



## Female Writers in the 18th Century

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### ABSTRACT

Women have traditionally played key positions in a range of literary works, particularly those targeted for younger readers. Literature is a mirror of society and the ideas held by society. In addition to that, it instills these beliefs. The trouble with this is that although while the feminist movement of the 1970s had a major influence on American culture, society is still predominantly male dominated, and there is still a long way to go before women attain cultural equality. This is the problem with this. Women aren't given much respect in American society, whether they're characters in books or authors. Osterhaus believes that throughout history, the majority of renowned and recognised writers have been men, which has resulted to "images of women in literature that are products of a creative process that has a limited perspective." Therefore, literature has the power to reimaging and recast the part that women perform in society. Having stated all of this, it makes one ask if the literature published for young people appropriately depicts women and if it reflects the new theories that social historians have established about the ways in which women have shaped history.

### INTRODUCTION

During the eighteenth century, female authors commonly focused their emphasis on the function of the female imagination while they were creating novels and poetry. They viewed the female imagination not only as a means of expressing their creative side, but also as a means of momentarily escaping the harsh realities of the world. In *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft focused the majority of her attention on the latter concept, which is the ability of a woman to use her imagination in order to escape the literal prison of an insane asylum as well as the figurative prisons of a tyrannical marriage and an oppressive world. In other words, she was able to break free from all of these prisons. From Wollstonecraft's point of view, the ability of a woman to make use of her imagination was the most important factor in liberating herself from these limitations. Anna Letitia Barbauld, in the meantime, brought attention to the creative masterpieces that might be made by the feminine mind with the poem "Washing-Day." On the other hand, she also makes a few allusions to the potentially deadly scientific imagination of men, which was the driving force for the development of hot air balloons. Lastly, Mary Shelley creates a remarkable contrast in *Frankenstein* between the creative applications of the imagination that are generally associated with women and the merciless ambitions that are typically connected with the scientific imagination. This difference is a stunning example of how Shelley's imagination operates. Barbauld and Shelley focus on the ways in which female imagination may be utilised, showcasing the artistic achievements that come from the feminine mind while simultaneously denouncing the ways in which masculine imagination can be utilised, notably in the fields of science and technology. Despite the fact that Wollstonecraft portrays imagination as the only outlet and lone choice for women who are confined to their houses, she prioritises the use of imagination by women over the use of the intellect by men. When it comes to women who are confined to their houses, Wollstonecraft portrays imagination as the only release and the only alternative opportunity.

While *Maria*, the main character in Wollstonecraft's novel, is being held hostage in a mental hospital, reading serves as an early source of solace for her. Reading was an activity that many women who had been domesticated turned to in order to give an escape from the monotony of their life and to develop their imaginations. In the same way as *Maria* did, these ladies depended on reading as a means of escaping the monotony of their lives and entertaining their imaginations. It is claimed that "the books she had gotten, were swiftly eaten, by one who had no other resource to escape from sadness" (Wollstonecraft 14). This statement is in reference to *Maria*. Through the use of this specific illustration, Wollstonecraft illustrates the dilemma that many women find themselves in, which is one of immobility and



even imprisonment, frequently inside the confines of their own homes. In the instance of Maria, Wollstonecraft narrates the account of a lady who is held hostage by her oppressive husband. This was an incident that would have been far too often for women who were living in the eighteenth century.

Shelley emphasises, once more, how the scientific imagination of men generally results in death and devastation, but the fantasies of women can occasionally turn out to be fairly harmless. By depriving Frankenstein's one opportunity for happiness with Elizabeth and by insuring that he would perish away at the climax of the novel, Shelley eventually punishes both Frankenstein and the male ego. Walton and the reader are both plagued by the final words that Frankenstein says, which are as follows: "Seek contentment in calm and abandon ambition, even if it is merely the seemingly harmless one of distinguishing oneself in research and discoveries". This is the final statement that Frankenstein makes. Shelley, Wollstonecraft, and Barbault all criticise males who deprive females of their brains and any semblance of a mind. Furthermore, Shelley, Wollstonecraft, and Barbault all reject scientific endeavours that are implemented for the aim of causing destruction and violence. In particular, Shelley is extremely critical of a male-dominated scientific discipline that completely eradicates the possibility of female participation in reproduction.

In the beginning of her work, Shelley makes a comparison between herself and the character of Frankenstein's creator. She also compares the novel, which is the result of her imagination, to the monster that Frankenstein made. This is an unusual turn of events. Shelley makes the statement, "I bid my horrible children go out and flourish," which can be translated as "I hope they do" (xxvi). The monster that Shelley created, on the other hand, is a peculiar creation of the imagination that serves to bring attention to the too ambitious ambitions of science and, as a result, accomplishes a lot of good in the world. Frankenstein's monster, on the other hand, causes Frankenstein extra anguish and suffering as a result of his early abuse of the monster. This is in contrast to the situation described above. In spite of the fact that it recounts a great number of horrible things, her work is an attempt to bring attention to the destructive characteristic of the male imagination. When she uses the term "ugly" to characterise the activities that are now being conducted in the scientific community, she is really bringing attention to the fact that they are horrible. One of the goals of these endeavours is to acquire unbounded power and knowledge, information that may be beyond the capabilities and capabilities of people.

