

FRANCES "FANNY" WRIGHT, "ADDRESS DELIVERED IN THE NEW-HARMONY HALL,  
AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE FOURTH OF JULY" (4 JULY 1828)

Alyssa A. Samek  
University of Maryland

*Abstract:* In her first recorded public speech to the utopian community of New Harmony, Indiana on July 4, 1828, Frances (Fanny) Wright used the occasion to articulate an inclusive brand of citizenship and utilized the meaning of the Fourth of July to promote her reform ideology. In doing so, she upheld a transcendent patriot and ideal citizen of humanity, dedicated to enacting the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, as the hero of the occasion.

*Key Words:* Fanny Wright, Fourth of July, epideictic, reform, radical, patriot.

Fifty-two years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Fourth of July had become *the* national American holiday.<sup>1</sup> It marked the birth of the American nation, the successful unity among disparate colonies, and the successful Revolution against Britain. Celebrations of the Fourth of July embodied the national ideals, pride, unity, and joy associated with the historic date.<sup>2</sup> On July 4, 1828, reformer Frances (Fanny) Wright stepped to the platform in New Harmony, Indiana as the "Orator of the Day" to commemorate this annual occasion. There, she faced the responsibility of capturing the symbolic and ritualistic significance of the day in a ceremonial oration before an audience expecting a different kind of Fourth of July oration.<sup>3</sup>

New Harmony had been formed as a socialist utopian community designed to live in "mental independence"<sup>4</sup> from the rest of the country. Given the community's collective purpose, the traditional symbolism of the Fourth of July may have rung hollow for its members. Rather than identifying with the sense of nationalism and pride borne out of war and violence, the reformers of New Harmony critiqued the social impurities that plagued the nation. To them, persistent realities of slavery and social inequality clashed with the *principles* articulated in the Declaration of Independence, even as the document itself called for the ultimate (and violent) act of revolution. These inconsistencies between ideals and reality motivated their reform activism and community separatism. How could the New Harmony members reconcile their reform spirit with an occasion that celebrated the supposed unity of the nation?

Fanny Wright would step to the podium to help answer that question. She was a politically radical, notorious, and inspiring reformer, who, outside the confines of her own

community, faced significant obstacles as a female reformer on the public stage.<sup>5</sup> When she spoke before her fellow New Harmony community members, she developed the public voice she would further hone on the lecture circuit following the speech. Giving the main oration on this important ceremonial occasion, she negotiated the tension between the traditional expectations for Fourth of July oratory and the New Harmony community's agenda of political and social reform.

In her first extant public address,<sup>6</sup> Wright sought to reclaim the meaning of the Fourth of July in the service of reform.<sup>7</sup> She used her Fourth of July celebration to call her audience to action, defying the generic expectations for a speech of reverent reflection. She accomplished this in two ways. First, Wright identified the natural principle of *change* as the driving force of improvement and social progress—change wrought by the mind rather than the sword. Second, Wright celebrated a transcendent "patriot"—an ideal (and common) citizen of humanity, unencumbered by national boundaries—as the hero of the Fourth of July. These strategies affirmed the audience members as agents of change and champions of reform. They also legitimized her role as a female speaker. Yet Wright did more than infuse the traditional Fourth of July speech with the rhetoric of reform; she transformed the meaning of the occasion and the meaning of U.S. citizenship in ways that conformed to reform ideals. As such, her speech represented a hybrid of Fourth of July oratory—a speech of commemoration *and* a call for reform—that reflected the shifts in the political and social culture in nineteenth-century America.

### *Democracy, Religion, and Reform in Nineteenth-Century America*

Fanny Wright faced the oratorical challenges of the Fourth of July Address at a time of great change in American history. The early nineteenth century found the adolescent nation in the midst of burgeoning industrialization and urbanization in the North, thriving agricultural and slave economy in the South, and continual westward expansion by the "sodbusters." These profound changes shaped the political and social landscape, as notions of institutional authority shifted to a heightened sense of individual autonomy and responsibility.<sup>8</sup> By 1828, the democratic spirit became tangible through the election of President Andrew Jackson, the Second Great Awakening, and the increased impulse of social reform.

The United States was on the cusp of a new era of democracy with an election that pitted two candidates who symbolized two sides of the transitional moment: Andrew Jackson and John Quincy Adams. Adams represented "centralized. . . [noble] leadership of the elite," while Jackson represented the "decentralized and democratic leadership of the common man."<sup>9</sup> A western military hero, Jackson exemplified the democratizing power of the expanding frontier, as his "support for the poor versus the rich [and] the 'plain people' versus 'the interests' captured an increasing base of support that elevated him to the presidency."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the "common man" found a new sense of power at this time, a power symbolized by President Jackson. Voter participation expanded as property qualifications were lifted and political party organization increased with the development of the two-party system.<sup>11</sup> The frontier was a new arena for democratic practice.

At the same time, the nation witnessed renewed religious fervor from the Second Great Awakening. Itinerant ministers sought to bring religion to the people of the expanding frontier

communities. The democratic spirit of religious revivalism further contributed to an increase in women's volunteer associations and women preaching in public, particularly in frontier camp meetings and in rural communities.<sup>12</sup> According to Glenna Matthews, the renewed religious energy helped to revitalize the reform efforts of the day, including the Sunday school movement, temperance, and most visibly, abolitionism.<sup>13</sup>

Reform communities in America capitalized on the celebration of the common man by emphasizing the moral responsibilities of citizenship. Whether focused on abolishing slavery, developing Sunday schools, or advocating temperance, reformers emphasized the inconsistencies between the principles and ideals of America and the painful social realities of everyday life. Reformers like Robert Owen and his son, Robert Dale Owen, established socialist utopian communities based on the principles of communal living, free love, and free inquiry. In contrast to other reform movements inspired by the religious revivalism of the Second Great Awakening, socialist utopian communities drew upon enlightenment egalitarian principles grounded in nature rather than Judeo-Christian theology. As such, they meshed well with early feminist ideals. As Barbara Taylor explains, "many Owenites viewed [the] progress of women toward freedom as 'the victory of human nature over brutality'" and drew "an analogy between black slavery and the condition of women" in the United States.<sup>14</sup> These beliefs and values deepened the divide between some reform communities and the broader American society.

