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Personal Trauma in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary: a Fiction*

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Madhav Timalina has completed his thesis entitled "Personal Trauma in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Mary: a Fiction*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from November 2020 A. D. to August 2022 A. D. I hereby recommend this thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Personal Trauma in Wollstonecraft's *Mary: a Fiction*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Madhav Timalsina, has been approved by undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This research attempts to see the personal trauma of Mary Wollstonecraft captured in her masterpiece writing *Mary: a Fiction*. Mary Wollstonecraft, born as British citizens, the famous and renowned leading feminist writer, has used her fictional writings as means of therapy to manage her trauma. The writings, which have a goal to lessen the pain of trauma, do not only document the trauma of Mary Wollstonecraft but also document the trauma of women of her society. The documentation of personal trauma and literary writings in parallel to collective trauma has helped Mary Wollstonecraft to figure out the female suppression, social interference of her society towards females. The relocation of trauma in sociocultural contexts of her whole life time justifies the traumatic experience of women of contemporary society in many cases is imposed one. Her desire to locate her trauma in particular and trauma of her sex in general in sociocultural contexts of British society, during the 18th century helps her readers to understand the western society and its components as the primary sources for any woman to be traumatized. The continuous imposition and regulation of male's ideology without considering the women in the society compels women to pass through various constructed events of trauma. Domestic violence, betrayal, miscalculation of emotion of women and mistrust in attachments are the result of indifference of the contemporary English Society towards women which construct a way for women to be traumatized. Mary Wollstonecraft, who becomes the victim of patriarchal society and whose voice is continuously silenced using the social laws and social institutions, takes the help of writing to narrate, preserve, and manage her experience of traumas. Making Mary and Maria her mouthpiece in *Mary: a Fiction*, Mary Wollstonecraft transmutes her personal trauma in *Mary: a Fiction* by making an appeal to make a bond among the victims of trauma to lessen the pain of trauma and to reform the society where they are living in.

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Chapter I

Personal Trauma and Literary Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft born in April 27, 1759, in London England a leading feminist writer, and pioneer for locating sufferings, pains, pathetic condition, and the inhumane treatment upon women in social and cultural contexts through her writings, has located her personal trauma in her fictional autobiographical novel *Mary: A Fiction*. When she is documenting her personal trauma in her fiction, she gets an idea that the women of 18th century's English society regardless of socio-economic status have been traumatized in one or other way by men in that society. The realization of the traumatic life of her sex forces her to find the reasons for the collective trauma of her sex. She finds that the process of the traumatization of the women starts more or less from their own home. Then when these women come in contact with the outer world, they find many so called lovers, or caretakers, or husbands to force them to pass through a series of traumatic events. But these men and the social institutions which have been formed to execute the men's interest upon women never point out the wrongs in men but always show the women's inefficiency to understand and handle the situation. She further says that the men have objectified the women, which is in fact the root cause of the traumatic suffering of the women in the contemporary society of England. Mary Wollstonecraft, a witness of indifferences of male to female, cannot protect herself from being the victim of trauma. Though she is a self-educated woman, her wisdom does not help her to keep herself away from the traditional traumatic sources like family violence, betrayal relationship, biased social and national law. However, she tries to manage her trauma through writings like in *Mary: A Fiction*. She attributes her trauma to her character Mary and makes Mary her mouthpiece to narrate her personal trauma.

The unpleasant experiences of her life have been narrated in almost all her writings.

Among the literary writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, I have selected *Mary: A Fiction* to examine how she has disclosed the horrifying and unpleasant life experiences. This novel captures the personal trauma of Mary Wollstonecraft highlighting the social and cultural misbehaviors to female by male of male dominated society. The desperate attempt of Mary Wollstonecraft to verbalize her trauma through her novel *Mary: A Fiction* becomes vivid because she has revisited her past horrible traumatic events through the memory of her novel' heroine Mary.

Mary: A Fiction revolves around the story of the heroine, Mary, who is frequently victimized by her society and its components. The societal institutions, traditions, and cultures create a special zone for women of any class or status to pass through the series of traumatic events. The novel focuses on the societal rather than the individual mistakes and criticizes what Wollstonecraft viewed as the patriarchal institution of marriage in the eighteenth-century Britain and the legal system that protected it. However, the heroine's inability to relinquish her romantic fantasies also reveals woman's collusion in their oppression through false and damaging sentimentalism. This novel pioneers the celebration of female sexuality and cross-class identification between women. The twentieth-century feminist critics have embraced the works, integrating those into the history of the novel and feminist discourse. These are most often viewed as a fictionalized popularization of the *Rights of Woman*, as an extension of Wollstonecraft's feminist arguments in *Rights of Woman*.

Mary: A Fiction questions on the validity and usefulness of marriage by illustrating the conventional and loveless marriage between Mary's mother and father. Mary's mother, Eliza, who is infatuated with novels, rarely reflects on anyone but herself, and favors Mary's brother. Mary, who is divested from getting any kind of facilities in her family, educates herself relying on books and the natural world. She finds herself lonely though she is in her family. The

emotional detachment of Mary to her family initiates her to conduct charity. But Mary's mother interest turns to Mary when her brother dies as her mother knows that Mary becomes beneficiary of the family's fortune. Mary is guided to be involved in different kinds of activities but the activities like dancing are concerned to draw the attention of the suitors. However, Mary is ready to get married with Charles when she is asked to be his wife by her sick and dying mother. Mary Wollstonecraft, the harsh critic of marriage, shows the irresponsible character of Charles who has left Mary immediately after the ceremony.

Mary, who has been mistreated in her father's home as well as in her husband's home, finds no one faithful to share her repressed feelings until she meets Ann, a local girl who educates her still further. Mary becomes quite attached to Ann, who is in the grip of an unanswered love. Mary, who has a strong friendship relationship with Ann, wants to help Ann's family financially but could not as her access to her property has been limited after her marriage with Charles.

Ann, who becomes consumptive, has to go to Lisbon to get treatment. Her friend, Mary, assists her hoping to bring her health back in her life. There they are introduced to Henry, who is also fighting with his illness. Ann dies and Mary is desolate. But the frequent meeting between Henry and Mary, who are forced to return to England separately, brings them close and they subsequently fall in love. Mary, who has been subjected to traumatic events from her parents' home to her husband's home, becomes sick when she has lost her friend Ann and her boyfriend Henry from her life. The disease is so fatal that it is limiting the life of Mary.

Eileen Hunt Botting reads the literary creation of Mary Wollstonecraft as the documents of personal experiences of Mary Wollstonecraft. Most of the writings of Wollstonecraft captures the practices of the contemporary society of 18th Century in English Literature. For an example,

she exposes the sociopolitical and cultural practices of the then England in her fiction *Mary: A Fiction*. The new approach to the fiction helps her to discover the importance of sociopolitical factors in its creation as Botting writes in "Crossing Borders and Bridging Generations: Wollstonecraft's "Rights of Woman" as the "Traveling Feminist" Classic," that women's power and positions are limited by society. Their roles are determined by the society not by their capabilities. Botting views:

Women such as Cruz and Wollstonecraft saw the soul or mind as both a refuge for women from the limitations of society and their primary means of transcendence from these limitations. With education, the powers of the soul or mind could be directed toward the transcendence of these social limitations and the restoration of these women's God-given dignity. Such educated women could finally realize the freedom and rationality that is necessary for both earthly happiness and heavenly salvation. (299)

Women are not given priority to use their mind and soul as they are determined by the society controlled by patriarchy. Education can be a way through which woman can recognize their God-given dignity. Freedom and rationality are important for the women, according to Botting based on the ideas given by Woolstencroft.

Wendy Stevens, likewise, analyzes the creation of Mary Wollstonecraft *Mary: A Fiction*, as a document of the personal experience of the author, who attempts to disclose the 'wrongs' of patriarchal society in relation to its mistreatment to women. She, in "No lies, just omissions," argues:

Mary: A Fiction is autobiographical and realistic in many respects, patterned clearly after the author's early life. Like many other females of her class, her life was filled with frustration stressful, ruled by prevailing values, laws and traditions in that society. The

novel directed the particular frustration of its author; a gifted woman living in a society which had no use for creative women. (11)

The laws, rules, and values of the contemporary English society are not based on the law of humanity. Instead, these laws are made to help a man to exercise and experiment his desires upon the body of woman without having any kind of fear being punished. The one sided male favored laws always helps a male to misbehave a females as well as protects the male from getting any kind of punishment even if he is involved in serious crime to the female. The biased laws adopted by the society and its institutions to implement such biased laws have made the society a cage for women who do not see any hope to be free and liberated from the harsh clutch of men. The caged status of female in male favored society is the primary concern of Mary Wollstonecraft as she envisions the justification of the superiority of male over female in the society is socially constructed. She wants to speak against of such kind of constructed superiority of male but her voice is either suppressed or made unheard. However, she cannot be speechless. To give the voice to her thoughts, she chooses the writings. So, her writings encompass her revolutionary voices.

