first century, which include two Spanish translations of *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*—*María o Los agravios de la mujer* (2002) and *Maria* (2011)—, a Galician translation of the same book—*Maria* (2013)—, a Spanish and a Catalan translation of her *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*—*Cartas escritas durante una corta estancia en Suecia, Noruega y Dinamarca* (2003) and

The contemporary reception of a feminist icon
Sandra Llopart Babot

Cartes sobre Suècia, Noruega i Dinamarca (2010), respectively—, a Spanish translation of *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters—Consideraciones sobre la educación de las hijas: reflexiones sobre la conducta femenina en los deberes más importantes de la vida* (2010)—, as well as two Spanish translations of Wollstonecraft’s only novel, published as *La novela de Mary* (2010) and *Mary* (2011). The latter was published in a special volume edited by Nórdica Libros which put together Mary Wollstonecraft’s and Mary Shelley’s work.

Title of the source text	Title of the target text	Year of pub.	Translator	Publisher	Target language
<i>Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman</i>	<i>María o Los agravios de la mujer</i>	2002	Anna Renau	Littera Books	Spanish
<i>Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark</i>	<i>Cartas escritas durante una corta estancia en Suecia, Noruega y Dinamarca</i>	2003	Camila Zapponi	Los Libros de la Catarata	Spanish
<i>Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark</i>	<i>Cartes sobre Suècia, Noruega i Dinamarca</i>	2010	Òscar Sabata	3i4	Spanish
<i>Mary: A Fiction</i>	<i>La novela de Mary</i>	2010	Bárbara Martínez	Araña	Spanish
<i>Thoughts on the Education of Daughters</i>	<i>Consideraciones sobre la educación de las hijas</i>	2010	Cristina López	El Desvelo	Spanish
<i>Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark</i>	<i>Cartas escritas durante una corta estancia en Suecia, Noruega y Dinamarca</i>	2011	Marta Lois	Taurus	Spanish
<i>Mary: A Fiction</i>	<i>Mary</i>	2011	Íñigo Jáuregui and Cristina Suárez	Nórdica Libros	Spanish
<i>Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman</i>	<i>Maria</i>	2011	Íñigo Jáuregui and Cristina Suárez	Nórdica Libros	Spanish
<i>Mary: A Fiction</i>	<i>Maria</i>	2011	M.ª Fe González	Hugin e Munnin	Spanish

Table 2. Twenty-first-century translations and editions of other works by Wollstonecraft

While most of these works were published by small independent publishing houses, key to our study is the interest in the author taken by Cátedra, Círculo de Lectores and Penguin, which currently stand among the biggest publishing houses in Spain. More precisely the three publishers have circulated editions of *Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer*. The distance separating Cátedra’s first edition (1994) from the versions published by Círculo de Lectores and Penguin is evidenced by their respective paratexts. In the case of Cátedra’s edition, the translator’s prologue introduces the figure of Mary Wollstonecraft to the Spanish readership by recounting the summits of her personal life and career from a rather neutral perspective. In the end, Martínez concludes that Wollstonecraft’s efforts “left this world a little less stupid than it was when she arrived” (12).⁴ This prologue was preserved in the 2019 edition of the translation. In contrast, Lois González’s prologue to the edition circulated by Círculo de Lectores displays a more socially and politically engaged position, arguing that the distance separating the author from present times has only changed the way questions are articulated, not the core of the questions

⁴ “dejaron este mundo un poco menos estúpido de lo que era cuando llegó”

The contemporary reception of a feminist icon

Sandra Llopart Babot

itself: “Once we analyze the history of ideas to understand the situation of the female gender as part of humanity, we discover that many of the main debates about equality and education in this newly opened twenty-first century maintain an important debt to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*” (7).⁵

