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İSTANBUL YENİ YÜZYIL UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE PROGRAMME



**TRAUMA'S ROLE IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: AN
ANALYSIS OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S *MARIA, OR THE
WRONGS OF WOMAN* AND MARY HAYS' *THE VICTIM OF
PREJUDICE***

MA THESIS

DEMET KURTULUŞ

20131306001

İSTANBUL, SEPTEMBER 2023

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İSTANBUL, SEPTEMBER 2023

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İSTANBUL YENİ YÜZYIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ
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İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı programı, 20131306001 numaralı tezli yüksek lisans öğrencisi Demet Kurtuluş'un "TRAUMA'S ROLE IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S MARIA, OR THE WRONGS OF WOMAN AND MARY HAYS' THE VICTIM OF PREJUDICE" adlı tez çalışması, Enstitümüz Yönetim Kurulunun 04/09/2023 tarih ve 2023/07 sayılı kararıyla oluşturulan jüri tarafından oy birliği ile Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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ETHICAL STATEMENT

I prepared my project following the thesis writing rules of the Institute of Social Sciences at Istanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University, and I hereby declare that;

- I have obtained the data, information, and documents provided within the thesis according to academic and ethical rules,
- I have submitted all information, documents, evaluations, and results under the requirements of scientific ethics and moral rules,
- I have cited all works that I have used in the project by appropriately referring to my sources,
- I have not made any changes to the data used,
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08/09/ 2023

DEMET KURTULUŞ

PREFACE

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Hatice Yurttaş for encouraging me and also for her guidance. She has given me an opportunity to study 18th-century women novelists and has had a great impact on my progress in this field. The TÜBİTAK project numbered 119K007 “Eighteenth-Century Women’s Writing and the Novel Genre” conducted by Dr. Hatice Yurttaş, has contributed a lot to this thesis, so I am extremely grateful to TÜBİTAK as well for the opportunity that they provide to researchers.

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Finally, I would like to thank my dearest parents, Esmâ and Muhammet, who have always supported me throughout my education life and who have always been proud of my achievements. Without them, I would not have been able to achieve so much in life. Also, I would like to thank my twin sister, Deniz, and my brother, Fethi, who have always been there for me and who have always tried to find solutions to my problems.

ISTANBUL, 2023.

DEMET KURTULUŞ

ÖZET

KADINLARIN GÜÇLENMESİNDE TRAVMANIN ROLÜ: MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'İN *MARIA, OR THE WRONGS OF WOMAN* İLE MARY HAYS'İN *THE VICTIM OF PREJUDICE* ROMANLARININ ANALİZİ

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18. yüzyıl İngiliz toplumu, teknolojik ve toplumsal bazı gelişmeler ile modern bir toplum inşa etme yolunda adımlar atmıştır. Ayrıca toplumun gelişmesini engelleyen geleneksel ideolojilere de meydan okumuştur. Bu dönemin önde gelen filozoflarından Rousseau, toplumun tüm üyelerinin eşit ve özgür olması gerektiğini savunmuş ve sivil toplumun kurulmasını teşvik etmiştir. Ancak kadınlar erkeklerden aşağı görüldükleri için bu ayrıcalığın dışında tutulmuşlardır. Diğer bir deyişle, eşitlik teşvik edilse de erkeklerin ataerkil tahakkümü sürdürülerek kadınlar ikinci plana atılmıştır. Fransız Devrimi'nden ilham alan bazı kadın yazarlar, Mary Wollstonecraft ve Mary Hays yalnızca, erkeklerin lehine olan yasalara ve sosyal normlara değil, aynı zamanda kadınların boyunduruk altına alınmasına hizmet eden geleneksel eğitim sistemini de eleştirmişlerdir. Tüm bu sorunların kadını hem sosyal hem de özel hayatta sınırladığını ve kadının erkeğe tabi kılınmasına yol açtığını incelemişlerdir. Bu nedenle eleştirilerini, kadınların toplumsal ve özel hayatlarında zorluklar yaşamasına neden olan eşitsizlik ve adaletsizlikler üzerinde yoğunlaştırmış ve kadının toplumdaki konumunu iyileştirmenin gerekliliğini öne sürmüşlerdir. Bu tez, Mary Wollstonecraft'ın tamamlanmamış romanı *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* ile Mary Hays'in *The Victim of Prejudice* adlı romanı, feminist düşünce perspektifiyle analiz ederek kadınların ataerkil koşullar altında yaşadıkları kolektif travmaları ortaya koymaktadır. Wollstonecraft ve Hays'in kadın kahramanları ataerkil kültür nedeniyle travmalarla karşı karşıya kalsalar bile kadınların toplumdaki durumunu iyileştirmenin gerekliliğini vurgulamışlardır ve bu da ancak kadınların eğitim yoluyla güçlendirilmesiyle mümkün olacağını ileri sürmüşlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Patriarki, Toplum Sözleşmesi, Feminizm, Travma.

ABSTRACT

TRAUMA'S ROLE IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S *MARIA, OR THE WRONGS OF WOMAN* AND MARY HAYS' *THE VICTIM OF PREJUDICE*

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The 18th-century British society took a step to build a modern society with some social advancements. Also, traditional ideologies hindering the progress of society were challenged. Rousseau, a prominent philosopher of the age, argued that all members of society had to be equal, and promoted the establishment of a civil society. However, women were excluded from this privilege as they were regarded inferior to men. Thus, while equality was promoted, the subordination of women was maintained via the assertion of men's patriarchal dominance over them. Some women writers, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Hays, inspired by the French Revolution, criticized the exclusion of women from civil society. They attacked not only the laws and social norms that favored men but also the conventional education system that served to sustain the subjection of women. In their works, they reflected how these issues limited women in both social and private life and led to the subordination of women to men. Thus, their critique centered on inequality and injustice that caused women to suffer and defended the need for a social reform. As a result, this thesis analyzes Mary Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*, and Mary Hays' novel *The Victim of Prejudice* with a feminist perspective and shows the collective traumas of women occurring under patriarchal practices. While Wollstonecraft and Hays's female protagonists face traumatic events due to the patriarchal culture, they emphasize enhancing women's condition, which could only be achieved via the empowerment of women through education. Reflecting a theme of the shared suffering of women, the novels demonstrate the necessity of improving women's condition.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Social Contract, Feminism, Trauma.

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INTRODUCTION

The period spanning from 1780 to 1850 witnessed significant transformations in social dynamics within Britain, closely linked to the rapid advancements in economic and technological spheres commonly referred to as the industrial revolution (Morris, 1979, p.9). The extent of these advancements was so significant that it resulted in the emergence of novel vocabulary, including terms such as science, technology, progressive, reactionary, capitalism, exploitation, and imperialism (Morris, 1979, p. 10). In addition to economic developments, significant shifts in social and ethical ideologies concurrently took place. The inquisitive mindset that led to the development of remarkable technologies during this era also tended to challenge well-established political and religious norms. It was an age when a significant intellectual upheaval was characterized by the presence of influential philosophers for transformation such as technological advancements, secularism, and political reform. These progressive forces were confronted with equally formidable sources of conservatism and steadiness which were represented by the Church and monarchical governance. The era marked the commencement of the establishment of the fundamental elements that shaped Europe into a recognizable modern entity. Especially Rousseau's *The Social Contract* had a substantial influence on the confrontation of ideologies (Wraight, 2008, p.2). As for Rousseau, a society that is ruled through a superior force is completely unacceptable. His assertion is that a society can only be established upon the foundation of a commitment, which entails a collective agreement among all citizens of the society to abide by mutually accepted rules (Wraight, 2008, p.29). Thus, the fundamental and distinguishing characteristic of Rousseau's model resides in the fact that all individuals are collectively involved: they participate in the creation of laws and are subject to the laws in an equitable manner. In this regard, everyone in society is regarded as equal. However, the social contract excludes women from civil society. It posits that their position is not constructed the same as civil men. The traditional social expectation for women was to primarily focus on domestic responsibilities, such as being a wife and mother while being highly attuned to the opinions and needs of others. Rousseau claims that "[th]e whole education of women ought to be relative to men to please them, to be useful to them,

to make them happy” (Rousseau, 1918, p.352). Consequently, in this era, women were often restricted to the private sphere and had limited opportunities for direct involvement in positions of power while men were seen as civil members of society and defenders of the nation within a system of government that encouraged active citizen involvement and enjoyed the freedom to openly articulate their thoughts and aspirations. Thus, it can be stated that while the social contract encouraged civil equality and freedom for men, it established men’s patriarchal dominance over women. In other words, the modern patriarchy that Rousseau suggests only defended the rights of men, while women were deprived of the triumph of civil rights.

Although women were excluded in civil life in terms of social, political, and economic activities, the number of women writers and literary products rose at the end of the 17th century. In this period women writers such as Margaret Cavendish (1623-73), and Aphra Behn (1640-89) gained fame (Spencer, 1988, p.24). Also, Delarivier Manley (1670-1724) and Eliza Haywood became the major female novelists and pioneers of the novel (Todd, 1989, p.49).

In the 18th century the middle class was empowered, so middle class society exposed their ideology and norms. Thus, women novelists reflected the ideals and norms of middle-class in their novels. The women were constrained within a domestic domain in which they primarily encompassed their roles as caretakers of the household and as upholders of moral and emotional principles. Feminine qualities and domesticity possessed greater significance in middle-class ideology. Women were acknowledged as possessing a valid authority within the confines of the private sphere while men obtained an active role in civil life. As a result, women embraced domestic affairs, emotional matters, romantic relationships, and the moral well-being of young girls. Thus, a woman novelist had a distinct role due to her perceived feminine abilities. That is, the women writers had the potential to explore the unique challenges and desires of women, primarily targeting a readership consisting of middle-class women. These women sought not only “amusement” for their “idle hours” but also narratives that could enhance the appeal and significance of their limited societal roles (Spencer, 1988, p.20). Moreover, eighteenth-century critics were deeply preoccupied with the moral utility of literature. They increasingly valued modesty in both the writer and their work, considering it an important aspect worthy of praise. As a result, women

writers who became representatives of modesty and morality were welcomed. The societal significance of the 'feminine' attributes of delicacy and propriety experienced a notable increase within bourgeois circles. Therefore, women's writing was restricted within this ideology.

However, close to the 18th century, The French Revolution that happened in 1789 inspired some writers as well in terms of equality and civil rights. These novelists, who were called Jacobin novelists, defended the concept of inherent individual rights that originate from natural law and exist prior to the establishment of civil society, and they supported that these rights are immune to misuse by governmental or legal entities. "Natural rights" refer to the rights that individuals possess inherently, without any external influence or authority. On the other hand, civil rights refer to the legal safeguards that aim to protect individuals from discrimination and ensure their equal treatment under the law. They are only present within the realm of civil society. The term 'republicanism' is employed in reference to the Jacobins. Nancy Johnson asserts that the concept of republicanism, which denotes a form of government ruled by law, emerged as a counterpoint to monarchy, emphasizing the central role of legal principles in governance (Johnson, 2004, p.2). The focal point of this perspective is in the accentuation of citizen engagement, social responsibilities, and collective welfare. Therefore, the works of Jacobins encompass comprehensive examinations of social biases, oppressive governance structures, and the potential for change. They serve as illustrations of the importance of thorough examination for the general public, and they promote a logical evaluation of individual circumstances (Johnson, 2004, p.15). Jacobin authors articulate their motives and objectives for employing the book as a medium to make "social and philosophical investigation" into "abusive prejudices" and "institutional tyranny", they aim to portray both the current state of affairs and the desired state of affairs. The novel, frequently serving as a portrayal of the private realm, assumes a significant role in the analysis of domestic politics and the formation of the individual as a legal entity (Johnson, 2004, p.14). The majority of the fictional narratives of the Jacobins revolve around the stories of individuals engaged in a struggle to establish a distinct sense of self, particularly women and slaves (Johnson, 2004, p.19). Therefore, especially women and servants' natural rights violated by the legal institutions in that period were questioned in the

works of Jacobin novelists.

Within the context of the social structure prevalent in the eighteenth century, women lacked the ability to assert their legal rights to civil and economic autonomy. As a result, women and servants remained predominantly confined to domestic spheres, with their identities primarily defined in relation to household responsibilities. Thus, they had to be dependent on their financial benefactors. Due to their limited economic agency, their individual identities became subsumed within those of others. As a result, it is evident that the novels of the English Jacobins exhibit a prevalent preoccupation with the examination of property definitions and the limits of individual identity (Johnson, 2004, p.104).

Mary Wollstonecraft as one of the leading Jacobin writers of the period criticizes the severe conditions of women in society. Her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is one of the pioneering texts in the development of contemporary feminist thought. The primary objective of the book is to criticize the significant disparity between genders that society constitutes and to ask for a reform via an education based on rational thinking. Within the context of her broader discourse on women, Mary Wollstonecraft expresses a particular concern with the education of women in her literary work. During the era, women were primarily provided with domestic education. This kind of education was primarily focused on preparing women for their roles as wives and mothers, rather than providing them with a comprehensive education in the sciences or humanities. The women were perceived as incapable of thinking in a manner similar to men. However, according to Mary Wollstonecraft, women were deemed incapable of possessing the necessary intellectual capacity as they were deprived of equal educational opportunities. Thus, she claims that women have a great aptitude for learning. Wollstonecraft argues this issue as follows:

Make them free, and they will quickly become wise and virtuous, as men become more so; for the improvement must be mutual, or the injustice which one half of the human race are obliged to submit to, retorting on their oppressors, the virtue of man will be worm-eaten by the insect whom he keeps under his feet

(Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.231).

In this assertion, she condemns the male-dominated society and authority that confine women and restrict their abilities and claims that women have capacities to improve themselves as men do. In addition to discussing women's capabilities, Wollstonecraft emphasizes the potential consequences that may arise in the absence of proper education for women. If just one portion of society, that is, only men are provided with education, it is noteworthy that the remaining ignorant or illiterate portion of society can have a detrimental impact on the overall size of the educated segment. Moreover, she presents a compelling challenge to deeply entrenched assertions on the societal status of women. In this period, women were relegated to a subordinate status, akin to that of slaves, confined mostly to domestic spheres and excluded from active participation in public affairs. Wollstonecraft criticizes this issue as she comprehends that it stems from the traditional assumption of womanhood that is associated with the perceived weakness inherent in women's nature and sentimentality. She argues this problem as follows:

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness or temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives

(Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.26).

Therefore, she claims that this perception derives from a society that wants to keep women docile and passive. She sees that women's inadequacy or childlike qualities allow men to treat them with a corresponding lack of respect. As a result, gender inequality is the issue socially constructed, and it is stressed that women's perceived weakness of intellect and heightened emotional tendencies are a direct result of the corrupt societal structures in which they live. Therefore, Mary Wollstonecraft effectively questioned prevailing gender norms and challenged traditional perspectives that established notions about women, which caused the dominance of men and the

subsequent subjection of women. She believed that social justice could only be implemented when these instances disappear.

Another Jacobin novelist, Mary Hays also defended women's rights and equal opportunities for women. Like her friend Mary Wollstonecraft, she was an ardent feminist whose assertion of the rights of women was reinforced by the ideals of the French Revolution. She believes that women have capacity to develop themselves independently of their obligations to the family and that traditional marriage requiring a docile submission to a husband regardless of his character and behaviour. Her assertion is that goodness is achieved by freedom rather than the restrictive morality imposed on women. With social norms, society expected women to exhibit affection towards their husbands and rely on them for support, while simultaneously demonstrating a calm subjection to their husbands' minds. Furthermore, women were urged to develop qualities such as emotional sensitivity, narrow-mindedness, and vulnerability, which were regarded as endearing feminine attributes. Simultaneously, women had to cope with insults and misfortunes with unwavering strength and resilience which caused oppression. Mary Hays's work *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* (1798) emphasizes the need of restructuring the educational system for women and rejects the belief that women possess inherent inferiority compared to men, which shows socially constructed concepts. She argues that the social system is flawed and limits the mind of women. She evaluates this problem as follows:

Of all the systems, - if indeed a bundle of contradictions and absurdities may be called a system, - which human nature in its moments of intoxication has produced; that which men have contrived with a view to forming the minds, and regulating the conduct of women, is perhaps the most completely absurd (Hays, 1974, p.47).

Hays endeavours to highlight the social and cultural construction of femininity, challenging the notion that women are innately feeble and deficient in capabilities. She criticizes the system that confines women urging them to adapt themselves to these norms. She looks for justice and reasoning and she posits that although men uphold

principles of justice in their interactions with one another, their actions contradict their beliefs regarding justice and equality when it comes to interactions involving women in the domestic sphere (Hays, 1974, p.288).

As a result, Mary Wollstonecraft and Hays both feminist writers of that period shared a mutual language. It is widely acknowledged that Wollstonecraft's works, particularly *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, had a significant impact on Hays's intellectual development. It is apparent that the association between Wollstonecraft and Hays was not limited to intellectual influence and personal fellowship but also involved a professional dimension that progressed gradually. Wollstonecraft, as Hays's mentor, facilitated literary opportunities for her (Walker, 2006, p.417).

