

**Tribhuvan University**

**Feminist Bonding in *Mary* and *Maria*: Reading the Fiction of Mary**

**Wollstonecraft**

**A thesis submitted to**

**the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University**

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Masters of Arts in English**

**By**

**Prabhakar Prasad Shah**

**Central Department of English**

**Kirtipur, Kathmandu**

**May, 2008**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Mr. Prabhakar Prasad Shah has completed his/ her thesis entitled "Feminist Bonding in *Mary* and *Maria*: Reading the Fiction of Mary Wollstonecraft" under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2007-09-15 (A.D.) to 2008-06-11 (A.D.). I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Dr. Beerendra Pandey

Supervisor

Date: -----

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences**

This thesis entitled “Feminist Bonding in *Mary* and *Maria*: Reading the Fiction of Mary Wollstonecraft” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Prabhakar Prasad Shah has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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## **Abstract**

In both of the novel, *Mary* and *Maria*, Wollstonecraft shows the desire of exhibiting the misery and oppression, peculiar to women that arises out of these two novels. In my study, I have found that the heroines disregard the social norms and values. They do not give much importance to the patriarchal laws, values and customs. The characters like Maria and Jemima suffer heavily from the male dominated society but they do not give up their life and finally established themselves. On the other hand, the character like Mary flies from patriarchal society and shows how a woman can live and serve to whole community without any help from man.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction: Mary Wollstonecraft as a Novelist

Mary Wollstonecraft (27<sup>th</sup> April 1797) was an eighteenth century British writer, philosopher and feminist. During her brief career, she wrote novels, treatises, a travel narrative, a history of the French Revolution a conduct books and a children book. She was the second of seven children born to Edward Wollstonecraft and Elizabeth, nee Dickson. In 1790s, her father sold his prosperous weaving business to become a spendthrift, hard-drinking gentleman farmer. As a result her childhood and adolescence were marked by her father's improvidence, brutality and her mother's indifference. Her formal education was limited to several years at Yorkshshire Countryday school.

At the age of Nineteen, Mary Wollstonecraft left home to take a situation as companion with a rich tradesman's widow at Bath. After two years she returned home to nurse her sick mother who died after long sufferings, wholly dependent on her daughter Mary's constant care. Wollstonecraft played a similar maternal role for her sisters Everina and Eliza, throughout her life. She also made arrangement for her both brothers. Added to all this, she took upon herself the care of an orphan child.

Two friendships shaped Wollstonecraft's early life. The first was with Jane Arden in Baverley. The two frequently read books together and attended lectures presented by Arden's father, a self style philosopher and scientist. The second and more important friendship was with Fanny Blood introduced to Wollstonecraft by the clares, a couple in Hoxton who became parental figures to her. Wollstonecraft loved her friend very much. She remembered her loss ten years afterwards in the *Letters From Sweden and Norway*, where she wrote: "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 stay over the heath."

To support herself, she joined a day school at Ishington which was removed in a few month to Newington Green. But that was not enough to acquit herself from accumulated debts. She became a publisher for a hurriedly composed tract, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*. From there, she established herself as a writer. The little pamphlet seems also to have advanced her as a teacher. She was recommended as a governor to the daughters of Lord Kingsborough.

In her career, Wollstonecraft wrote theories and novels. Such as: *A Vindication of Rights of Man, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, Letters Written in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* and two novel *Mary, The Wrongs of Woman* or *Maria*. She introduces a new kind of thinking heroine into the established genre of the sentimental novel. The author belief that woman should aspire to control their own life is plotted into her both novel.

Wollstonecraft had the good fortune to associate with Joseph Johnson, a member of Radical Discenters. Johnson, engaged her as a reviewer for his new periodical *The Analytical Review*, and brought her together with like minded Dissenters. Wollstonecraft learned French and German. She translated texts most notably the *Importance of Religion Opinions* by Jacques Necker and *Elements of Morality* for the use of children by Christian Gothif Salzman.

Wollstonecraft first controversial work came into being when her friend Richard Price voiced his support of the French Revolution. She immediately entered the fray on the side of price with *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) which though poorly reasoned and organized, was the first many noted rebuttals to Burke. Wollstonecraft not only attacked monarchy and hereditary privilege but also the

language that Burke used to define and evaluate it. In a famous passage in the *Reflections*, Burke had lamented: "I had thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to average even a look that threatened her with insult" (60).

Edmund Burke had associated the beauty with weakness, femininity and the sublime with strength and masculinity. Wollstonecraft turns these definitions arguing that his theory turn the women readers into a weak citizen. By redefining the sublime and the beautiful terms first established by Burke himself in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756). She undermined his rhetoric as well as his argument.

In her arguments for republican virtue, Wollstonecraft invokes an emerging middle-class ethos in opposition to what she views as the vice-ridden aristocratic code of manners. Influenced by Enlightenment thinkers, she believed in progress and derides Burke for relying on tradition and custom. Wollstonecraft argues for rationality, pointing out the Burke "system would lead to the continuation of slavery, simply because it had an ancestral tradition." She describes an idyllic country life in which each family can have a farm that will just suit its needs. Wollstonecraft contrasts her utopian picture of society, drawn with what she says is genuine feeling to Burke's false feelings. Joseph Johnson comments on Wollstonecraft's first overtly political work, "it seems that in the act of writing the later portion of *Rights of Men* she discovered that would preoccupy her for the rest of her career" (62).

Similarly, her another work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is one of the earliest work of feminist philosophy. In it, Wollstonecraft argues that women ought to have an education commensurate with their position in society and then proceeds to redefine that position, claiming that women are essential to the nation

because they could educate their children and they could be companions to their husbands rather than mere wives. At the same time, she expressed doubt that the middleclass women whom she especially wished to rescue from the inferior position are not determined enough to rise above the structure of social conventions.

Wollstonecraft is intent in illustrating that women's deficient education have placed on them. She writes: "Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's Sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, seeks to adorn its prison."

Wollstonecraft call for equality between the sexes in particular areas of life such as morality. While she does not explicitly state that man and woman are equal. She claims that man and woman are equal in the eyes of God. Wollstonecraft does not argue that reason and feeling should act independently of each other, rather, she believes that they should inform each other.

In her large philosophical argument, Wollstonecraft also lays out a specific educational plan. In one of the chapter of the *Rights of Women* "on national education", she argues that all children should be sent to a country day school as well as given some education at home to inspire a love of home and domestic pleasure. She also criticized social institution and famous authors, particularly French social philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau who characterize women as being of lesser value.

Wollstonecraft private life was much less satisfactory. while publicity, she was an encouraging woman to become economically and emotional independent. Among feminist, Wollstonecraft life has received much more attention because of her unconventional and often tumultuous personal relationships. She was passionately involved with American businessmen Gilbert Imlay, during her Paris visit. Imlay was not interested to marry Wollstonecraft. She soon became pregnant and gave birth to

her first child, Fanny, naming her after her closest friend. Wollstonecraft continued to write avidly despite not only her pregnancy and the burdens of being a new mother alone in a foreign country but also the growing tumult of the French Revolution. She wrote a history of the early revolution, *An Historical and Moral View of The French Revolution*, which was published in London, in December 1794.