A victim of male injustice, Mary Wollstonecraft, has attempted to present her social position in *Mary: A Fiction* by assigning her fictional character the role of helpless and submissive to patriarchal rules in spite of having the capacity to differentiate between wrong and right. Stevens's points out the depiction of patriarchal society in *Mary: A Fiction* as a prison for female whose fortune is same despite the differences in caste class. Stevens further argues that “the real and the fictional Mary were trapped by their gender. Neither Mary nor her fictional character Mary envisioned the possibility of escape during their lives” (11). The continuous shout for bringing the change in her society in order to make the social environment favorable

for both male and female can be traced in almost all writings of Mary Wollstonecraft. Her dissatisfaction on the social injustice to her sex has been registered in her writings. The novel which is designed to illustrate to show the 'wrongs' of the patriarchal society revisits the personal trauma of the author making a parallel connection to the trauma of women of her society.

At this point, Mary Wollstonecraft's personal history becomes significant in the analysis of her trauma. Mary was the second of six children. Her bitter training in the school of experience started from the very first years of her life. The caged like life of female can be easily traced. She has witnessed the practice of male impartial law in her own family since she started to understand her surroundings. Mary Wollstonecraft learns the lesson of male impartiality before she steps out in her society. The male members of her family do not hesitate to do even the inhuman behavior to maintain their superiority over the female members. The injustice of male to female in Wollstonecraft's family is clearly stated in the writing of Elizabeth Robins Pennel. Pennel revisits the familial experience of Mary Wollstonecraft in *Life of Mary Wollstonecraft*: "Her father was a selfish, hot tempered despot, whose natural bad qualities were aggravated by his dissipated habits" (13). So, it is obvious for Mary Wollstonecraft to encounter with traumatic events in early childhood age. If the head of the family is selfish and corrupt, it will not be hard to anyone to guess the condition of a female in that family.

The knowledge of brutality of male upon female is sharpened when she steps out from her family world to the social world. The situation or the weapon is different, but the suffering of the female is same in both in and out. The unfriendly and dominating familial and social laws compel a woman to pass through the series of trauma. So, she raises the issue of trauma in her writings making the woman aware of sources of trauma as well as asking male to reconsider the

constructed social and family environment for the female.

Wollstonecraft has understood the dominant male constructed truth in her society which becomes handy for males to exploit women of the contemporary society. So, she visualizes the necessity to challenge the existing deeply embedded male favored philosophy to uplift the life of women. That is why she has been seen as a revolutionary figure in the history of literature. The revolutionary figure of Mary Wollstonecraft is revisited by Claudia L. Johnson in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*. Claudia argues:

A radical figure in a revolutionary time, she took up and lived out not only the tolerant call for women's educational and ethical equality, but also practically all of the other related, brutally contested questions of the 1790s- questions pertaining to the principles of class, property, sex, tyranny, liberty, political authority, marriage, childrearing, prejudice, promises, suicide, to mention only a reason, sentimentality few. (1)

As a ground breaking figure, she always challenges to reveal the faults in patriarchal society. The existing male dominated society and its institutions to govern it are totally under the holds of males. As a result, a modern woman faces so many problems to challenge the value of the society as her voice will be silenced by the male dominated social institutions.

Mary Wollstonecraft never feels crushed. Her regular effort to uplift the life of woman in male dominated society establishes herself as a promoter of female's rights in male societies. She envisions education as only one but surest weapon to make women life better. But, this might be an unfortunate for the female not to have the opportunity to have the education in her life or to be introduced with only such kind of education which makes her emotional. The traditional form of education never develops the capacity to see the world from the eyes of justice. Rather the propose of providing education to the female is to continue the superiority of male over female

making females feel themselves as a weak, subordinate, and slave of males. So, she foresees the problem in education system of the society. She finds the liability in education system which has founded on biased educational system for male and female. Alan Richardson reads Mary's criticism on education system of England for girls in this way:

If education was greatest in forming individual subjects, it was equally powerful, Wollstonecraft eventually argued, to collapse the subjective lives of women. Building on Catharine Macaulay's *Letters on Education*, Wollstonecraft came to know the history of female education as an essential conspiracy of male educators and writers looking for women's weakness and less coherent than they would. For the voice of women's objecting social condition and for the rise innovative generation of rational, progressive independent women, educational reform was vital. (Quoted in L. Johnson 25)

The acknowledgement of fault in education system of the then makes Mary Wollstonecraft think differently. The different thought demands the exposition of woman's trauma resulted because of social and cultural injustice on woman in public sphere.

She starts to confront the current education system of her society for the women which offer education for the women to build them as sentimental. So, her writings and the rereading of her writings in sociopolitical situations become handy to understand her desire and compulsion to narrate her personal trauma in fictional cum autobiographical writings. Mary Wollstonecraft always refutes the existing educational system for female in her society. The conspiracy of male dominated society against women is clearly detectable as it wants women not to be reasonable. The education given to them only makes them familiar to words so that they can learn fiction. The offered course or fictional books for female disappoints Mary Wollstonecraft. So, almost all her writings illustrate the failure in educational system for female of her society.

Throughout her writing career, Mary Wollstonecraft show and described the failure of a woman to recognize the importance of using reason for making their life exclusive is a result of conspiracy of male dominate society. She wants to show the society about her role and its value over the male dominated society.

Her reliable fight for the freedom of her sex and the way she is treated in her society by her male companions force her to be the victim of the same male designed rules, and the same time, her attempts to change the society where female can enjoy her autonomy fails. The acceptance of the helpless condition of a female in male dominate society and the regular inscription of the indifferent behavior of her friends and her society in her knowledge make her reveal her own useless condition through her writings. Mary Wollstonecraft reveals the events and other social cultural components, agents, institutions, which are responsible for her distress. The distress of her to her society is in fact a gift that she gets from the environment where she is grown up. But the long history of ill practices of her society to its female members has already fixed the male's behavior and female's response to it.

Mary Wollstonecraft's keen knowledge of patriarchal society helps her to portray the humiliated and dominated picture of a woman in patriarchal society. The constant attempt of Mary Wollstonecraft to portray the poor status of a woman in male dominate society through her writing justifies her as a witness of patriarchal society and its mistreatment to women.

In her writing *Mary:A Fiction* she views the failure in marriage system of her society. The marriage is regarded as a turning or another phase in human life. She shows in her writings that the society expects only the submissive character of a woman. Even a woman is loyal or faithful to her husband; she might be the victim of his brutality and selfishness The legitimatization of sexual intercourse between man and woman, known as marriage, fosters a

new way of life where both husband and wife incorporate and get rid of so many things for the sake of happy life. But Mary Wollstonecraft views the need to create the equality between husband and wife for the healthy family as well as healthy society. Mary Wollstonecraft seems to form clearly that a woman suffers not because of her failure to cope herself with the situations but because she is the woman of a patriarchal society who is focused to be exploited since her birth. The unmoved behavior of a husband to his wife in modern society stands for the declaration of male biased belief about a woman body.

The turn of blind eyes and deaf ears to woman's condition in contemporary society can be noticed in the failure of differentiating between abortion and miscarriage. Though the demarcation line between miscarriage and abortion is clear, the patriarchal society assumes the miscarriage as abortion. The inability or unwillingness of patriarchal society to differentiate miscarriage to abortion stands for an example of making rules and laws which are based on biasness. In her view: "abortion became . . . a means to argue for women's political capacities. Whereas their lack of activity, over processes, over their bodies reliant on their successful delivery of future generations of people, allowed for a persistence of things-as-they-are, any moment in which women's control within the reproductive process became obvious signaled a more general political agency" (1). Gradually, women start to get freedom from their willingness to abortion. For this they realize that politics is a strong weapon through which they can express their rights. They realize their present activities can affect the future performances.

Mitzi Myers examines Maria in contrast to her other works, especially *Mary and Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, to better understand the author and her purpose in writing. She refers to arguments posed by several [critics](#) to build her conclusions. Mitzi Myers calls Wollstonecraft as an innovator in fiction. Myers claims:

. . .individualist and [innovator](#) in her fiction and aesthetic theory as well as in her polemical tracts, . . . Wollstonecraft confronts, though she does not solve, the problem of integrating a rational feminist program with one woman's subjective feminine vision, though it carries almost all the ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft that she holds throughout her life. Due her writings and critiques in *Mary: A Fiction* also becomes a tool to show her bad experience of her life. (110)

She does not only advocate for the freedom for the woman but also works finding out the surest weapon for it. She opines that the problem of the present pitiable condition of her sex of any classes is in education system. So, in her writings, she calls for the changes in education system. At the same time she also looks the way to resist the male dominance in her society. That is why she calls her sex to make anything as their weapon if that helps them to be free from the cruel clutches of male violence. While searching for the tool to discard male's philosophy which is made to exploit woman, she finds writing the one's own history as it may be useful for the next generation to know the wrongs of society, wrongs of males and females. She acknowledges the importance of writing and preserving it as a history about the troubles, suffering, pains, and wounds of woman. Her purpose to preserve the true story of woman as a history seems to have two goals; one is to make her next generation aware about the devil side of male and another is to appeal the suppressed sex, gender, and marginalized groups to continue their fight for the liberation.