#### *The Fourth of July Oratorical Tradition*

With her Fourth of July speech, Fanny Wright needed to adapt to the expectations of the oratorical traditions in America, especially those related to political and epideictic oratory. It was the "golden age of oratory," known for the great speeches of Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, and Henry Clay—the "Great Triumvirate" of the U.S. Senate.<sup>15</sup> It also represented a period of great epideictic oratory in American life—oratory that captured the emotions of the nation's citizenry and "asserted proprietary claims on the past and on its celebration."<sup>16</sup> Speakers dedicated monuments, celebrated historical events and sites like Plymouth Rock and Bunker Hill, and honored heroes of the national story with sonorous epideictic orations.<sup>17</sup>

Civic celebrations and commemorative speeches of this era often featured a "sentimental style" that emotionally unified audiences as citizens in ways that supported social stability. Daniel Webster was known for the epideictic eloquence of his "Plymouth Rock Oration" of 1820 and his "Bunker Hill Oration" of 1825.<sup>18</sup> According to Lillian O'Connor, Webster and other great orators, "move[d] thousands of Americans with their felicity of phrase and highly polished paragraphs delivered in public addresses of great beauty and length."<sup>19</sup> Edwin Black, analyzing Webster's Bunker Hill oration, characterized such language as indicative of a "sentimental style." He argued that Webster used the sentimental style to "regulate" an audience's emotional responses.<sup>20</sup> The "felicity of phrase" in these speeches narrowly defined how audiences were supposed to feel as they gathered to celebrate patriotic heroes and events. Such speeches did not call their listeners to action. Rather, ceremonial speeches in general, and Fourth of July speeches in particular, emphasized unity, collective celebration, and reverence for the inherited national purpose symbolized by the military heroes of the past. For these reasons, as Celeste Condit notes, Fourth of July orations exemplified the "shaping and

sharing of community" by "linking [an] audience to its past" and charting the "boundaries of the hopes and expectations of the community for the future."<sup>21</sup>

By 1828, the Fourth of July had become a nationalistic ritual that communicated a collective identity built out of the diverse American citizenry.<sup>22</sup> Orators and citizens re-knit their communities across the country with ideals laid out in the Declaration of Independence: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.<sup>23</sup> The Fourth of July celebrations also evolved in traditionally gendered ways. Men celebrated the Fourth with free-flowing alcohol and debauchery that included setting off fireworks, firing guns in town, and "admiring the military and reveling in politics," to make it the "noisiest [and] most popular" American celebration.<sup>24</sup> By contrast, women were encouraged to stay home, away from the drunken displays and exploding guns. Their participation was largely constrained by the reigning notion of femininity as pure, pious, and confined to the domestic space of the home.<sup>25</sup> By the 1820s, however, women had begun to join in the communal celebrations in semi-public ways by holding tea parties and even attending dances in some communities.

In addition to the raucous informal festivities, Howard Martin notes that some Americans participated in more formal ceremonies that were "quasi-religious" and regimented. The events frequently followed the pattern of a Protestant church service, with a reading of the Declaration of Independence and an oration bookended by hymns and prayers. Though some formal Fourth of July events included similar elements, they all led up to what Martin calls the "climactic" oration.<sup>26</sup> The oration was the centerpiece of the celebration, and it was often delivered by a man of prominence in a community, such as a member of the local clergy, a lawyer, or politician.<sup>27</sup>

Speeches on the Fourth of July typically narrated the story of American exceptionalism from the Puritans and the trials of British control, to the battle for American independence, to the revolutionary Declaration of Independence.<sup>28</sup> These civic speeches celebrated Revolutionary War heroes, many of whom later became political figures in the early American government.<sup>29</sup> The celebration and the oratory served to motivate citizens to live in ways that honored the national collective memory of the Revolutionary War.<sup>30</sup> The established tradition of civic commemorative oratory on the Fourth of July created a particular set of rhetorical and cultural expectations for epideictic speakers, particularly for women and reformers who stepped to the platform. Fanny Wright, speaking to her audience of reformers at New Harmony, provided her audience with a way to navigate their dual identities as American citizens and separatist reformers—a strategy she developed from her own life and past experiences.

### *Fanny Wright: Radical Reformer with a Reputation*

Frances "Fanny" Wright was born in Dundee, Scotland in 1795. Her mother's family was counted among "British lettered aristocracy," and her father, James Wright, Jr., was a merchant who maintained ties with intellectuals active in the Scottish Enlightenment in Glasgow.<sup>31</sup> When her parents died in 1798, Fanny was sent away from Dundee to be raised in London by her maternal grandfather, Major General Duncan Campbell, and her aunt Frances.<sup>32</sup> Several years later, Wright moved with her aunt to the village of Dawlish, in Devonshire, where she reunited with her sister Camilla. There, she spent the next seven years gaining a varied and stimulating

education, working with tutors and learned men in the village. Once she reached legal age to take leave of her aunt, Wright joined her extended family in Glasgow, many of whom maintained connections with Scottish intellectuals, including Adam Smith and David Hume.<sup>33</sup> Wright's frequent interactions with political and philosophical thinkers of the day illustrated her unconventional and privileged upbringing during the early nineteenth century. In 1816, Wright moved back to London where she encountered "new strains in radical thought," including calls for universal manhood suffrage.<sup>34</sup> During this time, she engaged the work of prominent intellectuals, including Jeremy Bentham and utopian philosophers like Robert Owen, whose successful industrial reform community in New Lanark, Scotland offered a model for enacting reform principles.

In 1818, Wright travelled to America with her sister Camilla. During her trip, she wrote letters to a friend in England that narrated her travels and revealed her views of American political ideologies and the U.S. system of government.<sup>35</sup> Those letters provided what historian Susan Kissell calls a "glowing account of the individual hope and freedom [Wright] believed possible in America."<sup>36</sup> In one letter, for example, Wright replied to her friend's "inquires upon the present state of parties and tone of the public feeling" in America by explaining:

The establishment of the Federal Constitution was . . . an experiment never before made; and one upon which the liberties of a nation, perhaps of a world, depended. It was natural, therefore, that all should regard it with anxiety, and some be doubtful of its results. While the people were yet apprehensive lest they might have delegated too much power to the new government, it was most singularly fortunate that the man existed whose integrity was no less tried than his name popular. . . . perhaps nothing speaks better to the hearts and minds of the American people, than the unanimous re-election of that venerable patriot [George Washington].<sup>37</sup>

Throughout her travels and studies, Wright developed intellectual relationships with well-known political and philosophical figures in Britain and America. Among her friends she counted General Marquis de Lafayette, who served as something of a mentor to her for many years, Jeremy Bentham, with whom she studied and discussed political philosophy and utilitarianism, and even former President Thomas Jefferson, who would later praise Wright's book narrating her travels and observations of American life.<sup>38</sup> After her lengthy and intellectually stimulating trip through the cities and countryside of America, Wright returned home to England.

It was not long after her first trip that Wright returned to America intent on putting her ideas of social equality into practice. She purchased several hundred acres to start an "ideal community" called Nashoba on land outside of Memphis, Tennessee.<sup>39</sup> She founded Nashoba on the utopian principles of collective communities espoused by Robert Owen, using Owen's New Lanark community as her model. The Nashoba community was guided, in part, by the principle of gradual emancipation, whereby the thirty slaves in residence would become educated and prepared for successful lives after enslavement. The community, and Wright herself, endured harsh public scrutiny. Community members were accused of promoting miscegenation, "free love," and atheism.<sup>40</sup> As a result, Nashoba achieved a level of disrepute

that eventually shut it down. The failure of Wright's attempt to put radical reform ideas into practice in Nashoba, Tennessee contributed to her personal notoriety, a notoriety that compelled her to return to Europe in June 1827.<sup>41</sup>