Imlay recognized Wollstonecraft as her wife to protect her from French authority, Imlay promised Wollstonecraft that he will return to her but his delays in writing letter, convinced her that he found another woman. Wollstonecraft returned to London seeking Imlay but he rejected her. In May 1795, she attempted to commit suicide but Imlay saved her life. Imlay sent her to Scandinavia as his business representative in the hope that new impressions would excite her authorial curiosity and restore new equilibrium. The resulting letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark based on a personal journal. Wollstonecraft wrote for Imlay represents her best work from an artistic point. She attempted suicide many times. Once she walked up and down about half and hour before jumping into the river Thames. A strange saw her jump and rescued her. She considered her suicide attempt deeply rational. She wrote after rescue:

I have only to lament, that, when the bitterness of death was past, I was inhumanly brought back to life and misery. But a fixed determination is not to be baffled by disappointment: nor will I allow that to be a frantic attempt, which was one of the calmest acts of reason. In this respect, I am only accountable to myself. Did I care for what is termed reputation, it by other circumstance that I should be dishonoured. (50)

Acknowledgement of her own vulnerability, recognition of the value of feelings, absence of polemics and a genuine interest in the unfamiliar surroundings all very much enhance her writing.

Wollstonecraft's novels criticize what she viewed as the patriarchal institution of marriage and its deterring effects on women. During her stay with Lord Kingsborough, she wrote her first novel *Mary*. The story was based on the memory of her own friendship for Fanny Blood. In the novel, the eponymous heroine is faced into a loveless marriage for economic reasons. She fulfills her desire for love and affection outside of marriage with two passionate romantic friendships, one with a woman and one with a man. In her last incomplete work, *The Wrongs of Woman or Maria*, Wollstonecraft returns to the genre of the sentimental novel in order to present her argument for gender equality. Despite its fictional frame, the story chronicles a variety of abuses heaped on females by bourgeois institutions. Imaginary events, full of autobiographical events cover a wide range of social classes with special focus on a heroine who disregards convention and is subjected to moral censure. Another section details the injustices suffered by a working class woman.

Neither of Wollstonecraft's novels depicts successful marriages, although she posits such relationships in the *Rights of Woman*. Both of Wollstonecraft's novels also critique the discourse of sensibility, a moral philosophy and aesthetic that had become popular at the end of the eighteenth century. *Mary* is itself a novel of sensibility and Wollstonecraft attempts to use the tropes of that genre to undermine sentimentalism. She believed, sentimentalism was damaging to women because it encouraged them to rely too much on their emotions. Female friendships are central to both of Wollstonecraft's novels but it is the friendship between Maria and Jemima, the servant, is the most historically significant. This friendship was based on a sympathetic bond

of motherhood between upper class woman and lower class woman. And it is one of the first movements in the history of feminist literature that hits at a cross class argument. Gradually, Wollstonecraft stopped thinking about Imlay and returned to her literary life. She involved herself with Joseph Johnson's circle in particular with William Godwin. Godwin and Wollstonecraft's unique courtship began slowly, but eventually became a passionate love affair. Both of them, soon decided to marry so that their child would be legitimate.

After Wollstonecraft marriage with Godwin, her reputation lay in tatters for a century. She was pilloried by writers like Maria Edgeworth, other novelist such as Mary Haysi, Charlottee Smith, Fanny Burney. Scholar like Virginia Sapiro makes clear that few read Wollstonecraft's work during the nineteenth century as her critics implied or stated that no self respecting woman would read her work. Only Lucretia Mott, an early American feminist seems to have been influenced by Wollstonecraft's work. According to Virginia Sapiro: "There is little indication that anyone who played a key role in women's history or feminism, other than Lucretia Mott, read Wollstonecraft's work seriously after her death until twentieth century" (51).

With the emergence of feminist criticism in academia in the 1960s and 1970s, Wollstonecraft work returned to prominence. Feminist like Virginia Woolf and Emma Goldman embraced Wollstonecraft's life story and celebrated her experiments in living. In the early 1970s, six biographies of Wollstonecraft were published that presented her passionate life in opposition to her radical and rationalist agenda. In the 1980s and 1990s, yet another image of Wollstonecraft emerged, one which described her much more a creature of her time. Scholars such as Claudia Johnson, Gary Kelly and Virginia Sapiro demonstrated the continuity between Wollstonecraft's thought and other important eighteenth century ideas regarding topics such as sensibility,

economics and political theory. Wollstonecraft's work has also had an effect on feminism outside the academy in recent years. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a feminist who is critics of Islam's dictates regarding women, cited the *Rights of Women* in her autobiography she wrote that she was "inspired by Mary Wollstonecraft, the pioneering feminist thinker who told women they had the same ability to reason as men did and deserved the same rights" (55).

On 30 August 1797, Wollstonecraft gave birth to her second daughter, Mary. Although the delivery seemed to go well initially, the placenta broke apart during the birth and became infected. After several days of agony, Wollstonecraft died of Septicemia on 10 Sept. Godwin was divested and he wrote to a friend: "I firmly believe, there does not exist her equal in the world. I know from experience we were formed to make each other happy. I have not expectation that I can now ever know happiness again" (42).

Wollstonecraft died at the age of thirty-eight. Her advocacy of women's equality and critiques of conventional femininity became increasingly important. Feminist often cite both her life and work as important influence. Today, Wollstonecraft is regarded as one of the founding feminist philosopher.

## Chapter Two

### Wollstonecraft's Criticism of Manners and Morals: Towards Feminism

Women have been excluded to marginality from the existing social structure. Monologic interpretation of society by men is still audible. Feminism is a movement for the full humanity of women. The main aim of feminist movement is to develop women's personalities and to make them aware about the precarious women's existence in a patriarchal society. It questions such long-standing dominant male heliocentric ideologies, patriarchal attitudes and male interpretation in literature. Feminism is concerned both with the representation of women in literature and with changing women's position in society by freeing them from oppressive restraints. Feminist are ultimately in pursuit of a more radical change, the creation of world in which one gender does not set the standard of human value. Arvonne S. Fraser defines feminist:

The object of feminism was to elevate the equal rights and human rights status of women of race, language or religion, in order to achieve equality with men in all fields of human interprise and to eliminate all discrimination against women." It therefore, studies, women as people who are either oppressed or suppressed or rejected the freedom of personal expression. (60)

Feminism and feminist criticism bloomed up as a self awakened movement in the 1960s. After two centuries struggle of women's used to be taken in a pejorative manner. So, women reacted against such automatic disparagement of their work by objecting first to traditional definitions of women handed down by great philosophers.

There are few attempts of raising alarm against patriarchy. However, the notable books such as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of The Rights of Woman*



(1792) and some of her letters, Prissilla Bell's *Reflection on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (1798), Mare Anne Radcliff's *The Female Advocate* (1792), Mary Lamb's *In a Letter From Semprenia to the British Lady's Magazine* and many more other writer gave voice for the women.

Manners and morals are so nearly allied that they have often been confounded, ever. Though the former should only be the natural reflection of the latter. Yet when various causes have produced factitious and corrupt manners, which are very early caught, morality becomes an empty name. The personal reserve, and sacred respect for cleanliness and delicacy in domestic life which women almost despise as the great pillars of modesty. But far from despising them, they should labour to improve the morals of their fellow- citizens, by teachings men, not only to respect modesty in women, but to acquire it themselves, as the only way to merit their esteem. If women are not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue. Truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice. And how can women be expected to co- operate unless she know why she ought to be virtues ? unless freedom strengthen her reason till she comprehend her duty, and see in what manner it is connected with her real good.