One of the focuses of this thesis is to reflect on the oppression of patriarchy upon women and draw attention to the legal and social injustices happened in 18th century. The novels *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*, and *The Victim of Prejudice* are chosen to be analyzed since Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays endeavour to find justice and equality for women as Jacobin novelists. Wollstonecraft and Hays protest the social conditions that give women a limited area in society, which confine them to men's oppression. In their novels, they advocate for radical concepts, such as the formal education of women and equal opportunities, women's active participation in the social realm, and a reform the in legal system. They criticize the boundaries of personal identity in relation to the constraints of society over women. Thus, these novels showcase the suffering and subjugation experienced by women as a result of social norms and discriminatory laws. They offer a space in which one can envision a future characterized by a fair social contract. Thus, the novels demonstrate the revolutionary ideas of Wollstonecraft and Hays to restore women's conditions in 18th-century British society.

Another aim of this study is to investigate how women's lives are negatively affected due to injustices and lack of legal protection. In this regard, traumas that women experience because of these social issues are examined. To investigate the trauma in the novels, the theoretical framework is shaped by the ideas of some trauma theorists. The role of society in cultural traumas is analyzed. Firstly, Freud's hysteria is given as an example of traumas that occur due to the social and cultural effects. In

the 19th century, Freud examined some women patients who were suffering from hysteria. According to Freud, hysteria relates to repressed sexual desires and fantasies, which disregards the social factors of it. He focuses on the dualistic nature of hysteria that characterizes an intensified sexual desire juxtaposed with an excessive repulsion towards sexuality. As for him, the manifestation of the illness occurs when the individuals encounter the demands of an actual sexual situation, either due to their own personal development or external factors in their lives. The individual seeks refuge from the conflict between their innate drives and their aversion to sexuality through the manifestation of illness (Freud, 2017, p.165). In other words, Freud focuses on avoiding sexual urges as a cause of the emergence of hysteria. In contrast, feminist writers Judith Herman and Ann Kaplan disagree with Freud's perspective, and they claim that hysteria is a result of traumatic events that women have experienced due to subordination and limitations imposed on them by the patriarchal society. They evaluate Freud's perspective as an investigation that only prioritizes the examination of sexuality. However, the social framework that leads to hysteria is completely disregarded in Freud's analysis of hysteria. Therefore, social issues lead us to see sociocultural factors of trauma. Some contemporary trauma theorists emphasize sociocultural interpretations of trauma. One of the contemporary trauma theorists, Michelle Balaev, endeavors to explain the phenomenon of trauma within a wider social framework. She contextualizes trauma within a broader conceptual framework that incorporates both social psychology and neurobiological theories, and via this way, a more comprehensive understanding of trauma can be achieved. This approach recognizes the diverse contextual factors that contribute to the subjective significance of the traumatic experience. The examination of trauma can reveal various interpretations that exist within and across personal and public domains. In this regard, Balaev's approach tends to recognize the social factors in shaping an individual's experience, response, and narratives of trauma. Her perspective focuses on the broader social, political, and economic causes that serve as the underlying circumstances within the framework of traumatic experience, which can help to identify the interpretation of trauma. Another contemporary trauma theorist, Judith Herman's approach presents a critique of the prevailing belief that traumatic experiences are rare and extraordinary events. Instead, she interprets trauma with the ongoing and recurring

conditions that individuals may confront in their daily lives. Herman's theoretical framework centers on the analysis of the impact exerted by social and cultural practices, conventions, as well as political and economic institutions on the manifestation of traumas that are concealed within individuals' personal narratives. Moreover, David Becker emphasizes the need to evaluate trauma within its social context. According to Becker, a comprehensive understanding of trauma necessitates the consideration of specific contextual factors in which it manifests. The factors that impact trauma encompass various components, including cultural norms, political circumstances, societal organization, and related factors. Thus, he focuses on trauma not only from the aspect of the individual experiencing pain but also the broader context in which this distress occurs. As a result, some contemporary trauma theorists evaluate trauma with socio-cultural dimensions, which constitute one of the focuses of this study in the context of trauma that women experience and the cultural interpretations underlying the trauma.

Considering socio-cultural factors of trauma, in the novels *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*, and *The Victim of Prejudice*, Wollstonecraft and Hays portray women who face traumas due to culture. Their protagonists show how culture leads women to experience traumas. Thus, they see that the suffering is a result of social and legal defects. Like most of the women, they also experience trauma because of the flaws of society, however they transform their traumas into a resistance against systematical oppression and show that suffering can be annihilated through women's empowerment. The only way to achieve that is to give women a proper education rather than a traditional education which promotes the continual subordination of women. In this regard, the protagonists in the novels are portrayed as fighters instead of helpless victims, and these novels cry out for a change to recover women's conditions in society. Therefore, the social problems leading women to have traumas are reflected to support the idea that a social recovery is necessary.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, a theoretical framework is drawn to analyze the novels. It starts with a portrayal of the sociocultural background of the 18th century, which focuses on Rousseau's social contract in comparison with Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays's ideas. After the general portrayal of 18th-century society, trauma theory is explored and explained from the

perspective of the socio-cultural factors of trauma.

The second chapter of the thesis focuses on *Maria, or the Wrongs of the Woman* written by Mary Wollstonecraft. It should be noted that it is an unfinished novel published in 1798 after Wollstonecraft's death by William Godwin. In the preface of the novel Godwin stated that during the process of rewriting Wollstonecraft's sheets for publication, he found it essential, in some instances, to establish connections between the more finished sections and the pages of a previous version. Consequently, in order to achieve this objective, he included additional lines in some places that he thought were necessary to connect the fragments. However, he stated that his utmost intention is to refrain from imposing any personal influence onto the text, and instead provide to the readers the original author's words and concepts. Therefore, the novel consists of some fragments that are combined by Godwin. Moreover, the work does not have a definite ending as Wollstonecraft could not finish the novel. However, some fragmentary endings which are piled from Wollstonecraft's drafts can be found at the end of the work. Regarding this work as a fragment, it can be said that Wollstonecraft demonstrates distressing encounters of women that are caused by social and legal problems. The protagonist, Maria symbolizes the collective experience of all married women throughout the century, who were subjected to domination and confinement inside a patriarchal system. Maria exhibits a remarkable capacity to withstand various forms of subjection while suffering from mistreatment by her merciless spouse. Because of the discriminatory laws that only favor men, she cannot separate herself from her tyrant husband. Moreover, she cannot claim her property rights to be able to flee from him and gain her autonomy. Maria is forcibly separated from her daughter and confined in a psychiatric institution just because she does not conform to the norms and expectations imposed on married women. In a society that forced women to stay in unhappy marriages with tyrant husbands, women had to endure everything even the immoralities and abuse of their spouses. However, Maria is an educated woman who cultivates her understanding with logical reasoning which is contrary to the traditional education of women. Therefore, Maria fights for every woman who is confined by social norms and who does not have a legal right to defend themselves against this oppressive system. Thus, Maria does not become a passive victim. Although she experiences traumatic encounters, she is aware that she is not the only woman who

experiences such issues and therefore she has a role to reflect women's shared suffering by becoming an active fighter for women's rights. In this regard, Maria depicts the resolute efforts of a woman striving to emancipate herself from the oppressive influence of male dominance and claim justice and equality for women in social and legal areas. The narrative not only includes Maria's story but also many minor characters that function as a link between the individual and collective experiences of women, thereby the novel not only illustrates the subjugation of women in a patriarchal society and how it leads women to suffer but also explores the ways to recover the position of women in public and private spheres. Thus, Wollstonecraft utilizes various stories of women to display a condemnation of patriarchal oppression that results from inequality and injustices and to portray women's capacity for resistance.

In the third chapter, Mary Hays' novel *The Victim of Prejudice* is taken into consideration in terms of patriarchal prejudices against women and the women protagonist's endeavouring to survive in a society where women are confined under social norms. The novel narrates the unfortunate story of Mary whose aspirations and prospects for future contentment are tragically thwarted by the prejudices of society. Mary, who is raised as a cultivated woman, is confronted with social exclusion and limited access to resources necessary for her sustenance, which is a result of her mother's bad reputation due to her seduction story. Thus, Hays portrays that seduction stories lead women to be fallen in the eyes of society and criticizes the society that gives importance to the chastity of women which is associated with women's honour and morality. Society constructs the idea of fallen women who are perceived as immoral; however, men who cause women to fall are excluded from social norms. Therefore, women cannot have a chance to restore their honor due to oppressive social norms and false morality. Mary, burdened by the inescapable presence of her mother's past, finds herself surrounded by opportunistic individuals and morally flawed authorities. Deprived of the opportunity to engage in productive work, she becomes a victim of overwhelming societal pressure. Because of the prejudices of society against fallen women, the protagonist Mary should fight these norms. Moreover, due to her disadvantageous position in society because of her parental lineage, she also becomes a rape victim, which causes her to be seen as a fallen woman like her mother. Similar

to Wollstonecraft's powerful woman protagonist, Mary also fights against the restrictive boundaries of chastity and societal etiquette, which leads women to a life devoid of accomplishments. She tries to find a place in society relying on her virtuous character and cultivated mind. Thus, she gets her strength from her intellectual faculties like Wollstonecraft's Maria. As a result, Mary portrays the obstacles that all women face and endure due to an oppressive culture. However, Mary does not become a trauma victim, instead, she is a trauma survivor who becomes a resisting voice to reclaim a place in society and to recover social and legal problems that women encounter.

This research focuses on how the patriarchy and its norms cause women to experience suffering, on the other hand, it illustrates the revolutionary ideas of Jacobin novelists, Wollstonecraft and Hays, and their struggle to restore women's conditions in civil and private lives through their women protagonists who are empowered with rational education.

1. CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Understanding Women's Position in Society through Social Contract

In order to understand the place of women in 18th-century society, it is necessary to analyze the changing ideology as well as socio-cultural changes. With the emphasis on individuality, Rousseau discussed a social change that gave importance to individuals by forming a social contract theory. Social contract theory in the 18th century dealt with civil society and declared how it was supposed to be arranged. Social contract rejects obedience by force and claims that no one possesses supremacy over anyone in the society, so that everyone is regarded to have equal rights and freedom. Thus, a civil society is formed against a superior force. In the religious tradition of Western world, the sovereignty held an absolute power. The sovereignty held by the king was widely recognized as God's will that could not be challenged or appealed. However, Rousseau opposed to this concept of sovereignty. John Noone asserts that "[s]uch approaches to sovereignty are completely unacceptable to Rousseau. Natural law is irrelevant" (Noone, 1970, p.697). Moreover, Rousseau envisions a society with a political system that is morally justifiable and legitimate. He believes that the structure of the sovereignty and the obligations it places upon individuals cannot be separated from morality (Noone, 1970, p. 697). Thus, as for him, the rule of a supreme power caused an amoral condition. Noone evaluates Rousseau's ideas about the connection of political structures and moral obligations as follows:

Whenever morality is in question, Rousseau sees only two alternatives: a state of morality or a state of nature. His idea of the state of nature is not simply that of history of man prior to the establishment of government ... it is also an analytic device that signals a special condition, viz., that amoral condition where the only rule is the rule of superior force (Noone, 1970, p. 697).

Therefore, Rousseau's social contract transforms the sovereignty into a moral state and takes people out of a state of nature. In order to achieve this, Rousseau claims that sovereignty of one person should be changed into a collective organization. Therefore,

no one should be subject to one another and they have to have political independence. In this society, individuals should contribute their personal attributes and abilities to the collective body, and they should be subject to the ultimate authority of the general will. In this collective body, individuals should take collective decisions, so that these decisions should carry moral obligations. Rousseau claims that “each of us puts in common his person and all his power under the supreme direction of the general will; and in return, each member becomes an indivisible part of the whole” (Rousseau, 2002, p.164). In other words, each member of the community is seen as an inseparable component of the entirety, so Rousseau emphasizes the significance of a civil society in which each individual willingly contributes their personal attributes and abilities to be collectively governed by the fundamental authority of the general will. J. MacAdam analyzes Rousseau’s civil society as follows:

Each citizen by right is a citizen-sovereign, a legislator, and thus authorizes the law which he, along with other sovereign equals, obeys. The law which he legislates and which he imposes upon himself is such that it should ensure equality in two senses: the law should come from all equally and apply to all equally. If the law is equal in these ways then the condition of political independence may be satisfied (MacAdam, 1972, p.319).

Therefore, it can be deduced that in civil society no one can be inferior or subjected to someone else, and everyone should enjoy equal rights by forming laws that should be obeyed and applied to anyone without any exceptions as it also brings moral obligations. From this perspective, it becomes evident that laws are seen as manifestations of the collective will. Similarly, the question of whether the ruler is exempt from the laws loses relevance, because the ruler becomes an integral part of the governing body. Furthermore, the notion of unjust laws becomes unimportant, as individuals cannot act unjustly towards themselves. Thus, people become freer as long as they obey the laws as laws merely serve as records of a collective body.

To be able to make society more independent and equal, Rousseau also opposes the power that aristocracy holds in their hands and asks the questions “How can a man

or a people take possession of an immense territory and rob the whole human race of it except by a punishable usurpation, since other men are deprived of the place of residence and the sustenance that nature gives to them in common?" (Rousseau, 2002, p.168). With these inquiries, he points out that public lands are occupied by a group of people who claim to be superior to other citizens of the society, and this situation destroys the natural equality of people; however, in order to achieve social unity, there should not be supremacy between the individuals. Thus, people can become equal by convention and legal rights when the governing entity acknowledges the nation as a whole and does not distinguish or favor any particular constituent members.

As a result, we can say that individuals gained power against authority as they realized old patriarchy and aristocracy chained them to a rotten system. Therefore, it can be stated that the new society gave the authority to the individual to form a united organization in which everyone could enjoy equality and liberty while demolishing the old system.

However, women were excluded from civil society. That is, the concept of social contract divides society into two spheres: the private or sexual sphere, and the public or political sphere. The private sphere was predominantly assigned to women and was perceived as inconsequential to public affairs, thereby establishing the public sphere as a primarily male realm. As for Rousseau, men and women have different duties and gender roles. One individual should possess an active and strong nature, while the other should exhibit passivity and weakness. Men should possess both power and determination, whereas women only require a limited capacity. Therefore, women possess inherent qualities that make them particularly good at satisfying men (Rousseau, 1918, p.352). Through these attributions, women were restricted by conforming to men's domination. Thus, men were supposed to be active in civil and political life, whereas women were to arrange sexual and private life, which resulted in the lack of civil rights in public areas. The social contract, in this perspective, is predominantly associated with men and serves as an instrument for the evolution of patriarchy into its contemporary manifestation. Although social contract theorists advocate the notion of universal natural equality, they do not see women as equal to men.

There are some reasons why social contract theorists confined women to domestic areas. First of all, women were regarded as subordinates to men mostly because they were assumed to lack the capacity to be a part of civil life. Rousseau, for instance, claims that women cannot think rationally and lack reasoning. He elaborates his ideas on women as follows:

As they are not in a condition to judge for themselves, women should receive the decision of fathers and husbands as they would the decision of the Church. Not being able to draw from themselves alone the rule of their faith, women cannot confine it within the boundaries of evidence and reason, but, allowing themselves to be carried away by a thousand extraneous impulses, they are always on this side or that of the truth (Rousseau, 1918, p.276).

Rousseau emphasizes that women should be dominated by men's reasoning as they cannot control their emotions and women lack the capacity for rational thinking. As for him, women possess inherent intellectual limitations. Thus, Rousseau marginalizes women and denies their possession of rational capabilities. Moreover, Rousseau promotes the belief that women should maintain a state of dependence and submissiveness, while men should assume positions of dominance. The variances between genders need to be acknowledged and valued as manifestations of nature. The idealized gender roles dictate that men should possess physical strength and vitality, while women should exhibit fragility and passivity. The former is expected to possess both the capability and determination to exert control, yet the latter is seen as sufficient by offering little opposition (Rousseau, 1918, p. 322). According to Rousseau, docility is considered an essential requirement for women. He asserts that in order for women to effectively fulfill their responsibilities, they must be educated to be docile (Rousseau, 1918, p.333). Moreover, he also points out that women's education should be regarding domestic area and should please men. In his book *Emile, or on Education*, he elaborates his ideas about the education of women and reflects on women's domestic education while depicting Sophie's capabilities and he writes, "[s]he has studied all the details of housekeeping; she understands cooking and cleaning" (Rousseau, 1918, p.377). Therefore, Rousseau emphasizes the importance of domestic

education of women, which excludes them from participating in civil society as active members. Therefore, men's domination is reflected as a natural order and women are expected to be docile in their private life.

However, close to the 18th century, some writers opposed Rousseau's ideas. Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the feminist writers of the era, criticized social contract which confined women. One of the issues she argued was the feminine roles that were attached to women. She asserts that "[w]omen are, in fact, so much degraded by mistaken notions of female excellence" (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.32). With this assertion, she rejects the distinctive features that are attributed to femininity associated with weakness, passivity, and excessive sensibility. As for her, these feminine attributes make women dependent on men. She believes that the respected female sensitivity and delicacy is not a virtue, but rather the product of misleading education that shows women with weak personalities (Spencer, 1988, p.99). In her treatise, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), she claims that she will treat women as "rational creatures" instead of seeing them as if they are children who are "unable to stand alone" (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.14). She tries to convince women that the feminine view which is connected to weak minds, and docile manners is used by men to increase women's "slavish dependence" (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.14).

