

The Spousal Abuse in Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*

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Abstract: The spousal abuse is a form of abusive and aggressive actions that woman encounters in her close relationship with her male partner who attempts to uphold control and power over his spouse. This subject has increased widely nowadays and it needs to be investigated through the lens of literature in order to give a voice for the voiceless wives who endure the bad temper and abuse of their spouses. It will be studied in *The Wrongs of Woman* which is considered as a feminist novel and one of the best 18th century novels. Wollstonecraft's philosophical and gothic tale tells the story of Her husband has committed her to an insane asylum. It critiques the oppressive sacredness of getting married in eighteenth-century Britain, and also the judicial framework that upholds it, according to Wollstonecraft., and focuses on society rather than individual female wrongdoings. The purpose of this dissertation is to utilize a thematic method to evaluate the theme of spousal abuse of women in the novel, and to investigate the impact and consequences on the main female characters. Her novel , was designed to be read and appreciated as both profoundly restorative and historical important in terms of what that exposes concerning patriarchal and patriarchal systems' effects on women's lives.

Keywords: Spouse Abuse, Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman, Offending Theory, Mary Wollstonecraft.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Spousal Abuse: An Overview

According to Walter, spousal abuse is a form of abusive actions which occurs in every male-female close relation in which the men partner attempts to uphold control and power over his spouse. As a result, when underlying behaviors such as intimidation, underestimating, isolation, compression, as well as a variety of additional attitudes needed to sustain oppression, fear, and power are present, the relationship deteriorates and may turn violent. Spousal abuse can take many forms, and in many cases, in the same relation there may be more than one type because each type has similar consequences (p. 27).

The social isolation refers to a near-complete lack or complete of engagement with individuals in individual's community, is one of the most serious forms of spouse abuse. The desire of men to isolate their wives from social communication with their families, friends, and other people of the society is frequently motivated by selfishness and distrust. Separating the victims communally will rise the abuser's powers while also protecting him legally. Because of the victim's social isolation, he or she becomes disruptive and antisocial, putting the abusers at the focus of the victim existence and giving the abusers the exploitation power (Baker 30).

Another sort of spousal abuse is financial abuse, in which the abuser maintains control and power over their victims by making them monetarily needy and preventing them from making decisions or maintaining their self-confidence. Accumulating debt, interfering with job or education, and controlling finances are just a few forms of economic exploitation. One of the most effective ways to keep an abused victim bound is financial abuse, because it reduces the victim's power and compels them to completely rely on their abusive spouse to meet their basic necessities such as food, clothes, and shelter (Walter 66).

An emotive kind of spousal abuse is described as "any nonphysical conduct or attitude that is aimed to control, intimidate, subjugate, degrade, punish, or isolate another person," (Kathryn 46). The victim of emotional abuse has been agreed by many studies that would suffer from a terrible psychological state; hence psychological abuse is classified as a subtype of emotional abuse. It causes severe psychological trauma because of its social ramifications and indisputable negative impact on abused victims. It has a negative impact on the victim's mental health (Kathryn 49).

The partner mistreatment is a kind of marital abuse known as "physical abuse". This term is often utilized interchangeably to indicate to "an act committed with the aim, or perceived intention, of inflicting physical suffering or injury on another person" (Straus & Gellis 40). Despite the fact that physical abuse is the worst sort since it can lead to death in severe circumstances, most recent studies on abused females have come as follows: Emotional abuse, as opposed to physical assault, has a far greater impact on the victims. As a result, Physical abuse has an emotional impact, and the victim's maltreatment is exacerbated in this case (Straus & Gelles 42).

In conclusion, sarcasm is classified as a form of spousal abuse, and it is also known as "verbal abuse," that is considered as the most visible form of abuse that can damage anyone, whether or not they are in an abusive relationship. Evans (86) defines it as a type of offensive language that falls into several groups and is mostly used to control others' feelings and behaviors in order to force victim to agree to abusers' demands. Making jokes, trivializing, withholding, judging, and condemning are all examples of verbal abuse.

1.2 Spousal Abuse of Women in the Early 18th Century

Because Mary and Maria depicts the position of eighteenth-century women, it's vital to understand the common sentiments about women at the time. Between the mid-seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, major changes occurred, and the mediaeval worldview was replaced by a contemporary western ideology. Dena Goodman, author of *Women in the Enlightenment*, explains why this time period was rightly termed the Enlightenment, a phrase that depicts enlightened men and women's perception of the transition from the dark and savage Middle Ages to a new world of light and reason. (Abbey 78-95).