Diane W. Strommer conceptualizes *Mary: A Fiction* as an effort of Mary Wollstonecraft to document personal story in her socio-cultural contexts so that she can give life to her past memory. The society has influenced the isolation of woman as a property of a man and also authorized the male to treat the female as he wants. In such a society, a woman formation of the

identity of male and female, like Mary Wollstonecraft, who has raised voice of equality and equity of female in her society has to face many challenges from the fundamentals of society and customs. On the line of presenting sociocultural reality mixing personal story either in autobiographical writing or fictional autobiographical writing .But those who fight for the rights of marginalized people find writing as a best means to document the personal story keeping it in the sociocultural contexts so that they can explore the responsible social and cultural mechanisms used to suppress the voice of these people, Mary Wollstonecraft pioneers. Diane W. Strommer argues, “Mary Wollstonecraft’s attempts to change her own history, intellectual gifts and personality as they related to the position of women in her time and place into the story of every woman” (96). The task to eliminate or reformulate the influenced laws for male and female makes her an ideal figure for those who fight for their own freedom. Though she has initiated the fight for freedom and liberation for her sex in her society, she cannot defend herself being victim of the male favored society.

Towards the later phase of her life realizes the hardship in reformulating the social and cultural practices in modern society which advocate of freedom for the marginalized and suppressed sex. The constant attack on her ‘self’ from her family, society and husbands makes her pass through the various forms of traumas.

In *Mary: A Fiction*, Mary a traumatic figure passes through series of traumatic events one by one which are the result of mishandling of woman in her society. The constructed and valorized opinion of the society to woman as a property, Mary envisions, is the primary reason for any woman from any class, cast, and groups to be the victim of trauma(s). The societal and cultural approved and definite practices for male and female become the main concern for Mary Wollstonecraft as she concedes that unless there is change in these practices, a woman can’t find

herself in secure and liberated social environment. The existing society regards the woman as a property of the man who can use the property as his wish without having any fear from either his society or from his nation's law.

The regular effort of different scholars from different disciplines to untie the truth of Mary Wollstonecraft life from available her writings and writings on her life justifies her as a historian, critics of contemporary society and culture, freedom fighter, voice of voiceless, and a revolutionary figure in the history of woman's writing. The woman who has started her fighting against the prejudiced laws of male dominate society which becomes the subject of enquiry even after the centuries of her death.

Having the idea from the different scholars' research on the life and writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, I have attempted to revisit her novel *Mary: A Fiction* as the means which Mary Wollstonecraft selects to release her personal trauma making her heroines. Mary and her mouthpieces in her novel respectively. The ongoing research in understanding the life and writings of Mary Wollstonecraft has disclosed the different facet of her life and her writing career.

In this fight of liberation of her sex, Mary encounters a lot of events which leaves irremediable wounds in her life. The society and its works become the agents of trauma which one by one add the unbearable pain in her life. She regularly shouts for the betterment of her sex but nobody cares her voice, Mary Wollstonecraft who knows the value of writing, in later phase of her writing writes about her personal trauma in particular and her sex in general.

The thesis focuses on the role of a trauma to figure the individuality of a woman in a male dominated society. So, this thesis tries to see how writers like Mary Wollstonecraft transfer their personal trauma in their literary writings. The centuries existing male ideologies become

obstructions for any woman to have power over her own life. But the attempt of such scholars to wake up the society becomes futile as the society is not in sleep rather it is pretending as if it is sleeping. The guided and controlled life of a woman becomes painful and traumatic for some scholars like Mary Wollstonecraft who frequently point out the ‘wrongs’ of the society. The different mechanisms of society and culture are made active to silence the voice of the women.

The society, particularly patriarchal society which frequently leaves the scars on the body of a woman, prohibits a woman to discuss her experiences of trauma of sexual abuse, refusal and betrayal as they are the result of the male practices of the male dominated society to the women. The women, who are serious in male dominated society, take writing as a best tool to cope their trauma. The silenced voice of women gets exposed in the writings as the writings become only one left resource for the women to show their suffering, pain and traumatic experience which are the result of indifference of male dominated society for them. The woman, like Mary Wollstonecraft, who wants to share her personal experience of trauma, regards the writing as a best means to transmute her trauma.

For this objective this thesis will be intensively text based. Deriving idea from trauma theory, the hypothesis will be examined. Since trauma theory diagnoses the agent of trauma, its effects and its way out, the thesis will exploit how the trauma has been brought forth. Susannah Radstone, in “Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics”, claims that “trauma analysis aims to demonstrate the ways in which texts may be engaged with the belated remembrance of trauma” (22). Having the idea from the Susannah Redstone's trauma theory, I attempt to revisit her novel *Mary: A Fiction* as the means which Mary Wollstonecraft selects to release her personal trauma making her heroine Maria her mouthpiece. The ongoing research in understanding the life and writings of Mary Wollstonecraft has disclosed the different faces of her life and her writing

career.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the novels, novelist, the background of the work and a general direction this thesis takes in course of study. The second chapter introduces and elaborates the critical concepts of trauma studies in relation to understanding how the personal trauma treated accepted in Mary Wollstonecraft's novel *Mary: A Fiction*. The third chapter consists of the analysis of *Mary: A Fiction* in the light of trauma theories. The fourth chapter is the concluding section in which the researcher delineates the findings.

Chapter II: Trauma and Autobiographical Writings

The study of trauma is comparatively new, though the incident has existed since humans began to be aware of their existence. The study of trauma in academic field was foregrounded when the academicians like Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman explore the trauma with its importance in understanding past, present, and possible future of human beings. In an attempt to understand the human's life horrible events, these writers have been working creatively on the boundaries of trauma, literature, and psychoanalysis paving a way to analyze and understand the role of traumatic experience in the creation of a literary writing.

The female writers of trauma continuously attempt to expose the captured their personal trauma in the literary writings of the writers especially autobiographical writings or fictionalized autobiographical writings. Over the last twenty years or so, the appearance of innovative new work on trauma in literature and critical theory has made a substantial impact both within and beyond the field of literature. This school of thought highlights that the literature is a handy means to capture the human experiences in comparison to the other available tools in preserving or representing human experiences. Elissa Marder argues, "Literature is one of the ways we tell one another about aspects of human experience that cannot be contained by ordinary modes of appearance and that may even beat human understanding" (3). Indeed, Cathy Caruth turns to literature—and literary forms of interpretation—to further her exploration into the structure of traumatic events and belated experience. Literature, she argues, enables us to bear witness to events that cannot be completely known and opens our ears to experiences that might have otherwise remained unspoken and unheard. Through a series of close textual readings of literary, psychoanalytic, philosophical, and film texts, Caruth powerfully and persuasively shows that despite the fact that certain kinds of events cannot be fully known or understood, these events

become meaningful in different ways by being told to others and heard by them.

The formal study of trauma begins with the changes in philosophical outlooks, social structures, and medical advances which are the result of developed revolution in West. The word trauma, derived from the Greek word for wound, was first coined to denote external injuries but the new socio-political environment in Western countries after industry revolution and the claim for reimbursement from the people of rail accident open the new area in the study of trauma. With improvement in technology in transportation, England and France face the problem of providing compensation for those who psychologically but not physically injured in rail accident. The research conducted by Jean-Martin Charcot and his team broadens the boundary in understanding the tread of trauma from external injury to the injury than remains unseen wounds sustained by the psyche, wounds of the internal kind, as such, psychological wounding gets its definition as both caused by a trauma and as being trauma itself.

The beginning of study of trauma, the word which is created for severe physical pain, tries to redefine in terms of psychologically disturbed actions of the person who is trapped in railway accident. The funded study of trauma conducted by French psychologist Charcot understands the symptoms of 'railway spine' as 'hysteria'—which was believed only to occur in women. Colin Wastell writes in *Understanding Trauma and Emotion*: "In the case of trauma unaccompanied by physical injury, the suspicion emerged that the applicant may not actually be affected, but rather attempting to gain reimbursement by fraud. Erichsen (1883) disdainfully labeled the condition 'railway spine'. The rise of interest in this condition was the beginning of the funded study of trauma" (3). The relationship of trauma with monetary reimbursement and with a 'disorder' associated with women resulted in a large degree of suspicion being directed towards those who claimed to be bothered with trauma. Indeed, it is regular with later literature

that, from the point of view of the legal profession, if a person displayed the symptoms associated with trauma, they were either malingering or constitutionally weak.