Therefore, it is evident that Wollstonecraft attacks the male authority which confines women to specific standards. Moreover, she complains about the inadequate educational opportunities for women, and she discusses that women are enslaved as they are not given enough chances to sharpen their understanding, and women are being kept in blind obedience (Wollstonecraft, 2014, pp. 40-42). Women must have equal rights to get education, which improves their perception and reason. As a result, Wollstonecraft defends equality for women, and she argues that women are enslaved by the patriarchal, oppressive male authority by granting them very little educational opportunities. Moreover, Hays shares similar ideas with Wollstonecraft. She fights repressive patriarchal ideology and condemns the use of dual standards (Spencer, 1988, p. 208). Hays criticizes this situation in her book *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* and states:

[T]he whole system raised and supported by the men, tends to, nay I must be

honest enough to say hangs upon, degrading the understandings, and corrupting the hearts of women; and yet! they are unreasonable enough to expect, discrimination in the one, and purity in the other (Hays, 1974, p.59).

In other words, she criticizes feminine qualities that patriarchy tries to expose, arguing that it fosters weakness and excessive sensibility. She also “condemns the gender inequities of contemporary society” and questions “the male biases of traditional ethics: the privileging of reason over emotion, abstraction over particularity, and self-sufficiency over interdependence” (Norton, 2012, p.124). Thus, Hays attacks both the gender disparities prevalent in society and challenges the perceived male-centered perceptions within the conventional ethical framework. With the Enlightenment ideology, her aim is “championing free inquiry, private judgment, equality, the struggle against "prejudice" a faith in progress and the ameliorating effects of knowledge, a utilitarian-inflected ethics, and defence of the individual's right to pursue happiness” (Norton, 2012, p.298).

Consequently, the concept of "individuals" was exclusively associated with men. That is, women were seen as the property of their fathers first, and then their spouses after the marriage. The only thing that women could do is to represent morality and a humble life where they had to be satisfied with their subordination. Society restricted women with traditional assumptions imposed on women. Rousseau claims that women cannot participate in the social sphere as they do not possess certain capacities as men do. However, women writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays defend equality and education for all women. They argued that women were limited due to education mostly given on domestic issues. This kind of education was given to keep women in confinement. Thus, they also assert that if equal educational opportunities are provided for women, they can improve their abilities and capabilities. To sum up, despite dramatic changes in social and political life in the 18th century in terms of liberty and human rights, women were kept in line with their restrictions. This situation led to many negative effects on women both in civil and private life as well as traumatic experiences which will be discussed in the following sections.

1.2. Trauma, Hysteria and Culture

The term "trauma" in the English language can be traced back to its etymological origins in the Greek language, specifically from the word "wound" which denotes an injury on the body (Caruth, 2016, p.16). David J. Morris asserts that the term "trauma" initially denotes a bodily injury in the field of medicine during the 17th century. Nevertheless, it was not until the mid-19th century that the term was utilized to describe a psychological injury resulting from a physical shock (Morris, 2015, p.62). The concept of damages is grounded in a model of trauma that is institutionalized in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The disorder has been formally acknowledged by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is primarily characterized as a condition that affects memory. The concept postulates that as a result of the emotional responses of fear and astonishment elicited by specific occurrences, the psyche undergoes a division or dissociation, rendering it incapable of acknowledging the psychological injury due to the disruption of the typical mechanisms of perception and comprehension. Consequently, the individual who has suffered the traumatic experience is rendered incapable of recalling and assimilating the distressing event into their regular state of awareness. On the contrary, they are plagued or controlled by intrusive recollections of the trauma. The trauma experience resists being portrayed as a past event. Instead, it is persistently relived in a dissociated, painful, and traumatic present. The symptoms commonly associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), such as flashbacks, nightmares, emotional detachment, depression, guilt, autonomic arousal, explosive violence, or excessive alertness, are believed to stem from crucial disconnection of the mind (Leys, 2010, p.2).

Freud's early studies on trauma contributed to contemporary trauma theories. His analysis of female hysteria can be an example of cultural traumas. Hysteria is a mental disorder that arises as a result of traumatic experiences. The experience of traumatic events can elicit intense emotional responses that lead to a modified state of consciousness, subsequently resulting in the manifestation of symptoms associated with hysteria. Thus, as for Freud, hysteria and traumatic events are closely related. Freud links them by stating "[h]ysterical symptoms are memory-symbols of certain (traumatic) impressions and experiences that are active" (Freud & Breuer, 2004,

p.303). In other words, hysteria is regarded as an enigmatic illness characterized by symptoms that are unclear and difficult to comprehend. As Judith Herman states “hysteria was a condition caused by psychological trauma. Unbearable emotional reactions to traumatic events produced an altered state of consciousness, which in turn induced the hysterical symptoms” (Herman, 1992, p.7). Thus, Freud examined these emotional reactions in some women patients and applied psychoanalytic treatment to them. In his work *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, he presents an examination of the hysteria of a woman patient whom he calls Dora. This case can explicitly show how social factors can trigger mental disorders. Dora is a twenty-one-year-old girl who suffers from hysteria. Dora’s case provides significant insights into the circumstances surrounding a young woman belonging to a bourgeoisie family. Dora possesses limited opportunities for autonomous engagement, as she is closely monitored by her family and parental expectations, resulting in a sense of pressure. Freud analyzes her symptoms and states that she has persistent coughing attacks, and she also exhibits depression, including constant weariness and diminished ability to concentrate (Freud, 1997, pp. 22-24). Moreover, she is suicidal. When her father finds a letter on her desk about her suicidal intentions, he decides to take her to Freud for treatment (Freud, 1997, p. 23). Dora's psychological difficulties can be readily associated with her socio-cultural context. She holds the belief, which is supported by Freud, that she is being utilized as a mere instrument in a strategic negotiation between her father and Herr K. The father expresses a desire to engage in a reciprocal exchange, offering Dora in return for Frau K. (Herr K’s wife), with the intention of maintaining an uninterrupted extramarital relationship with her (Freud, 1997, p.33). Moreover, Dora talks about the sexual harassment that she experienced. In one incident, Herr K. invites Dora to a place by the lake and tries to seduce her by saying “You know I get nothing out of my wife” (Freud, 1997, p.98). After the incident, Dora slaps him and runs away. Following the occurrence, Dora has recurring dreams which Freud comments on “I knew that the dream was a reaction to that experience (Freud, 1997, p.66). Thus, Dora is annoyed with his attitude, and having dreams is another symptom that she experiences trauma. In another scene, she mentions Herr K.'s endeavour to engage in physical affection with her, who is fourteen years old at the time, he tries to manipulate her into a sexual affair when they are alone in his office. Dora feels disgusted by his attack; however,

Freud interprets Dora's behavior as a result of repressing her sexual desire and thinks that Dora's reaction shows an abnormality. He claims that "[i]n this scene...the behaviour of this child of fourteen was already entirely and completely hysterical" and he adds that this is not a healthy behavior that a girl should display (Freud, 1997, p.28). Hence, it can be deduced that Freud finds Dora's reactions unhealthy, and they occur as a sign of sexual repression. Also, Freud suggests that Dora's cough attacks can be a result of her mental scenarios wherein sexual pleasure is achieved through the utilization of the mouth (Freud, 1997, p.47). Therefore, Freud thinks that the cough may serve as a symptomatic manifestation of Dora's sexual fantasies. Overall, Freud's analysis of hysteria is mostly linked with women's sexuality and their repressed desires. However, Freud disregards the cultural factors underlying the emergence of hysteria. Contemporary feminist critics criticize Freud as his explanations fail to evaluate underlying factors of hysteria. For instance, Judith Herman claims that Freud has rejected the emotions of indignation and shame experienced by women and the abuse that is experienced by Dora, instead, he chooses to link her story with sexuality and desires. Herman asserts that:

Freud refused, however, to validate Dora's feelings of outrage and humiliation. Instead, he insisted upon exploring her feelings of erotic excitement, as if the exploitative situation were a fulfillment of her desire[...]the dominant psychological theory of the next century was founded in the denial of women's reality. Sexuality remained the central focus of inquiry. But the exploitative social context in which sexual relations actually occur became utterly invisible (Herman, 1992, p.9).

Hence, according to Herman, the social environment in which hysteria occurs should be considered and she points out that the traumatic events that Dora passes through occur due to women's exploitation. Thus, Herman criticizes Freud's perspective which only centers on sexuality. Rather than analyzing the background of Dora's feelings, Freud sees the case from a narrow point of view and does not want to see the real problems underlying hysteria. Herman further argues that "[a]t the time of these

investigations there was no awareness that violence is a routine part of women's sexual and domestic lives. [...] The real conditions of women's lives were hidden in the sphere of the personal, in private life" (Herman, 1992, p.19). Thus, sexual and domestic exploitation that trigger trauma is silenced. Moreover, Ann Kaplan also thinks that "Freud does not go on to ask how cultural, political and social roles laid down" (Kaplan, 2005, p.27). Thus, she comments that hysteria is a manifestation of patriarchal norms upheld within the bourgeois family structure (Kaplan, 2005, p.25).

Consequently, the early trauma studies of Freud display that he refuses the reality of women's lives in which women had to endure sexual assaults and abuse. Instead, he connects the trauma with the women's hidden sexual desires by avoiding wider dimensions of this common disease. However, trauma cannot be separated from the culture in which it occurs. Freud's hysteria analysis helps to develop ideas on cultural and social trauma. In the following, contemporary trauma theories will be analyzed to connect how culture plays a role in trauma.

As a result, Freud's analysis overlooked the underlying factors leading to women's traumatic experiences and ignored abuse that women experienced. In contrast, Mary Wollstonecraft's novel, *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, and Mary Hays's novel, *The Victim of Prejudice*, shed light on the real reasons of these traumas by portraying the challenges women encounter in both their social and domestic spheres and they speak up for a reform and recovery in the social context.

1.3. Cathy Caruth and Literary Trauma Theory

In the 1990s, Cathy Caruth established the fundamental principles of trauma theory within the realm of literary criticism, and she published *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* in 1996. In this work, she focuses on trauma studies by integrating a psychoanalytic framework with a deconstructive methodology. She examines the uncertainties surrounding the portrayal of trauma in written works. This approach has aimed to facilitate understanding of traumatic events that are exceedingly difficult to comprehend and depict.

According to Caruth, trauma is a peculiar phenomenon that resides in the unconscious and subsequently troubles the survivor, yearning for comprehension while remaining elusive and intangible due to its presence in the unconscious. Thus,

the initial experience of trauma is inconceivable. The placement of a traumatic event within a narrative occurs only after a period of latency. Cathy Caruth explains the delayed experience of trauma and she states:

The time that elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is called the “incubation period,” a transparent allusion to the pathology of infectious disease. It is the feature one might term latency. In the term “latency,” the period during which the effects of the experience are not apparent, Freud seems to describe the trauma as the successive movement from an event to its repression to its return (Caruth, 2016, p. 15).

In other words, trauma has an incubation period that delays the symptoms. The traumatic event is suppressed during the incubation period but then becomes apparent to the victim. Thus, trauma resides in the victim who lacks initial comprehension, and then it resurfaces to torment the survivor at a later stage. The significance of the traumatic event is derived from its delayed manifestation, as it resists a straightforward localization. When the mind undergoes dissociation or fragmentation, it becomes incapable of perceiving the injury placed upon the psyche due to a disruption of the usual faculties of consciousness and cognition. Consequently, the individual who has been victimized is incapable of recalling and assimilating the distressing encounter into their regular state of awareness.

Furthermore, dissociation of the mind through a traumatic experience generates representation problems in literary works. Christa Schönfelder observes that, in terms of literary representation, Caruth’s deconstructive theory “demands a mode of representation that textually performs trauma and its incomprehensibility through gaps, silences, the repeated breakdown of language, and the collapse of understanding” (Schönfelder, 2013, p.32). Although these elements help to reveal the trauma in literary works, they also show that it is not easy to represent trauma because the mind becomes dissociated after the traumatic event.

Moreover, Caruth not only depicts the unclaimed experience of trauma and the difficulty of representing it in language, but she also examines trauma in the sense of

transhistorical approach by analyzing Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*. Freud's connection of the murder of Moses with the traumatic experience of the Hebrews introduces the notion of cultural trauma. According to Michelle Balaev's illustration, transhistorical approach refers to "traumatic experiences" that are "intergenerationally transmitted based on shared social characteristics" and so that "everyone can experience trauma through vicarious means based on one's ethnic, racial, gender, sexual, or economic background" (Balaev, 2008, p.152). Thus, Cathy Caruth asserts that Freud aims to establish a connection between an individual's experience of trauma and the wider collective, transgenerational, and religious history of the Jewish community (Caruth, 2016, p.12). She declares that "[t]he project of *Moses and Monotheism* is clearly linked ... to the attempt to explain the Nazi persecution of the Jews" (Caruth, 2016, p.12). Therefore, the concept of trauma is not considered as an isolated entity, as trauma extends beyond the individual and transforms into a space for communal exchange. This exchange aims to facilitate a deeper understanding of the trauma for future generations. Hence, Caruth makes a connection between transhistorical trauma and claims that "one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another" (Caruth, 2016, p.24). In this regard, Caruth's work involves a reevaluation of individual trauma as a departure from the singular experience and an arrival into the collective, transgenerational, and religious histories. Ruth Leys examines Caruth's concept of trauma and explains how trauma is transmitted in terms of cultural aspects:

The trauma of one individual is understood as capable of haunting later generations as if the ghosts of the past could speak to those living in the present, contagiously contaminating them in turn. The outcome is that individuals or communities who do not encounter the trauma firsthand are regarded as acquiring the traumatic recollections of those who died in the distant past (Leys, 2010, p.284).

As a result, Caruth makes a connection between trauma and how it is transmitted to other generations. Trauma is based on a belated experience whose effects appear after an incubation stage. To recapitulate briefly, Caruth asserts that the experience of trauma can result in a disturbance in an individual's awareness, which generates

ambiguity in presenting trauma. This, in turn, leads to problems in representing trauma in literary works.

1.4. Socio-cultural Factors of Trauma

One of the contemporary trauma theorists, Michelle Balaev, criticizes Caruth's concept of trauma theory in terms of conceptual aspects. According to her, alternative models and methodologies reevaluating Caruth's theory propose that traumatic experiences possess a definitive value (Balaev, 2014, p.1). Caruth's trauma theory is "consolidating the experience of trauma into a singular, silent ghost" (Balaev, 2014, p.5) and makes the trauma "frozen in a timeless, haunting state" (Balaev, 2018, p.366). She evaluates that Caruth's transhistorical trauma concept shows the victim and perpetrator preserving an identical connection to the traumatic event and having similar reactions. However, individualistic, and cultural factors can alter over time, and this alteration should also be considered. In this regard, Caruthian theory of trauma causes overgeneralization which leads to "pathological universalism" (Balaev, 2014, p.15). As a result, single conceptualization limits the understanding of trauma, the meaning of trauma should be evaluated with its diversity so that Balaev's approach "uncovers new relationships between experience, language, and knowledge that details the social significance of trauma" (Balaev, 2018, p.366). Moreover, Balaev's theory challenges Caruth's unrepresentable concept of trauma, as trauma manifests itself within distinct societal contexts and locations that contribute to the interpretation of the traumatic encounter. Thus, these factors give various meanings to the trauma and save trauma from being unrepresentable.

In her article "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory", Balaev examines trauma fiction and traumatized protagonists, and she claims that fictional characters that have experienced trauma draw attention to the particularity of personal suffering, which is often linked to sociocultural issues and beliefs (Balaev, 2008, p.156). She elaborates her ideas on the traumatized characters as follows:

Individuals suffer traumatic responses in the context of a culture that ascribes different value to the experience and a person's feelings that surround the experience. If the self is conceived as both a product of culture and individual

idiosyncratic tendencies and behaviors, then it follows that the meaning of trauma is found between the poles of the individual and society (Balaev, 2008, p.156).

As a result, Balaev defines trauma with its sociocultural elements to shape its representations and evaluates trauma with various dimensions. The analysis of the cultural environment in which a person or group experiences trauma allows for a deeper examination of how trauma is represented.

Moreover, Judith Herman also presents a shift in the understanding of trauma with her work *Trauma and Recovery* published in 1992. She redefines the conceptualization of trauma which sees trauma falling beyond the boundaries of typical human experiences. She asserts that:

The American Psychiatric Association described traumatic events as “outside the range of usual human experience.” Sadly, this definition has proved to be inaccurate. Rape, battery, and other forms of sexual and domestic violence are so common a part of women’s lives that they can hardly be described as outside the range of ordinary experience (Herman, 1992, p. 24).