According to Miriam Brody, the editor of *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, the attitudes toward women in the eighteenth century included those of "puritan reformers, decent religious fundamentalists," who pushed women to be obedient, docile, and reliant on males" (xxxi).

Furthermore, the French novelist and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau had a significant influence on women's thinking in the eighteenth century. Rousseau regarded women to be inferior by nature (17), The "emotional woman" was the ideal counterpart to the "rational male," as according Sue Thornham, author of *Feminist Theory and Cultural Studies* (Tong 13). Wollstonecraft, in contrast to Rousseau, believed that depriving men the opportunity to develop their logic and become moral persons with "commitments beyond selfish pleasure" will lead to them becoming emotional beings (Ibid). As according Pam Morris, author of *Literature and Feminism: An Introduction* and many others, women have suffered for a long process as a function of "biological essentialism," which is the belief that a woman's "nature" is a result of her reproductive duty. One of the grounds offered by essentialists to marginalize women is this. (2).

Wollstonecraft thought that men and women were on an equal footing and fought against the notion that women were inferior to men. According to Lorraine Code, editor of the *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*, Wollstonecraft also disputed Rousseau's notion that women are fundamentally inferior to men (xxi). Furthermore, Wollstonecraft claimed that men's superiority stemmed from their greater access to education and opportunities (Ibid). Since females were socialized to be obedient and reliant on males, as well as considered as emotional beings devoid of rational thought, women's natural position was seen as being in the home realm. As a consequence, women were mostly cut off from society.

Being a citizen during the Enlightenment meant "to be a man, to be a human," hence the Enlightenment's rights, which were only applicable to male subjects were not transferred to female subjects (Goodman 235). During the eighteenth century, however, some women claimed that the principles and political rights of the Enlightenment extended to them as well. (Bryson 15). Rousseau believed that women were "biologically unsuitable for the public domain," according to Bryson (13).

Rousseau believed that women were suitable for domestic bliss, in which they could earn decency and respect as husbands and parents (Goodman 252). She, on either side, argued the introducing female to the larger public, especially its ethics and principles, will indeed render females extra aware of particular domestic duties (Abbey 81). Wollstonecraft states in her book *Rights of Woman*:

Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers in a word, better citizens". (186)

Women were viewed as emotional creatures with little potential to enter the public realm in the eighteenth century, which resulted in their having restricted educational and legal rights. Women's principal responsibilities were to become brides and mothers. Women, on the other hand, had minimal power in the home sphere, since they were referred to as "sa femme" and had no legal rights over their children. Furthermore, Rousseau was a powerful figure, and his views on women were widely accepted. Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, was not ashamed to criticize Rousseau's beliefs and publicly argues against them. Wollstonecraft, as previously said, was not hesitant to engage politics or the male-dominated public sphere, publishing political, educational, and instructional books that harshly criticized women's lower social standing.

In the Early 20th Century, the wife abuse issue is overlooked in spite of an increase in abusive episodes. Legal officials usually dismissed and ignored reports of spousal violence from battered wives. If the abuse was significant bodily, the abused woman might have a tardy reaction after an indefinite delay in examining the reality of the claims, while the abusive additional forms requested are basically overlooked since the issues were deemed a special matter rather than a general one at the era. According to Linda Gordon's (p. 157) research of abused women's accounts, those who sought aid have met with homilies, words of resignation and shrugs regarding power, male aggression, and female destiny, while others were met with disapprobation or fury. As a result, the abused women take the responsibility in order to resolve such issues, despite they posed a risk to their lives. At that time, the permitted aspect of resolving such a problem was primarily handled by advisers who would ask men to cease abusing women to succumb the abusers deprived of taking any lawful action against the abuser. As a result, a lot of women experienced emotional detachment, forcing them to choose between two options: suicide or assassinating their abusers.

Abused wives are deprived of their right to search for assistance because of the unjust system of the time, which aided abusers' control. As a result, rather of submitting to man's power, the victimized women began to think practically, and they decided to assert their rights by themselves, with the support of the rights of women movement assisting them in doing so by modifying ancient female social codes. As a result, females are urged to dissident against their husbands' infidelity, negligence, and abuse, and to stop doing what previous generations of wives tolerated and expected (Walter 58). However, in a male-dominated society, increasing independence was frowned upon because women's rights were viewed as unrealistic demands, poisoning marriage relationships and leading to family breakup.