In this world, Men is contend with their own freedom and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness so it is unjust and inconsistent to subjugate women. Who made men the exclusive judge if women partake with him the gift of reason. Women are denied all civil and political rights, to remain in the families grouping in dark. They are only made to acquire personal accomplishments. Whole men seek for pleasure in variety and faithless husbands make faithless wives. Many more books were written on this subject and about women education. But if we

observe the behavior of women towards the society than we found that neglected education of women are the grand sources of their misery. Women are rendered weak and wretched by a variety of concurring causes, originating from one hasty conclusion. The conduct and manners of women have evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state. For they are like flowers which are planted into a rich soil, strength and usefulness are scarified to beauty. The flaunting leaves, after heaving pleased a fastidious eye, faded, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity. The cause of this barren blooming is the false system of education, gathered from the book written on this subject by men who considers females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers. Therefore the books written on female rights and manners, particularly written for the improvement must not be overlooked. It is observable that female in point of strength is in general inferior to the male. This is the law of nature but it doesn't appear to be suspended or abrogated in favor of women. But men are not content with this natural prominence, men endeavor to sink women still lower merely to render them alluring object for a movement. And women who are intoxicated by such adoration, do not seek to obtain a durable interest in their hearts. Here Wollstonecraft seems to persuade in her book *A Vindication of Rights of Woman*:

Women to endeavor to acquire strength, both of mind and body and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous of pity and the kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt. (6)

She wishes to show that elegance is inferior to virtue, that the first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex, and the secondary views should be brought to this simple touchstone. Women education has been lately attended in the society, yet they are still reckoned a frivolous sex and ridiculed or pitied by writers who endeavor by satire or instruction to improve them. Male writers spend their mind to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves. The only way women can rise in the world by marriage and this desire made women mere animals. When they marry, they act as children may be expected to act. Women because they have not been led to consider the knowledge of their duty as the one thing necessary to know, or to live in the present moment by the discharge of it, are very anxious to peep into futurity to learn what they have to expect to render life interesting and to break the vacuum of ignorance. Women are made weak and only taught to look for happiness in love adopt metaphysical notions respecting the passion which lead them shamefully to neglect the duties of life. Male novelists only mention about meretricious scenes, all retold in a sentimental jargon which equally tend to corrupt the taste and draw the heart aside from its daily duties. And the mighty business of female life is to please and restrained from entering into more important concerns by political and civil oppression. Sentiments become events and reflection deepens what it should and would have effaced if the understanding had been allowed to take a wider range.

The reading of novels makes women and particularly ladies of fusion, very fond of using strong expression and superlatives on conversations. Though the dissipated artificial life which they lead prevents their cherishing any strong legitimate passion, the language of passion in affected tones slips for ever from their glib tongues and every trifle produces those phosphoric burst which only

mimic in the dark the flame of passion. In Wollstonecraft's day various factors had modified the harsh literary view of women. The first was the abundance of female novelists like Fanny Bruneau, Charlotte Smith, Clara Reeve and Elizabeth Inchbald who presented heroines of moral if not intellectual stature. A second factor was the growth of humanitarian and enlightened sentiments that drew attention to the poor, the weak, and the despised, all three categories included women. Sentimental pictures taught and moved to tears if possible, they appealed to female readers, constantly told to their association with heart and they often included women in various pictures of distress. A third factor was the existence of the Bluestockings. This group of women, which included Hannah More, Elizabeth Carter, Elizabeth Montagu, and Hester Chapone gained some position in a male world through combining piety, seriousness and learning. But they wanted this position neither improved for themselves nor extended to others. In all the essential ideas on women, Wollstonecraft and Macaulay agree on politics, religion and pedagogy. Both feel that the tyranny of men harms the mind and character of women, just as the tyranny of government scars a people. Both stress the value of learning for girls, believing that it contributes to rather than destroys piety and virtue.

Catherine Macaulay's *Letters on Education* published in 1790, deeply influenced Wollstonecraft, who called Macaulay, "the woman of the great abilities, undoubtedly, that this country has ever produced. The scenes of social life has given rise to much false speculation on the natural qualities of female mind. Macaulay says:

The principles and nature of virtue, which is never properly explained to boys is kept quite a mystery to girls. They are told indeed that they must abstain from those vices which are contrary to their personal

happiness or they will be regarded as criminals, both by God and man. (qtd. in Wollstonecraft 249)

Locke and Wollstonecraft also agree on some point, the two connect moral and intellectual education. They vigorously support coeducation on the grounds that separating the sexes during school years leads to a false peculiarly female standard for women. For all these writers, virtue is a sexual and should be cultivated by men and women alike. They see the regeneration of society dependent on its treatment of women, and they believe together subtly and viciously what is not given to them as their right. The French revolutionaries destroyed most of the educational system of old regime and tried to replace it with one more suitable for a new democratic and secular society. Constitution put this positively regarding education in its proposal of "public instruction formal citizens". The rights of men including their right to education clearly preoccupied the revolutionaries. Only a minority of thinkers considered extending these rights of women. In the early years of revolution, some women exclaimed in pamphlets and petitions to the assembly at the many peculiar grievances of their sex. They demanded for example, that men be excluded from certain jobs so that women would have the right to work and would not be forced into idleness and prostitution. One feminist journal even suggested that women should be represented in the assembly and that they should have sexual freedom equivalent to men's. Women established clubs in which they announced their ideas and fashioned their ideas on equality. But no single adequate document of any length came out of the revolution to express the unique feminist position and desires.

Olympia de Gouges based her feminist ideas on the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, recently placed as preface to the constitution of 1791.

Although its proposals had seemed so universal in their application,

she showed how women were excluded from them, how privilege had been retained for men, and equality denied to women. (2)

Wollstonecraft had a larger polemical aim than to refute a single author but certainly much of her argument arose from her scorn of Sophie, whom Rousseau held up as exemplary for womankind. So the rights of women in great part responds to Rousseau's views with whose general ideas on education she seemed so much in argument. Wollstonecraft quotes Rousseau at length in her book, expressing her outrage at his opinion of women as totally subordinate to men and his educational scheme that would fit females only for such a role. She emphasizes virtue and reason throughout in an attempt to correct Rousseau's view that young women need only cultivate those qualities that make them alluring to men. And Wollstonecraft summarizes Rousseau's argument from his *Emile* is that women ought to be weak and passive because they are physically weaker than men, they should be subordinate to men, to whom they must render themselves agreeable. To compensate for this dependence and inferiority, women have been given the facility to excite desire, though which men are made dependent. Female weakness enhances desirability and women are therefore quite right to glory in it. Wollstonecraft asserts the rights of women, especially to an education that would render them beings worthy of respect or at least immune to prejudice. Repeatedly, she asserts not on the equality of the sexes but the rights of women to prove this through increased opportunities and independence. With education suitable for their class, women would be able to support themselves adequately or fulfill themselves in their traditional role of wife and mother. Properly educated, they could prove themselves intellectually and morally equal to men. The need for female education was a need

also of society as a whole. Unless the intellectual condition of women improved, there could be no further social advance for humanity.

