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## Introduction

The 18th century is a very significant period in order to analyse how the society at that time dealt with love and marriages.

We have chosen *Moll Flanders* written by Daniel Defoe, because it is a very good example of how women also took advantage of marriage. Here we find a woman that sees marriage as a business, where she can secure a social status, economic stability and companionship. Although love is secondary for her, she sometimes fined it.

In *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* written by Samuel Johnson, we find a prince who embodies the search for happiness. The Prince is very young and he has never been to any place except for Abissinia. His debate about marriage is one of the most representative passages of the book, where we can see two divergent visions about marriage.

We are also going to deal with *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* written by Samuel Richardson, because it is a good source to discern the 18th century status of women related to love, marriage, family and friends.

The election of *Joseph Andrews* written by Henry Fielding, makes us realise that true love is able to overcome many difficulties to reach the real love in the end.

We have also chosen *Mary* and *The Wrongs of Woman* written by Mary Wollstonecraft, because it deals with the problems that women had to face in the 18th century about marriage and all the consequences that could have for their lives.

The writer shows us how women were forced to marry men whom they did not love and how they found love afterwards, eventhough lovers usually disappeared in the end and women had to remain with their husbands.

Another source for our essay is *Gulliver's Travels* written by Jonathan Swift, that shows us the little importance the writer gives to love, as marriage is for him more of an status than of a feeling; therefore he

gives to Gulliver's journeys a prevalent position in his life.

Summing up all these works, we have tried to achieve a dissertation about love and marriage in the 18th century, which though quite difficult and complex is very interesting as well.

## **MARRIAGE**

Marriage is universal in all societies and of course it is common to the English

Literature. We are going to deal with it now through different novels of the 18th century.

Taking into account *Moll Flanders'* life, we can say that she only gets married to

gain money to survive. She just married for money, material wealth, social status and

companionship. She does not look for the founding of a family or for family ties. When she meets a man, his description is accompanied by his expenses a gentleman of

1200 a year and the word gentleman is always present. In that sense Moll's husbands are not characterised in depth, but superficially, we do not get much information about them, except for the benefits they would bring to her. This is why she gets married so many times during her lifetime.

Social values were changing in the 18th century and the writers at this time tried to reflect it in their novels, but without applying it to their real lives.

Moll is the main character in the novel and she uses the rest of the characters as mere objects to obtain what she desires. This is why she got married five times, she even got married to her own brother, although she did not know their relationship until they had already married.

Of course if we are talking about marriage, we have to take into account the children. We know nothing about Moll's children, it seems as if she did not care for them. Throughout the whole novel she does not show any worries about her children, although she had many of them, except in two cases.

The first one is the child she had when she was living in London with her governess. She paid other people to take care of him, you give a Piece of Money to these People to take Care of it as long as it lives (*Moll Flanders* p. 236)

The second one is the one who was living in Virginia with her husband (brother); he is the only one who assures her stability and a social position in America after her getting out of prison with her husband.

A different case takes place in *Mary* and *The Wrongs of Woman*. Mary is the main character, she is not able to achieve her economic individualism and she has dependency and submission to her husbands. The effects of Mary's marriage are the loss of freedom and independence of her husband.

Marriage in the 18th century was very different as it is today; getting married carried for a woman the loss of all her properties, because when a woman married a man her properties went straight to her husband, to do with as he thought best. The sole and absolute property rests in the husband, to be disposed of at his pleasure (*Love and Marriage in England : 1300–1840*, p. 272).

Mary Wollstonecraft was very concerned with this aim as she says in *The Wrongs of a Woman* : Indeed what could most woman do? Who had they to maintain them, but her husbands? (p. 139); she shows some kind of feminism in her thoughts, as she accepts here that women are in an unfair situation and men had a better social

status, even preferring to have been born as a man: Why was I not born a man?(p. 139). This gives us a clue about how marriages were in the 18th century.

Now we are going to deal with *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* where we find a man speaking about marriage and about his future wife. The debate on marriage is the most elaborate subject in the book (chapter XXIX, p.100). We have one question, which is marriage seen from two different points of view.