Bell Hooks' (231) domestic theories focused on the reasons behind the females' abuse; concluding that the main causes of violence against women is due to the philosophical idea of coercive authority and hierarchical rule the violence those who are dominated and who dominate. Hooks condemned community for granting males sole right that has been abused and resulted in violence against females everywhere, in addition to it in regards to the value of females' employment and education. According to Seligman the psychological state of battered females who killed their violent husbands in his "Learned Helplessness" theory (148). He realized that the abused women used new ways to live, and that killing the abusers was the best option, because the murdering act is not perceived as a true kill, but rather as a technique to stop abusing.

The media worsens matters when focusing on killing abusers and neglected the causes that drove women to murder their abusers, which were traditional gender codes, a lack of opportunities for females and the institute of marriages, all of which are sufficient to drive a normal female to kill her abuser (Johnsson 179). With the emergence of the feminist movements, there has been a shift in the way people think about women, legal theorists and feminist literary critics attempted to persuade the impartiality method that the term "spousal abuse of women" did not only refer to physical attacks, but also included additional forms of abuse like animal abuse, economic, sexual, verbal, psychological, emotional, and social isolation of women. With the improvement of several voices advocating for the rights of women to

live properly as well as safely in the twentieth era, the court system began to take the psychological state of female who killing their abusive spouses extremely. The psychological disorders of abused women were highlighted, and the victims' self-defense appeal was supported.

1.3 Spousal Abuse of Maria in Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*

It's incomplete novelistic continuation from the 18th century. Wollstonecraft's husband (William Godwin) published *The Wrongs of Woman* after her death in 1798. This book is considered one of the most radical feminist works ever written (Abbotson, 91). Wollstonecraft's philosophical and gothic tale tells the story of a lady imprisoned in an insane asylum by her husband. It criticizes the patriarchal structure of marriage in eighteenth-century Britain, as well as the judicial system that supported it, and focuses on society instead of particular "wrongs of woman." On the other hand, the heroine's refusal to let go of her romantic aspirations exposes women's cooperation in oppression by incorrect and damaging sentimentalism. The novel was a success. The novel was well-received. The novel was a forerunner in exalting female sexuality and feminine affinity across social classes. When the book was first released, such topics, together with Godwin's polemical *Memoirs of Wollstonecraft's Career*, made it unpopular.. (Claudia 112).

The work was lauded by feminist critics in the twentieth century, who included it in the historiography of the novel as well as feminist dispute. It's often considered a fictional popularization of Wollstonecraft's feminist arguments in *Rights of Woman*, as well as an autobiographical expansion of Wollstonecraft's feminist beliefs in *Rights of Woman*. (Emily, 75).

Rereading the generic parts of *Wrongs* demonstrates that it is Wollstonecraft's deliberate combination of theory and fiction that allowed her to transgress and subvert gendered conventions that would otherwise exclude women writers from theoretical (philosophical or political) discourses. As a result, Wollstonecraft can be considered not just the first feminist writer to offer a full and clear feminist program, but also the first to modify gendered genres and discourses for feminist aims.

Many sins marked Wollstonecraft's childhood, including her father's financial failure, her mother's emotional withdrawal, and both of their blatant fondness for her brother. The other psychically devastating wounding, the "adult" version of the same infraction Imlay's repudiation of Wollstonecraft and their baby daughter, Betty, for just a rapper so severe that she felt obligated to reconstruct over and over in her fiction, rubbing elbows and transmuted her sadness with illustrations of tortured, beaten, and gunned down women's bodies. Maria, the work is loaded with imagery of damaged and aggressive women, and it is no surprise that Wollstonecraft had the most trouble finishing it.

Wollstonecraft thinks that the mind is its own sphere, and that one must live one's entire life within the confines of one's own psyche. Maria's mentality, on the other hand, has been shattered by her husband's violent treatment. Her baby girl's face is continually in front of her eyes, but she has no idea that she is pregnant. "Still she cried for her child, lamented she was a daughter, and dreaded the intensified miseries of life that her sex rendered virtually unavoidable," (document) says Wollstonecraft on giving birth to a daughter.

Maria imagines Henry as the ideal lover, much as Pygmalion imagined Galatea in ivory before seeing her come to life beneath his embraces. Even still, it is important to observe that this writing is preoccupied with triangle arrangements. Without Jemima, the servant woman, the lower-class surrogate who so frequently does the hard labor for the more-educated, presumably more-intelligent heroine, Henry cannot be loved or appreciated. The reader is involved in Jemima's tale almost as soon as Henry and Maria declare their love, and this is a narrative that is more thorough and finely woven than Henry's.