Throughout history, the notion of woman has evolved and shifted in accordance with the ideology that was prevalent at the time. As a result, women have faced a variety of difficulties as a result of this changing ideology. In spite of the fact that women in today's society have access to the same possibilities as men, there are still problems that need to be solved. In current culture, which is dominated by the media, women are provided with a variety of representations of femininity. Freud's famous question, "What does a woman want?" which he posed in the early twentieth century, continues to be relevant and has not yet been addressed in its entirety. It is inevitable that women will be subjected to pressure to adhere to particular standards so long as they continue to live in a culture that is too preoccupied with social norms on what it means to be a woman. As a consequence of this, there is the potential for a conflict of identity to arise between the understanding of a being of herself and the notion of woman that has been established by ideology.

In light of this battle, women have wanted to articulate their thoughts recorded as a hard copy in any case. They accept that there is a hole between what they perceive as themselves and what they are shown they ought to be. This contention is the motivation behind why women have wanted to communicate their thoughts recorded as a hard copy. The reason for this postulation is to concentrate on the manners by which the tale of the (female) self is conveyed recorded as a hard copy, as well as the manners by which women endeavor to foster their own identity, both as per and in resistance with the predominant philosophy in their ongoing society. There will be an accentuation put on the difficulties that women who are keeping in



touch with themselves face, as well as the vagueness and mental strain that are related with the experience of feeling that they are not quite the same as everything society says to them they are and what they feel and think about themselves. Women throughout history have frequently used writing as a means of combating the alienation of the self that they have experienced. Writings of the self, in particular, have been particularly effective in this regard. Within the context of her book, "Autobiography," Linda Anderson highlights the significance of the autobiography genre by highlighting the fact that the personal is also universal. In addition to this, Anderson explains how challenging it is to make a broad statement about something for which one does not really have a vocabulary. According to her point of view, "autobiography has the potential to become the text of the oppressed," which means that it may articulate, via the experiences of a single individual, experiences that may be emblematic of a certain marginalised group. Autobiography, when viewed from this perspective, becomes a means of both attesting to oppression and authorising the subject through her cultural representation. As a result, books that investigate the lives of women are of utmost significance due to the fact that they usually have a particularly intricate connection to the social circumstances in which they were created. It is via the process of describing the society to which the writer belongs that she is able to discover her distinctive identity.

This is the sort of thing that is more common in the compositions of women than it is in the works of guys. The justification behind this is on the grounds that all through history, women have been relegated a more noteworthy number of socially made jobs that are related with their orientation than men have. As this postulation will endeavor to represent, women have genuinely wanted to find how they fit into this unique situation. This need has been a proceeding with pattern. Moreover, the individual piece of composing is something commonplace of women's writing as a rule, and this is the sort of thing that Judith Gardiner has investigated. Judith Gardiner has researched this part of composing. Gardiner found that identity is a huge part in women's writing in her book named "On Female Identity and Composing by Women." She likewise expressed that "[f]emale identity development is reliant upon the mother-girl bond." [...] the mother representation of female creation clarifies the novel contribution that the female essayist has with her characters and recommends that there is a comparative connection between the female peruser and the person. Moreover she feels that a "lady essayist utilizes her text, especially one centring on a female legend, as a component of a proceeding with process including her own self-definition and her empathic distinguishing proof with her personality". Not only do women appear to have a stronger connection to their audience, but they also appear to have a stronger connection to their own work, which becomes a representation of who they are. The purpose of this thesis is to study the ways in which ideology has an effect on women, as well as the ways in which this is contested and how it exhibits itself in works produced by women. I will perform careful readings and comparative analyses of literature from three distinct historical periods that directly lead up to our current time in order to provide an answer to this topic.

In the end, I will finally examine how these works link to the modern study by concentrating on Caitlin Moran's How to be a Woman. I will begin with Cassandra by Florence Nightingale, then go on to A Room of One's Own by Virginia Woolf, and ultimately conclude with The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan. The fact that each of these authors contributes a reaction to the many masculine perspectives on female identity in their respective modern societies is the common thread that binds these authors and writings together. From a social and feminist point of view, the texts will be studied with a particular emphasis on the narrative of the self and the roles that are developed via social interaction. As opposed to providing explanations, social theory is more concerned with providing commentary and criticism of modern society. To have a feminist viewpoint is to adopt a strategy that examines and investigates the social norms that pertain to gender, race, class, sexuality, and other forms of social inequality. On account of this, it appears to be beneficial to investigate, contrast, and talk about the texts with reference to theory from each of these perspectives.