Ryan La Moth observes, “Freud initially proposed, in his traumatic theory of hysteria, that “one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience” proved “suitability as a determinant” and “necessary traumatic force” in the formation of hysterical symptoms. The hysteric’s symptoms are derivatives of memories which are operating unconsciously” and which were for the most part, rooted in the patient’s childhood traumatic experiences” (546). Sigmund Freud, a leading psychologist, diagnoses the cause of hysteria and discovers the disease regarded as peculiar to woman in the contemporary society as a response to the childhood sexual abuse trauma. He sees the hysteria, taken as a female disease, is a result of trauma. La Moth reads Freud's traumatic theory of hysteria which is applicable to understand the hysteria as a delayed response to the trauma that is set by the childhood sexual abuse. Hysteria must be understood as a response to the early sexual abuse of the child. It is regarded as a response of our unconscious mind when the victim of trauma voluntarily or involuntarily is triggered to the unbearable pain of the past. He changes the word trauma to understand the psychic response of a woman who once was sexually abused.

The study of trauma to understand ‘hysteria’ helps Colin Wastell to read Jean –Martin Charcot’s work significant in the study of woman’s trauma as he writes, that “hysterics were the result of the women’s traumatic experiences” (3). So, from its beginning, the trauma study pays its attention on the psychological trauma of women and its impact on women’s life. The study of trauma in its beginning phase has been limited in the study of the psychological and physiological responses of the trauma victims. The aim of studying trauma is to analyze the abnormal behaviors performed by the trauma sufferer.

Marinella Rodi-Risberg likewise sees the latest history of psychological trauma in understanding the traumatic experience of women is the result of feminist movement in *Writing Trauma, Writing Time and Space*. She views that “after the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s, when it became known that more women than men suffered from the long-term effects of psychological trauma and that these women were traumatized in private life rather than in war” (8). As is clear from this brief overview, trauma’s coming into being as a theory, or the very history of research into psychic trauma itself, has a history of necessity to cope the trauma which may be the result of violence, sexual abuse, wars, betray, incest etc.

Judith Herman finds the study of psychological trauma has “a curious history- one of episodic amnesia” (9). Herman reads the history of development of psychological trauma is the result of political movement in the world each time. He sees the history of psychological trauma with history of major political movements like World Wars and women’s right movements. This class interval absentmindedness is not due to the lack of interest on it, but rather the issue arouses debate that sometimes it is easier to avoid the subject and deny its existence. Herman asserts, “Psychological trauma has surfaced into public consciousness, and each time flourishing in association with a political movement (9).” He admits that the study of trauma starts with the study of hysteria, shifts to the study of traumatic impacts on soldiers in World Wars and especially in Vietnam Wars, and in later phase on the study of sexual and domestic violence. Herman sees that the latest concerned area of the trauma study on sexual and domestic violence is because of, “feminist movement in western Europe and North America” (9).

Anne Kaplan revisits the idea of trauma and hysteria set forth by Freud. She finds the failure of Freud to see the cultural, political and social phenomena responsible for different psychosis in the case of sexual abuse though he is able to differentiate male hysteria and female

hysteria. Kaplan in, “Why Trauma Now’: Freud and Trauma Studies,” argues:

Freud suggests why women choose hysteria while men manifest obsessional psychosis by distinguishing the kinds of infantile sexual abuse boys and girls receive (women receive it “passively”, males “actively”). Yet he does not realize the contained acceptance of existing concepts of gender in this statement. That is, Freud does not go on to ask how cultural, political, and social roles laid down for men and women to produce different psychosis in the case of sexual trauma. (27)

With the introduction of new sociopolitical contexts of the world and the long term effect of World War. Civil Wars, holocaust, and International wars the narrowed definition of trauma gets challenged and researches in wars and its aftermath on people are conducted. In later phase of the study of trauma, the scholars attempt to see trauma not only from the perspectives of psychology and physiology but also they try to relocate the study of trauma in sociocultural and political contexts.

These events were significant in that they helped to structure the configuration of a generational awareness amongst women writers, intellectuals, artists, and thus condition their attempts to reconfigure the process of identity-formation and collective memory. The historical context which set the parameters for a reworking of the discursive grounds for women collective identity was propounded by the outbreak of different social movements like Women Right, movement of 1960s. The revolutionary afford of new critics and researchers in separating the plights of the women documented either in films, pictures or in literary writings facilitates new approaches. The new approaches in analyzing the displaced characters of a woman in a text put forth the notion that any form of representation must be analyzed in its social and cultural contexts.

Mary Wollstonecraft attempts to disclose the real face of her culture and society which structure the traumatic events for women through their components. The existing laws and biased rules of her male dominated society form sufferings, suppression, pain and humiliation for women. The mark created by these remarkable events repeatedly haunts them. As a result, these women neither keep themselves away from the haunting experience of the events nor find the social and cultural environment inclusive. The exercised control over women compels the women to pass through unexpected terrifying events which leave a mark in the body as well as in the mind of the women eternally. So, the researchers and the scholars of traumatic studies shift their attention on defining trauma from psychological or physiological paradigm to social and cultural regime after 1960s. Gadi Benezer, in "Trauma Signals in Life Stories," observes:

It is obvious too, that traumatic moments never happen in a social vacuum. They are connected to the social context in which they take place. Life stories include an exposition of the relation between the private and the collective context. In many if not most cases, they are related to the norms of society and to what is spoken about and what is kept silent in public. They can thus give a better understanding of both the personal trauma, as it is viewed within a social context, and of the social milieu, as reflected in the individual's life. (20)

Realizing the necessity to put trauma in sociocultural and political contexts, Anne Kaplan asserts that the contextualized form of study of trauma helps us to understand it well. Kaplan does not support the idea of universalizing trauma as psychological study of trauma does. The trauma, as she opines, has its origin in human society, politics and culture which discard the equal rights and freedom for the people who are the members of the society, culture and politics though they claim the ground of their foundation is on the motif of providing social and cultural position

equally to its people without carrying any sign of discriminations. To support her idea, she reads David Becker theory on trauma. She observes: “Becker also dispute that instead of speaking about trauma per se, we should talk of the ‘traumatic condition,’ since that phrasing implies that one is not just looking at an entity who has suffered but at what surround’s that person’s sufferings- his or her specific institution involved, the state of her community, its politics” (39). Becker observes different types of traumatic condition like psychological trauma, its representation of human beings terrific past memories and the role of memory in shaping social, individual and cultural identities are the central concerns that define the field of trauma studies. Psychoanalytic theories on trauma paired with additional theoretical frameworks such as post structural, sociocultural, and postcolonial theory form the basis of criticism that interprets representations of an extreme experience and its effects upon identity and memory.

Similarly, the concept of trauma itself a source of critique, is generally understood as a severely disruptive experience that profoundly impacts the self’s emotional organization and perception of the external world. Trauma studies explores the impact of trauma in literature and society by analyzing its psychological, rhetorical, and cultural significance. Scholarship analyzes the complex psychological and social factors that influence the self’s comprehension of a traumatic condition.

Karyn Ball, in “Introduction: Trauma and Its Institutional Destinies,” reads the psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman who has argued that the history of trauma studies is determined by the history of political and social movements for the reconstruction of the society and its policies. He opines that the reappearance of trauma studies in the literary field after the social movements 1960s attempts to redefine the trauma as not only the individual inability to bear the horrifying events rather trauma is the result of social injustice done by a social group

upon another group. He asserts the new model of trauma studies helps to create social cognizance by vocalizing the marginalized and suppressed group. The intensity to be the words of voiceless person or group is to help to identify the sources of trauma for these groups so that it will help to eradicate the social injustice or to pave a way for social integration of these marginalized and suppressed groups. Ball claims, "The systematic study of psychological trauma 'depends on the support of a political movement.' This is the case insofar as social movements raise public awareness by 'giving voice to the disempowered' and thereby creating the conditions that enable individuals and groups to admit the reality of trauma and victimization"

(4). Karyn Ball reframes debates about psychoanalysis within trauma studies. Ball's trauma theory includes essays that go beyond psychoanalysis in rethinking the cultural significance of traumatic anxiety, melancholy, and the representation of suffering in testimony, self-narration, and politics. Traumatizing theory is unmistakably on the cutting edge and moves trauma theory into a new postmodern phase.

John G. Allen argues that the trauma should not be only confined in psychological regime. Instead of locating traumatic experience in psychological understanding, one must shift his or her attention to the social and cultural causes of trauma to understand the trauma in its full fledge. The any event which is not expected to happen in life terrifies a person and leaves the lasting inerasable hunting effect in the person's life. Allen claims, "Traumatic experiences can result in cynicism, bitterness, distrust, alienation, hatred, vengefulness, demoralization, loss of faith, and loss of hope. All these are ways we can be traumatized by terrifying events that ought not to happen" (5).