The Princess Nekayah points out the inconveniences of marriage and insists on the differences that may exist among children and parents:

From those early marriages proceeds likewise the rivalry of parents and children: the son is eager to enjoy the world before the father is willing to forsake it, and there is hardly room at once for two generations. The daughter begins to bloom before the mother can be content to fade, and neither can forbear to wish for the absence of the other ( p.100–101)

But for the Prince Rasselas, marriage is one of the best things in life:

If marriage be best for mankind, it must be evidently for individuals; or a permanent and necessary duty must be the cause of evil, and some must be inevitably sacrificed to the convenience of others.(p.100)

Nevertheless, as Rasselas is not married, his conception of love and marriage is like this, an ideal and never ending love to live with the woman he loves:

Such is the common process of marriage. A youth and maiden, meeting by chance or brought together by artifice,[...] dream one of another[...] conclude that they shall be happy together. They marry, and discover what nothing but voluntary blindness before had concealed; they wear out life in altercations, and change Nature with cruelty (p.100)

Nekayah is the one who helps him to see reality. She shows him the bad things of marriage when she says: I see and reckon the various forms of connubial infelicity, the unexpected causes of lasting discord, the diversities of temper, the oppositions of opinion, the rude collisions of contrary desire [...](p.98). She also says: marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures(p. 95), she is very realistic, even more than her brother is. But with this debate they do not decide who is right or wrong, they only discuss about the pros and the cons of marriage.

Sometimes we find that some writers do not pay much attention to marriage, an example of this is Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver Travels*. J. Swift focuses in the different adventures that the main character goes through during his journeys; this is why the author mentions marriage few times in the novel.

The first time marriage is mentioned, in a very superficial way, is at the beginning of the novel: I married Mrs Mary Burton, second daughter to Mr Edmond Burton hosier in Newgate Street, with whom I received four hundred pounds for a portion (3)(p. 53).

Then, marriage is only mentioned when Gulliver returns home after his journeys, as when he returned from Lilliput:

I stayed but two months with my wife and family [...]. I left fifteen

hundred pounds with my wife and fixed her in a good house at Redriff

[...]. My son Johnny[...] was at the grammar school, and a towardly child.

My daughter Betty (who is now well married, and has children)[...](p. 117)

But the author also wants to express that Gulliver loves his family, although they are not given much importance: I took leave of my wife, and boy and girl, with tears on both sides(p. 117).

Gulliver, as he is the equiscent narrator, talks about his wife and family in two different ways; sometimes he misses them so much (4) and sometimes he just mentions them in a very superficial way: [...] and found my wife and family in good health.(p. 263).

Marriage appears again in another novel, *Joseph Andrews*, we observe how Joseph has to overcome many difficulties (he was robbed and beat up) and reject many temptations to get at the end to his dear Fanny. In the end they marry:

When the church rites were over, Joseph led his blooming Bride back

to Mr Booby's(for the Distant was so very little, they did not think proper

to use a Coach) the whole Company attended them likewise on foot; and

now a most magnificent Entertainment was provided, at which Parson

Adams demonstrated an Appetite surprizing, as well as surpassing every

one present. Indeed the only Persons who betrayed any Deficiency on this

Occasion, were those on whose account the Feast was provided. They

pampered their Imaginations with the much more exquisite Repast which

the Approach of Night promised them; the Thoughts of which silled both

their Minds, tho' with different Sensations; the one all Desire, while the

other had her Wishes tempered with fears. (p. 302)

Marriage has common features in different centuries literature. In the 19th century literature for instance, we find two clear examples of different kinds of marriages in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*.

In *Pride and Prejudice* we find that people married for different reasons. Darcy and Elizabeth get married just for love, as opposed to Wickham and Lydia who only care for money and they follow a blind impulse to marry. We also see marriage of interests in that of Mr Collins and Charlotte Lucas, they both take advantage of their marriage; since he wished to have a wife to follow the patterns of the society at that time and she was getting quite old already to get a husband. As we see in the 19th century, we can find fixed marriages that were not based on love at all.

A clear example of marrying for money is found in *Castle Rackrent*. In this case we notice that men are the ones who marry wealthy women, and not viceversa; as opposed to Moll Flanders, who marries rich men to get their money.

### The role of the seducer

We are going to deal now with one of the main characters in the 18th century literature: the seducer. The seducer represents an emblematic figure, as he is the one who tries to seduce a woman to obtain sexual benefits from her without getting married.

One of the seducers of the 18th century literature may be Mr B in the novel *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* by Samuel Richardson. Here we find this seducer as the master of the house who constantly pursues her maid Pamela. He does not want to get married, he only wants Pamela to make her his mistress: You shall be mistress of my person and fortune, as much as if the fooly ceremony had passed(p. 230).

He does not want to get married because that means having to support a wife, but he does want to obtain the pleasure that a woman can give to a man without any responsibilities to her. Therefore, virtue is a jewel regarded by women that is not easily given until marriage, and so Pamela says: I am resolved to be virtuous and gloried in honesty of my poor parents(p. 54). As a result of this, the seducer gives the promise of marriage to get what he wants, but without any intentions to marry the woman at the end. However, Pamela is so determined to keep her virtue that he finally has to give up and marry her.