In 1828 Wright returned to America to join the utopian socialist community of New Harmony, Indiana, founded by Robert Owen and his son, Robert Dale Owen. New Harmony represented a new beginning for Wright, a renewed opportunity for living a utopian life in the aftermath of Nashoba. This new community lived under the principles of collective family life, liberal notions of women's rights and sexual equality, and the free pursuit of education and knowledge.<sup>42</sup> At New Harmony, Wright became the first female editor of a newspaper with a general circulation, the *New-Harmony Gazette* (later titled *The Free Enquirer*), and an early female public speaker and lecturer in America.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout her life, Frances Wright challenged traditional gender ideologies. As a young unmarried woman, Wright's travels, her established philosophical, social, and political connections with powerful men, and her practice of speaking in public to "promiscuous" audiences, directly challenged gendered conventions of the early nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> According to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, a "woman who spoke displayed her 'masculinity'; that is, she demonstrated that she possessed qualities traditionally ascribed to males."<sup>45</sup> Yet by speaking, Wright enacted the egalitarian principles instilled by her education and her chosen communities. Doing so contributed to her reputation as a "dangerous reformer."<sup>46</sup> Indeed, Wright violated—politically, socially, and rhetorically—the cultural expectations for women in public.<sup>47</sup>

Wright's style of delivery and dress added to her intrigue as a speaker and also fueled the criticism that swirled about her. Walt Whitman recalled "Wright's powerful oratorical skills," and how she spoke informally and colloquially to the crowds gathered before her.<sup>48</sup> Her draping clothes and Turkish-style bloomer costume were uncharacteristic of women's dress at the time, visibly marking her as unique and reform-minded. Because of her unique and intriguing public activity and persona, rhetorical scholars have analyzed Wright's discourse and life by detailing her intellectual history and examining her roles as a pioneering feminist, female orator, and radical reformer during the early nineteenth century.<sup>49</sup>

Scholars generally have agreed that Fanny Wright is historically significant for performing the radical act of speaking in public at a time when women were excluded from the public platform.<sup>50</sup> Not only was she among the first women to speak in public, but her reputation surrounding the failed Nashoba community added controversy and intrigue to her appearances. She was haunted by public speculation about her beliefs regarding women and men's sexual autonomy, atheism, and other presumably alien values.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, Wright's presence on the platform marked an historic moment, and her first multi-city speaking tour packed lecture halls and even incited riots.<sup>52</sup> Celia Morris Eckhardt argues that Wright "was loved and hated with equal extravagance." While friends and admirers like Jeremy Bentham praised her for having "the sweetest and strongest mind that ever was lodged in a female body," detractors labeled her "The Red Harlot of Infidelity" and called her the "celebrated female champion of infidelity."<sup>53</sup> In short, she was a divisive public figure. Yet, *within* the reform community of New Harmony, she was a respected leader, largely because she was committed to enacting the principles of the egalitarianism they espoused.<sup>54</sup>

The masthead of the community's newspaper, *The New-Harmony Gazette*, captured well the community's basic philosophy: "If we cannot reconcile all opinions, let us endeavor to unite all hearts."<sup>55</sup> As a utopian community, New Harmony viewed itself as both part of and separate from the nation committed to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. This separation was articulated in each issue of the *Gazette*, which listed two notations of time: one indicating the number of years of America's *political* independence, and the other marking the years of New Harmony's *mental* independence.<sup>56</sup> The two notations emphasized New Harmony's dual identity as part of the broader American community yet independent in its commitments to knowledge, free enquiry, and egalitarian reform.

Fanny Wright's speeches and writings reflected the values of the New Harmony community as she emphasized mental independence, freedom of thought, and progressive education in her arguments for reform.<sup>57</sup> Susan Kissel maintains how Wright believed that education was central to empowerment: "Education dedicated to 'free enquiry,' alone, could empower the ignorant and helpless" and break the mental bonds of the churches, governments, and other individuals that held power over others by depriving them of the freedom to gain knowledge.<sup>58</sup> In short, education was essential to opening up the possibilities for reform in the first place. These themes emerged in speeches throughout Wright's public speaking career. Yet her 1828 Fourth of July Address was unique in creating a tension between the oratorical tradition of this nationalistic occasion and the reform tradition shared by those in Wright's immediate audience—an audience that sought to live "in mental independence" from the nation.<sup>59</sup>

### *Wright's Fourth of July Oration*

In her Fourth of July oration to the audience gathered in New Harmony, Wright infused her speech with a rhetoric of reform by invoking established rhetorical traditions but emphasizing the commitment to democratization. First, she shifted the "national purpose" of the Fourth from commemorative reflection to critique and action by building the speech around the notion of positive change ("improvement") and a narrative of necessary progress. This shift allowed her to distance her message from the violence of revolution and emphasize the agency of the people. Through *knowledge and will* she argued that the people could change their government and attain societal progress. This emphasis on change wrought by the people reframed the Fourth as a moment for assessment and action rather than reflection and revelry. Second, Wright recast the Fourth of July hero from the Revolutionary War veteran to the reformer and the reform community. Through these two moves, Wright crafted a hybrid form of Fourth of July oratory, one that reframed traditional elements within her reform sensibility, rhetorically celebrated the values of the New Harmony community, *and* called her audience to action.<sup>60</sup>

First, Wright shifted the purpose of the Fourth of July away from a commemoration of violent military revolution to a narrative of nonviolent and intellectual progress driven by social critique and reform. Attending to the oratorical traditions, Wright addressed the significance of the Fourth of July by honoring the Declaration of Independence—the document that established American independence and set forth the ideals that formed the "ground on which she stood as a public speaker."<sup>61</sup> She opened the speech by acknowledging the traditional

purpose of the celebration: "The custom which commemorates in rejoicing the Anniversary of the national Independence of these States has its origin in a human feeling, amiable in its nature, and beneficial, under proper direction, in its indulgence" (1).<sup>62</sup> By reconstituting the purpose of the occasion, she established the need for "proper direction" as a way to repurpose the Fourth of July toward the goals of reform. She infused the occasion with her call for freedom of knowledge, education, and inquiry: "From the era which dates the national existence of the American people, dates also a mighty step in the march of human knowledge" (2). Couching the date in new terms of significance, Fanny Wright acknowledged the Fourth of July's place in military and political history in addition to the history of knowledge and progress. Detailing the latter, Wright focused on change as the driving force of progress.

The natural principle of change formed the central thread throughout Wright's Fourth of July oration and provided the ideological fulcrum for Wright's historical narrative. Her speech centralized change as a natural process observable in the natural world:

Speak of "change" and the world is in alarm. And yet where do we not see change? What is there in the physical world *but* change? And what would there be in the moral world *without* change? The flower blossoms, the fruit ripens, the seed is received and germinates in the earth, and we behold the tree . . . All is change (6).

Wright responded to anxieties about instability by rooting change in nature metaphors involving flowers, fruit, seeds, and trees. These nature comparisons reflected her reliance on a romantic notion of holistic interconnectivity. Elizabeth Bartlett contends that utopian socialists, including communities like New Harmony, drew upon romantic ideals to articulate their reform ideology. Romanticism held that "all products of nature, including human beings, are built on the same principles, are held together by the same spirit, and are aspects of the whole."<sup>63</sup> Wright thus spoke of the nation as part of a process of perpetual progress by grounding change in nature. To respond to the anxieties about change, Wright argued that citizens needed to actively embrace change because it signified societal advancement.