The call to see pain, plights, suffering, and wounds either existed in society or reproduced in writing and painting has originate a new pattern in the study and analyzing the literary

writing either authored by male or female. The commencement of using Trauma in understanding a literary text has strained a lot of ways for the researcher to complete their research. Susan Rubin Suleiman, in “Judith Herman and Contemporary Trauma Theory,” argues, “Trauma studies constitutes a huge field today, keeping whole armies of theorists- philosophers, literary scholars, and historians as well as clinicians- very busy” (276). The literary scholars have felt the importance of interpreting or reinterpreting the literary texts from the light of trauma to understand how the traumatic experience of the writers get reflected in their writings.

Many trauma theorists literary scholars has called for the consideration of interpreting literary writing as a way to release personal as well collective trauma. The study of trauma focuses on how the voice of a race, sex, group has been suppressed in modern society. More than this, the scholars and the texts on trauma studies focus on the outcome of traumatic experience, its sources, the behavioral and physiological changes in the victim of trauma as well as how the person’s trauma is being ‘worked through’ and ‘acted out. The work of trauma enquiry seems to disclose the hidden truth of suppression and its means applied by the contemporary society in a text.

The practices of a society demonstrate the ideologies set in the society get guided by the concept of ‘othering’. Hence, the constructed ideologies on the onset of ‘other’ help the main stream people to exercise their power recklessly on the marginalized people. The disadvantaged people find literature as the best tool to represent their miseries and pains which are the consequences of inauspicious treatment of their society .The inhuman behavior of privileged people has made the life of underprivileged people miserable and painful. So, the cultural scholars like Karyn Ball shout to diagnose the flawed of a society which marks scars on the body or identity of the disadvantaged group, sex, race, etc. Karyn Ball argues:

The “representation of difference,” or “otherness,” depending on one's perspective, became the contemporary catch expression for a cultural agenda to make visible the wrongs of a society that reproduced the freedom of white heterosexual men above all, at the same time that it sustained the ideological and material conditions for the social and economic marginalization of women, people of color, and gays and lesbians. (3)

Ball pursue a set of moral and political questions about the treatment of minorities and women in literature and critical theory, she describes in her trauma theory writings that, these marginalized ,disadvantage society has dominated and discriminated by vested and patriarchal society especially for woman, transgender group, gay and Lesbians as well as marginalized group. The categories of race, class, gender, and sexuality composed a mantra that regulated the praxis of those of us who allied ourselves with the ‘multiculturalist’ approach to literature, an approach that aimed to create the cultural and institutional conditions for greater social parity.

Janice Haaken elucidates the development of Trauma Studies as a result of social movements in “The Recovery of Memory, Fantasy, and Desire.” The world has witnessed so many social movements and every time the motif of social movements is to bring forth the plight, suffering, pain, dominance of a marginalized race, sex, gender, or groups. She observes, “The social movements of the 1960s and 1970s tackled the hegemonic ideal of a unified collective memory. It was and is a struggle against the domination of cultural memory. In this context, repression refers to the subjective experience of struggle against a ‘received truth’ in creating a new identity and narrative account of the past (118). Along with the social movements, the existing culture in the world gets challenged. The change in value of society tries to encompass all the people in the society under one umbrella though it faces many problems and threats from its own people who could not accept the norms of equality and

freedom for all. The new or revised form of culture opens a new sight to look into the life of people who are suppressed for a long time. The society and its institutions bring changes in its value. The academics from different disciplines develop different theories to unfold the plight, pain and suffering of the people in the society as they believe that the suppression of the people is in fact the result of adopted or practiced culture of the society. Anyway, the social movements in the world establish a platform for the social integration. The revised structure of society diverts its attention from the mainstream people to the marginalized gender group and sex. Then after, the scholars from different fields attempt to foreground the covered up the voice of the people who are the victim of social law and rules for a long time.

As per the requirement of the changed picture in the socio-cultural paradigm, trauma studies broaden its field from emotional understanding of trauma to understanding trauma from sociocultural aspects. The scholars of trauma studies like Karyn Ball read the emergence of trauma studies as a demanded means to see the suppressed traumatic experience of marginalized people in the contemporary society as the trauma is somehow cultural phenomenon than anything else. Ball reads Judith Herman's clinical research which has focused this structure of articulation reflects a similar conjunction of trauma and domination in the discourses of the social movements from the 1960s and 1970s. On the traumatic effects of incest and other forms of domestic abuse-traumas that are relatively common among women and girls, but only began to receive attention as public issues through the efforts of feminists to raise consciousness and mobilize society against specific forms of gender and sexual persecution. Their relative successes and failures paved the way for the institutionalization of the multiculturalist agenda in the 1980s and the emergence of trauma studies shortly thereafter.

The feminists investigate the trauma of female or marginalized groups either being

concealed in the societies or try to dig out the rooted causes of traumatic experience of a women depicted in film, writings, painting etc. by (re) reading the accessible texts authored either by male or female. The emergence of Trauma Studies at first handled and endorsed by the feminist writers as they want to attract the concentration of the societies of the World which are partly or fully constructed to apply male ideologies to make shocks on the body of woman. But in the later phase of trauma study, it pays equal attention in finding the causes of traumatic experience and its ways of managing without considering gender, sex, race etc.

The tremendous researches on trauma and its agents have identified the various events which postulate trauma in a person may be both natural and human made. A traumatic event is one that necessitates the shaping of the very distinctions upon which everyday existence depends; upon which people rely to continue their lives. In fact, the events or people that cause trauma are regarded as 'agents of trauma'. *American Psychiatric Association*, regarding agents of trauma, states:

With the military combat, violent personal assault (sexual assault, physical attack, robbery, mugging), being kidnapped, being taken hostage, terrorist attack, torture, incarceration as a prisoner of war or in a natural or manmade disasters, severe automobile accidents, concentration camp, or being diagnosed with a critical illness. For children, sexually traumatic events may include developmentally inappropriate sexual experiences without threatened or actual injury or violence. (Quoted in Thomas Degloma 113)

The agent of trauma forces the victim to alter his existing views on society, people and the world. Anything which creates a break in human psyche and leaves scars in the psyche of the person is taken as an agent of trauma.. The sudden impact of horrifying events may alter our confidence about our society. Duncan Bell reads trauma as the atrocious events which strike

people and leaves an effect in the lives of the people forever. Ball argues, “Trauma implies a breakdown of both meaning and trust- in a world that has been shattered, overturned. It encompasses ‘rapid, sudden, and radical’ impacts on the ‘body social’. Trauma occurs, then, when there is a break, a displacement, or disorganizing in orderly, taken for granted universe” (8). So, trauma may create hate, dissociation, distrust and disorder in the life of a traumatized person. Such kind of person may not come out from the grips of trauma and cannot live a normal life. The continuous reflection of traumatic events may paralyze the victim. So, it needs to be transferred, transmuted and represented.

The academics of trauma studies who initiate understanding trauma from psychological discipline to war neurosis divert their attention to dig out how trauma is represented in literary writing; autobiographical, fictional, or poetic. The personal as well as collective trauma has been evidenced through speaking, writing, making films etc. The regular effort paid by these scholars have made trauma studies as a major tool to identify the personal writings of the writers intertwined with their personal as well as collective trauma.

Trauma should not be concealed. Rather it must be made visible through the various available means. The suppression of the trauma may create psychological as well as physiological impairments in the life of trauma victim. The inerrable effects of trauma can be managed bringing it from past to present through speaking and writing .The only one way to manage either personal or collective trauma is to bring the traumatic experience through writing or speaking. So the academics of trauma studies suggest surfacing the trauma in any form. So, the scholars of trauma studies advise to write the traumatic experience if you cannot speak it to other. Giving the value of writing in trauma management, Jon G. Allen argues:

As discussed in relation to attachment, the core of trauma is feeling afraid and alone. The

lack of opportunity to obtain comforting and make sense of the events is a paramount contribution to traumatic experience. Talking about trauma entails shedding the shackles of secrecy and allowing someone to bear witness. Then you're no longer alone with the experience, and, albeit belatedly, you can experience some understanding, comforting, and reassurance. Thinking and talking about trauma in the context of a secure attachment relationship is the framework for mentalizing, making sense of experience, making the emotion more bearable, and opening up the possibility of healing and a more fulfilling life (95).

The importance of managing trauma through writing has drawn the concentration of the many academics who have been continuously working in the field of trauma management. Leigh Gillmore, in his analytical writing "Limit-Cases: Trauma, Self-Representation, and the Jurisdictions of Identity," writes to read the autobiographical writing as an outlet to the truth about the writer's life than a document documented to create false truth about the author:

Yet, autobiography's impediments to such working through consist of its almost legalistic definition of truth-telling, its anxiety about invention, and its preference for the literal and verifiable, even in the presence of some ambivalence about those criteria. Telling the story of one's life suggests a conversion of trauma's morbid contents into speech, and thereby, the prospect of working through trauma's hold on the subject. (129)

The assertion on the credibility in autobiographical writing foreshows the significance of locating traumatic experience of the author as an attempt to diminish his or her trauma. Though trauma can't be totally erased from the unconscious mind of the victim, its pain and long term effect can be minimized.