Wollstonecraft's figure of the woman keeps on disappearing, she resists stable definition, a definition without overflow, without boundary crossings, the kind of feminine identity that a political manifesto written in the name of women would seem to command. She wants her rational middle class heroines to practice renunciation for different reasons, and without seeming to perform either for the sake of public opinion or for their own self complacency. Indeed, a form of renunciation is necessary to the logic of Wollstonecraft's argument from very first page of her discourse. In Wollstonecraft's text aristocratic anorexia seems to signify female subjugation, middle-class asceticism promises a transcendence of embodiment, and even individual liberation in the name of reason. She embraces a version of this hyper intellectual transcendence of corporeality, the notion that bourgeois women should cultivate delicacy, understood as control of appetite and other bodily functions, while developing their capacity for reason. Wollstonecraft repeatedly warns women not to be intoxicated by men's sexual advances, homage from men is described as intoxicating and so is indulgence in pleasure. The danger of male appetite to women is thus textually associated with incontinence and also with infection by ingestion. She quotes on women's writing and says- "The problematic relation between women's bodies and women's works is what disarticulates the text of liberal feminism from its very beginnings" (299). Many feminist scholars have unfortunately misrepresented Wollstonecraft as a radical thinker who calls for the total transformation of family life and complete rejection of any hierarchy between family members. Andrew McCune and Claudia Johnson, extrapolate from *Maria or The Wrongs of Woman*, without convincing evidence that Wollstonecraft challenges the 'heteronormative' family and promotes 'proto-lesbian vision of familial and communal

life. "Janet Todd, presents a skewed view of Wollstonecraft's philosophy of the family by suggesting that she ultimately rejects the 'claustrophobic nuclear family unit' in favour of single motherhood and all-female support network." (85)

Laurie Langbauer miscasts Wollstonecraft as a gynocentric feminist whose vision of ideal family puts mothers and daughters first and down plays the role of fathers and sons. Wollstonecraft's vision of the egalitarian transformation of the family doesn't require the destruction of the private family, the heterosexual love the denial of religious ethics, the subversion of parental authority, the neglect of crucial role that fathers play in raising and caring for children or in attention to the needs of boys in favor of caring for the needs of girls. But 19<sup>th</sup> c, scholar Emma Rauschenbush-clough whose doctoral dissertation 'A Study of Mary Wollstonecraft and *The Rights of Woman*, provided the first serious academic study of the second vindication. Ranschenbush-clough accurately described "the author of *The Rights of Women* as a religiously motivated and morally conservative thinker whose vision of the egalitarian reform of the family and female education was decidedly moderate" (86). The traditional patriarchal family with its warped power struggles between husband and wife, brothers and sister, prevents the growth of natural affections and prevents them from developing into the virtues that maintain a stable human society. In the novel *Mary*, Wollstonecraft uses Mary's unhappy childhood and adult homes to illustrate why the traditional patriarchal family fails to serve as a little platoon for the fostering to the affection that form the basis of the moral, social and political virtues.

Wollstonecraft no longer views the traditional family as inescapable cave of moral corruption and hierarchical oppression. The traditional family though corrupt, can be transcended through legal and educational reform. She stresses to reform the unjust, patriarchal laws regulating marriage, property and inheritance that have



institutionalized the traditional, hierarchical family and its legacy of sex and class based oppression.

She criticizes the same pattern of corrupt relationships in the traditional, patriarchal family tyrannical, wastrel fathers, superficial, deluded, weak-willed mother, adulterous spouses, dominating, greedy elder brothers and vulnerable brothers deceived and destroyed by false ideals of love and marriage. She expresses her fear for the girls who are entering the world without fixed principles of reason and religion to guide their actions, especially in the profound matters of love, marriage and motherhood. And the most important lesson should the daughters have is a humble sense of their infirmities combined with a deep gratitude for Christ atonement for their sins. *A Vindication of The Rights of Women* is Wollstonecraft's response to Rousseau's *Emile*. Rousseau thinks like Plato that the equal treatment of boys and girls in matters of physical education will lead to the destruction of the traditional family. But Wollstonecraft attacked him and says equal physical education will lead to the positive transformation of the family. In *A Vindication of Rights of Women* she designs an educational system that will produce women strong in body, mind and character who are capable of performing the roles of spouse, parent and citizens as the equals of men. She also blames Burke for perpetuating the stereotype of women as helpless, irrational creatures incapable of genuine morality whose only purpose is to please men with their beauty. She says since the soul has no sex, men and women thus share the same capacity for both reason and affection.

Wollstonecraft in *The Wrongs of Women*, laments the injustice of an economic system that forces poor women to nurse other women's babies, while paying other poor women to nurse their own. And she shows how fathers drive away their wives and children to avoid the expense. She views the traditional patriarchal family and the corrupt society as a prison that is difficult to escape. So she however, contends that

the traditional patriarchal family is corrupt and incapable of steering these affection and virtue in their most pure and potent form.

Priscilla Wakefield says there are many branches of science as well as useful occupations in which women may employ their time and their talents beneficially to themselves and to the community without destroying the peculiar characteristics of their sex or exceeding the most exact limits of modesty and decorum:

wakefield's one work for adults, *Reflection on the Present Condition of the female Sex*, published in 1798, vigorously argues for better education and more liberal employment opportunities for women at a time when their vocations were limited to domestic situations as servants, nurses, governess, housekeepers or slightly more independent enterprises as school mistresses, seamstresses and shopkeepers. (qtd. in Damrosch 258).

Mary Anne Radcliffe was bitterly frustrated at finding men monopolizing the respectable trades for women, shutting them out and forcing the most desperate into beggary and prostitution. She began *The Female Advocate in 1792*, her full title announcing a debt to Wollstonecraft, and published in 1799. She does assail the vagrant Act's punishment of begging and defends many prostitutes as not morally culpable but economically desperate.

She distinguishes those innocents from the guilty and discriminates in her proposed remedies between the well bred female who is reduced by the unseen hand of fate and the very poor an abject, where birth has deprived them of knowledge of refinement or delicacy.

She praises Wollstonecraft and says: "All women possess not the Amazonian spirit of a Wollstonecraft. But indeed, unmerited oppression is sometimes a sufficient

apology for their throwing off the gentle grab a female and assuming some more masculine appearance" (qtd. in Damrosch 263).

In a letter from 'Semprenia' to *The British Lady's Magazine* published in April 1, 1815. Mary Lamb urged women of leisure not to do needle work as recreation, not only is this mentally debilitating labor but it usurps women needing to earn their living thus. The argument is stamped both with her own experience and the influence of Wollstonecraft who had also made her living by needlework. She further criticizes Men's irrational behavior and says: "In how many ways is a good woman employed in thought or action through the day in order that her good man may be enabled to feel his leisure hours real substantial holiday and perfect respite from the cares of business" (qtd. in Damrosch 277).

Summing up, Wollstonecraft sees the suppression of women at the hands of men in the imperative of innocence that the patriarchy has imposed upon men. Because women are kept under innocence, they have disadvantage vis-a-vis men. It is the same innocence that lies at the heart of their romantic nature which makes them being duped. Wollstonecraft sees a way out of it in the education of women. Rationality achieved through education will guard them against their own sentimentality. My analysis of her novel in the next chapters will follow along these lines.

## Chapter Three

### Feminist Strains in *Mary* and *Maria*

Wollstonecraft's novel *Mary*, a fiction, subsume narrative form of theorizing of the female subject of Enlightenment patriarchy. Mary is as good as dead by the end of their narrative struggles, and these narrative represent above all else expressive failure in gestures of gothic sensibility. The negative virtue that Wollstonecraft had condemned in *Mary* reoccur in this portrait of female neglect and education. In the novel, Mary is a younger child who feels lighted by the mother's extravagant partiality to the older boy once again the father is a despot and the mother is a paragon of 'passive obedience'. And once again the daughter is schooled in the arts of continual restraint in the most trivial matters, unconditional submission to order.