Jemima, like them, must represent the troubles, sufferings, abuse, and beatings that may be inflicted on innocent women whose only crime is to be born women in a society that sees them as waste or raw sexual material to be exploited and devoured. Jemima's story is a humiliatingly painful succession of insults and affronts, starting with maternal rejection, maternal death, paternal neglect and physical abuse, emotional woundings, and finally another illegitimate pregnancy caused by rape, with the cycle set to repeat itself. When reading Jemima's story, one is reminded of Blake's poem "The Mental Traveller," because both works provide a dismal view of gendered combat, implying the same desperation and cynicism born of failed idealism.

Jemima does not have her child, opting instead for an abortion, and Wollstonecraft does not blame Jemima's decision, instead classifying it as desperate. She also doesn't criticize Jemima's period as a prostitute or her time as a "principled thief". Given Jemima's lack of alternative options, both behaviors are understandable, preying on the patriarchy's advantages and corrupt authority. After five years as the kept mistress of a wealthy and intellectual man, Jemima is forced to return to the streets when the guy unexpectedly dies.

In the context of the eighteenth century, "Jemima recognizes that she has been "laid aside as the muck of society" as a "displaced housewife." Condemned to work like a machine for the sole purpose of earning food, and barely that, I felt despondent and desperate " Document . She preys on a man who has previously caused one woman's pregnancy out of desperation. Jemima precipitates the other lady's death by driving this guy to renounce his commitment to the woman and unborn child. In other words, Jemima has turned into the murderess of her own exiled mother. Wollstonecraft shows what we all already know. Victims of abuse become victimizers in turn, and those who have been battered become the beaters when given the chance.

Jemima's abuse cycle naturally comes to an end when she becomes as broken and dangerous as her captors. According to the reasoning of the thumping dream, the "stiff, cold body" carried out of a well, the unnamed suicide expectant woman, could only be understood as yet another reduced woman substituting for the protagonist Maria's misplaced or unacknowledged transgressions and her innermost fears. The woman who would rather die than bear George Venable's child is depicted as a public sight, a cautionary tale, far away but strangely present and dangerous to the heroine and her successor.

Maria escapes her husband after much theatrical acting and exaggerated hysteria, and begins the chain of events that would lead her to her eventual destination, the insane asylum. "Junked like a diseased animal,". Maria embodies the stereotypical female victim, pursued by her husband for her uncle's wealth. Even the landladies who provide her with refuge hand her over to her husband. Maria understands that she is both plagued and stalked by Venables in a paranoid dream:

who seemed to assume terrific or hateful forms to torment me, wherever (turned.- Sometimes a wild] cat, a roaring bull, or hideous assassin, whom I vainly attempted to fly ; at others he was a demon, hurrying me to the brink of a precipice, plunging me into dark waves, or horrid gulfs; and I woke, in violent fits of trembling anxiety, to assure myself that it was all a dream". (*Maria* 132)

Maria is suffering from insanity, which is manifested in this scene as a series of typical medieval scenes founded on leftover experiences of chronic abuse. She has no one to turn to but her absent and all-loving uncle; she is completely alone and defenseless (a convenient deistic God-figure). Maria, but at the other hand, is starting to slip into an early form of the feminist parthenogenetic fantasy, the notion that two mothers can bring a child into existence without the intervention of a man, which would flourish almost two millennia ago in the fiction of writers like Marge Piercy and Joanna Russ."

In Wollstonecraft's case, she conceals the first hurt of her family' refusal of her own survival, only to be confronted with the primal issue when Imlay decisively refuses her and excludes her from the familial circular pattern she was attempting to form with him and their daughter. Her writings are on the dysfunctional family dynamics, which are clearly meant to really be embodiments of patriarchal society. Wollstonecraft maintained that if she was harmed by such institutions' psychological and sexual abuses, then so were all women. Reading the wound appears to be as uncomfortable today as it was then.

2. CONCLUSION

The novel was written by Wollstonecraft, who is an English writer, incorporates the society mood toward females immediately when their social rank is seen as beneath male status. Wollstonecraft devotes her acting to discussing feminine issues at a time when women's suffrage was nearing its pinnacle. As a result, this novel is regarded as a call for the rights of women by showing one of the most main and taboo topics at the time, spousal abuse of women. The spousal abuse of women is a central theme in Wollstonecraft's novel which is centered on the wife abuse that forced Maria to kill herself after enduring her sufferings for so long time, and then she decided to kill herself in order to end the discriminatory and prejudice practices of her masculine society.

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