The absolute most powerful works of the 20th 100 years, for example, those composed by Simone de Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter, and Toril Moi, are integrated into the women's activist hypothesis that is used in this proposition. These female scholars have projects that are like those of Songbird, Woolf, Friedan, and Moran, and it would be helpful to peruse them related to each other to have a superior comprehension of the many methodologies that are taken during the time spent endeavoring to characterize what a lady is. References to Simone de Beauvoir will zero in fundamentally on how her idea of lady as "the Other" connects with what the chose works depict, while Elaine Showalter's compositions are significant in wording contextualizing women's literature in association with social and cultural worries.

The final point is that Toril Moi offers a lot of helpful ideas and notions that pertain to women as beings as well as sketching the bigger boundaries of what feminist theory and critique includes. Due to the fact that she combines Woolf, Friedan, and de Beauvoir into her extensive research, she will be alluded to consistently throughout. Furthermore, in order to provide a description of the culture in which these authors found themselves, I will make use of The Norton Anthology-Literature by Women. Within this collection, women's literature from the time periods that I am focusing on has been compiled and described.

The anthology has also been studied in order to explore the manner in which male authors of the various time periods in question represented female characters in their works of literature. When it is necessary, we shall make reference to other pertinent theoretical works and literary works. In addition, it is vital to provide clarification on a few key theoretical terminology and ideas in order to provide direction to the reader of this thesis. The phrases "sex" and "gender" are frequently considered to be two distinct methods of characterising the distinctive characteristics that distinguish men and women. The term "gender" refers to the socially created roles, behaviours, activities, and characteristics that a specific culture thinks proper for men and women. Sex, on the other hand, refers to the biological distinctions that exist between the two. The notion of 'woman' appears to be a concept that primarily ties itself to 'gender' and is more closely tied to ideological structures, but the concept of 'sex' appears to be a static concept that decides gender in the first place. This is one of the reasons why 'sex and gender' is significant for this thesis.

Toril Moi also makes a remark on these two ideas and makes the observation that it is often vital to differentiate between the natural and cultural variations in sex, particularly in the case of feminist theorists who concentrated on this distinction in order to avoid biological determinism. During the Victorian era, there was a prevalent belief that if a person possessed a certain sex (female), they were expected to act and think in a particular manner (feminine). This led to the confusion of gender and sex between the two. This qualification, then again, doesn't turn out as expected in that frame of mind of subjectivity hypothesis, which alludes to speculations that middle on the idea of "oneself." She is of the assessment that the classes of sex and orientation are "just immaterial to the undertaking of creating a substantial verifiable comprehension of being a lady." This is a trouble that is looked by the female creators who will be all examined in this proposition. To additionally figure out the importance of the expression "women's activist," which is characterized as "a backer or ally of the privileges and uniformity of women," it is likewise fundamental to take note of that this setting is being talked about."

There is a need to recognize the differentiations between the expressions "women's activist," "female," and "ladylike," as per Toril Moi, who believes that this ID is essential. It is vital as far as we're concerned to "recognize 'woman's rights' as a political position, 'femaleness' as an issue of science, and 'gentility' as a bunch of socially characterized qualities as to scholarly analysis." as such, that's what she declares assuming women's composing is described as ladylike composition, it will bring about a place of minimization as to a general public that is overwhelmed by male controlled society. Along these lines, the qualification between the words is critical in the field of abstract analysis. Another term that will be utilized rather



habitually is philosophy, which is an expression that depicts the manner by which people ponder and see the universe of the globe.

Ideology is a way of defining a topic from the inside out, as well as the societal standards that individuals are supposed to conduct in accordance with. Language, which represents attitudes and social notions, is intimately tied to ideology because of this connection. Furthermore, language that is chauvinist or male-dominated not only reflects sexist beliefs in a culture but also contributes to the maintenance of those sentiments. Language fails to offer women authors with notions that sufficiently express what it is that they are confronting, and language is filled with patriarchal views. This is one of the difficulties that will be addressed in this thesis. It is also one of the problems that will be addressed in this thesis.

It would appear that this is a key factor in both the reasons why they have such a difficult time writing and the reasons why they are required to write in the first place. A problematization of the urge to discover a language and a text that explains both their own predicament and maybe that of other women can be found in each and every one of the works that will be reviewed in this session. Women have, over the course of history, been confronted with difficulties concerning their identity. These difficulties have arisen as a result of the conflict that frequently emerges as a result of the impact of ideology and the lack of differentiation between sex and gender. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), identity may be described as the distinguishing trait that is possessed by any single individual or that is shared by all of the members of a certain social category or group. We shall use the term "identity" throughout this thesis to refer to both the internal and subjective aspects of identity, as well as the outward and normative aspects of identity. Therefore, the phrase relates to both the way in which women perceive themselves as well as the way in which others perceive them. The concept of identity will be discussed in further detail as the result of social institutions and the way in which individuals interact with one another. The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the societal forces that are responsible for shaping the ideology that pertains to women, as well as the degree of influence that women themselves have over who they are.

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