Her children were left in the nursery; and when Mary the little blushing girl, appeared, she would send the awkward this way. To own the truth, she was awakened enough in a house without any play-mates, for her brother had been sent to school, and she scarcely knew how to employ herself: he would ramble about the garden, admire the flowers and play with the dogs. (5)

Mary, in her childhood never gets love and affection of her parents. She was considered an awkward things in her own house. She rambles in the house without any companions. Her brother had been given all the comforts. But on her part, every comforts have been denied. She was not send to any school and ramble around the garden. She found her pleasure in flower and play with dogs. Nature became a friend for her where she often spends her time and quest about human misery.

Wollstonecraft raises deep struggles between female-embodied subjectivity and enlightenment reason to become a symptomatic disturbance. Her novel *Mary*

centers on the primary apprehension of femininity as a social and educational construct rather than a natural condition of woman.

She had besides another reason, she did not wish to have a fine tall girl brought forward into notice as her daughters. She still expected to recover and figure in the gay world. Her husband was tyrannical and passionate: indeed so very easily irritated when irritated that Mary was continually dread lest he should frighten her mother to death. (5)

There was not mutual understanding between Mary's parents. Her mother gave much importance to her physical appearance rather than her family. She dislikes her daughter, Mary because she reminds her of her own age. She gave much importance to her status among her friends than her daughter. On the other hand, Mary's father was a cruel person. He always exclaimed against female accomplishments. All these activities frightened Mary and she was always worried about her mother.

Wollstonecraft uses Mary's unhappy childhood and adult homes to illustrate why the traditional patriarchy fails to serve as a little platoon for the fostering of the affections that forms the basis of moral, social and political virtues. If Mary had been free to marry the man 'She loved instead of submitting to an arranged marriage for the sake of maintaining the family estate in the male line, the love shared in her family would have inspired all their kin, but toward ever-widening circles of society.

Engrossed by the scene of misery she had been witness to, she walked silently by his side, when he roused her out of her reverie by telling her that in all likelihood her mother had not many hours to live; and before she could return any answer, informed her that they had both determined to marry her to Charles, his friend's son; he added, the ceremony was to be performed directly, that her mother might be

witness of it; for such a desire she had expressed with childish eagerness. (11)

Mary was unaware about marriage. She has started learning about human pain in the selfish world. Her mother died. Mary could get her mother affection for only some hours. She was not even asked her wish about marriage. She was tied with an unknown man to settle down an issue. Mary, here became an object for her father's selfishness and her mother's last wish.

Birth like marriage in *Mary* is connected with death in ways that reveal the author's intense anxiety and ambivalence about death dealing properties of female sexuality. In the novel, Mary was not free to express her own desire before her father. She came towards such circumstances where she compromised her desire: "The clergyman came into road the service for the sick and afterwards the marriage ceremony was promised: Mary stood like a statue of Despair, and pronounced the awful vow without thinking of it" (12).

Wollstonecraft portrays Mary's father's characters as a tyrant who did not ask his daughter's wish. He made his wife die on her bed. And, here, he also threw her daughter in the same situation.

Wollstonecraft's first educational treatise, supports the use of religious and moral education to give women the strength of character and Christian faith to cope with the same incapable problem of family life and the sinful human condition as the fictional Mary confronted. "Her anxiety led her to study physic and for sometime she only read books of that cast and this knowledge, litterly speaking, enabled in vanity and vexation of spirity as it enabled her to forsee what she could not prevent" (14).

Gradually, Mary's thought and judgment both improves. She started taking interest in music, drawing and reading. When her friend was in serious condition, she

forget everything and devoted herself for her friend. Her willingness to get her friend cured made her to study about medicine. She read all the books related with that cast.

Wollstonecraft was drawn to writing of fictions about women named Mary largely as a form of self-talk, a displaced therapeutic mechanism that allowed her to replay and re-shape traumatic in her own life. 'Mary' the central character in the novel is a passive character from the beginning. She never opposed anyone of the action of her father and mother from her childhood. She accepted her marriage with an unknown person for her mother willingness. She went out from her house to escape from husband. She can not see her friend in trouble. In her journey, she got acquainted with a male character Henry. They both became close to each other.

He had called her his dear girl, the words might have fallen from him by accident; but they did not fall to the ground. My child ! His child, what an association of ideas ! If I had had such a father ! she could not dwell on thoughts, the wishes which oftruted themselves. Her mind was unhinged and passion unperceived filled her whole soul. Lost in walking dreams, she considered and reconsidered Henry's account of himself; till she actually thought she would tell Ann-a bitter and aloud she begged forgiveness of her. (25)

It can be seen from these thoughts of Mary that she is turn in between two opposite thought. On the one side, she is very much pleased with Henry remarks. The word 'my child' has enlivened her mind. While on the other, the memory of her friend Ann roused her out of reverie. She begged forgiveness with her friend for her pleasant thinking on her death. For a while, the remembrance off Ann banished her regret at parting with Henry though his pale figure pressed on her sight. She also remembers her friend while parting from the ship.

My poor Ann! thought Mary, 'along this road we came, and near this spot you called me your gardian angel- and Now I leave thee here! ah, I don't... thy spirit is not confined to its moldering tenement ! Tell me, thou soul of her I love, tell me, ah ! whither art thou fled? Ann occupied her until they reached the ship. (30)

She thought about her friend's activities and her own movement in the ship. Ann had given her whole life to Mary. Mary was a guardian for her. She addresses to Ann's soul and ask with her about love.

Wollstonecraft's theological beliefs force behind plot and message of *Mary*, a fiction. The novel would be more aptly labeled a spiritual journey than romance. Mary, her fictional counterpart upholds her hopes for happiness and justice in the life hereafter rather than in this world. She met Ann's mother and told the unfortunate mother about her daughter's loss. Mary also relieved Ann's family from the present necessities. She wandered about the village and relieved the poor. It was only employment that eased her aching. She became more intimate with misery that rises from poverty and the want of education.

Mary learns to see herself from a young age as a part of God's family, rather than corrupt families into which she has been born and married. Parental neglect leads Mary to develop a religious faith and sensibility. She began to consider the first cause formed just notions of his attitudes and in particular dwelt on his wisdom and goodness. Wherever, she went, she treated with kindness to all the surroundings of people.

For sometime she had observed, that she was no more treated with the same respect as formely; her favors were forgotten when no more expected. This ingratitude hurt her as did a similar instance in woman



who came out of the ship. Mary had hither to support her: as her finances were growing low. She hinted to her that she ought to try to earn her own subitances; that woman in turn loaded her with abuse.

(35)

Mary helped a poor family and recovered them out of their misery. She procured the family every comfort. She finds herself in danger while helping the woman. But latter on, the woman started asking with Mary for every comforts. She was not treated well when she visited her house.

Mary shows her motherly affections towards Henry at the end. She gave him motherly affection when her mother requested her to spend some days with him.

She would boast her resighation- yet catch eagerly at the last ray of hope. While he slept she would support his pillow, and rest on her head where she could feel his breath. She loved him better than herself. She could not pray for his recovery- she could only say. The will of Heaven be done. (44)

Mary has faith on God. She nursed Henry and tried to soften the pains, she could not remove. She became a pillow for Henry till his end of life. She wished for his recovery though she know not. Mary is portrayed as symbol of love till the end of the play. At the end, she returned to her house in the country, established manufactories and the estate into small farms. She devoted herself in helping the sick, supporting the old and also educating the young.

The narrative is strikingly two staged with a central transitional section based in Lisbon. It begins as a story of Mary's development from birth, the death of her parents, and her relationship with Ann until Ann's death. It ends as a story of her

relationship with Henry until his death and the expectation of Mary's death as the possible resolution to her impossible desire.