Nerea Arruti, in her writing "Trauma, Therapy and Representation: Theory and Critical

Reflection," quotes Primo Levi to highlight the role of trauma in creative writing. She visualizes the trauma as a driving force for writing as only the narrativization of the painful experience can alleviate its aftermath. She quotes Primo Levi in this way:

Certainly practice (in this case frequent re-evocation) keeps memories fresh and alive in the same manner in which a muscle often used remain efficient, but it is also true that a memory evoked too often, and expressed in the form of a story, tends to become fixed in a stereotype, in a form tested by experience, crystallized, perfected, adorned, installing itself in the place of the raw memory and growing at its expense. (1)

Her allegation on the need to know the writing in the light of trauma helps to read any literary text as a wishful effort to discharge personal trauma of the author. Even the victims speak about their trauma; their voice may be unheard or suppressed. As a result, the victims may shelter in writing as a best means to disclose their traumatic experience. The locked and critical sociocultural contexts may compel the trauma victims to contain their traumatic experience to cover its own flaws and weakness

So the trauma, known as a psychic injury which replicates only after revisiting the same kind of horrible life threatening events, has its history from the early existence of human being. The study of trauma does not get any remarkable attention before Charcot and Freud. The intertwined wound in human life from his early civilization gets attention around the end of nineteenth century .But Charcot and Freud start their study of trauma to understand trauma with 'hysteria'. But social and cultural movements immediately surged up after the great wars of the world make the trauma studies interdisciplinary. The political upheavals in the world widen its concept and compel it to focus the psychic behavior of armies who become victim in great wars of the world.

The extended field of trauma helps to relocate trauma in social, political and cultural contexts as trauma is the product of misbehavior of one group of people to another group of people in exercising the power. The writing helps the writer to locate his or her personal trauma in social, political, and cultural contexts. More than this, by locating personal trauma in social, political and cultural contexts, it helps writers to mix his or her trauma with others' or these texts help the writer as well as readers to understand the personal trauma is not merely personal rather it is collective. So, every text, especially auto (biographical) or auto (biography) either fiction form, represents the painful experience of trauma.

The writing, which is written to give some description on traumatic experience, becomes a means to speak 'unspeakable' event. The writer is not only permitted to disclose his or her trauma, but also takes benefit of writing trauma as writing and speaking of trauma will diminish the pain of trauma. In another sense, disclosing personal trauma through writing helps writer to manage their trauma then writing becomes their voice which has been suppressed for many years by society either using law vigorously or using violence. Another benefit of writing about personal trauma may cover a new way and hope where both perpetrator and victim can make their freedom in the society.

Chapter III:

Personal Trauma in *Mary, a Fiction*

Mary Wollstonecraft, a leading feminist, attempts to capture the existing social practices guided by the male ideology in her writing *Mary, a Fiction* to locate the social and cultural traumatic experience of a female. In course of exploring the trauma of her sex in her writings, she could not keep her story aside. Rather her own traumatic experience helps her to explore the

trauma and its sources for woman vividly in her writing *Mary, a Fiction*. The trustless father, the selfish relatives, the cunning husband, social institutions, and the biased socialization process for man and woman are responsible for making a trail of traumatic experience for her and her sex.

Mary Wollstonecraft's writing *Mary: A Fiction* depicts that the traumatic journey of a woman starts from her parents' home. A girl has to face the unjust behavior in her life from her family; especially from males. The designed and applied method for upbringing up a young females and girls in contemporary English society, Mary views, is responsible to have the traumatic experience at home before the girl is exposed to the social practices. The traumatic journey started from the birth family continues throughout the life of the female till her death. The traumatized body can never be free from the trauma. However, the intensity of trauma can be managed if favorable and healthy environment is provided for the trauma victims.

The exposition of the trauma through any means; writing, speaking or any other forms, helps the traumatized person to manage his or her trauma. The need of manifestation of trauma for its management has been highlighted by many trauma scholars. These scholars believes that trauma should not be concealed. Rather it must be made visible through the various available means. The suppression of the trauma may create psychological as well as physiological impairments in the life of trauma victim. The inerrable effects of trauma can be managed bringing it from past to present through speaking and writing .The only one way to manage either personal or collective trauma is to bring the traumatic experience through writing or speaking. So the academics of trauma studies suggest surfacing the trauma in any form. So, the scholars of trauma studies advise to write the traumatic experience if you cannot speak it to other. Giving the value of writing in trauma management, Jon G. Allen argues, "Converting the memory fragments into an organized narrative not only fosters self-understanding but also

enables you to talk to others about the traumatic experience. Talking to others will help with the construction of autobiographical memory. As discussed in relation to attachment, the core of trauma is feeling afraid and alone" (95).

The importance of managing trauma through writing has drawn the concentration of the many academics who have been continuously working in the field of trauma management. Leigh Gillmore, in his analytical writing "Limit-Cases: Trauma, Self-Representation, and the Jurisdictions of Identity," writes to read the autobiographical writing as an outlet to the truth about the writers life than a document documented to create false truth about the author:

Conventions about truth telling, salutary as they are, can be inimical to the ways in which some writers bring trauma stories into language. When the contest is waged over who can tell the truth, the risk of being accused of lying (or malingering, or inflating, or whining) threatens the writer into continued silence. In this scenario, the autobiographical project may swerve from the form of autobiography even as it embraces the project of self-representation. (129)

The assertion on the credibility in autobiographical writing foreshows the significance of locating experience of the author as an attempt to diminish his or her trauma. Though trauma can't be totally erased from the unconscious mind of the victim, its pain and long term effect can be minimized.

Mary Wollstonecraft revisits her childhood experiences of her home which is governed and run by her tyrannical father in *Mary, a Fiction*. Family, a word which carries the meaning of care, love, cooperation, and support among the members, becomes an agent of trauma for both Mary Wollstonecraft and her fictional heroine Mary. Though, Mary Wollstonecraft has fictionalized her childhood experience in *Mary, a Fiction*, she recollects the tyrannical and cruel

face of her father. The deliberate fictionalization of her family environment in *Mary, a Fiction* helps her to reveal her own as well as her mother's traumatic experiences which is the result of her father's indifference behavior to the female members of her family. Mary recollects her father's tyrannical face in *Mary, a Fiction* as:

Her husband was very tyrannical and passionate; indeed so very easily irritated when inebriated, that Mary was continually in dread lest he should frighten her mother to death; her sickness called forth all Mary's tenderness, and exercised her compassion so continually, that it became more than a match for self-love, and was the governing propensity of her heart through life. She was violent in her temper; but she saw her father's faults, and would weep when obliged to compare his temper with her own. (3)

Mary Wollstonecraft, who does not have healthy relationship with her father, has taken the help of her writing to show the cruel and tyrannical face of her father. When the memory of the tyranny of her father is revisited through her writings, she does not hesitate to assert that her father's rude and harsh rules in his family is the result of social and cultural gifts to male in patriarchal society.

Instead of having love from mother and protection and promotion from her father, Mary Wollstonecraft often becomes the victim of mother's prejudice and the father's malice. The victimization of attachment trauma in Mary Wollstonecraft's life is surfaced and resurfaced in her writings like *Mary: A Fiction*.

Mary Wollstonecraft gives a shape to her personal trauma in her master creation, *Mary: A Fiction*. The victim of male dominated society, Mary Wollstonecraft recalls her traumatic memory; memory of domestic violence and the death of her friend Fanny. Mary Wollstonecraft, who is overwhelmed by the domestic violence and the death of her dearest friend Fanny, uses

writing as a tool to preserve as well as manage her personal trauma resulting from the above mentioned two unforgettable events.

Mary: A Fiction, which carries the fractional biographical elements of Mary Wollstonecraft, basically accounts the traumatic experiences of domestic violence and death of her friend, Fanny Blood. These traumatic events disturb the mind of Wollstonecraft but she does not find any means and even a person to share them. But knowing the impact of these horrifying events in her 'self', Mary Wollstonecraft determines to disclose these traumatic experiences through her writing placing her heroine in the existing social and cultural situation in her writing. Her attempt to verbalize her trauma through her writing gets evident in *Mary: A Fiction*.

Trauma has been interpreted and reinterpreted making its space in psychology, physiology, neurology, or in other fields. The field and the demand may be different but the goal remains same. The different researchers' enthusiastic researches on trauma studies have revealed that the unacceptable performed behavior in social attachment or family attachment ideology seeds the trauma in the life of the person who is betrayed in the notion of attachment theory. Among the scholars of trauma studies, Jon G. Allen pays his attention in *Coping with Trauma* to find out the location of trauma in personal attachments. His research on trauma discovers the trauma takes place when there is disruption in attachment relationship. He sees the place of personal attachment in family and society. We, from our early life, find ourselves connected with others. But if the connection is grounded on cruelty, betrayal, and treachery, the attachment trauma makes its position among the people. Allen writes, "First, much trauma occurs in the context of attachment relationships. Second, trauma can disrupt your capacity to make use of attachment relationships. Third, attachment trauma earlier in life renders you more vulnerable to later trauma" (26). The traumatic memory of domestic violence gets partial reflection in *Mary: A*

Fiction as the domestic violence might be regarded as 'unspeakable' in her contemporary society.