For Wright, change had positive and negative ends when applied to progress and reform of the "moral world." For her, change could occur "for the better or for the worse; or it may be for neither" (7). Wright explained that while *natural* processes of change were neither good nor bad, change that occurred in the moral world of human thoughts and feelings could be evaluated. In the moral world, negative change resulted from ignorance. For Wright, in fact, all negative change could be tied either to a lack of knowledge or a lack of freedom to enact change based on knowledge. "Changes that are from better to worse," Wright said, "can originate only in ignorance . . ." (7). The implication of this argument was that negative change could be avoided and was not a permanent state, again emphasizing the possibility for reform. On the other hand, positive change in this human moral world was motivated by knowledge rooted in experience and freedom. Wright explained the true ends of "positive" change: "Out of change, therefore, springs improvement." Positive change or "improvement," was critical to the broader progress narrative of her speech. Improvement was a force of progress, impelled by knowledge and freedom, and essential to the government. "Improvement," Wright argued, was the "perfect principle" within representative government (7).



In fact, Wright argued that "improvement" was possible in both the moral world and in American government. She upheld the American government's success as a model and celebrated its role in national life, a move that conformed, in part, to established Fourth of July oratorical traditions. At the same time, her decision to locate the promise of government in the principle of change rather than the principle of stability helped shift the emphasis of the speech toward reform. She explained, "Here then is the great beauty of American Government. The simple machinery of representation carried through all its parts, gives facility for its being moulded at will to fit with the knowledge of the age" (7). Even though the machine metaphor invoked a sense of stability and predictability for the governmental and constitutional processes, Wright used the metaphor to delineate the difference between principle and the practice of governance.<sup>64</sup> She explained that even if the machine was "imperfect in any or all of its parts, it bears within it a perfect principle—the principle of improvement. And, let us observe, that this principle is all that we can ever know of perfection"(7). As Wright upheld the potential for the perfectibility of the American government, she also articulated the perpetual need for reform by denying the practical possibility of perfection.

Though virtually unattainable, the responsibility for attempting to achieve perfection rested on the audience of reformers. They had the power to shape the government in line with the "knowledge of the age" (7). Wright emphasized the transformative potential of the audience by honoring the nonviolent change enacted by reformers over the violence wrought by Revolutionary War fighters. In short, she replaced war heroes with common reformers as the "true" heroes of the national story. Her speech defied oratorical tradition because it lacked a cohesive Revolutionary War narrative that tied American exceptionalism to a divine power and the unwavering celebration of wartime heroes. Instead, she lifted up the success of knowledge and agents of reform in bringing about change and improvements in government and the larger social condition. This shifted the purpose of the Fourth of July to a celebration of knowledge, progress, and natural change. Those reformers seeking improvement were the true heroes of change and progress. Wright again underscored the importance of the change principle by emphasizing the individual's agency in *reforming* government:

The clear-sighted provision in the national as in the state constitutions, by which the frame of government can be moulded at will by the public voice, and so made to keep pace in progress with the public mind, is the master-stroke in constitutional law (8).

Wright emphasized the agency of reformers, because they constituted the "public voice" that could (and should) change the government, under the rubric of knowledge and progress.

Wright's celebration of change echoed the affirmation of the right of revolution articulated in the Declaration of Independence, though stripped of the violence of force and replaced with peaceful "molding" in accordance with the "public mind." She ascribed agency not to the revolutionary fighters but to the "people who shall have imagined a peaceable mode of changing their institutions." For Wright, it was not the violence of revolution but rather the principles of change, independence, and freedom of inquiry that were worthy of celebration on the Fourth of July. She added, "While other nations have still to win reform at the sword's point, we have only to will it . . . we have only peacefully to collect knowledge and to frame

our institutions and actions in accordance with it" (10). Success of nonviolence depended on continual change and reform.

Using the narrative of the Fourth to rearticulate reform values, Wright called for her audience to use the occasion to engage in examination—a notably critical act—and urged them to action rather than mere reflection and celebration of the past. Wright argued that though change was natural, improvement or progress was only attainable through reform. To accomplish this end, she articulated the meaning of the Fourth of July and its purpose. "Dating, as we justly may, a new era in the history of man from the Fourth of July 1776 . . . it would be useful, if on each Anniversary we examined the progress made by our species in just knowledge and just practice" (3). This statement not only acknowledged the traditional meaning ascribed to the Fourth in celebrating the "new era in the history of man," but it also established Wright's division between principle and practice that created the opportunity for reform.

Throughout the speech Wright directed the revolutionary *ideas* at the heart of the Fourth of July toward nonviolence and continual improvement. She explained:

Each Fourth of July would then stand as a tide-mark in the flood of Time, by which to ascertain the advance of the human intellect, by which to note the rise and fall of each successive error, the discovery of each important truth, the gradual melioration in our public institutions, social arrangements, and, above all, in our moral feelings and mental views (3).

By shifting the meaning of Independence Day away from a time to celebrate wartime heroes, she recast it as an opportunity for gauging progress and seizing new opportunities for action. For Wright, advancement of "human intellect" was the primary mode of achieving human progress and realizing the potential of the future. Such advancement required freedom, liberty, and self-awareness, something uniquely possible in America.

Wright uncharacteristically defined American exceptionalism in secular terms and redefined liberty to venerate the reformer over the soldier. Traditional Fourth of July orations told a quasi-religious story of exceptionalism and connected liberty to the revolutionary cause and the legacy of freedom.<sup>65</sup> Departing from this tradition, Wright avoided references to the divine and defined liberty as achievable through the progressive principles of reform. In particular, Wright noted that progress resulted from a focus on *actually* achieving liberty in practice and principle. She sought to uphold an *inclusive* definition of liberty as true and natural by critiquing various attempts to parse the term. She explained, "We are told of political liberty—of religious liberty—of moral liberty. Yet, after all, is there more than one liberty; and of those divisions, are they not the more and the less of the same thing?" (9) Using this holistic conceptualization of liberty allowed Wright to make broader appeals for reforms that would make America's ideals a lived, social reality.

In line with the rhetorical tradition of reform, Wright identified social inequities in America that fell short of the ideals espoused in the Declaration. Even as she highlighted the exceptionalism of America in upholding the principle of liberty, she evidenced the presence of inequality, namely the "one evil" of slavery and the "degradation of our colored citizens" (10). This *lack* of liberty, echoed by her own experience with the Nashoba community, highlighted

the imperfection of America, and motivated reform. For Wright, the physical violence of slavery was akin to the mental enslavement that resulted from limiting freedom of education. By aligning these forms of slavery and referencing "our colored citizens," Wright addressed the common experience of violence and ideological enslavement to enhance her call for reform. She argued, "By *this*—by his capability of improvement; by his tendency to improve whenever scope is allowed for the development of his faculties. To hold him *still*, he must be chained. Snap the chain, and he springs forward" (8). Wright projected the promise of change (and reform) into the future, using knowledge as the measurement of that progress. As such, change and progress were rooted in the freedom of inquiry and knowledge. Wright stated, "Once launch the animal man in the road of enquiry, and he *shall*—he *must*—hold a forward career" (8). This energy of progress further supported Wright's transformation of the Fourth of July oration from a celebration of American ideals and nationalism through violent revolution to one that upheld the process of nonviolent reform.