Regarding the independent editions of the text, we may highlight Montena’s special edition, which includes the radical foreword and in-text comments of writer and influencer Bebi Fernández. In this case, Fernández’s contribution expands on Lois’s insights about the currency of Wollstonecraft’s work: “Despite having been silenced, still today, [*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*] continues to narrate and highlight a problem that unfortunately is contemporary to us [...] Today, a contemporary Mary Wollstonecraft could very well write the same book and would still feel the same burning indignation when writing it. I still feel it, as does every woman in the world [...]” (12).⁶ Similarly, Akal’s edition, which was presented in 2014 by Spanish left-wing politician Pablo Iglesias, translated Sheila Rowbotham’s rich introduction to the volume, where she reaffirms contemporary readings and interpretations of Wollstonecraft’s work. The Catalan and Galician renderings of the text also include forewords by the translators, which assert Wollstonecraft’s ideas in the twenty-first century as more pertinent than ever.

5. Reception in twenty-first-century Spain: The creation of a feminist icon

During the second half of the twentieth century, Wollstonecraft’s name increasingly appeared in the Spanish press. The writer was usually cited as one of the founders of modern feminism alongside national and international figures such as Clara Campoamor, Flora Tristan, Concepción Arenal or Susan B. Anthony. In 1992, *La Vanguardia* even dedicated a lengthy article to the author, which identified her as a representative of “the female condition at the beginning of modernity” (Usandizaga 2).⁷ Likewise, in 1995 a translation of Claire Tomalin’s *Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (originally written in 1974) was published by Salvat. Despite the fact that the volume was not a sales success, it was, however, an indicator of the author’s increasing popularity in the target context.

However, it is in the twenty-first century that Wollstonecraft’s work and legacy have been truly acknowledged and disseminated. Wollstonecraft’s growing iconic status can be traced through different indicators. For example, a quick search of Wollstonecraft’s name in the press archives of the National Library of Spain (BNE) delivers a total of 2.283 mentions. As Figure 1 illustrates, among these, the author was mentioned 96 times prior to the year 2000—with the decade 1990-1999 displaying the highest number of mentions (66)—. While the first two decades of the new millennium compile a total amount of 2.187 mentions, it is between 2010 and 2019 when numbers rise most significantly, as Wollstonecraft’s name was mentioned 1.997 times during this decade.⁸

⁵ “Una vez que analizamos la historia de las ideas para comprender la situación del género femenino como parte de la humanidad, descubrimos que muchos de los principales debates acerca de la igualdad y la educación, en este recién estrenado siglo veintiuno, mantienen una deuda importante con *Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer*.”

⁶ “[*Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer*] aún hoy, pese a haber sido silenciado, sigue narrando y poniendo de relieve una problemática que desgraciadamente nos es coetánea [...] Hoy día una Mary Wollstonecraft bien podría escribir lo mismo y sentiría al escribirlo la misma ardiente indignación. La siento yo hoy por hoy y la siente cada mujer del mundo [...]”

⁷ “La condición femenina al principio de la modernidad”

⁸ Data relative to mentions of Wollstonecraft’s name were examined in detail so as to avoid computing references to the author’s daughter, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley.