Thus, Herman rejects to see traumatic experiences as unusual events, her perspective towards trauma encompasses the enduring and recurrent events that individuals may face in their daily lives. By expanding the spectrum of traumatic experiences, Herman aims to acknowledge and address the pervasive impact of these seemingly ordinary yet profoundly distressing experiences. Herman's model specifically explores the impact of social and cultural practices, conventions, and political and economic systems in the generation of traumas that are previously concealed within the realm of personal experiences and private lives. Additionally, the study examines the methods of recovery in the context of trauma. In contrast to Caruth's emphasis on the incomprehensibility due to dissociation or fragmentation of the mind, Herman posits that trauma is recognizable through the act of remembering and truth-telling. This is essential for both the re-establishment of societal structure and the recovery of

individual victims. According to Herman, the process of recovering from trauma, whether on a communal or individual level, is only possible to occur once it is recognized and shared within the society. The interconnection between individual healing and communal action is evident as individual traumas, particularly domestic abuse -the primary focus of Herman's work- serve as indicators of underlying social issues, specifically patriarchy in this particular context (Herman, 1992, p.157). From Herman's perspective, Caruth's theory fails to acknowledge this connection, as it perceives trauma as a concealed entity within the unconscious mind, disregarding its origins in the broader social context in which it arises, and instead emphasizing its enigmatic characteristics. Caruth's perspective overlooks the significance of collective efforts and rehabilitation in favor of an individual-centric framework. Moreover, her viewpoint eliminates any potential for survivors to exercise their own agency, as they are perceived as captives in an incomprehensible and uncontrollable realm.

Moreover, another contemporary trauma theorist David Becker points out that trauma should be evaluated in the social context. According to Becker, a comprehensive understanding of trauma necessitates considering the specific contextual factors in which it manifests. These factors encompass cultural norms, political circumstances, the nature of the event, the community's structure, and similar aspects (Becker, 2004, p.1). As for him, it is more appropriate to discuss the concept of the traumatic situation rather than the trauma itself. This terminology suggests that the focus should extend beyond the individual who has experienced suffering and encircle the broader context in which this suffering occurs. This includes considering the individual's environment, the specific institutions involved, the state of their community, and the political factors at play. When dealing with trauma, he proposes that “we have to deal with the individual and the society, with the material and the spiritual aspects of life, with politics and economics, justice and psychology” (Becker, 2004, p. 14). Thus, it is proposed that individuals should establish their own interpretation of trauma within a specific social setting, emphasizing the progressive evolution of the traumatic circumstances rather than solely focusing on an individual's symptoms.

As a result, the meaning of trauma lies within the connection between the person and society. Thus, the influence of sociocultural components should be taken

into consideration to understand trauma. From this point of view, the novels *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* and *The Victim of Prejudice* are analyzed with broader social problems that generate trauma which women experienced in 18th-century society. Herman's approach shows that traumatic experiences are not exceptional occurrences, instead, they are constant and recurring incidents that people may encounter in their everyday lives. Thus, the novels present how cultural practices cause women to have traumas in their daily lives within social and private spheres. Moreover, the recovery process of trauma can only happen after it is acknowledged and shared throughout the social framework. That is, there should be a connection between personal healing and collective action. Therefore, the novels demonstrate that the recovery of women can be achieved through sharing and when the social setting is reformed.

2. WOMEN'S CHALLENGES WITH SOCIAL AND LEGAL DEFECTS IN *MARIA, OR THE WRONGS OF WOMAN*

Mary Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* places an emphasis on the traumatic experiences of women, and it serves as a bridge between the singular experience and the communal experience of women. The novel includes fragments without a definite ending, and it was published after Wollstonecraft's death by her husband William Godwin, who was also a Jacobin writer and philosopher of the era. Although the novel can be seen a collection of fragments, it still presents the suffering of women that occurs due to the social and legal defects, and it focuses not only on laws that are inefficient in protecting women but also on customs that have double standards and false morality against women. The title of the novel indicates the wrongs done by unjust social norms and laws. Therefore, the novel criticizes the society that excludes women from the radical ideas of individualism and progress in 18th-century society. On the other hand, it exhibits the traumatic experiences of women to encompass a strong condemnation of the patriarchal society that favors men with their laws and norms; however, the protagonists show women's capacity for resistance and recovery.

The novel is situated inside the Gothic setting of a mental institution and recounts the story of Maria, who has a relatively advantageous position in society and who is confined by her deceitful spouse with the intention of confiscating her fortune. She tries to escape from the confinement. However, laws favor men and make life difficult for her. In addition to Maria's challenges with marriage laws and marital issues, Wollstonecraft depicts Maria's relationship with Darnford, the enigmatic hero who is also an inmate in the asylum, and her friendship with Jemima, the warden of the asylum. The narrative is presented in two perspectives: third-person narration within the confines of the asylum, and first-person narration in memoirs written to Maria's infant daughter. Maria and Jemima become a representation of all women who endure social and legal defects. Maria is Wollstonecraft's most profound critique of the interconnected web of sexual, social, political, and economic structures that collectively confine married women. On the other, Jemima portrays the difficulties that all seduced and raped women encounter due to social norms and prejudices.

Therefore, Maria and Jemima are not only subjected to various traumatic experiences, but their stories related to women's experiences depict the hardships encountered by women that affect their physical and emotional states and well-being. Moreover, the novel is structured as a collection of interconnected narratives that present stories of women from many socioeconomic backgrounds. In this regard, the novel mirrors various narratives of women who are exposed to mistreatment by a male-dominated society. Thus, *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* grounds suffering in a wider aspect linking social and political attitudes towards women, which contextualize oppression and subjection. Wollstonecraft's motivation for writing the novel stems from "the desire of exhibiting the misery and oppression, peculiar to women, that arise out of partial laws and customs of society" as she indicates in the preface of the novel (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.73). Thus, Wollstonecraft demonstrates that the novel is an attack on the social and legal defects of society, so it highlights a collective struggle of women against men's authority, which transforms the subjective perspective into a social issue. While portraying traumatic experiences, Wollstonecraft's characters are empowered by these sufferings, and they use their experiences to fight against tyranny. Also, the novel shows parallelism with her treatise *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. The protagonists confront the restricted education that was offered to women. The education of women predominantly centered on their domestic duties, which hindered their potential for advancement and individual growth. Additionally, social norms contributed to the perpetuated oppression of women with the perception that they possessed inferior physical strength and reasoning abilities and were excessively driven by emotions. Thus, it resulted in their exclusion from active participation in society and rendered women financially dependent on men. All these issues are challenged by Wollstonecraft's protagonists who treat oppositely to these social norms. In this regard, the novel represents these ideas, and it can be seen as a fictionalized version of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

The novel starts in *medias res*, depicting the unfair confinement of Maria, at the hands of her husband, George Venables. In addition to subjecting Maria to confinement in a mental institution, he separates her from her baby daughter. Thus, the beginning of the novel depicts the trauma that Maria experiences. Maria seems in a frenzied state of mind and a melancholic state of idleness and refuses to eat anything

that Jemima serves. Jemima treats her as one of the women facing hysteria and tries to persuade her to eat stating “[Y]ou must and shall eat something. I have had many ladies under my care, who have resolved to starve themselves, but soon or late, they gave up their intent, as they recovered their senses” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.11). Realizing that Jemima might perceive her as a mad person, Maria comprehends that she should recover from her trauma and “preserve her senses” so as not to give a wrong impression to Jemima (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.11). However, the melancholy that she feels is so overwhelming that she finds herself “indulged in sorrow” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.12). Yet, Maria should find a way to escape from this imprisonment to find her daughter. To show her determination, it is stated that “she perceived, must blunt or sharpen the faculties to the opposite extremes producing stupidity, the moping melancholy of indolence, or the restless activity of a disturbed imagination” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.12). Therefore, Maria leaves her melancholy and stops generating excessive feelings, which demonstrates that she relies on her faculties and reasoning. From that point, Maria changes her attitude and becomes decisive not to be confined in her melancholy and to fight for her freedom and her daughter. Upon recognizing Maria's sanity, Jemima consents to provide her with a limited selection of books and “implements for writing” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.13). Reading and writing become ways to recover from trauma and sharpen her senses. Certain books in the collection have annotations made by Henry Darnford, another inmate in the asylum, and it is via his notes that Maria develops an affection for him. The two initiate communication and then arrange a meeting. Darnford discloses that he awoke in the asylum mysteriously subsequent to his arrival in London, and he was unsuccessful in persuading the medical professionals to grant him his freedom. Through this sharing, the three of them develop friendship in the asylum and the novel prepares the reader for the critique of customs and unjust laws that Wollstonecraft condemns for the suffering of women.

Wollstonecraft's criticism starts with the portrayal of Jemima's life. Before revealing Maria's story, Jemima shows how social norms can limit women's lives and deprive them of sustaining their lives as well as how laws favor men rather than women. The story combines the suffering of two generations, Jemima and her mother, who encounter similar issues due to the social norms and expectations of women.

Jemima's mother is a servant who is seduced by a man who also works as a servant in the same place. Realizing her pregnancy, she fears shame due to social norms and she tries to persuade her seducer to get married. Her persistent request for marriage causes him to distance himself and to grow a dislike towards her. She is afraid of social pressures, and she begins to show the effects of trauma after this incident. In melancholy, she thinks that she is ruined, and starves herself to die. Though she is not successful with her attempt, it affects her health negatively. Jemima's mother hides her pregnancy and continues to work as a servant. When the situation is recognized, her seducer faces a mild reprimand from the mistress of the house, and he is allowed to stay in the same place. However, she is forced by her mistress to take shelter in an attic, and she gives birth to Jemima there with no sympathy or support. With the portrayal of the desperate death of Jemima's mother, Wollstonecraft criticizes the social norms that give importance to women's chastity. 18th-century society created fallen women who were seen as sinners and immoral beings when women had sexual intercourse before marriage. As a result, women were required to preserve their chastity before marriage. Lawrence Stone argues society's reaction to these issues as follows: "double standard lies in the stress in secular society on honor [...] In the eighteenth century, the concept of honor had a very clearly defined meaning: a woman's honour (depended on) her reputation for chastity" (Stone, 1977, p.503). Thus, it shows that women who had sexual intercourse without being married lost their chastity and honour, which led them to be subjected to the mistreatment of society. Hence, Wollstonecraft attacks the social norms that create a false morality and double standard that only women are subjected to follow, while men are excluded. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she argues that virtue should not only be related to women but also to men. Society only punishes women with mistreatment and ruins their reputation. However, men are not treated the same and they are favored. Wollstonecraft elaborates her ideas on this issue as follows:

The two sexes mutually corrupt and improve each other. This I believe to be an indisputable truth, extending it to every virtue. Chastity, modesty, public spirit, and all the noble train of virtues, on which social virtue and happiness are built, should be understood, and cultivated by all mankind, or they will be cultivated

to little effect. And, instead of furnishing the vicious or idle with a pretext for violating some sacred duty, by terming it a sexual one, it would be wiser to show, that nature has not made any difference, for that the unchaste man doubly defeats the purpose of nature by rendering women barren, and destroying his own constitution, though he avoids the shame that pursues the crime in the other sex. I have before observed, that men ought to maintain the women whom they have seduced; this would be one means of reforming female manners and stopping an abuse that has an equally fatal effect on population and morals (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.181).

Thus, morality can only be improved if society's moral expectations apply to both sexes. The virtues of both men and women should possess a similar character, for virtue to be considered a relative concept. Consequently, their behavior must be based on the same principles and strive towards the same objective which is to improve “the whole moral law” (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.182). Therefore, Jemima’s mother becomes a representation of all fallen women who are cast away from society. Moreover, Wollstonecraft points out the importance of education for women since she sees that especially women who are intellectually weak are easily destroyed by men’s appetites as the norms of society are driven by the prioritization of men’s desires. Thus, women are seen as objects, not subjects in their sexual exchange. In this society where women conformed to men’s desires, it led to the degradation of women. Wollstonecraft emphasizes this issue when she says, “I cannot discover why, unless they are mortal, females should always be degraded by being made subservient to love or lust” (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.36). Thus, women who are resilient and properly educated are unlikely to succumb to any kind of degradation. As a result, Jemima’s mother’s seduction story shows a morally corrupted society that prioritizes men’s desires and excludes men from moral judgment, and it also indicates the weakness of seduced women who should cultivate themselves not to be a victim of this system. Furthermore, the seduction story of Jemima’s mother chases Jemima through her life from childhood to adulthood and stigmatizes her. Hence, society punishes not only her mother but

also Jemima. Her suffering starts in her childhood when her father sees her “as a curse entailed on him for his sins” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.34). Because of that, Jemima faces both physical and verbal violence from her father. Moreover, when his father gets married again, she is enslaved and mistreated by her stepmother, which shows that she is never accepted in the family. Not only in the family but also in society, Jemima cannot find a place. She is labeled as a “bastard” by society (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.34). Thus, stigmatization occurs continuously in the social context. It feels her melancholy as she sees that she is excluded from society. As a result, she cries a lot when she is alone. Facing terrific maltreatment, Jemima begins to hate human beings as well as herself. When she is sent out of the house, she starts to work as a servant in a mansion where her master rapes her. She ends up pregnant, which causes psychological harm and leaves a lasting wound on Jemima. On the other hand, the horrific incident triggers her memories of childhood trauma when she is called a “bastard” by society. She explains her feelings after learning about her pregnancy, stating “I know not why I felt a mixed sensation despair and tenderness, excepting that, ever called a bastard, a bastard appeared to me an object of the greater compassion in creation” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.31). Wollstonecraft criticizes society which creates victims first and then puts them in a miserable situation. Moreover, Jemima’s story shows how low-class women’s bodies are violated. Wollstonecraft demonstrates that society turns these women’s bodies into properties that men can possess. Colleen Fenno makes a connection between Jemima’s class and the violation of her body, and she explains the issue as follows:

Jemima’s narrative illustrates that working-class women faced greater danger and less legal protections as victims of rape. The relationship between sexuality, property, and class placed working-class women in greater danger because their sexuality was less valued and often considered a shared commodity (Fenno, 2012, p.8).

Thus, Jemima’s rape serves as an illustration of how women who belong to a low class are subjected to exploitation and mistreatment because of social perceptions. Jemima faces prejudices and maltreatment although she has no fault. Moreover, she is exposed

to violence and insults by her master's wife, and she is made a scapegoat due to her class. The mistress of the house throws Jemima out of the house and declares that "(she) should not stay another night under the same roof with an honest family" (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.36). The statement of the mistress illustrates the hypocrisy of the higher classes.

Moreover, Jemima, like her mother, is made a fallen woman by society. After she terminates her pregnancy, she engages in prostitution to earn her living. Lawrence Stone discusses the results of pregnancy without marriage as follows:

The penalties of pregnancy without marriage in the eighteenth century were thus very heavy for both mother and child. The former was likely to lose her job, might be sent to the House of Correction, and eventually be driven into prostitution (Stone, 1977, p.635).

From this assertion, it can be deduced that society stigmatizes these women and does not give them a chance to sustain themselves except prostituting as it happens to Jemima. Due to the rape, she experiences an intense detachment from herself and loses the autonomy of her body. Nancy Johnson argues her situation by stating: "Jemima's life as a commodity follows a logical course toward prostitution as a means of subsistence. Prostitution itself becomes the epitome of a misuse of property, a loss of the self, and the inability to claim one's sexuality and labor as one's own" (Johnson, 2004, p.146). Thus, as Jemima loses control of her body, she experiences a loss of self, which also leads her to become a prostitute. Moreover, Judith Herman evaluates the damaged self of trauma victims and states that "traumatic events violate the autonomy of the person at the level of basic bodily integrity. The body is invaded, injured, defiled" (Herman, 1992, p.38). Due to this violation, the trauma victim loses the sense of self. Therefore, society creates traumatized women because of oppressive norms. Seen as a fallen woman with a disadvantaged socioeconomic status, Jemima faces stigmatization and cannot have a place in society. This situation results in a deprivation of autonomy and a lack of job opportunities. However, Jemima is not like her mother instead, she is a perseverant woman and does not let her traumas make her a passive victim. In contrast, she becomes a trauma survivor. Thus, Jemima endeavours to gain

her autonomy and earn her living when she accepts a gentleman's offer to keep his house. From this moment, Wollstonecraft presents the importance of education for women one more time. During her stay with the man, she gets an opportunity to engage in reading to improve herself. She starts to read to cope with solitude but also to satisfy her curious mind. Her master allows her to listen to the discussions he has with his literary friends. Wollstonecraft shows the readers that these are the elevated discussion topics that women were excluded. However, Jemima gradually improves her faculties, and her master encourages her intellectual growth. Wollstonecraft displays that if opportunities were given to women, they could enhance their intellectual capacities to improve their minds. Therefore, her criticism is on the systematic exclusion of women from attaining an equitable level of formal education equal to men. Jemima's interest in self-improvement echoes Wollstonecraft's critique of the importance of education in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She argues about the education of women as follows:

Let an enlightened nation then try what effect reason would have to bring them back to nature, and their duty; and allowing them to share the advantages of education and government with man, see whether they will become better, as they grow wiser and become free...To render this practicable, day schools for particular ages should be established by the government, in which boys and girls might be educated together (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.220).