The victim of trauma can't speak about personal traumatic experience as the person wants to forget it or the victim does not like to talk about it having the fear of social or cultural marginalization. These scholars believe that in a society some events which trigger the traumatic experience cannot be spoken because of social suppression. Especially the domestic violence, incest, sexual abuse etc are not supposed to disclose to others. Jane Kilby claims,

Originally, victim silence was figured in terms of social censorship: women remained silent because there was a taboo on speaking about sexual violence, not because they had lost the capacity to talk per se. It was an externally imposed silence. This conceptualization still holds for many, with victim silence still figuring as a consequence of social censorship manifest in any number forms, explicit and implicit. (3)

The roundabout of the personal traumatic experience of her childhood in her family in *Mary: A Fiction* can be taken as the compulsive nature of trauma to be surfaced. The social institutions and the existing culture of her society have legalized the domestic violence against the women. More than this, these social and cultural practices promote the use of violence against women. So, Mary Wollstonecraft knows that she will not get any justice against the domestic violence. However, the pain that she gets either being witness or being victim of domestic violence in her family leaves a scar in her mind forever. The incurable traumatic pain resulted from domestic violence has been narrated in *Mary: A Fiction* making her heroine Mary to be an witness of her father's tyranny over her mother or the tyrannical behavior of her father directed towards herself as both Mary and her mother are female.

Mary, who is a victim of meanness of her father, does not find any consoling words from her

mother either. Mary's mother, a hunted person of patriarchal rules and its institutions like marriage, does not show her interest to create a platform for her daughter for her liberation. Instead, she becomes the passive supporter of male ideology giving priority to her son and depriving her daughter from her love, affection, care, and assist. Mary Wollstonecraft observes: "Her sensibility prompted her to search for an object to love; on earth it was not to be found: her mother had often disappointed her, and the apparent partiality she showed to her brother gave her exquisite pain — produced a kind of habitual melancholy, led her into a fondness for reading tales of woe, and made her almost realize the fictitious distress" (3).

The parental response that Mary gets in *Mary: A Fiction* becomes the partial reflection of the family of Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Wollstonecraft has been subjected to the domestic violence in her early childhood age and she is stripped from education, love, affection, and care in her family. The suppressed memory of inerasable effect of domestic violence and the neglected self in her family are unfastened when she writes *Mary: A Fiction*. Pennel sketches the character of father of Mary Wollstonecraft in these words: "He used personal violence not only to his dogs and children, but even to his wife. Drink and unrestrained selfishness had utterly degraded him. Such was Mary's father" (14). Mary Wollstonecraft's childhood age becomes more traumatic when she is disregarded by her mother. The effect of father's violence, when gets added with the mother's inattention, makes Wollstonecraft's life miserable.

The victim of mistrust in family attachment relationship, Mary Wollstonecraft has been forced to have the unbearable experience of severe pain at the beginning ages of her life. Pennel points out the intense suffering of Mary Wollstonecraft: "Only too often the victim of her father's cruel fury, and at all times a sufferer because of her mother's theories, she had little chance for happiness during her childhood" (16). The impact of domestic violence and the

partiality of her mother frequently hunt her. Though she tries to conceal it to others, she could not because the traumatic memory can be suppressed for sometimes but cannot be erased from the memory.

The suppression of traumatic memory always is in a way of being surfaced. The memory of past can be repressed for some time but the reoccurrence of similar event in victim's life, witnessing the similar traumatic event happened in other's life or hearing other's story of traumatic event similar to that of victim takes the victim back to the past and compels him or her to suffer from his or her past traumatic experience. In this sense, understanding the memory of the victim of trauma plays important role to diagnose his or her affected present situation.

The traumatic memory, memory of violence, the untimely death of dearest one, rape, sexual violence, etc., becomes a creative force for the writers who find writing as a best means to explore the traumatic self and to preserve the history of violence upon particular sex, group, race, etc. Kim Lacy Rogers analyzes why writers unfold their life stories; stories of violence in "Lynching Stories". He explains racial violence in this way:

Memories [. . .] of racial violence have, however, left their mark on many narrators' life-stories. If the cumulative story of most of their lives has been that of survival, achievement, and community leadership, it is a story that has been constructed and reconstructed from often painful experiences. Thus, many narrators acknowledge the sometimes corrosive effects of remembering the segregated past, even as they assert that their experiences of fear and dread must be transmitted to younger generations. (125-26)

Although studies have suggested that memories of trauma that are forgotten and later recalled have a similar accuracy rate as trauma memories that had not been forgotten. Hartman, in "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies," had effectively translated his long critical career

into variations on the study of trauma. After reading Romantic Poetry, Hartman argued that trauma marks the disjunction between the event and the forever belated, incomplete understanding of the event. Figurative language is a form of ‘perpetual trooping’ around a primary experience that can never be captured. Whether it is Coleridge’s “Ancient Mariner” “compulsively repeating his tale, or William Blake’s private and cryptic mythology, or Wordsworth’s account, in “The Prelude” and “Tintern Abbey”, of how poetic subjectivity is created through wounding events. Hartman regards trauma theory as a key expository device.

Hartman had always emphasized that poetic discourse induced a proliferation of meanings; trauma was now the motivating “nature of the negative that provokes symbolic language” (540). In analyzing the traces of the disturbing knowledge of a person in his story, the act of remembering the horrifying event that has injured the person psychologically is also important. “The word remember itself suggests that memory creates the form, as well as evokes the fragments, of past events” (187) Claire Kahane writes. Supporting the idea of trauma memory, Kaplan argues:

In arguing that trauma is a special form of memory, they stated that in trauma the event has affect only, not meaning. It produces emotions [- - -] terror, fear, shock [- - -] but perhaps above all disruption of the normal feeling of comfort. The meaning-making one (in the sense of rational thought, cognitive processing), namely, the cerebral cortex, remains shut down because the affect is too much to be registered cognitively in the brain. (34)

Mary Wollstonecraft distastes marriage as marriage demands the submissive character of a wife as well as it guarantees a husband to treat his wife like an animal or like his property. The miscalculation of emotion of a woman in marriage, a social or cultural institution, and the

heartless treatment of a husband to his wife become the first agent of trauma for the wife as well as for the girl(s) of that family. The sufferer of her father's misconduct and a witness of his cruelty to her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft opines the marriage and its constructed characters are responsible for the 'wounds' of a woman. So, she tries to generalize the fate of women as to be exploited physically, emotionally, and financially by showing the sufferings of woman. The mastery on presenting the traumatic life of women in male favored society becomes vivid in her writings as those are the outcomes of her personal experiences either facing them personally or being a witness.

Mary Wollstonecraft recollects the traumatic self of women of her society when she narrates miserable condition of a woman in *Mary: A Fiction*. She writes: "Near her father's house lived a poor widow, who had been brought up in affluence, but reduced to great distress by the extravagance of her husband; he had destroyed his constitution while he spent his fortune; and dying, left his wife, and five small children, to live on a very scanty pittance" (4). Mary Wollstonecraft's act of remembering her past traumatic memory is in fact guided by her motif to resurface the ill face of society and its male drivers in her writings. The parallel and the side by side narration of the story of her mother and the stories of other women with her personal traumatic memory justify the fate of women of her society who have to pass through almost same kinds of traumatic events.

The restricted definition of trauma in psychological or physical field gets widened when the researchers from cultural studies pay much attention to relocate trauma as a result of the ever going tension between oppressors and oppressed. The scholars of cultural studies divert the trend of locating trauma reflected in psychic disorder, depression, hysteria etc to dig out the root cause of trauma that becomes the hindrance in social inclusion. So these scholars look into traumatic

events for a person or group of people as a barrier that has been the result of exercise of power from the main stream culture to deprive and prohibit the victim in accessing to social equality and freedom. Ron Eyerman sees the necessity to liberate the confined meaning of trauma as psychological or physical to cultural trauma. Eyerman asserts, 'Cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion' (2). The desperate attempt of relocating the personal as well as her sex's trauma in sociocultural context helps Mary Wollstonecraft to bring a shift in understanding trauma from either psychological or physiological perspective to social or cultural paradigm.

Memory or memorizing the past is crucial to understand the formation of self of an individual in his or her culture and society. The study on the identity formation at first keeps an individual and his or her present behavior as shaped by the past as its prime concern. The focus from understanding the individual's self- shifts to understanding individuals' 'selves' because an individual's memory is somehow interlinked with the memory of other.