The contemporary reception of a feminist icon Sandra Llopart Babot

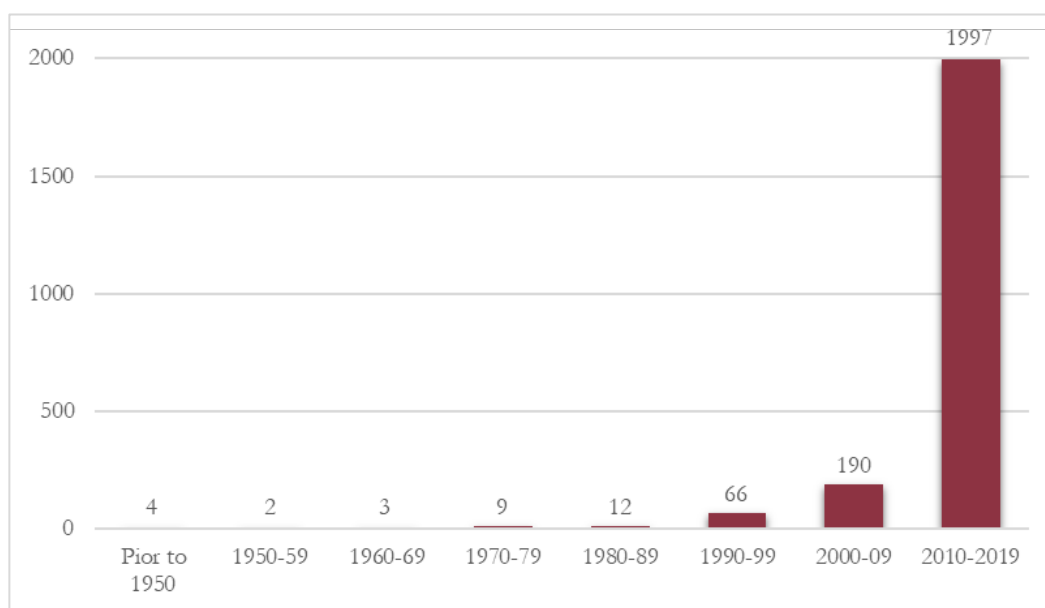


Figure 1. Mentions of Wollstonecraft's name in the printed press per decade

Taking a closer look at the contexts or “repertoires”—to use Even-Zohar’s terminology—of appearance of Wollstonecraft’s name may provide further evidence for her becoming a contemporary feminist icon. Indeed, while manifold editions of her works have circulated during the past twenty years, few book summaries or reviews have been published in the Spanish printed press. Instead, most of the texts compiled at the BNE archives cite her as a precursor of international feminist movements in the context of sociopolitical writings on the evolution of the feminist fight or women’s struggle for equality. These articles either use her name alone and describe her as a feminist pioneer or refer to her as the author of *Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer*, which is usually described as the first or among the first feminist treatises in literary history.⁹

Among the scarce reviews of the volume published in the Spanish press, we may refer to Ana Castells’s contribution, who celebrated Taurus’s decision to re-edit the volume as part of a collection entitled Great Ideas:

La prueba que se ha dado un paso adelante en las reivindicaciones de Wollstonecraft es el hecho de que este ensayo se incluya en la colección Great Ideas junto a los grandes pensadores. La prueba que aún queda mucho camino por hacer, en cambio, radica en el detallito que en toda la colección de cien títulos sólo encontramos la voz de tres mujeres más [...] Por eso las recomendaciones de Wollstonecraft, en el momento de superar prejuicios y tópicos enquistados, no han caducado. (10)¹⁰

⁹ In relation to this, Elisabeth Gibbels has studied the translations, appropriations and receptions of Wollstonecraft’s discourse in “The Wollstonecraft Meme” (2020).

¹⁰ “The proof that a step forward has been taken as regards Wollstonecraft’s claims is the fact that her essay is included in the collection Great Ideas, alongside other great thinkers. The proof that there is still a long way to go, however, lies in the small detail that in the entire collection of one hundred titles we can only find the voice of three other women [...] That is why Wollstonecraft’s recommendations concerning the need to overcome prejudices and entrenched clichés have not expired.”

The contemporary reception of a feminist icon

Sandra Llopart Babot

Following Castell's line of thought is Luis del Val's review of the history of the fight for women's rights (3). Even if del Val highlighted the tremendous advances that have taken place since Wollstonecraft published her landmark volume, he still acknowledged that this transformation is unfinished and that, even today, the author's insights may help to define future paths in the fight for equality. Likewise, Eulàlia Solé's article "La antítesis del feminismo" (18) lamented the undermining of women's rights that permeated some contemporary societies, which, according to the author, did not even comply with fundamental claims made by pioneers such as Wollstonecraft or Olympe de Gouges.