Thus, Wollstonecraft posits the notion that education ought to be constructed around the enhancement of women's intellectual capacities, with a particular emphasis on the cultivation of logical thinking abilities, so the principles that are taught to men and women should be similar. This approach can improve the status of women and enhance their prospects within society. As a result, Wollstonecraft portrays Jemima as a representation of all women who have a strong desire for knowledge. Jemima utilizes reading to recover from her traumas and she hopes to get a place in society when she states, "acquiring new principles, I began to have the ambition of returning to the respectable part of society" (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.39). Thus, Wollstonecraft emphasizes the importance of adequate education opportunities for women, which can

recover not only women's position but also women who suffered from this system.

Wollstonecraft also depicts how society hinders women from recovery while excluding their active participation in society with limited job opportunities for them. Jemima argues the lack of opportunities as follows:

A man with half my industry, and I may say, abilities could have procured a decent livelihood, and discharged some of the duties which knit mankind together; whilst I, who had acquired a taste for the rational, nay in honest pride let me assert it, the virtuous enjoyments of life, was cast aside as the filth of society (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.42).

Claiming that she can get better employment, Jemima highlights the gender-based discrimination of society. This problem leads her to live in miserable conditions. Jemima's statements reflect Wollstonecraft's ideas that she argued in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She complains about the society which does not provide job opportunities for women and exclude them from civil life. She discusses the issue as follows:

Business of various kinds, they might likewise pursue, if they were educated in a more orderly manner, which might save many from common and legal prostitution. Women would not then marry for a support, as men accept of places under government, and neglect the implied duties; nor would an attempt to earn their own subsistence, a most laudable one! sink them almost to the level of those poor abandoned creatures who live by prostitution...in order to render their private virtue a public benefit, they must have a civil existence in the state, married or single (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.193-194).

Therefore, she expresses dissatisfaction with the limited employment prospects available to women. She sees the problem that women were not provided adequate job opportunities that can secure their financial stability and foster autonomy. Hence, she believed that job opportunities could foster women's emancipation and self-reliance

rather than dependency on men. To illustrate this issue, Wollstonecraft portrays Jemima's difficulties in finding a job and shows that the lack of job opportunities prevents her from being self-sufficient. Therefore, Jemima becomes a thief, and afterward, she is arrested and taken to jail where she stays for six months. When she is released, she suffers from trauma and remembers all she endured by stating "my soul recoils with horror from the remembrance of the insults I had to endure till branded with shame" (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.44). Yet, she still remarks that "I could not now cease to reason" which shows her reliance on logical thinking (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.44). Therefore, society hurts not only her body but also her mind, but she constantly tries to maintain her life. Eventually, she finds a job in an asylum and meets Maria and Darnford to whom she reveals her story. Wollstonecraft illustrates a society that confines women in various aspects and investigates the problems of social conventions with Jemima and her mother's stories and she also advocates for recovery. Christa Schönfelder analyzes the novel in terms of trauma and investigates the scene where Jemima reveals her story as follows:

The novel here evokes the healing powers of narration in the context of trauma. It is important to emphasize, however, that in Jemima's case, narration does not take the form of solitary self-expression and self-therapy. The novel makes clear that Jemima's type of self-narration is not primarily expressive and cathartic ... Furthermore, in contrast to many postmodern trauma novels, the primary importance of narration for Jemima does not lie in the act of shaping her traumatic past into a coherent narrative or in the search for lost memories as well as for words to embody those memories; rather, what seems to matter most for Jemima is telling her tale in front of an audience, that is, finding a kind, understanding, and sympathetic listener. Through Jemima, then, *The Wrongs of Woman* demonstrates that autobiographical remembering is not a solitary and secluded activity but one that vitally depends on communication and social interaction (Schönfelder, 2013, p.100).

Jemima for the first-time encounters people, Maria and Darnford, who can bear witness to her testimony of trauma and sympathize with her. Thus, the novel explores the potential of recounting personal experiences, which can help to achieve healing and recovery from trauma. Jemima's sharing of her traumas is not centered on provoking strong emotions, instead, it focuses on the act of self-narration in the presence of an audience. Thus, it shows that recovery should not be an isolated endeavour, but rather it should rely on engagements with others. Thus, Wollstonecraft seeks compassionate and emphatic listeners for women's sufferings in a larger social context. It recalls Judith Herman's claim that recovery from trauma can only take place when it is acknowledged and communicated in society. As a result, women are silenced and their traumas are ignored by society; however, they need an audience that will empathize with their stories.

While the novel starts with the details of Jemima's life to exhibit the social and legal problems which seduced and raped women face, the main issue focuses on the unjust marriage laws as well as social expectations from married women. Maria embodies Wollstonecraft's revolutionary ideas that she discusses in her treatise *A Vindication of The Rights of Woman*. Contrary to traditional conceptions of femininity, Maria's reliance on her developed intellect and logical thought distinguishes her from the stereotype of an emotionally driven weak woman. She perceives the flaws that exist in societal norms and legal frameworks. She rejects the traditional societal norms that perpetuate the subordinate position of women to men. In contrast, she endeavors to gain her autonomy. In this regard, "Maria is not only the woman wronged and wounded by men par excellence, but she also functions as the author's feminist politics" as Christa Schönfelder states (Schönfelder, 2013, p.92). One of the problems that Maria faces is her choice of husband and the differences in their expectations of marriage. Maria echoes Wollstonecraft's ideas about marriage where she sees mutual happiness and satisfaction as the essential factors that can sustain a marriage. In other words, Wollstonecraft defends companionate marriages for the prosperity of the spouses. Ruth Abbey argues Wollstonecraft's ideas about marriage as follows:

She envisages a form of marriage that incorporates the major features of the classical notion of higher friendship such as equality, free choice, reason, mutual

esteem, and profound concern for one another's moral character. The classical ideal of higher friendship provides a suitable model for her liberal approach to marriage because it represents the paradigmatic rational, equal, and free relationship. In such relationships, individuals exchange some of their independence for interdependence and are united by bonds of deep and lasting affection, as well as respect for and appreciation of one another's character and individuality (Abbey, 1999, p.79).

Thus, Wollstonecraft sees marriage as a companionship which is based on mutual respect, genuine affection, and equality and her protagonist, Maria reflects these ideas. Maria experiences problems in her marriage when she realizes that it is not a companionate marriage as she desires. Before she gets married to Venables, Maria observes his behavior and evaluates if he can be a good husband that she expects from a companionate marriage. Maria is convinced that he is a cultivated man and sees him as “superior to the rest of mankind” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.54). However, she learns that he took five thousand pounds from her uncle to get married. Thus, as for George Venables, it is a conventional marriage in which women can be commodified and exploited. Moreover, Maria perceives that George is not as intellectually strong as she thinks, and she realizes “defects in (her) husband’s understanding” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.62). On the other hand, she still tries to improve his taste, but her attempts fail. She comprehends that “she cannot become the friend or confidant” of her husband (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.63). As a result, although Maria tries to cultivate a deeper connection with her spouse with her attempts to improve his intellect to make him suitable for a woman as cultivated like her, she confesses that she fails to change him. After spending some days with him, she feels like “the most stupid creature in the world”, so she cannot have the marriage that she desires (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.60). In contrast, Wollstonecraft's portrayal of Danford, whom Maria meets in the asylum exemplifies what she expects from a companionate marriage. Maria obtains books from Jemima, upon which she encounters Danford’s annotations. She discerns that Danford must have a refined manner and be intellectually equal to her. Wollstonecraft shows that unlike Maria’s husband, Danford and Maria have common interests that

facilitate engaging conversations and affection. Consequently, it leads to the development of a relationship between them, so Maria sees him as the potential life partner.

Another issue that Wollstonecraft criticizes is the lack of property rights of women in their marriages. Women are compelled to surrender their property as well as personal autonomy upon entering marriage. William Blackstone explains women's position in marriage by stating:

By marriage ... they are one person in law, so that the very being and existence of the woman is suspended during the coverture, or entirely merged and incorporated in that of the husband. And hence it follows, that whatever personal property belonged to the wife, before marriage, is by marriage absolutely vested in the husband (Blackstone, 1753, p.294).

Thus, married women were subject to the legal principle of coverture, which establishes the married pair as one economic entity and grants the husband the authority to manage the woman's property and personal belongings. Additionally, the legal status of a married woman was traditionally seen as being combined with that of her husband, resulting in the absence of her separate legal existence. Therefore, Wollstonecraft criticizes this issue by portraying Maria's confinement. A woman like Maria who possesses a substantial amount of riches should have the autonomy to make choices. However, paradoxically, her wealth becomes the very reason why she is confined within a mental institution. Maria's uncle endeavors to evade the legal provision that transfers a married woman's assets to her spouse. Thus, he bequeaths the majority of their wealth to Maria's daughter and designates Maria as the legal custodian. Maria plans to free herself by escaping to Italy with her daughter after she gets the wealth of her uncle. However, the plan designed to liberate Maria from her husband's oppressive rule, causes her to become more tightly bound to his authority and imprisons her in an asylum (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.89). In the book, *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987*, Lawrence Stone the issue as follows:

Cruelty is deliberately used to force the wife to supply more money; either by

persuading her parents to give a larger marriage portion or by inducing her to surrender control over property which had been secured to her by a trust deed before marriage (Stone, 1990, p.142).

Thus, Venables's purpose becomes clear, he only wants to acquire Maria's property and riches. Therefore, by the portrayal of Maria's confinement, Wollstonecraft expresses strong disapproval towards the authority exercised by husbands over wives, while also offering critique towards legal frameworks that fail to provide enough protection for married women. Thus, Venables, in order to seize Maria's property, not only confines Maria but also kidnaps their daughter. When Maria learns that her daughter is dead, she implies that Venables is responsible for her death as Maria's uncle allocated his assets to her daughter to avoid the legal clause that requires the transfer of the assets of a married woman to her husband. Thus, Wollstonecraft illustrates the arbitrary force of husbands and the laws.

The narration of Maria's story is left half-finished after the door of the asylum opens and Maria flees the asylum with Jemima. Godwin explains that Wollstonecraft designed to prepare three parts for the novel and the ones which are presented to the readers can be considered one part of the novel. Since the novel is not completed, Godwin understands that there might be some readers who have a desire to learn the subsequent developments in the novel. Thus, he declares that he presented the incomplete and unfinished paragraphs for those who are keen to envision the following progression of the novel. Therefore, due to the incomplete parts, the rest of the novel creates suspense. Based on the sketches provided by Godwin in incoherent form, it may be inferred that in subsequent parts of the novel, Maria's husband initiates legal proceedings against Darnford on charges of seduction and adultery. Additionally, the readers may deduce that Maria undertakes the task of formulating a legal defence for the court and seeks a divorce after Darnford needs to depart for Paris. Therefore, it may be deduced that Maria persistently condemns the repressive legislation that subjugates women to enslavement and criticizes flawed morality that diminishes women's worth to their chastity and obedience, while pardoning offenses committed by men. Thus, from the incomplete part, we can understand that she expresses a profound outrage at a system that unjustly burdens women with social expectations.

The seduction and adultery trial that Maria's husband initiated was commonly known as "criminal conversation" in the era. Elaine Jordan explains "Criminal Conversation" as follows:

"Criminal conversation" was the name of the action in common law by which a husband could claim damages from the seducer of his wife: money in compensation for his lost honour, and all the benefits of cohabitation with his wife (Jordan, 1997, p.223).

Thus, criminal conversation as one of the legal procedures highlights the importance of marriage and sexual fidelity reinforcing the subjugation of women. Legal systems, as seen in the case of Maria, exhibit social attitudes, influencing not only moral perspectives but also subjecting women's behavior. While women were supposed to tolerate every oppression in the marriage, a wife's adultery was seen as intolerable. Therefore, from the incomplete parts that are presented by Godwin, Wollstonecraft continues to show the hypocrisy of society, as Venables who betrays Maria in their marriage, has a right to sue her and her lover. However, Wollstonecraft wants to portray a strong woman who can defend herself and criticize the unjust laws, so Maria writes a defence to the court although Darnford is the one who is charged with seduction and adultery. As Schönfelder observes, Maria's written defence includes "powerful political statements" and "it is a feminist manifesto, denouncing the array of wrongs done to women and proclaiming the right of women to free themselves from the yoke of male oppression" (Schönfelder, 2013, p.87). In her defence, Maria criticizes the laws and social norms that enslave women, and she speaks up for her rights and explains all the oppression that she has endured during her marriage. Her protest is as follows:

After leaving, what the law considers as my home, I was hunted like a criminal from place to place, though I contracted no debts, and demanded no maintenance--yet, as the laws sanction such proceeding, and make women the property of their husbands, I forbear to animadvert. After the birth of my daughter, and the death of my uncle, who left a very considerable property to

myself and child, I was exposed to new persecution; and, because I had, before arriving at what is termed years of discretion, pledged my faith, I was treated by the world, as bound forever to a man whose vices were notorious (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.103).

Maria's defence depicts inequality and double standards in society. She sees that society is a hypocrite, and the expectation from women is to be docile and to be subject to men, while men are patriarchally privileged. Maria challenges the confines of cultural norms, and she becomes a figure of resistance. As a result, she demands to get divorced by claiming "if laws exist, made by the strong to oppress the weak, I appeal to my own sense of justice, and declare that I will not live with the individual, who has violated every moral obligation which binds man to man" (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.103). Thus, she advocates for equitable treatment towards women who choose to separate from their spouses in unhappy marriages, emphasizing the need to treat them with dignity and fairness rather than subjecting them to criminalization. Moreover, the incomplete paragraphs of the novel also include the judge's statements. It may be deduced Wollstonecraft maintains to mirror society's unjust norms and expectations with the judge's statements. As for him, permitting women to justify adultery based on their emotions is seen as a potential catalyst for widespread immorality. Echoing the social impositions on women, the judge states that she was obliged to demonstrate affection and adhere to the authority of her husband designated by her parents and relatives, who have the wisdom and better understanding to make decisions on behalf of her. The judge's statements are the mirror of expectations from women who were perceived as irrational and emotional beings. Moreover, regarding the allegations brought against her husband, he finds them imprecise with a lack of proof. Thus, Wollstonecraft exhibits a hypocritical society in which accusations made by men were not subjected to scrutiny, but those made by women were disregarded. Overall, he claims that the holy status of marriage should be maintained, and infidelity of women should not be legalized by granting them a divorce (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.105). Although the narration contains fragmentary parts of the judge's statements, it can be induced that his utterance portrays the unfair treatment of both society and laws that favor men. However, Maria continues to become the voice of women and asks for a

right to defend themselves legally and to reform the unjust laws.

Consequently, Wollstonecraft emphasizes that it is required to examine the laws concerning women. She demonstrates the role of the legal system in perpetrating violations of women's rights. The focus of her critique is the judicial procedure that subjects women to the judgment of men. Hence, the persistent exposure of various types of abuse can be seen as a significant consequence of an unjust legal framework. In addition to legal frameworks, women are also subject to the influence of societal norms and expectations, which lead them to suffer. These women are subjected to the hardships that arise from societal influences. Therefore, Maria and Jemima exemplify the notion that the most effective means of alleviating the burdens imposed upon women is to advocate for change and promote women's education.

Although the novel primarily centers around the narratives of Maria and Jemima, it also touches upon various stories of other women being confined in restrictive marriages. Wollstonecraft emphasizes women's suffering by including women from different social status and backgrounds. Maria reveals the stories of women that she meets as Wollstonecraft supports the idea that women's oppression should be analyzed from a wider perspective and should be viewed as a communal experience of women. Eleanor Ty explains the reason why different voices are utilized by stating "Wollstonecraft uses repetition as a structural device, using the voices of other characters in the novel to weave her argument back and forth" (Ty, 1993, p.40). Wollstonecraft's argument emphasizes that the traditional education given to women is the main problem that leads women to suffer in their marriages and civil life. During the era, especially via the conduct books, women were given guidance and education on appropriate etiquette and ethical behavior. On the surface, these books seemed to contribute to the enhancement of women's personal qualities. However, their primary focus was on shaping women to meet the expectations of their male counterparts, namely fathers and spouses. According to Wollstonecraft, the ongoing maintenance of women's subordination is facilitated by institutions that effectively organize and enforce oppressive practices. Thus, Wollstonecraft observes that men, who possess political and social authority, have a vested interest in preserving the existing state of affairs by educating women to subordinate themselves and obey the authority of men. Rousseau who shares similar ideas pushes women to accept this subordination.

Rousseau's advice to women can be read as follows:

What is most wanted in a woman is gentleness; formed to obey a creature so imperfect as man, a creature often vicious and always faulty, she should early learn to submit to injustice and to suffer the wrongs inflicted on her by her husband without complaint (Rousseau, 1918, p.351).

