

Throwing Like a Lady Embodied Female Experience from Mary Wollstonecraft to Feminist Phenomenology

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Abstract

This paper explores the intersection of Mary Wollstonecraft's critique of femininity in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and contemporary feminist phenomenology, particularly in the works of Sandra Lee Bartky and Iris Marion Young. By positioning Wollstonecraft's foundational analysis of the social construction of femininity alongside 20th-century feminist phenomenology, this paper bridges historical and contemporary feminist thought to investigate how gendered embodiment, identity, and power are constructed and contested. It examines key themes, such as the influence of education on the female body, the role of beauty standards and the male gaze in shaping self-perception, and the impact of emotional education on character development. The analysis highlights a shared understanding between Wollstonecraft and feminist phenomenologists: that women's domination extends beyond political exclusion to affect the very formation of their subjectivity. By connecting these critiques across different historical contexts, the paper demonstrates how feminist phenomenology provides a critical framework to expand upon Wollstonecraft's insights, illuminating the enduring cultural mechanisms that regulate feminine bodies. The comparison ultimately underscores the persistent relevance of feminist critiques of gender, embodiment, and social power from the Enlightenment to contemporary feminist discourse, contributing to a deeper understanding of the intersections between gender, the body, and social structures.

Keywords: Feminist Phenomenology, Mary Wollstonecraft, Gendered Embodiment, Social Construction of Femininity, Historical and Contemporary Feminist Thought