Focusing on the specific value of interpreting memory in formation of self and its connection to understanding the collective memory, Ron Eyerman, in *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the formation of Afro- American identity*, argues, "Notions of collective identity built on this model, such as those within the collective behavior school, theorize a "loss of self" and the formation of new, collectively based, identities as the outcome of participation in forms of collective behavior like social movements" (5). The role of traumatic memory in creation of the 'self' helps a reader to identify the social and cultural institutions of a society longing to create the different but fixed identity of its male and female members. The malpractices of contemporary society to objectify a woman, hence making a woman property of a man, are

captured in writings of women. Among them, Mary Wollstonecraft pioneers.

Mary Wollstonecraft, whose childhood is marked by domestic violence, finds Fanny Blood in her life as a true friend with whom she can share her feelings, ideas, and so on. But the predestined fate of Mary Wollstonecraft to be traumatized gets fueled when she is blown by the untimely death of her friend, Fanny. The effect of death of her friend is so terrible for her that she almost becomes the patient of depression. As Mary Wollstonecraft does not find anyone to share the grief that has left an effaceable scar in her life, she takes the help of writing to release her trauma as well as to preserve her deep affection, compassion, and love for Fanny Blood.

Mary Wollstonecraft realizes that the death of Fanny has taken away so many things from her life. The long-lasting traumatic effect of the loss of Fanny is documented in one of her letters collected in Pennel's book in which she writes:

The loss of Fanny was sufficient of itself to have thrown a cloud over my brightest days; what effect, then, must it have when I am bereft of every other comfort? I have, too, many debts. I cannot think of remaining any longer in this house, the rent is so enormous; and where to go, without money or friends, who can point out? My eyes are very bad and my memory gone. (62-63)

Mary Wollstonecraft's traumatic memory of loss of her friend, Fanny, is recollected in *Mary: A Fiction*. Mary, the heroine of the fiction, finds Ann as an idle woman with whom Mary develops a strong obsession of friendship. The pleasure that Mary has in Ann's friendship turns out to be matter of worries as Ann health is deteriorating. The poor health of Ann becomes the primary concern of Mary as she loves her friend more than anyone else. Mary Wollstonecraft narrates:

Night after night Mary watched, and this excessive fatigue impaired her own health, but had a worse effect on Ann; though she constantly went to bed, she could not rest; a

number of uneasy thoughts obtruded themselves; and apprehensions about Mary, whom she loved as well as her exhausted heart could love, harassed her mind. After a sleepless, feverish night she had a violent fit of coughing, and burst a blood-vessel. The physician, who was in the house, was sent for, and when he left the patient, Mary, with an authoritative voice, insisted on knowing his real opinion. Reluctantly he gave it, that her friend was in a critical state; and if she passed the approaching winter in England, he imagined she would die in the spring; a season fatal to consumptive disorders. (11)

The calculation of the time of approaching death of Ann makes Mary restless as Mary Wollstonecraft becomes restless when she gets informed of approaching death of her dearest friend Fanny. The disturbed health of Fanny leaves an ineffaceable mark in the memory of Wollstonecraft. Mary Wollstonecraft has so deep compassion to Fanny that even the worse health of Fanny makes Mary Wollstonecraft a patient of depression. Pennel argues:

She loved Fanny Blood with a passion whose depth is beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. Her affection for her was the one romance of her youth, and she lavished upon it all the sweetness and tenderness, the enthusiasm and devotion of her nature, which make her seem to us lovable above all women. And now this friend, the best gift life had so far given her, was to be taken from her. She saw Fanny grow weaker and weaker day by day, and knew that she was powerless to avert the coming calamity. (55)

The powerless situation of Mary Wollstonecraft and her heroine makes them the passive viewers of their friends' death. Though the death has taken all the pains of Fanny and Ann with itself, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary are posted to live under the continuous traumatic memory of the death of their friends. The confession of Mary Wollstonecraft about the lasting effect of Fanny's

death delineates the traumatized 'self'. Pennel brings the words of Mary Wollstonecraft as:

When a warm heart has strong impressions," she wrote in a letter long years afterwards, "they are not to be effaced. Emotions become sentiments; and the imagination renders even transient sensations permanent, by fondly retracing them. I cannot without a thrill of delight recollect views I have seen, which are not to be forgotten, nor looks I have felt in every nerve, which I shall never more meet. The grave has closed over a dear friend, the friend of my youth; still she is present with me, and I hear her soft voice warbling as I stray over the heath. (24)

The traumatic memory of Fanny's death has been remembered in *Mary, a fiction*. The affected mind of Mary Wollstonecraft by the death of Fanny bursts out when she remembers her friend Fanny in Maria, a Fiction through the character Mary, who is also in grief of her friend's death.

The deserted figure of Mary in *Mary: A Fiction* resembles the deserted identity of Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Wollstonecraft who has been deserted on love, care, protection, trust and attention, etc. in her family finds Fanny in her life as a source of love and care. But the source of love dries when Fanny dies. The death of Fanny is so shocking to Mary Wollstonecraft that she assumes her world is deserted. The haunting memory of her home's domestic violence upon her and her mother, and the untimely and unexpected death of Fanny shake her world. It becomes too difficult for her to overcome from the past traumatic experiences of domestic violence and Fanny's death. She finds the writing as a best weapon while she is looking for an appropriate means to transform and manage her personal trauma which is directly or indirectly attached in her 'self' by her society.

Mary Wollstonecraft who has understood the value of writing trauma to get of rid from her past traumatic experience, becomes a means for her to speak 'unspeakable' event. When she

documents her personal trauma in her writings, she attempts to show the link of her trauma with the trauma of other women asserting women's fate in her society is designed by men of her society, not by women themselves. The helpless social position of women as she views is the primary reason to be traumatized behind the women's trauma.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

Interface between Personal Trauma and Collective Trauma in *Mary, a Fiction*

This research examines how Mary Wollstonecraft has transmuted her personal trauma in her fictional autobiographical writing *Mary: A Fiction*. Apart from identifying the personal trauma of Mary Wollstonecraft, this research examines the worth of narrating personal trauma through writing. In particular, I have examined *Mary: A Fiction* as a real-life story which discloses the trauma of Mary in particular and trauma of woman in general. Having examined of different critics and researchers on *Mary: A Fiction*, I have presented this text as the documentation of traumatic experiences of the writer. Reviewing insights from several trauma theorists, I have examined traumatic experience of Mary Wollstonecraft's novel.

The biography of Mary Wollstonecraft and the development of the character Mary in the novel, I have found, go parallel. The handling of the life story of Mary Wollstonecraft and her fictional character Mary has fostered the imposition of trauma in women's life begins from their early conscience of the world. The artful exposition of her personal trauma making as collective trauma in her fictional autobiographical writings *Mary: A Fiction* she tries to describes her own disturbed mind making complains about the dogmas, domination and discrimination of patriarchal society responsible for inculcating traumas in woman's life.

Mary Wollstonecraft, whose voice is unheard or ignored, does not have any other options than to write it. Through her writing, she does not only encompass her trauma but also shows the problem in treatment for a woman in patriarchal society. Her strong assertion on woman's trauma as an imposed and created turns out to be true for any researcher who diagnose her personal traumatic memory in her writing placing her writing in contemporary sociocultural milieu.

To show the offence of patriarchal society upon her body, Mary Wollstonecraft writes *Mary: A Fiction*. Mary, who has been the victim of attachment trauma, betrayal trauma, and emotional breakdown, narrates her traumatic past in her novels making her heroines Mary and her mouthpiece in *Mary: A Fiction* respectively. Like Mary, her fictional character Mary becomes the victims of domestic violence. Their early childhood life is full with miseries not because they are weak physically or psychologically but because of being the victims or witnessing other victims of patriarchal society. The impact of domestic violence is so disturbing that Mary has to be silent for many hours without being able to speak even a single word. The domestic violence has shattered her 'self' and has altered the meaning of family in her life. The altered and shattered identity of Mary has been refigured in her novel's heroine Mary. The tormented and shattered self of Mary searches various available shelters in her life but every time the granted shelter for protection and promotion of her life discloses itself as a perpetuator of trauma. Having the series of traumatic events and its effects on her body and mind, she makes an effort to exile herself from the world.

Realizing the injustice that she is doing to her life and her wounds, Mary Wollstonecraft comes with a determination to reveal the wrongs of men and her society. Instead of writing her personal trauma in autobiographical form of writing, she chooses a fictional form of writing to transmute her trauma. Mary Wollstonecraft knows that her primary goal to write her personal

trauma is to make her sex aware about the origin of traumas which is deeply rooted in prejudiced sociocultural constructed role for men and women. To achieve her goal, she selects fiction or novel as women in contemporary society promoted and restricted to read only novels or fictions.

Therefore, Mary Wollstonecraft narrates her traumatic experience in her novel *Mary: A Fiction*. While she is remembering her personal trauma in her novels through her heroine Mary, she blurs the demarcation between personal trauma and collective trauma when she remembers the trauma of her female acquaintances in her life and she finds traumatic events with their female associates but discover social mores, cultural values and political laws are major elements in perpetuating trauma in women's life.

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