It can be seen that women are instructed to obey their husbands and to be dependent on men slavishly; however, Wollstonecraft posits that "strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience" (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.33). Thus, traditional education promotes submissiveness and domesticity. In the novel, Wollstonecraft reflects the importance of education for women when Maria encounters the misery of women that is a result of blind obedience. While hiding from her husband, Maria hears similar stories from various women and shows the effects of the conduct books that teach women submission. In one instance, Maria hides in a shop whose owner holds the belief that her chance of escaping is very low since she believes a woman is obligated to endure any circumstances in her marriage. Wollstonecraft portrays the woman echoing the ideas of Rousseau who suggests women must endure everything in their marriages. However, Maria disagrees with her and feels pity when she observes how miserable she looks, and she describes her situation:

Her pale face, on which appeared a thousand haggard lines and delving wrinkles, produced by what is emphatically termed fretting, inforced her remark... She toiled from morning till night; yet her husband would rob the till, and take away the money reserved for paying bills; and, returning home drunk, he would beat her if she chanced to offend him, though she had a child at the breast (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.81).

As seen in her expression, the woman is constantly being abused by her husband. She engages in arduous labor for her family; however, she believes that she must bear everything including domestic violence. Wollstonecraft argues that the women who "are cruelly neglected by their husbands; or, days and weeks are spent in dreaming of

the happiness enjoyed by congenial souls, till the health is undermined and the spirits broken by discontent” (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p. 37). Thus, this slavish subordination deteriorates women’s minds and health and prevents them from having happy marriages. Moreover, Wollstonecraft establishes a connection between Maria and the shop owner’s hardships in their marriages. Both Maria and the shop owner’s husbands seize their money for gambling. Additionally, they both consume a great amount of alcohol and abuse women physically and sexually. Although both the shop owner and Maria experience the same problems in their marriages, Maria as an educated woman cannot agree that a woman must be subordinate to men despite all the cruel behavior they face. Thus, it can be deduced that the education that women receive is based on men’s authority, and these women are kept in ignorance and dependent on purpose.

Furthermore, when Maria attempts to seek a new accommodation, she witnesses a different woman whose marriage life seems to be like the shop owner’s situation. Her spouse mirrors general men’s attitude towards women. Not only does he cheat on her, but also, he gets into debt. Thus, the husband appears to be an exact copy of Maria and the shop owner lady’s husbands. Elizabeth Dolan compares the husbands of three women and claims “Like the previous landlady, this woman’s story mirrors Maria’s own experience with a husband’s theft of his wife’s money” (Dolan, 2008, p.206). Therefore, like the woman who runs a shop, she also internalizes her subordination to her husband and highlights submissive behavior and obedience for a happy marriage. Although these women face the misbehavior of their husbands, they accept their situation, and they believe this is how they can sustain their existence in society. Mary Wollstonecraft repeats similar stories of women from different social backgrounds to illustrate what women must endure because of the traditional education that is granted only to please men. However, Maria embodies a woman who drives strength from her cultivated mind. As Ferguson and Todd argue “Wollstonecraft consistently treated education as the solution to women's mental and physical lack of development and as a need for independence, equality, and the virtuous life” (Ferguson & Todd, 1998, p.19). Therefore, the development of intellectual faculties has the potential to counterbalance the degrading societal and domestic circumstances experienced by women. Therefore, throughout the novel, she defends this argument by illustrating the suffering that women encounter due to their ignorance. Thus, it is

evident that most of the women demonstrate passive obedience to the authority, however, Maria reflects the exploitation of women by questioning “Was not the world a vast prison, and women born slaves?” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.8). As a result, Maria's realization of the oppression that women face collectively begins with her direct awareness of her strengths in her faculties and intellect, expands to include empathy for the sufferings of other women, and culminates in a more comprehensive awareness of this oppression.

Wollstonecraft also argues that mothers play a big role in the education of their children. In order to guide their children's intellectual development effectively, it is essential for mothers to possess a certain level of education, which will enable them to assist their children in shaping their intellect and disposition. Ultimately educated mothers can foster their children's ability to contribute positively to society. Wollstonecraft criticizes the society which deprives women of getting a formal education and still expects to foster good mothers, thus she asks the questions as follows:

Do passive indolent women make the best wives? Do the women who, by the attainment of a few superficial accomplishments, have strengthened the prevailing prejudice, merely contribute to the happiness of their husbands? Do they display their charms merely to amuse them? And have women, who have early imbibed notions of passive obedience, sufficient character to manage a family or educate children? (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.46).

With this assertion, Wollstonecraft suggests that women should get an education similar to that of men so that they can develop human characteristics or perfections using the same methods as men. If women can get a formal education, they can be better equipped to nurture the faculties of their children. She emphasizes the roles of mothers by portraying Maria's mother. Maria's mother is a failed mother as she is not capable of educating their children. Maria depicts her when she states: “My mother had an indolence of character which prevented her from paying attention to our education” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.51). Thus, Wollstonecraft defends that mothers

like Maria's cannot be good mothers as their intellectual capacities are inadequate. Wollstonecraft sees that the problem occurs because of the traditional education that men regulate and condemns them as follows:

In the regulation of a family, in the education of children, understanding, in an unsophisticated sense, is particularly required: strength both of body and mind; yet the men who, by their writings, have most earnestly laboured to domesticate women, have endeavoured by arguments dictated by a gross appetite, that satiety had rendered fastidious, to weaken their bodies and cramp their minds (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.83).

Therefore, she posits that men serve as barriers to women's attainment of a comprehensive education in order to fulfill their roles as nurturing mothers. When women's mental and physical faculties are nurtured, they will possess the ability to excel in their role as mothers and effectively manage the well-being of their families and children. Nevertheless, as seen in Maria's portrayal, mothers such as hers have limitations in their ability to impart the necessary knowledge to children, which will hinder them from being responsible members of society. Wollstonecraft highlights the notion that when women lack the capacity to provide education to their children, they cannot make positive contributions towards social progress. Therefore, Maria's mother does not serve as a positive role model for their children. Nevertheless, Maria engages in personal growth and development through the education that her uncle provides her. Therefore, she has the necessary intellectual power that will protect her from oppressive men. As a result, Maria sees her mother as a sufferer of her father's repressiveness and thinks that it is her father who has caused a deterioration in her mother's well-being as he has a severe impact on her life. She implies that her mother's death is related to the harsh domestic conditions that are formed by her father, and she remarks "I shall pass over the tyranny of my father, much as I suffered from it; but it is necessary to notice, that it undermined my mother's health; and that her temper, continually irritated by domestic bickering, became intolerably peevish" (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.48). This claim highlights Maria's perception of her mother as a social victim constrained by the limitations imposed on women. However, being

a cultivated woman, Maria distinguishes herself from this group of women. Although she experiences similar traumas, she does not resign herself to her husband. Instead, she wants to speak up against cruelty.

The concept of motherhood, with a special focus on the link between mothers and daughters, has significant prominence throughout the novel. The significance of a nurturing maternal figure is shown to be crucial in the developmental process of young women, while the act of becoming a mother is portrayed as a transformational and beneficial power. With these aims, Maria engages in the act of writing memoirs addressed to her daughter, and she intends to impart guidance and instruction. The memoirs authored by her serve as a critical analysis of the conduct books prevalent during the era, which instruct women to conform to social expectations that are imposed upon them. Nevertheless, Maria aspires to nurture her daughter's intellectual development by addressing the problems that women encounter and showing her how to navigate these challenges that impede women's progress in society.

To sum up, Wollstonecraft challenges the belief of teaching women only household responsibilities, she argues that such an approach hinders their potential and reinforces their subordination to men's authority. These women experience suffering and trauma that deteriorates their minds and well-being, which can even lead them to die. On the other hand, they fail to be good mothers and wives. Wollstonecraft posits that in order to be a proficient mother, a woman needs to exhibit intelligence and a level of autonomy that is often lacking in women who are conditioned to rely only on their husbands. Thus, she portrays Maria as a strong woman who can fight the oppression of men via her intellectual strength, and as a mother, she shows that she has a role in improving her daughter's mind and protecting her from social defects. In order to instruct her, she keeps writing memoirs which can be read as a critique of the conduct books. Therefore, women who are cultivated can contribute positively to society as they are more like to transmit their knowledge to their children, which will result in the development of more compliant citizens.

As a result, due to Mary Wollstonecraft's death, the novel is incomplete. According to Godwin, "Very few hints exist respecting the plan of the remainder of the work" (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.108). Thus, he compiles "two detached sentences"

and “some scattered heads” to show what Wollstonecraft was planning for the development of the novel (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.108). Godwin presented these detached sentences and heads extracted from Wollstonecraft's drafts in order to give hints about her ideas. We may deduce that most of the fragmentary ideas do not seem optimistic which is contradictory to the portrayal of Maria who is a cultivated woman with her intellect and reasoning. From one of the fragmentary sentences, we might deduce that Darnford and Maria experience a temporary parting followed by a joyful reunion. However, during the separation, Maria seems restless as Darnford engages in correspondence through letters, a portion of which is lost. We might evaluate this idea as too sentimental. Wollstonecraft was opposed to excessive sentimentalism, and she portrayed a woman who depended on her rationality. Therefore, this fragmentary sentence does not seem to serve the purpose of why Wollstonecraft wrote the novel. Another uncertain fragment shows Darnford's absence due to professional engagements, and his delayed return. However, Wollstonecraft ends this fragmentary sentence by stating “love to excess excludes fear or suspicion”, which might indicate that she does not let Maria express her emotions in an exaggerated manner. This might be a suitable expectation of Maria's attitude. Except for these sentences, Godwin provides some scattered heads for the continuation of the novel. One of the heads is “Trial for adultery–Maria defends herself–a separation from bed and board in the consequence–Her fortune is thrown into chancery – Darnford obtains a part of his property–Maria goes into the country” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.108). Although we cannot deduce much from these heads, we might say that Wollstonecraft imagines Maria as a continuous fighter who claims her rights and defends herself. Other illustrated heads are “a prosecution for adultery commenced-trial- Darnford sets out for France-Letters- Once more pregnant-her returns- mysterious behavior -visit-expectation-discovery-interview-consequence” (Wollstonecraft, 1994, p.108). These notes can be the most ambiguous ones. However, we might comprehend that Maria seems suspicious of Darnford, which gives the impression of betrayal. The following heads seem to illustrate Maria's trial which results in payment for the damages and a separation from bed and board. She most probably gets pregnant by Darnford but she has a miscarriage. From the last headings, we might infer that she learns Darnford's betrayal, and has a miscarriage. Ultimately, she commits suicide. Although

Wollstonecraft does not portray Maria as a victim, these notes show that she was thinking of suicide as an option. Final notes that Godwin shares with the readers show several pivotal attributes that can be associated with trauma. With some fragmentary sentences, Wollstonecraft pictures Maria as suicidal. Maria prepares herself to take a pill to suppress her distressing past and evade her agonizing ordeal. The haunting images of her child do not leave her even when she prepares to die. Hence, Maria is surrounded by her lost child's misery; however, the suicide attempt is interrupted by Jemima bringing Maria's child. The illustration shows us that Wollstonecraft denies the idea of suicide for her protagonist. A woman like Maria should be resilient enough to endure her suffering. However, the scene still has a surreal setting and clearly elicits a mental breakdown. As a result, the novel is incomplete, and the readers cannot know what Wollstonecraft was thinking for the continuation of the novel. These detached sentences and scattered heads might give us some hints about her plans.

To sum up, the novel not only highlights the failure of the laws to secure women but also sheds light on the presence of discriminatory customs and hypocritical moral standards that perpetuate injustice against women. Due to these problems, women encounter distressing situations both in civil life and in private life. Jemima and her mother represent all women who are ostracized by the society not only due to seduction and rape but also their class. Social norms and expectations cast them away from society. On the other hand, Maria is trapped in a marriage in which her husband treats her as property. Maria criticizes the laws that do not protect the married woman. Thus, laws and customs favor men and keep women in silence and blind obedience. In this context, the experiences of women in social and private life cause them to have traumas. Although the novel reveals the suffering of women, Wollstonecraft empowers her protagonists with educated and cultivated minds, which she sees as necessary for progress and recovery.

3. TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE IN *THE VICTIM OF PREJUDICE*

Mary Hays' novel *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799) displays traumatic encounters experienced by Mary Raymond to exemplify injustices including both the legal system and the oppressive nature of patriarchy faced by women. Hays advocates for social transformation in terms of moral values as well as legal system and challenges the patriarchal structure of society by depicting a woman who consistently strives for independence and acceptance. Being an illegitimate child raised by a guardian called Mr. Raymond, Mary is cast out of society because of her mother's bad reputation. Though she is raised as a virtuous and cultivated character, she cannot escape from stigmatization. She becomes a victim of prejudice not only because of her mother but also of rape. In this regard, the novel explores "the social consequences of rape and woman's refusal to collude with a society that elevates female chastity into woman's sole presence by insisting on her acting out the inevitable position socially required of her" as Marilyn Brooks indicates (Brooks, 2008, p.12). Thus, it can be stated that the novel examines the inescapable outcomes after seduction or rape and criticizes the society that confines women to suffer from social norms and prejudices. Hays brings out her critique by giving Mary the agency to reject the notion of inevitable downfall and confront the biases associated with her illegitimate status and traumatic rape experience. Mary exhibits a refusal to conform to the customary expectations placed upon fallen women. The story engages with a re-evaluation of the concept of chastity, rendering it adaptable and subject to manipulation. Hays criticizes a society that evaluates women in terms of chastity and shows that chastity is a socially constructed term. In this regard, Mary has a resemblance to Jemima in Mary Wollstonecraft's novel *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*. Both characters are illegitimate children who are seen as outcasts. They have no legal, social, or economic rights. Their mothers die in a desperate situation and the mothers' bad reputation affects their own lives as well, which leads them to be seen as the property of the men. Eleanor Ty asserts that "in spirit and intent *Victim of Prejudice* is closer to Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* in that it presents a catalog of possible wrongs or acts of social injustice perpetrated on the eighteenth-century middle-class female" (Ty, 1993, p.60). While Wollstonecraft demonstrates women

from different classes, Hays portrays the impacts of social restrictions on women by presenting a span of two generations, which is Mary and her mother. Therefore, as Jane Spencer argues “*The Victim of Prejudice* is a study of the obstacles in the way of female independence, the ideal that animated Wollstonecraft in *The Rights of Woman*” (Spencer, 1988, p.132). Thus, the novel addresses the issues of social norms, sexual assault, and the marginalization of women within the legal framework portraying the struggle of a daughter who tries to overcome social impositions. Moreover, it endeavors to reform the legal system with a more feminine perspective. Through the novel, Hays tries to exhibit the representation of women’s restrictions in society, in other words, “the confinement of women” that becomes “a physical reality” (Ty, 1993, p.61). The protagonist, Mary, endeavors actively to have a place in society although she experiences traumas and tries to survive with legal and economic disadvantages.

In the first chapter of the novel, Hays presents Mary Raymond’s educational background by showing her with a high level of education provided by her guardian Mr. Raymond. She even exhibits superior academic performance compared to the male students of Mr. Raymond and she develops a keen interest in science and literature. Mary claims that “I was indebted for a robust constitution, a cultivated understanding, and a vigorous intellect” (Hays, 1998, p.5). Traditionally, this type of education was primarily reserved for men, while women were typically instructed in areas such as virtue, and domestic management. Nevertheless, Hays constructs a female protagonist who receives an education equivalent to that of men with the aim of fostering self-sufficiency in contrast to Rousseau’s ideas that limit female education only to domestic areas. In this regard, Hays’ protagonist echoes Wollstonecraft’s emphasis on female education that she presents in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In this context, Hays constructs a female protagonist who receives equal education as her male counterparts, with the intention of fostering the development of an independent and competent woman. In one scene, it is seen that Mary compares her capabilities with one of Mr. Raymond’s students, William, and states “...I found myself foiled by his superior and stature, yet, in courage, in spirit, in dexterity and resource, he was compelled to acknowledge he had met with no contemptible rival” (Hays, 1998, p.49). Thus, Hays depicts a qualified strong woman who resists the idea of weak women that society creates. Hays intentionally gives details about the educational background of

Mary to illustrate a powerful woman. Although Mary is a strong female figure, she is unaware of her mother's past which will lead her to endure hardships throughout her life.

The first time she encounters the prejudices of society is when she learns that she cannot get married to the person she loves. Being in love with William, who she grows up together under the protection of Mr. Raymond, she dreams of getting married to him. However, Mr. Raymond reveals to her that she cannot be the wife of William. Mary hearing the shocking news describes her disappointment stating:

Why can I never be the wife of William Pelham? What tyranny is this? When reason, virtue, nature, sanctify its emotions, why should the heart be controlled? who will dare control it?" I wept anew, sobbed audibly, my bosom bursting with grief. For the first time in my life, I was ready to accuse my guardian of injustice and caprice (Hays, 1998, p.70).