The general consensus on the currency and applicability of Wollstonecraft's claims to our contemporary society contrasts with some opinions such as Irene Lozano's, who criticized the "narcissistic overtones" ["tintes narcisistas"] of fourth-wave feminisms, arguing that the fact that today women are considered free rightful subjects is already a triumph:

La igualdad de derechos y oportunidades, la libertad, el acceso a la educación y al trabajo, han cambiado por completo la vida de las mujeres europeas. Al fin somos individuos, que no individuales. De manera que si Mary Wollstonecraft levantara la cabeza y la pluma no volvería a escribir "Espero que las mujeres me disculpen si las trato como criaturas racionales". Hoy ya no hay que excusarse para hablar de las mujeres como sujetos libres titulares de derechos. (3)¹¹

In this regard, Lozano's criticism of fourth-wave feminisms provides a logical context to frame her claim that Wollstonecraft's proto-feminist ideals are nowadays fully accomplished. In this regard, contemporary feminisms have engaged in more critical readings of the author's thought, focusing on the applicability of some of her insights to present struggles at a transnational level.

However, more recent publications in press media include full-length articles that address her writings and character as a subject matter in its own right. Among these, we may refer to María Pilar Queralt del Hierro's lengthy review of "Mary Wollstonecraft's pioneer feminism" ["El feminismo pionero de Mary Wollstonecraft"] (n. p.) and Berta Gómez's revision of the author's life and legacy (n. p.). In her article, Queralt del Hierro argues that Wollstonecraft was overshadowed by the worldwide success of her daughter's writings until the twentieth century feminists started the task of recovering her legacy. While the Catalan writer mostly focuses on reviewing the author's biography, she does conclude that Wollstonecraft brought forward a new perspective on women's condition. As for Gómez's contribution, the journalist echoed the backlash generated by the unveiling of Wollstonecraft's statue in London and took the chance to reflect upon contemporary representations of women from androcentric perspectives.

Especially during the past decade, with the rise of fourth-wave feminisms, Wollstonecraft's masterpiece *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* has recurrently been used as a reference not only in printed press media, but also in specialized online sources, such as feminist websites or literature blogs. Among these, we may highlight the reviews of *Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer* published in *Palabras que hablan de historia*, a literary blog about historical fiction and non-fiction works; online young-adult journal *El templo de las mil puertas*, which focuses on Bebi Fernández's special annotated edition and Ana Ávila's review for *La langosta literaria*, a literary website managed by the Penguin Random House Group. The three texts bring to the fore the author's indignation at the flagrant and unjustified inequality between men and women and

¹¹ "Equal rights and opportunities, freedom, access to education and work have completely changed the lives of European women. At last we are individuals, not wenches. So, if Mary Wollstonecraft were to raise her head and pen, she would never again write 'I hope women will excuse me if I treat them as rational creatures'. Today, there is no longer any need to excuse oneself when speaking of women as free rightful subjects."

The contemporary reception of a feminist icon

Sandra Llopart Babot

emphasize her defense of gender equality rather than superiority. In addition, Ana Avila's text reviews in detail some key claims made by the author and their currency in contemporary societies. In this respect, the author argues: "Today, a free mind like Mary Wollstonecraft's is not exempt from suffering the same fate suffered by the author at the time of the French Revolution. Three centuries later, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* still teaches lessons and is a mirror of how superficialities can destroy actions of greatness and human nobility" (n. p.).¹²

Likewise, feminist websites such as *Feminismo.Inc* or *Las gafas violetas*, as well as other mainstream women's sites, such as online magazine *Vein*, have published lengthy pieces on the author. In her article for *Las gafas violetas*, Paula Morais pays special attention to the hardships endorsed by the author as a consequence of her beliefs and her gender (and the intersection of both). Likewise, Morais also discusses the author's foundational work (present in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*) on the notions of "positive discrimination" and "male privilege".