Wright ultimately shifted the ceremonial occasion of the Fourth of July toward reform by highlighting "the prospective education of the democratic audience."<sup>66</sup> She called her audience to pull the Fourth of July from its nationalistic tradition in support of measuring societal progress with an eye to the future. Wright's use of the "'future perfect' form of 'history' to prophesy the triumph of reform" aligned more with the rhetoric of the reform tradition.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, by shifting the purpose of the occasion to a moment for recalling the *true* ideals established in nature and embodied in the Declaration, Wright offered a space to emphasize the incongruity with social reality. If the reality did not live up to the ideals, she argued, it would halt or impede the natural progress of society. By echoing Jefferson, who positioned American history within the history of the natural world with the phrase, "when in the course of human events," Wright identified the Fourth of July as a marker of human progress, with an eye on the realization of the ideals in the present and into the future.

### *Constructing a Transcendent Citizen of Humanity*

Throughout her speech, Wright celebrated a patriot who subscribed to an inclusive, global notion of patriotism. In order to celebrate this new patriot, Wright critiqued what Benedict Anderson later called the "imagined community" that makes up a nation.<sup>68</sup> For her, the imagined nation removed the humanity from the day-to-day life of the citizen within that imagined structure. The distinct error of this imagined community was an exclusive notion of citizenship tied to a nation and its government. To support this argument, Wright drew upon the historical examples of Greece and Rome where "the preference invariably given to the imagined interests of an imaginary existence called *the state* or *country*, and the real interests of the real existence, or human beings, upon whom, individually and collectively, their laws alone could operate" (13). Invoking these historical "mistakes," Wright struck a blow at the American experiment in government by calling the "imagined" interests "selfish" in their ignorance of the social reality of the human beings in the nation (13). Going a step further, Wright challenged the violent means of achieving political independence. For her, the celebration of military glory effaced the real terror experienced by humanity as a result of

violence in the name of national "defense." She refigured the nation's military legacy as an *imperfection* and *weakness* of the nation to motivate reform.

Wright also critiqued governmental institutions for promoting an exclusive sense of patriotism. She enumerated the usages of patriotism: "love of country in an exclusive sense; of love of our countrymen in contradistinction to love of our fellow-creatures; of love of the constitution, instead of love or appreciation of those principles upon which the constitution is, or ought to be, based" (11). In three clauses, Wright revealed the inequities fostered by institutions and by collective ignorance of needed reforms. She contrasted the exclusive with the inclusive to emphasize an understanding of patriotism as a feeling of love for our "fellow-creatures" and for "principles" rather than for the documents that codified them. By contrasting such views of patriotism, Wright called into question the sentiment at the heart of the Fourth of July. For Wright, patriotism was "the interest felt in the human race in general" rather than feelings "felt for any country, or inhabitants of a country, in particular" (16). She added, "The very nature of the national institutions is frequently mistaken, and the devotion exhibited for them is frequently based on the wrong principle" (11). On the Fourth of July, a day designed for displays and affirmations of patriotism, Wright challenged the sentiment and heroes at its center. Wright positioned a different patriot at the center of the holiday.

With patriotism redefined in this way, Wright argued that the patriot truly worthy of celebration was loyal to humanity over nation and featured an inclusive rather than exclusive definition of citizenship. This hero "express[ed] a love for the public good" (16). This patriot was a global citizen and "a lover of human liberty and human improvement, rather than a mere lover of the country in which he lives, or the tribe to which he belongs" (16). This citizen embodied reform principles and embraced Wright's notion of liberty for all humanity. She captured her vision of egalitarian citizenship in the peroration, a significant move during a time when only white men with property were considered legitimate citizens.

Equality means, not the mere equality of political rights, however valuable, but equality of instruction and equality in virtue; and that Liberty means—not the mere voting at elections, but the free and fearless exercise of the mental faculties, and that self-possession which springs out of well-reasoned opinions and consistent practice (18).

Wright's expanded notion of liberty and citizenship also widened the possibilities for individual agency. This patriot was a "useful member of society" committed to the work of progress, change, and mental improvement, capable of "enlarging all minds and bettering all hearts" (16). In short, Wright's patriot, unlimited by gender or race or even nation, epitomized the ideal citizen.

Wright argued that the global patriot and inclusive patriotism ought to be celebrated on the Fourth of July. The patriot of humanity was appropriate because America was "truly the home of all nations, and in the veins of whose citizens flows the blood of every people on the globe" (18). This reality rendered "patriotism, in the exclusive meaning," wholly inappropriate. Indeed, as Wright emphasized, "The very origin of the [American] people is opposed to [exclusive patriotism]" and the "institutions, in their principle, militate against it." And she

called for "celebrating protests against" such exclusive patriotism (18). By uplifting her global patriot within the principles of reform and egalitarianism, she created a space for her own inclusion in that definition of patriot and citizen. In doing so, her very presence on the platform enacted her argument about the patriot and affirmed the agency and patriotism of her audience of reformers.

Grounding the Fourth of July in the *principles* of reform, she constructed the model citizen as an embodiment of the Declaration's values merged with the ideals of reform and the quest for social equality. Wright made an even larger claim about the future direction for those inheriting the legacy of the Revolution and the founding of the nation. Here, by proffering a transcendent citizen and patriot, she lifted the Fourth of July from American nationalism and revolutionary violence to an annual moment that measured the progress of the human civilization and moved beyond the "imagined" interests of nation-states.

### *The Legacy of Fanny Wright and the Fourth of July Address*

Frances "Fanny" Wright's Fourth of July address in 1828 kicked off her brief but powerful public lecturing career. William Waterman notes blithely that the speech was less important in terms of content than in Wright's "discovery that she possessed no little ability as a public speaker."<sup>69</sup> Yet the speech was, in fact, significant in its own right, primarily for the way it utilized the most important American holiday to promote Wright's reform traditions and goals. Because she delivered it to her own community, the speech likely was well-received.<sup>70</sup> The 1828 speech began a short-lived career on the public platform where Wright would articulate arguments that echoed long after she left the public eye. In other venues, Wright endured endless insults for addressing "promiscuous audiences," yet by doing so she prepared the way for future woman's rights activists. The depth of Wright's challenge to the gender norms of the nineteenth century was epitomized by the famous epithet—"Fanny Wrightist"—hurled at women's rights agitators over the subsequent decades.<sup>71</sup>

Wright's public career blazed a trail and inspired many women and reformers after her, as indicated by her prominence in the opening pages of the multi-volume *History of Woman Suffrage*, edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage. Therein, the editors counted Wright "among the immediate causes that led to the demand for equal political rights by women in [America]."<sup>72</sup> Ernestine Rose's speech at the Tenth National Woman's Rights Convention in May 1860 demonstrated Wright's cherished memory as a foremother of the woman's rights movement. Rose explained that Wright "[broke] the time-hardened soil of conservatism" in ways that would "benefit unborn generations" by "sowing the seeds of future growth [of the woman's rights movement]."<sup>73</sup> Later, Wright was similarly honored for her early and crucial role in Lillian O'Connor's ground-breaking study of the roots of women's public address, *Pioneer Women Orators*.<sup>74</sup>