In the novel *The Wrongs of Woman or Maria*, Wollstonecraft would appear to have been paralyzed or in the grip of a compulsion that allowed her only to imagine various scenarios of traumatic disaster for her heroine. The novel is intended to be read and understood as both personally therapeutic and at the same time historically significant for what it reveals about women's lives under patriarchy.

Wollstonecraft also revealed that for women of all classes, life really was the way it was depicted in sentimental fiction, a series of insults, humiliation, deprivations, beatings and fatal or near fatal disasters. Many of the critics have noticed it. Critics like, Mitzi Meyers has called the novel.

A feminist anatomy of socioeconomic abuses and its audience indeed encounters everything from domestic violence to sexual abuse from the legal inequities that make married women subject to their husbands in all things to the lack of education and economic opportunities that keep the unmarried and poor subject to bodily labour and social disgrace.

(qtd. in Wollstonecraft 76)

Wollstonecraft believes that the mind is its own realm and that one lives ultimately within the circumferences of one's psyche. Maria's psyche, however, is ruptured by the brutal treatment she has received from her husband. Her baby's face floats always before her eyes. But she is not aware that the child is already dead.

Abodes of horror have frequently been described and castles, filled with spectres and chimeras, conjured up by the magic spell of genius to borrow the soul and dreams are made of what were they to the

mansion of despair, in one corner of which Maria endeavouring to recall her scattered thoughts. (11)

In the opening of the novel, Maria is in madhouse. She has been imprisoned into the cell. The cell looks like a ghost house. It seems the magic spell of genius has conjured up to harrow the soul and absorb the wondering soul. But in spite of all this, Maria is lost in her own thoughts in one corner of the prison.

Wollstonecraft appears to be gently mocking her heroine at the same time and rationalizing her belly. After six weeks in a mad house, Maria becomes aware of another inhabitant. A man in a adjacent cell, a reader of Dryden and Milton who makes intelligent marginal annotation in the very volumes that Maria then pursues. This man very quickly becomes the unknowing recipient of Maria's pent-up emotions. Maria begins to construct an ideal lover in her image: "how difficult it was for women to avoid growing romantic, who have not active duties or pursuits" (137).

Maria is so bored that she falls in love as a from distraction. She finds herself inventing a romantic hero who will share her sentiments and free her from the madhouse in which he also has been immured. Wollstonecraft's ambivalence was her view that in the current state of society, there was always the danger that Women's sensibility was more likely to undermine the strengthen virtue by encouraging romantic, wavering feelings rather than strong preserving passions.

The most pressing question here is the narrator's attitude towards Maria's romantic expectations. The rhetoric of imprisonment suggests that at the very least, Wollstonecraft understands such wishes to originate in deprivation and confinement. An adjacent passage, moreover, underscores the insight that romantic expectations are actually projections of unanswered desires. Having had to struggle with the vices of mankind. The narrator continues:

Maria's imagination found repose in portraying the possible virtue the world might contain. Pygmalion formed an ivory maid, and longer for an informing soul. She, on the contrary, combined all the qualities of a hero's mind and fate presented a statue in which she might enshrine them. (170)

The statue is Maria's fellow prisoner, Henry Dardford, who soon emerges from featureless obscurity to become a virtue force in Maria's drama. The narrator remains curiously ambivalent about the precise nature of his role. Her description of Maria's emotional surrender, for example culminates in a question which seems to announce the narrator's shrewd awareness that romantic expectations often don't correspond to real possibilities.

Wollstonecraft's dilemma is epitomized by the uncertain perspective of the novel's omniscient narrator. In one of the chapters, for example, which traces Maria's emotional surrender to a fellow inmate, the narrator moves from judgment observer to unreflecting sympathizer. Maria has been imprisoned in a madhouse so that her avaricious husband can gain control of the independent fortunes of both Maria and their infant daughter. At the beginning of the chapter, the narrative voice comments authoritatively on Maria's situation. This voice observes:

Pity and the forlorn seriousness of adversity, have both been considered as dispositions favourable to love, while satirical writers have attributed the propensity to the relaxing effects of witness: what chance then had Maria of escaping when petty sorrow and solitude all conspired to soften her mind, and nourish romantic wishes, and form a natural progress, romantic expectations. (167)

The language of this passage suggests that the narrator shares Maria's romantic wishes. Maria wants to escape from her sorrowful situation. Her romantic wishes shows her desire to escape from pity and sorrowful condition. Her growing interest in her fellow inmate Dardford gives her solace from her painful past.

In *The Wrongs of Woman*, Jemima is presented as a woman with a great capacity for virtue, never nurtured by affection, assumed the esteem aspect of selfish independence until Maria treats her with affection and respect. Jemima continues her narration to the Dardford and Maria. We find in her whole narration that the sins of mother are brought to bear inevitably on the daughter. Jemima's mother was seduced by a fellow-servant who first promised to marry her but later on refused. Though trying to live within the construct of virtuous domesticity, as a labouring woman, she becomes entrapped.

As Jemima tells it:

Sorrow and methods she adopted to conceal her condition still doing the work of a house maid, had such an effect on her constitution, that she died in the wretched garret, where her virtuous mistress had forced her to take refuse in the very pangs of labour, that my father, after a slight reproof, was allowed to remain in his place-allowed by the mother of six children, who scarcely permitting a footstep to be heard, during her mother's indulgence, felt no sympathy for the poor wretch, denied her every comfort required by her situation. (79-80)

Jemima's mother was punished, then destroyed by her own error, her seducer's treachery and the hypocrisy of her mistress. But Jemima's father felt no sympathy on her painful condition. He was enjoying and take no concern of Jemima's situation. He

denied her parental name and offered her little protection but at the same time, he himself abused her many times.

Jemima's position might be potentially freeing, allowing her to define herself rather than being defined by the rigid societal system of classification. Her birth determines her life even more painful. As the narrator explains at an early moment in the novel "A deadly blight had met her at the very threshold of existence, and the wretchedness of her mother seemed a heavy weight fastened on her innocent neck to drag her down to perdition" (113).

Her mother's life structures her own not simply because Jemima encounters cruelty and abuse akin to his mother. But also because others like her father, stepmother and some outside of her family use the Jemima's worthless condition. All these people read her from her mother's perspective. Jemima reflects back on her former life and give voice to the ways in which her mother's mistakes were thrust upon her.

Wollstonecraft's juxtaposition of Maria's first person narrative with another first person narrative, that of Jemima, Maria's warder in madhouse. She portrays Jemima's life as an orphan. As an orphan, she is thrown into the wretched society only to suffer humiliation. Her story is not simply a replication of her mother's however it is a degeneration. She also blames her life's wretched condition on her mother.

As Jemima reveals her part to Maria and Dardford:

Now, I look back, I can't help attributing the greater part of misery to the misfortune of having been thrown into the world without the grand support of life—a mother's affection. I have no one to love me: or to make me respected, to enable me to acquire respect. I was an egg dropped on the sand, a pauper by nature, hunted from family to family

who belonged to nobody and nobody cared for me- I was infant born- without having any companions to alleviate by sympathy or teach me how to rise above it by their example. (190)

Jemima shares her events with her two companions, Maria and Dardford in the prison. She implies that her mother could somehow have supported or prevented her sufferings by teaching and giving her lesson about social life. Jemima is subject to greater persecution and more humiliation. She has nobody to care about her and rambles without any determination. Jemima received a greater part of humiliation in her mistress's house where her step mother send her to work.