A further indicator of Wollstonecraft's growing iconic status is the publication of works such as *Mary Wollstonecraft: pionera feminista. Revisión histórica y social* (2020) by Mercedes Osuna, where the scholar reviews not only Wollstonecraft's life and sociopolitical thought, but also her intellectual and literary influences. While the volume has a marked academic nature, its publication also testifies to the relevance of Wollstonecraft's work both in mainstream as well as scholarly contexts. Likewise, Libros Corrientes recently published *La marcha de mujeres sobre Versalles y El mito de Mary Wollstonecraft y las raíces de clase del movimiento feminista* (2021), which includes a translation of Wollstonecraft's "Women's March on Versailles" (1794) and Hal Draper's "The Myth of Mary Wollstonecraft: Class Roots of the Feminist Movement" (1976). Moreover, specialized and feminist bookstores such as Librería Mujeres, Traficantes de Sueños, Laie or Mujeres & Compañía have incorporated *Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer* into their catalogues.

With the growing significance of 8M demonstrations both at a local and global level, Wollstonecraft's name and writings have repeatedly appeared in manifold sources tackling gender equality, feminism and women's rights. By way of example, with the event of the 2021 women's day, several press media referred to key figures in the history of the feminist fight. Among these, *El Mundo* published a piece entitled "Women's day: the origins of 8M and quotes to celebrate it", which featured Wollstonecraft's "I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves" (n. p.).¹³ In this case, Wollstonecraft's quote appeared alongside other popular sayings by feminist role models such as Malala Yousafzai, Gloria Steinem, Coco Chanel or Beyoncé. As noted by Elisabeth Gibbels, "each wave of feminism has produced its own body of Wollstonecraft literature" (174) and even if local audiences may not be familiar with her works, the author has acquired an iconic status for contemporary feminisms.

6. Conclusion

Gibbels (2020) has studied the appropriations, misattributions and receptions of Wollstonecraft's feminism in Europe, arguing that these have constructed a meme around her character.

¹² "Hoy, una mente libre como la de Mary Wollstonecraft no está exenta de padecer los señalamientos que sufrió la autora en tiempos de la Revolución Francesa. Tres siglos después, la *Vindicación de los derechos de la mujer* aún da lecciones y es espejo de cómo las superficialidades destruyen las acciones de grandeza y la nobleza humana."

¹³ "Día de la Mujer: el origen del 8M y frases para celebrarlo" and "Yo no deseo que las mujeres tengan poder sobre los hombres, sino sobre ellas mismas."

The contemporary reception of a feminist icon

Sandra Llopart Babot

Even if this is not exactly the case in Spain, as her texts are fully available to the Spanish readership and no significant misattributions or reappropriations of her work can be traced so far, Wollstonecraft's current status as a discourse founder and a feminist icon is undeniable. In this regard, probably because of her worldwide reputation as a feminist pioneer, Mary Wollstonecraft has often been presented as an iconic figure dissociated from her life experiences or writings. Nevertheless, the reception material that has been examined through this paper evidences that, especially during the past decade, an important task has been carried out so as to recover the author's biography and devote more attention to the insights brought forward in her works, which actually transcend the fundamental ideas that have sometimes been de-contextualized to be used as reference for contemporary feminist movements.

However, scholars such as Kitts (1994) or Lorenzo Modia (2003) have highlighted the fact that Wollstonecraft cannot (or should not) be viewed as an exception in the history of European women. On the contrary, she is an exponent of the proto-feminist thought prevalent in Europe and in Spain during the eighteenth century, which set the foundations of contemporary feminist thought.

Anyhow, the recently renovated interest in the author's life and work has made her a discourse founder and an outstanding symbol of the feminist fight and the struggle for equality, somehow compensating for the silence surrounding her work that has prevailed during the past two centuries.

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The contemporary reception of a feminist icon

Sandra Llopart Babot

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The contemporary reception of a feminist icon
Sandra Llopart Babot

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