Wright was neither the only nor the last reformer to use the occasion of the Fourth of July to argue for reform causes.<sup>75</sup> Perhaps most notably, Frederick Douglass's "What, to a Slave, is the Fourth of July," emphasized the irony of celebrating the ideals of the Fourth in a country where slaves were deprived of their most basic freedoms.<sup>76</sup> Speakers from other reform movements, including temperance and the American colonization movement, likewise utilized

the ceremonial occasion to advance reform agendas, and the Declaration of Independence has been invoked by women's rights activists and other reformers as justification for appealing to natural rights.<sup>77</sup> In 1848, for example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony used the Declaration of Independence as the model for their argument that women had a natural right to citizenship.<sup>78</sup>

Wright's 1828 Fourth of July address was uniquely positioned at the nexus of the oratorical traditions of the Fourth of July epideictic and the rhetoric of reform. In line with Fourth of July oratory, the speech articulated a vision for the promise of America by grounding those future possibilities in the agency of the individual citizen and a vision of positive change that uplifts all of humanity. The progressive impulse drove citizens to accomplish the ideals rooted in nature and embodied in the Declaration of Independence, extending that celebration to humanity. In short, Wright unmoored the Fourth of July from its nationalist anchor: "So shall we rejoice to good purpose, and in good feeling; so shall we improve the victory once on this day achieved, until all mankind hold with us the Jubilee of Independence" (18).

Although the Fourth of July oration is not so common these days, Wright's 1828 speech has echoed throughout the twentieth century in the rhetoric of woman's rights activism and in the rhetoric of other contemporary social movements. Her call for global citizenship and human rights echoes in the transnational social justice activism of today.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, her argument about the ability of the government to be "moulded at will to fit with the knowledge of the age" (7) lingers in perspectives on the Constitution as a "living document" designed to be interpreted in light of changing circumstances. Such arguments feature change as a natural process and stand in sharp contrast to views of the Constitution that emphasize the founders' intentions regardless of cultural change.<sup>80</sup> Finally, Wright's ideas about the importance of education and freedom of thought reverberate in contemporary political debates about equal access to quality public education.<sup>81</sup> In short, Wright's speech showed how ideals of the Declaration of Independence could animate a variety of different causes, and that view of America's ideals continues to drive American public discourse and political life today.

---

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1967), 373-376.

<sup>2</sup> Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience*, 314.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Dale Owen, ed. *The New Harmony Gazette* 1, no. 1 (1825): 1.

<sup>5</sup> As Cary R. W. Voss and Robert Rowland explain, assessments of Wright's rhetorical legacy remain mixed. Some uphold her as a testament to women's early rhetorical action and prowess while others dismiss her public platform performances as less than inspirational. See: Cary R. W. Voss and Robert Rowland, "Pre-Inception Rhetoric in the Creation of a Social Movement: The Case of Frances Wright," *Communication Studies* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 2-3.

---

<sup>6</sup> Rhetorical scholars have analyzed Wright's corpus from her 1828 Fourth of July address through her *Course of Public Lectures* delivered in large cities throughout the East and Midwest between 1828 and 1829. They often note the broad reform themes that appeared within her *Lectures*, including her concern for egalitarian goals, women's rights, abolition of slavery, and equal instruction. Despite attention to the commonalities across her body of work, little attention has been paid to the contours of her inaugural address. Notably, Voss and Rowland argue that Wright's Fourth of July address functioned in the "pre-inception stage of the suffrage movement." See: Voss and Rowland, "Pre-Inception Rhetoric in the Creation of a Social Movement," 1-14; Anthony Hillbruner, "Frances Wright: Egalitarian Reformer," *Southern Speech Journal* 23, no. 4 (1958): 193; and Lillian O'Connor, *Pioneer Women Orators: Rhetoric in the Ante-bellum Reform Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 42. See also: the published version of these lectures in Frances Wright, *A Course of Public Lectures* (New York: The Free Enquirer Press, 1829).

<sup>7</sup> Hillbruner, "Frances Wright: Egalitarian Reformer," 196.

<sup>8</sup> Gregory Clark and S. Michael Halloran, eds., *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Transformations in the Theory and Practice of Rhetoric* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 11.

<sup>9</sup> Clark and Halloran, *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, 13. In fact, on the same day as Frances Wright's address to New Harmony, John Quincy Adams gave a Fourth of July oration to an audience in Little-Falls, New York as a way to garner public support for his re-election campaign. Henry Hawken notes that Andrew Jackson was encouraged to "keep a low profile" on the Fourth, while Adams gave his speech to a highly restricted and managed audience filled with members of the "establishment" to show support for the sitting president. See: Henry A. Hawken, *Trumpets of Glory: Fourth of July Orations 1786-1861* (Granby, CT: Salmon Brook Historical Society, 1976), 99-100.

<sup>10</sup> Brian J. L. Berry, *America's Utopian Experiments: Communal Havens from Long-Wave Crises* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), 56.

<sup>11</sup> Norma Basch, "Marriage, Morals, and Politics in the Election of 1828," *Journal of American History* 80, no. 3 (December 1993): 892.

<sup>12</sup> Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman: Woman's Power and Woman's Place in the United States, 1630-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 103-105.

<sup>13</sup> Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman*, 103-105.

<sup>14</sup> Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 35.

<sup>15</sup> See: Stephen H. Browne, "Reading Public Memory in Daniel Webster's *Plymouth Rock Oration*," *Western Journal of Communication*, 57 (1993): 466; O'Connor, *Pioneer Women Orators*, 122; and Ronald F. Reid and James F. Klumpp, *American Rhetorical Discourse*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2005), 373. The fact that O'Connor dates the "golden age" between the years 1828 and 1861 completely ignores the great orations that took place before 1828, the most obvious being Webster's "Bunker Hill Oration" of 1825.

<sup>16</sup> See: Boorstin, *The Americans*, 373; Hillbruner, "Frances Wright: Egalitarian Reformer;" O'Connor, *Pioneer Women Orators*, 122; and Alice J. G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, *Frances*

*Wright Free Enquirer: The Study of a Temperament* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), 208. For more on the role of epideictic address on establishing or controlling public memory, see: Browne, "Reading Public Memory in Daniel Webster's *Plymouth Rock Oration*," 464-477.

<sup>17</sup> See: Browne, "Reading Public Memory in Daniel Webster's *Plymouth Rock Oration*," 464-477; and Diana Karter Appelbaum, *The Glorious Fourth: An American Holiday, An American History* (New York: Facts on File, 1989), 57. Appelbaum explains that the Fourth of July became an important patriotic date throughout American history including July 4, 1848 when the cornerstone for the Washington Monument was laid in Washington, D.C.

<sup>18</sup> See: Browne, "Reading Public Memory in Daniel Webster's *Plymouth Rock Oration*," 464-477; and Edwin Black, "The Sentimental Style as Escapism, or the Devil with Dan'l Webster," in *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action*, ed. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (Falls Church, VA: Speech Communication Association, n.d.), 77.

<sup>19</sup> O'Connor, *Pioneer Women Orators*, 123.

<sup>20</sup> Black, "The Sentimental Style as Escapism," 78-79.