Wollstonecraft depicts a patriarchal society that knows but no way to provide for such children through a network of man who devise ways of retaining the power of insemination while controlling its logical outcome, the legitimation and support of some and the disposal of the rest. Jemima decides to abort herself to save her child from the patriarchal society. She doesn't want to suffer her child for no reason.

I hurried back to my hole, and rage giving place to despare sought for the potion that was to procure abortion and swallowed it, with a wish that it might destory me at the same time that it stopped the sensations of new born life which I felt with indescrible emotion. My heart turned round, my heart grew sick and in the horrors of approaching dissolution, mental anguish was swallowed up. (97,98)

Jemima seems to sacrifice herself and the fetus so as not to continue the systems of social and economic oppression. She does not want to let her child, another victim of patriarchal society. Her decision to abort her child becomes a way to break the cycle of sins being passed from mother to child. As Jemima swallowed the medicine, she resists through her body the dire ending of mother and child.

Jemima story triggers the reflection on the world as it is. Ideally it is for those few who due to advance before society improvement. It would give rise to critical interpretations of a world that thrives on the inhuman situation and anguish Jemima has experienced. Jemima has focused on the wrongs of poverty.

A 'man' and she tells "with half my industry and I may bay abilities, could have procured a decent livelihood and discharged some of the duties which knit manking together: whilst I, who had acquired a taste for the rational, nay, in the honest pride let me assert it, the virtuous enjoyment of life was cast aside as the fifth of society. (116)

Jemima offers a corrective to the lovers elucidating of how society has failed her. She says a woman is cast aside of the society and is always condemned to do labour like animals. But with simple reason, work is respected in the society. Maria's and Dardford's explications are put into question for reading them. Jemima mentioned about the wrongs of poverty but the two Maria and Dardford mistook her interpretation. They mistook Jemima as they found the involvement of their own class.

Wollstonecraft does not condemn Jemima's act, placing it in the category of desperate measures. She also does not condemn Jemima's stint as a prostitute or the time she spends as a thief from principle. Both the acts, preying as they do on the patriarchy's privileges and corrupt power are understandable given Jemima's death or other options. After she spends five years as the kept mistress of a wealthy and cultural man, Jemima finds herself once again on the street when the man suddenly dies. Jemima realizes that she has been: "Cast aside, condemned to labour like a machine, only to earn bread, and scarcely that I melancholy and desperate" (117). Out



of desperation, she preys on a man who has already caused one woman's pregnancy. Jemima feels herself as an outcast who is lingering for mere survival of her life:

The narrative has a powerful impact on Maria, who embodies the maternal power typically associated with Wollstonecraft feminism. Because Jemima cannot control her history. She also cannot control, how those who hear it will come to use it especially the sympathetic Maria. Maria's thoughts take a wider range and she is led to consider the oppressed state of women more generally. She never deploys this history for her own purposes. Through the narrative, we see her thoughts move quickly from the wider context back to herself. She laments that she had given birth to a daughter because Jemima's story forces her to reconsider the reproductive logic that organizes and sustains the patriarchal world.

Maria dwells on the wretchedness of unprotected infancy. Her "sympathy with Jemima changed to agony, when it seem probable that her own babe might now be in the very state" (128).

Her heightened feelings transform her daughter into a replication of Jemima's motherless ness and victimization. Maria repositions Jemima as the abandoned daughter, hoping to get intelligence by her child.

She employs Jemima's circumstances and language against her:

With your heart, and such dreadful experience can you lead your and to despair my babe of a mother's tenderness, a mother's care? In the name of God snatch her from destruction ! let me give her an education- let me but prepare her body and mind to encounter the ills which await her sex and I will teach her to consider you as her second mother. (130-31)

Maria inverts Jemima's former supplications to make Jemima responsible for positioning her daughter to speak them in future. Jemima's narrative represents for Maria, a crystallization of the peculiar fate of all oppressed women. Thinking that her humanity has been benumbed rather than killed. Maria needs Jemima not simply as a buffer in her relationship with Henry but in her relationship with her daughter.

*The Wrongs of Woman or Maria*, presents another version of sexually frightened, persecuted, victimized heroine. A woman unable to find suitable male soul mate because social and financial corruption doom her from the outset to the status of an exchange object. The description of Maria's marriage suggests that she could not reform George's taste or character. When she realized that she could not become the friend or confidant of her husband. She lost all her self-confidence, she possessed. Dehumanized by his dismissive and condescending attitude, Maria finds herself continually silenced by him. Most degrading of all is their sexual relationship which Maria rather coyly discusses initially in the abstract. "For personal intimacy without affection, seemed to me the most degrading as well as the most painful state in which a woman of any taste, not to speak of the peculiar delicacy of fostered sensibility could be placed" (2-9).

George Venables however, was so corrupt that he prefers the company of prostitutes to his wife. Maria never finds herself in a situation where she could share any of her personal matter with her husband. She never feels any feelings of love of Venables as faithful husband towards her.

There were no independent legal rights for woman. She could not sue her husband for divorce. She could not visit her children if her husband took them from her. Most importantly, she could not act upon her own desires if they conflicted with those of her husband. As Maria phrases it: "Men more effectually to enslave us, may

inculcate this partial morality, and loose sight of virtue in subdividing it into the duties of particular stations; but let us not blith for nature without a cause !" (31).

Man thinks of women as slave. They behaves or treats to them as their personal possession. Men never think of their negative virtue and take it as their pride. Maria tries to console her daughter about his father's behaviour towards her.

The character 'Maria', in the novel chronicles one determined woman, struggling to go outside of ideology to advance to use her words before the improvement of age. Maria deplores contemporary moral standards that require women to remain married to men for whom they have neither affection nor esteem: "Women, weak in reason, impotent in will, is required to moralize, sentimentalize herself to stone and pine her life away, laboring to reform her embruted mate" (32).

Maria declares that to the contrary, lack of passion and coldness of heart undermine virtue. She argues that desire must be reciprocal and women must have the freedom to express that fire of the imagination which produces active sensibility and positive virtue.

Wollstonecraft claims that relations within the family between men and women, parents and children must be founded on the same basis as relations between equal citizens within the public sphere. Her remarks about women's maternal duties need to be read fairly. In 'The Wrongs of Woman', Maria remarks that "in the present state of women, it is a great misfortune to be prevented from discharging the duties and cultivating affections" (33). These remarks suggest that Wollstonecraft views on maternity pertain to a very specific context. Women had few options as far as a contributions to society were concerned apart from the raising of children. Women were characteristically treated as counters in an economic exchange. They were valued as much for what they represented as for who they were. Gilbert Burnelt stated

'Men have property in their wives'. As Maria recognizes, 'a married woman is as much a man's property as his horse or his ass" (245).

One of the major themes of Wollstonecraft's work is that woman will not be able to attain self-governance so long as women are financially dependent on man, Solong as women's independence is not protected by the law and women's emotional dependence and subjection to the tyranny of men. This conviction is articulated most forcefully in *The Wrongs of Women* or *Maria*. In the novel, Jemima and various women in whose house Maria take lodgings after leaving George Venables, all of whom are victim of law inequality. "She toiled from morning till night: yet her husband would rob the ill and take away the money reserved for paying bills; and returning home drunk, he would beat her if she chanced to oftend him, though she had child at the breast" (279).

Maria flees from her husband and was hiding herself into a house. When the home owner comes to know about her reality, he beats his wife for giving her room on rent. The woman worked from morning to night for bread. But her husband did not notice out and he beats and robs her money. Her husband even didn't care about his infant with the woman.