The reason that prevents this marriage is Mary's social status as well as her mother's past. William as "heir to an ancient family and fortune" cannot marry a girl like Mary (Hays, 1998, p.54). Moreover, Mr. Raymond is highly warned by his father, stating "Let him be preserved from humiliating connections" (Hays, 1998, p.74). Thus, Mary is not a suitable wife for William due to social norms. Therefore, the novel brings criticism to a social framework that evaluates individuals based on their economic position and social class. Mary opposes this class distinction and instead, she believes that individual qualities such as education, reasoning, and virtue should be considered in marriage. However, Mr. Raymond by seeing the social norms that make their marriage impossible decides to separate Mary and William by sending Mary to Mr. and Mrs. Neville's house. When William visits her and seems determined not to lose Mary, Mr. Raymond reveals Mary's mother's story depicting another norm of society that extends the issue from class distinction to women's chastity and social prejudices that confine women.

The story of the protagonist's mother, (also) Mary, is revealed to Mary by Raymond. She is seduced and left alone by her seducer when she is pregnant. Rejected

by her family, she faces injustices from society, and she is tagged as a prostitute. Hence, Hays depicts women's predicament for a comprehensive analysis of social institutions labeling women and not giving them a chance to recover from their suffering. When the mother Mary is abandoned by her seducer during her pregnancy, she knows that society will discriminate against her, and she will be ruined. Being seduced and left alone she states: "I found myself suddenly deserted, driven with opprobrium from the house of my destroyer, thrown friendless and destitute upon the world, branded with infamy, and a wretched outcast from social life" (Hays, 1998, p.110). Mother Mary's story explicitly shows what society expects from women. As Janet Todd states society wants to see "sentimental construction of femininity" which is "a state associated with modesty, passivity, chastity, moral elevation and suffering" (Todd, 1989, p.4). Thus, the perception of an ideal woman is primarily associated with her chastity and passive sexuality. This construction is employed as a means of exerting control over female sexuality and desire, which is increasingly viewed as potentially disruptive in light of societal norms. Wetenhall Wilkes shows the importance of chastity for society stating: "Chastity heightens all the virtues ... It is not only an ornament, but also a guard to virtue. This is the great point of female honour, and the least slip in a woman's honour, is never to be recovered" (1740, as cited in Brooks, 2008, p.14). In this regard, women who cannot protect their chastity are seen as fallen women by society. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries "fallen woman" refers to "a woman who had a sexual relationship with somebody who was not her husband"(Oxford University Press, n.d., Definition 1). Thus, the perception of fallen women by society explains the reason why Mary's mother is cast away and excluded from society. Mary Hays criticizes the existence of a dual standard within society, wherein men's immorality is pardoned, but women's promiscuity results in their social exclusion and a lifetime of shame. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft puts an emphasis on the same issue by claiming "a woman who has lost her honor, imagines that she cannot fall lower, and as for recovering her former station, it is impossible; no exertion can wash this stain away" (Wollstonecraft, 2014, p.93). With this assertion, she tries to show that virtue and honor are made by the standards of men and society does not give a chance to women once they have been outcasts by social norms. Mary's mother echoes Wollstonecraft's

criticism towards society when she says “I perceived myself the victim of injustice, of the prejudice, of society, which by opposing to my return to virtue almost insuperable barriers, had plunged me into irremediable ruin” (Hays, 1998, p.98). Thus, false morality and norms of society lead women to experience traumas like Mary’s mother. She describes her situation when she states: “I dashed my wretch body against the dungeon’s floor, tore with my nails, my hair, my flesh, my garments; groaned, howled, shrieked, in frantic agony “ (Hays, 1998, p.99). Therefore, it is possible to consider the novel as an attack “on the double standard which demanded chastity of woman, but not of men” (Spencer, 1988, p.112). In this regard, Mary Hays attacks on double standards of morality which condemns women with immorality and connects virtue only to the protection of hymen.

The death of (mother) Mary also portrays how patriarchy makes women victims. In the middle of a duel in a tavern, Raymond sees “a woman, with a wan and haggard countenance” (Hays, 1998, p. 91). When a man is stabbed, Mary is caught as holding his arm. After this incident, she is accused of murder. Raymond reveals that he expected a pardon for her. However, the judge charges her with the death penalty. Sherman claims that prejudice leads her to die, and she explains that “pardons were very common. Roughly half of those condemned to death during the eighteenth century did not go to the gallows but were transported to the colonies or were imprisoned” however, she is not pardoned due to society’s stigmatization. Sherman argues the reason that she is not pardoned by stating “Mary’s character would have prejudiced any court ... the female found in taverns was singled out as not only dissolute but a threat to the morals of men” (Sherman, 2001, p.143). As a result, society creates false moral standards and makes women desperate. The mother, Mary criticizes the system that makes her suffer in a miserable way and she explains it as follows:

Law completes the triumph of injustice. The despotism of man rendered me weak; his vices betrayed me into shame, a barbarous policy stifled returning dignity, prejudice robbed me of the means of independence, gratitude ensnared me in the devices of treachery, the contagion of example corrupted my heart, despair hardened and brutality rendered it cruel. A sanguinary policy precludes

reformation, defeating the dear-bought lessons of experience, and, by a legal process, assuming the arm of omnipotence, annihilates the being whom its negligence left destitute, and its institutions compelled to offend (Hays, 1998, p.115).

As it is seen that Mary's mother becomes a victim of unfair laws and the social system, and she dies by complaining about the society that makes her a wretch and does not give her an opportunity to live. She is betrayed and has lost her honor. Her story shows the hypocritical morality of society as it only condemns women and excludes men who have led them to suffer.

With the portrayal of Mary's mother's situation, the novel also explores the complicated nature of mother-daughter relationships from broader social issues such as discriminatory biases that prioritize one's lineage, reputation, status obscuring a person's inherent value (Ty, 1993, p.61). Thus, the death of Mary's mother is a figurative representation of the loss of selfhood. As Mary gets her name from her mother, Hays shows that the same pattern of life is awaiting Mary's life and she will be the victim of society's prejudices. After Raymond reveals her familial lineage, he warns her about the forthcoming need to combat prejudice following his death. Being an illegitimate child, she will encounter unfair treatment and disgrace. Raymond is aware that when a mother engaged in immoral behavior such as seduction or prostitution, it is likely that her daughter is to be marginalized by society since the social norms judge her by looking at her parental background. Mary Raymond understands the potential ramifications associated with the poor state of her reputation. According to Spencer, "the belief that illegitimacy is a stain is the first prejudice which causes trouble for Mary" (Spencer, 1988, p.131). Thus, she begins to feel "a sense of oppression, almost suffocation" (Hays, 1998, p. 102). However, she is ready to fight as she grounds her judgments on rationality and moral excellence. She reveals her strength as follows:

My resolutions every hour acquired strength, and my mind regained its vigour;

I became inspired with an emulation to prove myself worthy the confidence of

my patron, who, satisfied with having communicated to me the circumstances which rendered my destiny peculiar, trusted for me conduct to the principles he had impressed upon my mind; principles, of which he had a right to expect the fruits (Hays, 1998, p.104).

Therefore, it can be deduced that Mr. Raymond has facilitated the acquisition of a comprehensive education for her by equipping her with the necessary resources to attain self-sufficiency as a woman. This stands as an opposition to the destiny of her mother, as a result of this, she trusts her faculties to secure a place in society and to escape from miseries. As Marily Brooks examines, in the novel, Mary Hays allows “the daughter to refuse to accept the inevitability of ruin and to challenge the prejudices surrounding her illegitimacy. She attempts to become more than just the daughter of the mother and seeks to tell and live her own story “(Brooks, 2008, p.13). Therefore, she firmly believes that her mental fortitude can enable her to triumph over any forthcoming challenges.

Mr. Raymond, on the other hand, wants to protect her from society with more conventional ideas and wants to see her “in a safe and sheltered situation” (Hays, 1998, p. 125). Because of that, he talks about a suitor who wants to get married to her. His advice to follow traditional marriage contradicts Mary’s ideas about marriage. As an educated woman who relies on reasoning, she rejects this advice by stating:

I cannot, I ought not, to bestow on any man a reluctant hand with an alienated heart. It is not necessary that I should marry; I can exert my talents for my support or procure sustenance by the labor of my hands. I dare encounter indigence, but I dare not prostitute my sincerity and my faith (Hays, 1998, p.126).

With this statement, Mary reflects on Hays’ revolutionary ideas about marriage. Like Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays believes in companionate marriages “in which spouses were friends as well as lovers and colleagues” (Walker, 2006, p.105). Thus, happiness in marriage can be achieved with harmony between spouses who view marriage as a

friendship. As a result of this, Mary cannot get married to her suitor. Gina Walker asserts that “Hays proposes that women may choose to act on their sexual desire as an expression of autonomy, or they may decide not to marry in an alternative act of self-determination” (Walker, 2006, p. 222). Therefore, Hays portrays an independent woman who believes in her personal autonomy and education to sustain her life.

After Mr. Raymond’s death, Mary is left with no support, and she tries to build herself a life in London where her challenge starts. Mary Hays effectively engages in social critique and challenges the patriarchal structure on two distinct occasions. The first instance occurs via the portrayal of Mary's mother's experience of seduction and betrayal, while the second instance manifests through Mary’s rape in London.

The second part of the storyline can be interpreted as Mary's endeavor to disassociate herself from her maternal lineage. She not only tries to live a life that is characterized by an exemplary and virtuous attitude but also to escape from prejudices. In the beginning, she expresses a positive outlook, stating "I am youthful, energetic, in good health, and capable of exertion" (Hays, 1998, p.93). However, she is not aware that her traumatic encounter with Sir Peter Osborne is impending. Osborne, the lord of the manor that lives close to Raymond’s cottage has made Mary his target since her childhood. To illustrate, in her childhood, William challenges Mary to steal grapes from Osborne’s Garden. When Mary tries to steal grapes from Sir Peter Osborne’s Garden, however, she is caught by him who forces her to kiss him. She is identified as "a true daughter of Eve" by him after this incident (Hays, 1998, p.19). Hays uses a biblical reference to Eve's transgression in taking the forbidden fruit to demonstrate Osborne sees Mary as an object of temptation. Eleanor Ty analyzes this incident, and she asserts that:

This appellation becomes ironically appropriate because shortly after her theft of the forbidden fruit, Mary is expelled from her Edenic idyll, loses her 'innocence' in both the physical and mental senses, and becomes subjected to the continual harassment of the powerful Sir Peter. Instead of extricating her from her difficulties, Mary's learning has only made her aware of the peculiar social conditions which contribute to her plight (Ty, 1993, p.62).

Thus, this scene displays that Hays is using a metaphor that associates Mary with an archetypal fallen woman, Eve, which overshadows Mary's fate, and Osborne who constantly chases her can be seen as the villain that will cause her to be a fallen woman.

The second interaction she has with Sir Peter Osborne serves as a perfect example of her resolute character. When Mary and William unexpectedly encounter a wounded hare being pursued by hunters, Mary's first response is to protect the distressed creature by positioning her own body in front of it. This act demonstrates her bravery as she disregards her own safety. When Osborne expresses his frustration towards William for the disruption of his hunt, Mary intervenes to protect William from the physical assault inflicted by Osborne's whip. As a result, Mary endures many strikes that result in visible wounds on her neck and shoulders. Following their successful escape, Mr. Raymond proceeds to examine her injuries, to which she expresses her indifference, attributing them to her efforts in safeguarding William by stating: "Have you not taught me, dear father, that, in the cause of right we should condemn bodily pain?" (Hays, 1998, p.60). Mary's empathetic instincts compel her to prioritize the defence of those who are subjected to abuse and oppression by others in positions of authority, such as the case of William and the hare. Her courage and determination remain unaffected by the potential physical injury she may endure and override her concern for her own well-being. This incident shows that Mary cannot stay passive against tyranny and is ready to disregard bodily injuries to challenge it. Thus, it is implied that Mary is resolute to fight against the tyranny that she can face.

Her traumatic encounter with Osborne happens following Mr. Raymond's death when she arrives in London. She is abducted by Osborne and taken to his residence where she gets raped. After the incident, she starts to show the impacts of trauma as she experiences "a succession of fainting-fits" for several days (Hays, 1998, p.162). However, in contrast to her mother, she has a strong sense of self-assurance and personal integrity, and Mary exhibits rebellious behavior by asserting her intention to take legal action, stating that "I demand my liberty this moment; I insist upon being suffered to depart. No one has a right to control me. I will appeal to the tribunal of my country; I will boldly claim the protection of its laws" (Hays, 1998, p.142). Mary challenges Osborne with a bold and assertive approach. In contrast to her mother, she has a strong sense of self-assurance and personal integrity. Nonetheless, establishing

the occurrence of rape within a legal framework presents significant challenges. It places the individual who makes the accusation in a vulnerable position. This predicament arises from the need of the accuser to provide evidence of the assault while simultaneously having to recount intimate details and endure potential damage to their reputation. Adam Komisaruk asserts that “Hays alludes generally to the way that the legal system, as part of this nominal public, will add insult to the injury of a rape victim” (Komisaruk, 2019, p. 10). Thus, Mary Hays criticizes the legal system which is inefficient in protecting women. Also, the system makes the victim vulnerable to the insults of society, so women must hide their experiences not to face these difficulties. Osborne, being aware of the lack of legal protection for women asks the questions to Mary “Who will credit the tale you mean to tell? What testimony or witness can you produce that will not make against you?” (Hays, 1998, p. 143). Therefore, Mary Hays criticizes the law system that weakens women and forces them to conceal their rape experiences not to face insult from society. However, Mary exhibits a defiant manner and maintains her autonomy by insisting that her honor is capable of being recovered. She refuses to be restricted inside the confines of a social stereotype that labels her as a fallen woman. As a result, she flees from his place by stating “My spirit, superior personal injury, rises above the sense of its wrongs, and utterly contemns you!” (Hays, 1998, p.144). Therefore, it can be claimed that, unlike her mother, Mary exhibits a refusal to conform to the conventional expectations placed upon fallen women, and boldly confronts the need to adopt a weak and invisible social position after having fallen in the eyes of society. In this sense, her story engages in a re-evaluation of the concept of chastity, showing it as adaptable and capable of being manipulated by patriarchy.

Upon returning to the streets of London, Mary finds herself in a mental breakdown due to the traumatic event that she experienced. When she comes across her childhood lover, William takes care of her while she is coping with her tough experience. She explains her mental disturbance when she states: “[t]hree weeks that followed were a blank in my existence; yet I had intervals of reflection, dark and dreadful. Imaginary terrors, broken recollections, strange phantoms, wild and wandering thoughts, harassed and persecuted me” (Hays, 1998, p.169). Thus, she experiences delirium because of the rape trauma. However, she renews herself with

empowerment and she is decisive about her resilience against this oppression. She shows her decision to William in her letter as follows:

I resolve on separating myself from you; it would be temerity to expose myself to a renewal of the preceding evening's conflict. Attempt not to trace my steps; your search would be vain, or productive only of mutual distress. The path to which duty points I am determined to pursue; nothing shall divert my course; neither poverty nor shame can appeal me (Hays, 1998, p.152).

This assertion signifies her renunciation of the patriarchal structure and her reliance on men, both in terms of social interactions and financial support. Mary demonstrates a strong commitment to achieving self-sufficiency, firmly believing in her own abilities. Thus, societal norms and oppressive forces are incapable of impeding her drive to have a place in society.

Being perseverant, Mary wants to reveal her traumatic experience and tries to find support from people. According to Judith Herman, the process of recovery of trauma can only be unfolded when it is acknowledged and disseminated within the societal framework. She claims "...restoration of the breach between the traumatized person and the community depends, first upon public acknowledgment of the traumatic event, and second upon some form of community action" (Herman, 1992, p.51). Therefore, Mary interacts with women from various social classes, engaging in conversations about her traumatic experience. However, these women eventually prove to be ineffective in providing the support she seeks. Following her departure from Osborne and subsequent rejection of William Pelham, Mary endeavors to get work with the woman first suggested by her guardian, Mr. Raymond. The woman questions Mary about the reasons for her delayed application. After being informed of Mary's experience of detention, sexual assault, and subsequent sickness, the woman displays a notable lack of empathy. Her tone exhibits a sense of superiority and gradually transitions into a more sarcastic attitude. She finishes the interview with "an expression half-insulting", by saying, "I meant not to wound your delicacy by an offer of charity but the accomplishments of which you boast, you will please to recollect, remain yet to be proved, unless you rely for your recommendation on the merit of a

very pretty face” (Hays, 1998, p.156). After the apathetic response of the woman, Mary becomes afraid of not being heard by anyone and states “It was now that I felt all the horror of my destiny” (Hays, 1998, p.158). However, she never gives up trying to be heard and looking for a job until she gets employment in a print shop. Mary’s endeavor to find a job and support herself economically challenges Rousseau whose societal expectation is to confine women to their roles inside the private domain, namely as wives and mothers. This expectation limits their direct access to positions of power. However, society’s expectations and norms follow her wherever she goes. Osborne rumors about her reputation so that she cannot escape. Thus, she is again faced with an attempt of assault, this time, by her employer. He teases her stating that "Sir Peter Osborne and Mr. Pelham found less difficulty" (Hays, 1998, p.160). As she is aware of the fact that she must exert effort to ensure her survival by independent means and prevent experiencing a similar outcome like her mother, she continues to believe in self-construction and exhibits a persistent self-centered tendency as a solution to recover from her sorrows. Mary expresses her critique of prevailing societal norms and advocates for the establishment of a society that should allow women to gain their personal autonomy. She shows her determination when she states, “I resolved in my mind, selected, and rejected, as new obstacles occurred to me, a variety of plan” and she cries out to claim her existence in society by saying “I had a right to exist” (Hays, 1998, p.162).