<sup>21</sup> Celeste Michelle Condit, "The Functions of Epideictic," *Communication Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1985): 290.

<sup>22</sup> Martin, "The Fourth of July Oration," 393; Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience*, 373-376; Hillbruner, "Frances Wright, Egalitarian Reformer," 196. Wright's speech was also significant because she was likely the earliest woman to speak from the public platform in a secular context and the first woman to give a Fourth of July oration. Additionally, multiple collections of Fourth of July orations and essays about the Fourth of July celebration never mention Wright as they presume that the orators at these important civic occasions were universally male. See, for example: Robert Haven Schauflyer, *Independence Day: Its Celebration, Spirit, and Significance as Related in Prose and Verse* (Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics, 2000); Hawken, *Trumpets of Glory*; and Cedric Larson, "Patriotism in Carmine: 162 Years of July 4<sup>th</sup> Oratory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 26, no. 1 (1940): 12-25; and Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 4-7.

<sup>23</sup> Perkins and Wolfson, *Frances Wright Free Enquirer: The Study of a Temperament*, 208. The celebrations often infused with religious references, orations for the first one hundred years re-affirmed the right of revolution articulated in the same document. See: Martin, "The Fourth of July Oration," 395-396.

<sup>24</sup> Appelbaum, *The Glorious Fourth*, 53; and Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Feminist scholars and historians note that the prevailing gender ideology for femininity during this era was what Barbara Welter calls "the cult of true womanhood" that emphasized four cardinal virtues of "domesticity, piety, purity, and submissiveness." See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," *American Quarterly*, 18, no. 2 (1966): 151-174.

<sup>26</sup> Appelbaum, *The Glorious Fourth*, 51. Martin further confirms a tradition of featuring a single Fourth of July oration, calling it the "climactic address" that capped off a range of ceremonial festivities for the day. See Martin, "The Fourth of July Oration," 394.

<sup>27</sup> Appelbaum, *The Glorious Fourth*, 51.



<sup>28</sup> Howard H. Martin, "The Fourth of July Oration," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 44, no. 4 (1958): 394. At many Fourth of July ceremonies, Revolutionary veterans were physically present in the audience as late as 1850.

<sup>29</sup> Martin, "The Fourth of July Oration," 394.

<sup>30</sup> Martin, "The Fourth of July Oration," 394-395.

<sup>31</sup> Celia Morris Eckhardt, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 4-5.

<sup>32</sup> Eckhardt, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, 5-6. Eckhardt writes that Fanny's sister Camilla was left with foster parents in Dundee after their parents' deaths.

<sup>33</sup> Eckhardt, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, 11-12.

<sup>34</sup> Eckhardt, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Frances Wright D'Arusmont, *Views of Society and Manners in America*, first ed. (New York: E. Bliss & E. White, 1821).

<sup>36</sup> Susan S. Kissel, "Conservative Cincinnati and its Outspoken Women Writers," *Queen City Heritage* 44, no. 1 (1986): 20.

<sup>37</sup> D'Arusmont, *Views of Society and Manners in America*, 244-245.

<sup>38</sup> Eckhardt, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, 85. See also Susan S. Kissel, *In Common Cause: The "Conservative" Frances Trollope and the "Radical" Frances Wright* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993); and Elizabeth Ann Bartlett, *Liberty, Equality, Sorority: The Origins and Interpretation of American Feminist Thought: Frances Wright, Sarah Grimke, and Margaret Fuller* (New York: Carlson, 1994), 26. Eckhardt explains that despite the gendered boundaries that stood between Wright and engaging in actual apprenticeships with men like Bentham or Lafayette, she and the men persisted in their relationships that featured mentoring and intellectual refinement and, perhaps, collaboration (*Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, 49-53).

<sup>39</sup> Kissel, *In Common Cause*, 31. See also, Gail Bederman, "Revisiting Nashoba: Slavery, Utopia, and Frances Wright in America, 1818-1826," *American Literary History* 17, no. 3 (2005): 438-359. Bederman refutes claims of Nashoba as an ideal "interracial egalitarian" community, arguing instead that Wright's "relationship with her slaves was no different than that of any other benevolent slave mistress" (439).

<sup>40</sup> Free love was an "alternative to marriage" and a "central organizing ideal among utopian communities" in the United States. Free love was based on a belief that the "legal institution of marriage was unnatural" because it "disrupted the social order and created conditions of dependency, servitude, despotism, prostitution, and a sexual double standard." See: Kate Zittlow Rogness, "The Intersectional Style of Free Love Rhetoric," in *Standing at the Intersections: Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies*, eds. Karma R. Chavez and Cindy L. Griffin (New York: SUNY Press, 2012), 65.

<sup>41</sup> Eckhardt, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, 140.

<sup>42</sup> Arnita Arment Jones, "From Utopia to Reform," *History Today* 26, no. 6 (1976): 393-401

<sup>43</sup> Kissel, "Conservative Cincinnati," 20.

<sup>44</sup> Susan Zaeske, "The 'Promiscuous Audience' Controversy and the Emergence of the Early Woman's Rights Movement," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 191-207. Zaeske points out that even though Frances Wright was attacked as unfeminine and immoral for speaking in public, the promiscuous audience charge was not made against her. Zaeske argues that this could have been because she was one of the earliest women to speak on the public platform. In addition, because Wright attacked religion, Zaeske surmised that it was perhaps easier to argue that she was immoral.

<sup>45</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, vol. 1 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1989), 11.

<sup>46</sup> William Randall Waterman, *Frances Wright* (New York: AMS Press, 1967), 152; Kissel, *In Common Cause*, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, vol.1, 11.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Susan S. Kissel, *In Common Cause*, 40.

<sup>49</sup> See: Hillbruner, "Frances Wright: Egalitarian Reformer"; Kathleen Edgerton Kendall and Jeanne Y. Fisher, "Frances Wright on Women's Rights," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60, no. 1 (1974): 58-68; and Zaeske, "The 'Promiscuous Audience' Controversy," 194.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Kendall and Fisher, "Frances Wright on Women's Rights"; and Zaeske, "The 'Promiscuous Audience' Controversy," 194. As Voss and Rowland note, however, the evaluation of Wright's significance among scholars was decidedly mixed, with some hailing and others dismissing her significance in the broader arc of public address. See: Voss and Rowland, "Pre-Inception Rhetoric in the Creation of a Social Movement: The Case of Frances Wright," 1-2.

<sup>51</sup> John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988/1997), 112-114.

<sup>52</sup> Bartlett, *Liberty, Equality, Sorority*, 27. One newspaper article reporting from St. Louis in November 1828 to readers in Washington, D.C. notes, "The celebrated Miss Frances Wright has been in this city [St. Louis] for some days. She has delivered several Lectures to crowded audiences." "St. Louis, November 18," *Washington Daily National Intelligencer*, December 8, 1828. In another article published in the *Adams Sentinel* of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in 1829, the author exclaimed, "The Walnut Street Theatre has been let for several Sabbaths to celebrated infidel, Miss Frances Wright, who is to lecture therein on *Sabbath* evenings upon her profane and disgusting doctrines!—Surely such a thing cannot be countenanced in our enlightened Emporium." "Postscript," *Adams Sentinel*, September 16, 1829.