Wollstonecraft strongly deplores on the condition of woman in her society. In the novel, 'The Wrongs of Women', Maria is the author's thinly venerated mouthpiece proceeds to liken the status of women to that of slaves and compare such a marriage as Marias' to an act of barbaric cruelty.

The heroine's words culminate in a highly emotive image

"Are not", I thought, the despots for ever stigmatized, who in the wantness of power, commanded even the most atrocious criminals to chained to dead bodies? though surely those laws are much more

inhuman which forge adamantite fetters to bind mind together then  
never can mingal in social communion. (64)

Maria's image of a living person chained to corpse. She is married to a dissolute man who has squandered her dowry and facing ruin. She views social laws are made by in human mind which force a married woman puppet in the hands of their husband.

Wollstonecraft's work, sometimes as benign and non-threatening, sometimes as sexual and demanding. Maria finds herself in yet another victimized situation. At one time, her husband attempts to sell her sexual favors to an older man 'Mrs' to whom he owes, gambles. Maria flees from her husband and begins the series of moves that bring her to her final destination, the madhouse. Maria is the ultimate caricature of a female victim. She realized that she is tortured as well as haunted by Venables.

Who seemed to assume terrific or hateful forms to torment me,  
wherever I turned. Sometimes a wild cat, a roaring bull or hideous  
assassin whom I vainly attempted to fly; at others he was a demon,  
hurrying me to the brink of a precipice, plunging me into dark waves  
or horrid gulfs: and I work in violent fits of trembling anxiety, to  
assume myself that it was all dream. (103)

Sexual anxiety helps her transmuted it into a series of stock gothic scenarios. Maria suffers from hysteria rooted in residual memories of abuse. She finds her husband as demon in her dream who plunges her into dark waves. It always terrified her in her bed.

Jemima retains the capacity to love not only men but woman also. Jemima only childhood wish was for a mother's affection. Her feminine emotions are more resilient than Maria's nurtured, middle-class sensibility. The two women finally escape

the madhouse, Jemima goes first. When they are confronted by a last menacing male, the terrified Maria throws "her arms round Jemima, cries, "save me" (132).

At the conclusion of novel, Wollstonecraft has Jemima save Maria once more, this time from an attempted suicide by restoring to Maria, her lost daughter.

Wollstonecraft accents Maria decision to destroy the fetus as she destroys herself. She doesn't give birth only to abandon it, leaving it unsupported and vulnerable to the cruelty of society, nor does she, in this instance, spontaneously abort and then kill himself. After a life struggling against the cruelty of men and the denial of her dignity she wishes to get rid of the patriarchal world as well as the self whose desires have been complicit it. The image of her first born child haunts her.

All the incidents of her life were in arms embodied to assail her, and prevent her sinking into the sleep of death. Her murdered child again appeared to her, mourning for the babe of which she was the tomb.

"And could it have a nobler? Surely it is better to die with me than to enter on life without a mother's care ! I can't live but could I have deserted my child the moment it was born? thrown it on troubled wave of life, without a hand to support. (162)

Maria has suffered and refuses to generate another version of herself. Pregnant, unmarried and alone, Maria swallows the landanum. Her soul was calm and nothing remained but an eager longing to forget herself. She endured to escape from this hell of disappointment. The desire to protect her fetus through death parallels Jemima's experience of abortion. The medicine here is intended to kill both mother and child. Maria's suicide signifies her agency as a mother as much as her agency as a woman trying to avoid domestic constraints.

Wollstonecraft does not let Maria die. A new vision swims before her of Jemima and the little creature that is her first born restored. Jemima convinces Maria to live by holding her responsible for the motherless life, this daughter will be forced to bear without her. She reads her own history back to Maria. And Maria takes on what Jemima imagines to be her own mother's guilt for leaving wretchedness: "I snatched your daughter from misery and (now she is alive again). Would you leave her alone in this world, to endure what I had endured (164). Maria's ability reinterpret this narrative is put into question by her duty as a mother. Jemima reminds her duty of a mother. She requests not to endure her what Maria's has suffered in her life from her husband and brother.

Maria finally denies to have gone for suicide. She does so for the sake of her daughter. The daughter's successful pronunciation of Mama which Jemima had tutored her to do all the journey brings Maria to tears and to life in one emotional declaration. After a moment of silence, Maria cries out, "The conflict is over ! I will live for my child!" (165). She claims life for herself, though perhaps not for the fetus. She dedicates her powers once again to the future her daughter embodies.

## Chapter Four

### Conclusion

Wollstonecraft articulates a narrative of male oppression and female victimization by which to explain the apparently endemic persistence of this masochistic figure as constructed through feminine false consciousness. Her both novel, *Maria* and *Mary* presents despair, disaster conditions of women in the society. Both the Heroine Mary and Maria struggles toward establishing an idealized family of her own. In *The Wrongs of Woman or Maria*, Wollstonecraft revisits all of these primal fantasies from her heroine. Maria is seduced from two male Venables and Dardford. There is also sexual differences between Maria and her brother Robert. And finally the attempt to recreate a family of origins. The birth of her daughter is also on some level an attempt to reconstruct her own birth, replayed with Maria as mother to herself. And at the end, we find that Maria finally castrates both Venables and Dardfords. She decides to leave as a sort of virgin mother hallucinating about all female community with her daughter and Jemima. Another character in the novel, Jemima bears a fearful symbolic weight. She has to embody the woes, sufferings, abuse and beatings that can be delivered to innocent women. Her only fault was to be born women in a society that views such beings as excess refuse or raw material to be used and consumed Jemima's narrative is an embarrassingly painful series of insults and affronts, beginning with maternal rejection, maternal death, paternal neglect. She has to endure all the problems in her life, physical abuse, emotional wounding and then another illegitimate pregnancy resulting from rape. On the other side, Maria's narrative has covered the longest part of the novel. It is written in a letter form to her already-dead baby daughter. The symbolic impart of the latter, however suggests that Maria want to teach the next generation or her daughter about the male domination.



*The Wrongs of Woman or Maria* in other words chronicles one determined women's struggle to get outside of ideology to advance to use her words before the improvement of the age and her failure to make that advance sets us brooding on the curious complicity of gender and genre in later 18<sup>th</sup>C, sentimental novel.

The novel *Mary* begins as a story of Mary's development from birth, the death of her parents and her relationship with Ann until her death. It ends as a story of her relationship with Henry until his death and the expectation of Mary's death as the only possible resolution to her impossible desire. In the novel, Mary, the main character has been denied all the rights. She never gets any kind of love and affection from her mother. Her mother gave more love to her son than to Mary. She is considered as an awkward thing in her own home. Maria was so depressed by her parent's partiality that she starts her company with some of the poor child. Mary becomes an object to settle down an issue in the novel. She is not even asked her desire and tied with an unknown man to fulfill her mother's last wish. Mary is an unsatisfied woman who finds consolation in only helping others in the time of need. She never gets any kind of love and affection from anyone. For sometime, Mary became close with her friend Ann but that was only a comfort for her. Ann was Mary's friend whom she took to into her journey to recover from her illness. Mary was so bored from male society that she never likes to accompany them. She many times refuses to return to her home. Mary is a helpful character in the novel. She does not accept Henry's proposal but helps him at the end when he was suffering from illness. At the end part of the novel, Mary decides to help all the poor of her village.

Mary in the novel is a loving and kind character. She refuses to follow male rules and devotes her whole life in the service of poor women and men.

Wollstonecraft portrays the character 'Mary' as a self determined woman who likes to live free and help others as a woman rather being mere puppet in the hands of male.

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