Mary never surrenders herself despite the traumas she endures. She continues to reveal her story to find recovery. When she has a job interview with another woman, overwhelmed with emotion, she begins to cry in front of the woman and openly admits to being an orphan with no social ties. In response, she is met with empathy and understanding, which ultimately leads her to leave the interview feeling confident about securing a job opportunity. This interview can be seen as a counterpart to the previous one in terms of its tone and comprehension. However, the subsequent arrival of a letter to Mary clearly indicates the impossibility of any future relationship between the two women. The woman is informed about Mary’s reputation by Osborne. Thus, she decides that it is appropriate to let Mary stay with her (Hays, 1998, p.166). Although she endeavors to find a place in society, society does not give her a chance to continue her life. At this point, she experiences a mental breakdown after reading

the woman's letter and she explains her situation, stating: "I drew from the bottom of my heart a heavy sigh, and, the next instant, broke into a convulsive peal of laughter; while confused, but vivid, images danced before my dazzled sight" (Hays, 1998, p.167). This scene is an indication that she is experiencing the effects of trauma, which will deteriorate at the end of the novel. Overall, the novel emphasizes the difficulties that a fallen woman endures in terms of the economic sufficiency to survive. Mary Hays criticizes the society that limits the chances of women as follows:

Young women without fortunes, if they do not chance to marry (and this is not a marrying age) have scarce any other resources than servitude, or prostitution. I never see, without indignation, those trades, which ought to be appropriated only to women, almost entirely engrossed by men, haberdashery, millinery, etc. even mantua-making. -Fine citizens and soldiers this race of delicate, contemptible beings would make, if called out for the defence of their country! (Hays, 1974, pp.67-68).

Within the confines of the prevailing social structure, women like Mary and Mary's mother do not have chances for achieving financial independence and self-sufficiency. They cannot sustain their lives as they are not granted job opportunities. The system shows these women to be seen as fallen and stigmatized by society's norms as immoral. Therefore, women like Mary's mother not only become a victim of seduction and rape but also cast out of society. In this context, the novel emphasizes the legal/economic disability of women in an unfair system. Thus, the capacity of women to engage in employment is constrained by the expectation of their sexual compliance results in a depletion of their self-respect, which in turn exacerbates their vulnerability to poverty.

The novel adeptly illustrates barriers that impede the opportunities accessible to women, especially those who are stigmatized as morally depraved and morally debased. The concept of "fallen women" refers to women who engage in behavior that is deemed morally or socially unacceptable by societal standards. Society perceives Mary as a fallen woman and ignores her endeavour to gain her autonomy. Like Jemima

in *Maria, the Wrongs of Woman*, Mary wants to be heard. She states that “I endeavoured to justify myself, my character blasted, no one believed the tale I told; every ear was shut, every heart was hardened against me” (Hays, 1998, p.185). Moreover, she is confronted with the stressful pursuit initiated by Sir Osborne, resulting in her inability to create any financial means. As a result, she experiences two imprisonments due to her unpaid debts. Hays portrays not only metaphorical but also the real confinement of women with Mary’s imprisonment. Imprisonment is a concept that Mary Hays uses to display the idea of ‘magic circle’ which is associated with the cultural limitations imposed on a woman’s intellectual capacities, sexual tendencies, and whole being. Eleanor Ty highlights Hay’s concept of ‘magic circle’ and states that “Hays uses the same metaphor of the ‘magic circle,’ this ‘prison of the soul’ out of which women ‘cannot move, but to contempt or destruction’” (Ty, 1993, p.52). This circle follows Mary everywhere, especially with the rumours that Osborne spreads. After Mary is jailed due to her unpaid debts, Osborne offers her “a legal settlement” to repair her chastity and claims that it can ensure her prosperity (Hays, 1998, p. 171). However, Mary, who does not resign herself to the hypocrisy and impositions of society, cannot see this as a solution. Instead of accepting these impositions, she is willing to sacrifice herself to emphasize that social change is necessary and states that “welcome, welcome ... desolation, infamy, a prison, the rack, death itself!” (Hays, 1998, p.171).

At the end of the novel, after spending two years in confinement, Mary’s health deteriorates because of the things she endured due to social pressure, and she expects to find peace and waits for her death. However, Mr. and Mrs. Neville find her and save her from prison by stating that “we will shelter you from a cruel and undistinguishing world, we will smooth, will assist, your return to virtue” (Hays, 1998, p.188). After being rescued, Mary stays with them. However, her physical and mental health seem diminished due to the traumas she experiences resulting from socio cultural pressures. She explains her situation as follows:

The tone of my mind was destroyed, and the springs of life were sapped. It seemed as if a premature old age had withered my bloom and blasted the vigour of my youth: no longer robust, sanguine, active broken spirits and a shattered

constitution sunk me to the weakness of infancy, imaginary terrors haunted my mind, and a complication of nameless depressing pangs racked my frame. (Hays, 1998, p.191).

It is seen that she experiences both psychological and physical effects of trauma. We can say that she undergoes melancholia and exhibits some bodily manifestations of trauma which can be interpreted as fatigue and a decline in physical strength. Following the death of Mr. and Mrs. Neville, Mary's health continues to deteriorate. Nevertheless, Mary boldly awaits her death while adhering to her radical beliefs and ideas rather than succumbing to social norms. She sacrifices herself instead of resigning to the flawed social norms and expectations. At the end of the novel, we see that she criticizes men who engage in sexual activities and exhibit hypocritical attitudes by enforcing unfair punishments and limitations on women. Mary perceives that her qualities are undervalued because of social norms. Thus, society treats women unjustly and has a hypocritical morality. She argues that lack of knowledge and despotism will fail to achieve any reforms. Overall, despite the prevailing sense of despair, there exists a flicker of optimism or a lingering sense of uncertainty. The readers are left with the tension between the hopelessness in society and the potential for positive change for women along with Mary's perception of her personal life as futile. However, there is a glimmer of hope as she believes that sharing her story can cultivate compassion and humanity, which are in themselves hopeful. Recounting her story is capable of advancing optimism from the writer to the reader, but the reformation of society is deferred to future times. However, when compassion and humanity are elicited by the act of sharing her experiences, it might be argued that the endeavor is not entirely futile.

To sum up, Mary's writing demonstrates feminist rhetoric against the oppressive influence of patriarchy. Social norms and practices cause women to experience traumatic events. Michelle Balaev points out the relationship between trauma and its social context as follows:

Novels represent this disruption between the self and others by carefully describing the place of trauma because the physical environment offers the

opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories imbedded in landscapes that define the character's identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience (Balaev, 2008, p.150).

When the setting of trauma and suffering are examined, it can be seen that Mary's society evaluates women with their chastity, and losing chastity expels them from society, which is the cause of the traumatic experiences of women. However, as Mary embodies the revolutionary ideas of Jacobin novelists, she fights against the norms instead of becoming a desperate victim. Hays portrays that women are driven into suffering as they lack the necessary resources to attain autonomy. Her protagonist, Mary is portrayed as a strong woman with her intellectual capacities and reasoning in contrast to the image of fallen women and becomes the representation of all women who undergo the impositions of patriarchal society. Thus, *The Victim of Prejudice* critically examines the impact of prejudice on individuals in a resistant manner claiming justice and empowerment for women.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on the novels *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* written by Mary Wollstonecraft and *The Victim of Prejudice* by Mary Hays. It examines the negative impacts of patriarchal society on women's well-being, highlighting the legal and social injustices that occurred in the era. Wollstonecraft and Hays seek justice and equitable education for women. In the eighteenth century, women were assigned an inferior position and mostly confined to domestic realms and barred from active engagement in public sphere. Women were expected to be passive and docile as well as submissive to men. Thus, the education of women fostered docility and their obligations in the household. However, Wollstonecraft and Hays offer a critical examination of gender inequalities. They criticized the education that focused on household skills and responsibilities of women. This kind of education was not only limiting women's potential and agency but also making them subjected to men's authority. However, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays believed that women possess the same capacity as men for personal growth and development. Thus, they defended that women should have equitable opportunities to acquire autonomy rather than being dependent on men. Wollstonecraft and Hays opposed the conventional notion of femininity which was linked to sentimentality, weakness, and passivity. They believed that this perception was culturally constructed, and it was reinforced by the traditional education given to women. Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft and Hays demonstrated that women were not inherently sensitive and irrational, and they could develop themselves if opportunities were given.

Therefore, this thesis has examined the institutional subjugation imposed by male authority on women, shedding light on the many forms of legal and social inequalities that result from this oppressive structure. With this aim, it focuses on *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*, and *The Victim of Prejudice*. In these novels, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays express their dissent at the prevailing socioeconomic circumstances that impose restrictions on women, confining them inside a domestic sphere and subjecting them to male tyranny. They display their radical ideas, including the need to provide women with a comprehensive education and ensure equal chances for all individuals, also they call for a reformation of the legal system that favors men. Thus, Wollstonecraft and Hays promote their political radicalism and bring social

criticism through these novels. Gary Kelly explains their mutual motivation and asserts that:

They opposed tyranny and oppression, be it domestic, national or international, spiritual or temporal; they were against all distinctions between men which were not based on moral qualities, or virtue; and they were utterly opposed to persecution of individuals, communities, or nations for their beliefs on any subject (Kelly, 1976, p.7).

Thus, Hays and Wollstonecraft critically analyze the existing hegemonic system and suggest an alternative order. They demonstrate the state of tyranny that leads to women's degradation, and they resist the social norms and legal defects that lead women to suffer.

One of the focuses of this thesis is the novel, *Maria, or the Wrongs of the Woman*. The central character, Maria, serves as a representation of the revolutionary ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft. Maria faces subjugation and imprisonment inside a patriarchal marriage. Her story demonstrates the presence of discriminatory legislation that only privileges men. Maria's critique challenges the societal expectations and norms that traditionally confine women to certain roles. Maria can be seen as a woman who has a formal education. She opposes traditional education which constrains women's intellectual capabilities. In contrast, Maria derives her empowerment from her engagement with rational thinking and her avid pursuit of knowledge via reading. Therefore, with the portrayal of Maria's intellectual abilities, Wollstonecraft offers a critique of conventional educational practices that hinder the intellectual growth of women and show that women are capable of improving their abilities. Maria's criticism extends beyond educational limitations; she also critiques the socially constructed gender roles that confine women inside the institution of marriage. Traditional marriages expect women to display a passive submission to their husbands. However, Maria aligns with the principles of companionate marriages. This marital approach emphasizes the values of friendship, equality, and respect, in contrast to the conventional notions of matrimony. These marriages are characterized by the mutual respect and preservation of the dignity of both men and women within the institution

of marriage. Maria shows the flaws of traditional marriages by depicting that women must endure the arbitrary tyranny of men. Maria shows that these marriages lead women to have traumatic experiences. In contrast, companionate marriage relies on the respectful companionship of men and women. Maria also critiques the notion that women are commodified and treated as possessions within the institution of marriage. These marriages lead women to experience a loss of autonomy as they relinquish control over their resources and commit themselves entirely to their husbands. Maria also offers a critique of the false moral norms prevalent in society. In the culture, there exists a tendency to legitimize the unethical actions of men, while simultaneously subjecting women to strict ethical norms. Furthermore, another protagonist Jemima also depicts the criticism of Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft articulates her critique by reflecting on the narratives of both Jemima and her mother. Jemima's mother is a seduced woman who faces social condemnation. Society highly cares about the chastity of women and imposes moral codes. However, while men do not face moral reprimand, women are socially stigmatized if they do not protect their chastity. Wollstonecraft brings her criticism against the double standards of morality and indicates that virtue should be expected from both genders. Wollstonecraft shows that these practices lead women to suffer and have traumas, however, men are favored. Wollstonecraft continues to display the defects of society with Jemima's personal story. Like her mother, Jemima is also subjected to a set of moral norms that have a dual nature. Wollstonecraft's critique of societal hypocrisy and inadequate legal protections for women is shown in the narrative of Jemima. Therefore, Wollstonecraft's novel demonstrates the pervasive inequality and double standards within society that are directed at women, resulting in significant traumatic experiences for them. Women experience traumas because of various discomfoting experiences within the contexts of marriage and social interactions. Therefore, one of the primary emphases of this thesis centers on the concept of cultural trauma. It demonstrates that cultural context contributes to the occurrence of trauma experiences of women. Consequently, with the portrayal of Maria and Jemima's lives, Wollstonecraft advocates on behalf of women who are constrained by societal standards and lack legal protections and opposes this repressive framework. She pictures her protagonists as trauma survivors, not trauma victims as they fight against

this oppressive system. Thus, Wollstonecraft displays the importance of formal education so that she empowers her protagonists with rational thinking and intellectual growth.

Moreover, this thesis has focused on the novel *The Victim of Prejudice* written by Mary Hays. Like Wollstonecraft, Hays also analyzes the context of patriarchal biases restrict women within societal standards. The novel presents Mary and her mother's story to bring criticism against social norms. Mary has a refined manner and cultivated mind; however, she finds herself facing social marginalization and constrained availability of essential resources. These circumstances at first arise as a consequence of her mother's seduction story. In her portrayal, Hays criticizes the social emphasis placed on female virginity as a marker of honor and virtue. She shows that the perception of a fallen woman is a socially constructed image and criticizes the society that exempts men from moral impositions. Mary, weighed down by her mother's past, also becomes a rape victim. However, Mary confronts the confining limitations imposed by notions of chastity and cultural decorum, which consign women to a life devoid of notable achievements. She tries to establish her position within society by depending on her noble character and polished intellect. Therefore, she derives her strength from her intellectual capacity. Thus, Mary actively challenges societal biases against women and tries to find a place in society. Consequently, Hays portrays Mary as exemplifying the challenges encountered by women, as they navigate and persevere through a society characterized by oppression. However, Mary does not assume the role of a trauma victim; rather, she emerges as a resilient survivor of trauma, actively advocating for her rights and challenging societal norms. She strives to address the social and legal challenges faced by women, aiming to gain their rightful position in society.

As a result, both novels have parallels in terms of their thematic focus and discourse. The ideas and criticisms articulated by Mary Wollstonecraft in her treatise, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, have a significant influence on the thematic development of both works. Both writers critique the patriarchal system that enforces limitations on women within their social and private spheres. The social system maintains the hierarchical dominance of men over women, which is sustained via conventional educational practices highlighting women's assigned duties and

obligations towards men. In contrast to traditional educational methods, Maria and Mary receive formal education similar to that of men. Both exemplify the rational and intellectual capacities of women. The critique is directed against societal norms that foster the perception of women as individuals who are weaker in strength and rationality. They posit the idea that women can emancipate themselves from dependence on men and attain autonomy. They believe that it can change the culturally constructed perceptions of women while bringing them respect. Thus, women can acquire their autonomy through a cultivated mind. Consequently, the protagonists in the novels get their strength and agency from their intellectual capacities and logical thinking. Through their cultivated minds, they do not become trauma victims, in contrast, they are empowered by painful circumstances to resist inequality and unjust treatment. They are aware that these issues are mutual problems that all women face. Therefore, they should be resilient to confront the unjust practices of society. Furthermore, both novels exhibit a critical analysis of social norms and gender disparities, specifically focusing on the unequal expectations and double standards placed upon women, alongside the existence of biased legal systems that privilege the rights of men. In this context, Maria attacks marital laws, which impose limitations on women inside the institution of marriage. Conversely, Mary critiques the societal norms and moral standards that exempt men. Furthermore, the lives of Jemima and Mary exhibit parallelism. Both women possess seduced mothers, resulting in the subsequent experience of social stigmatization. Thus, they draw attention to a society that forces women to embody moral virtue, while showing an indifference to the immoralities of men. Therefore, both Wollstonecraft and Hays emphasize the unjust social practices upon women which leads to their social exclusion and stigmatization and label them as immoral individuals. Jemima and Mary's lives also show parallelism as both are subjected to sexual assault. Both characters have to deal with men who see women as properties that they can obtain. Thus, these ethical shortcomings lead women to have traumas. However, both Jemima and Mary do not fall like their mothers. Instead, despite their traumas, they continue to claim a place in society. Consequently, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary engage in a critical examination of societal norms and legal frameworks that exhibit favoritism towards men.

The dissertation has demonstrated the adverse impact of gender-based

inequalities on women highlighting the significant influence of society and culture on women's traumas. Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays contribute to the feminist discourse by offering their critical insights. Thus, it is an analysis of the arduous circumstances that women must confront in their pursuit of justice. Wollstonecraft and Hays' protagonists endeavour to articulate their traumatic experiences and speak up to restore the conditions of women in the civil and domestic sphere.



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