<sup>53</sup> Eckhardt, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, 3; "Miss Frances Wright," *Adams Sentinel* (Gettysburg, PA), December 30, 1829. Several articles discussing elections in New York referenced the support of the "mechanics ticket" or "working men's ticket" by "infidels" or "disciples of Fanny Wright." The article in the *Adams Sentinel* reported that the ticket received 6,000 votes out of 20,000 votes cast. Such articles illustrate the negative political associations that opponents had of Fanny Wright. See: "New York Election," *Hagers Town Torchlight and Public Adviser* (Hagerstown, MD), November 12, 1829; and "Shreds and Patches," *Adams Sentinel* (Gettysburg, PA), November 18, 1829.

<sup>54</sup> Those who supported the cause of reform represented by New Harmony, would sing her praises. One short article commented on an "Address to the People of Indiana" written (and perhaps delivered) by Robert Dale Owen in February 1828 as a full-throated defense of the Van Buren administration, described Fanny Wright as "mightiest advocate of the famous 'Social System'" and as a "chaste, refined, delicate author." See: "Van Buren Address," *The Telegraph* (Logansport, Indiana), February 24, 1828.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Dale Owen, Ed. *The New-Harmony Gazette* 1, no. 1 (1825): 1.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Dale Owen, ed. *The New Harmony Gazette* 1, no. 1 (1825): 1; Robert Dale Owen and Francis Wright, eds. *The New-Harmony Gazette* 3, no. 37 (July 9, 1828): 289.

<sup>57</sup> Barbara Taylor notes that Wright's wealthy upbringing allowed her to become one of the "first women to publicly espouse Owenite feminist ideals" and enjoy a historically recorded public career. Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, 59.

<sup>58</sup> Kissell, *In Common Cause*, 69.

<sup>59</sup> Kendall and Fisher, "Frances Wright on Women's Rights," 58. Wright's other speeches were delivered in public lecture halls in large cities, often to mobs of angry protesters. Kendall and Fisher note that Wright's messages of reform throughout her public discourse was distinctly more conservative in her public speaking than what appeared in print, particularly in the newspaper for the New-Harmony community.

<sup>60</sup> Black, "The Sentimental Style as Escapism," 78-79.

<sup>61</sup> Bartlett, *Liberty, Equality, Sorority*, 31. Details of the New Harmony celebration are unclear but it was quite likely that it involved a formal reading of the Declaration of Independence.

<sup>62</sup> Frances Wright, "Address, Delivered in the New-Harmony Hall, At the Celebration of the Fourth of July, 1828, the Fifty-second Anniversary of American Independence," *The New-Harmony Gazette* 3, no. 37 (July 9, 1828): 289-291. This text is the earliest known printed and circulated version of the speech. The 1828 speech was reprinted a year later in Frances Wright's *A Course of Public Lectures* (New York: The Free Enquirer Press, 1829), 171-182. All capitalization and spelling in direct quotes reflect the original document as published in the *New-Harmony Gazette*. Citations of the speech forthwith will refer to paragraphs in the authenticated text.

<sup>63</sup> Bartlett, *Liberty, Equality, Sorority*, 18.

<sup>64</sup> *Federalist* 10.

<sup>65</sup> Larson, "Patriotism in Carmine: 162 Years of July 4<sup>th</sup> Oratory," 14; Martin, "The Fourth of July Oration," 395.

<sup>66</sup> Frederick J. Antczak, *Thought and Character: The Rhetoric of Democratic Education* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1985), 7.

<sup>67</sup> Andrew W. Robertson, *The Language of Democracy: Political Rhetoric in the United States and Britain, 1790-1900* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 213.

<sup>68</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983/2006): 6.

<sup>69</sup> Waterman, *Frances Wright*, 136.

<sup>70</sup> Published fragments suggest that Wright's address was highly valued within the New Harmony community and the readership of the *New Harmony Gazette* (later *The Free Enquirer*). The 1828 address was featured in the first pages of the July 9, 1828 edition of the *Gazette*. Moreover, Wright was not only invited to give a second Fourth of July Address in 1829, but that address was also prominently featured along with reprints and defense of Wright as a speaker and reformer against her opponents. For example, in 1829, one contributor wrote of the one-sided press coverage of Wright's lectures in New York. The writer argued that the religious clergy in New York City used the press to attack Wright, "teeming with ridicule, abuse, misrepresentation, and calumny, in the hope by one united effort of overpowering the courage of the lecturer, or the enthusiasm of her auditors." This article confirmed not only the welcome reception of Wright's addresses and ideas, but also the vociferous responses of her opponents. See "New York, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1829," *The Free Enquirer* 2, no. 18 (1829): 143.

<sup>71</sup> Lori D. Ginzberg, "'The Hearts of your Readers will Shudder': Fanny Wright, Infidelity, and American Freethought," *American Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (1994): 198; and Zaeske, "The Promiscuous Audience Controversy," 194.

<sup>72</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage* (Rochester, NY: Susan B. Anthony, 1889), 51-52.

<sup>73</sup> Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds. *History of Woman Suffrage*, 692. Rose's statement supports Voss and Rowland's argument about Wright's role in offering what they call "pre-emption rhetoric" for the coming woman's rights movement. See: Voss and Rowland, "Pre-emption Rhetoric in the Creation of a Social Movement: The Case of Frances Wright," 1-14.

<sup>74</sup> Lillian O'Connor, *Pioneer Women Orators*.

<sup>75</sup> See, for instance, Kurt Müller, "Anti-Slavery Rhetoric on the Fourth of July: William Lloyd Garrison," in *The Fourth of July: Political Oratory and Literary Reactions, 1776- 1876*, ed. Paul Goetsch and Gerd Hurm (Tul^bingen: G. Narr, 1992), 121-138.

<sup>76</sup> Frederick Douglass, "What to a Slave is the Fourth of July? At Rochester, July 5, 1852," in *American Rhetorical Discourse*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, ed. Ronald F. Reid and James F. Klumpp (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2005): 338-344.

<sup>77</sup> See Hawken, *Trumpets of Glory: Fourth of July Orations 1786-1861*, 47-48; 171.

<sup>78</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, Vol. 2 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1989), 34. Campbell argues that this strategy ultimately failed for the early feminists because their goal was not separation from the nation, but inclusion. Thus, using the Declaration as a direct model did not serve their rhetorical purpose.

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, Marjorie Mayo, *Global Citizens: Social Movements and the Challenge of Globalization* (London: Zed Books, 2005); and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks in Recognition of International Human Rights Day," December 6, 2011. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/12/178368.htm> (accessed March 15, 2013).

<sup>80</sup> In early 2013, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia reaffirmed his counterargument to those who claim that the Constitution is a "living document," or intended to be interpreted in its own context and molded to fit the current society. Scalia notably responded, "It's not a living document. It's dead, dead, dead." See: Tasha Tsiaperas, "Constitution a 'dead, dead, dead' document, Scalia tells SMU audience," *Dallas Morning News*, January 28, 2013.

---

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Kenneth R. Howe, "Liberal Democracy, Equal Educational Opportunity, and the Challenge of Multiculturalism," *American Educational Research Journal* 29, no. 3 (1992): 455-470.