A similar situation happens in *Moll Flanders*. Here we have again a seducer who uses the promise of marriage to obtain what he wants. But in this case, the main element to convince her is money; we see this in: [...] he put five Guineas into my hand and went away downstairs(p. 23) or [...] he pulls out a silk purse, with a hundred Guineas in it and gave it me(p. 25). This happens just before Moll gives him what he desires. This is the first time Moll falls in the hands of a seducer. He is her master and promised her marriage to obtain what he wants, but after his goal was achieved, he got rid of the poor girl to look for another victim (5).

The role of the seducer also appears in Mary Wollstonecraft. In *The Wrongs of Women*, Jemina's father seduces her mother by a promise of marriage: he had promised in the fervour of seduction(p. 102), but after she gave birth to Jemina, Jemina's mother died. And Jemina's father received nothing but a slight reproof (p. 102). He married again to a woman who treated Jemina as a servant.

Jemina herself suffered the effects of a seducer but in the most evil way: At the age of 16, she is raped by the man she works for, and thrown out of the house by his wife when she discovers them together (p. 137). Before the rape was committed, he tried to seduce her, but she refused him, so this is why he finally raped her.

We find one characteristic in common with all the seducers, which is that they are in a higher position in society, as the three of them are the masters of the three girls. This is why they acted this way, because they thought they had the right to use their victims as they wanted, just because they had the power.

The figure of the seducer is not an exclusive mark of the 18th century literature, since we can find this figure also in some examples of the 19th century literature.

We find it in the figure of George Wickham in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, where he tries to seduce Elizabeth Bennet deceiving her by telling her untrue stories about Darcy's life. Then he seduces Elizabeth's sister, Lydia, and marries her.

We can also consider George Robertson in Sir Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* as a seducer, whose victim is Effie Deans, whom he takes away her virtue, even though he had to marry her at the end.

#### WHEN FRIENDSHIP TURNS INTO LOVE

Sometimes we find a man and a woman who are only friends, but as time passes, this friendship turns into something inevitable that is love.

In *Moll Flanders* we find only one character that can be assumed to be as Moll's friend, this character is the gentleman at Bath. Although at first he is just a friend, Moll treats him in the same superficial manner as his husbands.

As Moll is the equiscent narrator, she introduces him as the gentleman he is:

The Gentleman who, as I said, singl'd me out of his companion the winter before [...] this Gentleman came down and continu'd to single me out of his peculiar Confidence as well as Conversation; he was a compleat Gentleman, that must be confess'd, and his Company was very agreeable to me, as mine, if I might believe him, was to him [...] (p. 159).

The way she introduces him shows us her interest to be her friend, although his interests are not the same as hers. He tells Moll about his family problems, his wife was:

[...] the Lady was distemper'd in her Head, and was under the Conduct of her own Relations, which he consented to, to avoid any Reflections that might, as was not usual in such Cases, be cast on him for mismanaging her Cure; and in the mean time he came to the Bath to divert his Thoughts from the Disturbance of such melancholy Circumstance as that was. (p.159–160)

Which assures him Moll's friendship to forget his problems.

From this moment begin a series of descriptions concerning his virtuous character: My Landlady, [...], gave me an advantageous Character of him, as a Man of Honour and Virtue, as well as of a great Estate [...] even when I was in Bed; and also into his when he was in Bed (6), yet he never offered any thing to me than a kiss, or so much solicited to me any thing (p. 160); I should always find I had a true Friend (p. 161). A description like this shows the picture of a perfect friend, a man with no sexual intentions. He even gives her money to live in a better way, without any intention of her giving it back:

[...] he had a sincere Respect for me, and knew my Circumstances, he had not Lent me that Money, but given it me, and that he thought I had merited it from him by giving him my Company so intirely as I had done: After this, he made me take a Maid, and keep House, and his Friend that came with him to Bath, being gone, he oblig'd me to Dyet him, which I did very willingly, believing as it appear'd, that I should lose nothing by it, nor did the Woman of the House fail to find her Account in it too. (p. 164)

But then comes a turning point immediately before they go to Bristol: And now he made deep Protestations of a sincere inviolable Affection for me, but all along attested it to be wit the utmost reserve for my Virtue and his own [...] that if he was naked in Bed with me, he would scarcely preserve my Virtue, as he would defend it if I was assaulted by a Ravisher; I believ'd him, and told him I did it so; but this did not satisfie him; he would, he said, wait for some opportunity to give me an undoubted Testimony of it. (p. 166)

Which gives us the first clue to think that maybe he is not as virtuous as he seems to be. His real intentions are discovered when they go to Bristol and they lay in bed together, he insisted.

At last repeating his usual saying, that he could lye naked in the Bed with me and not offer me the least Injury, he starts out of his Bed, and now, my Dear, says he, you shall see how just I will be to you, and that I can keep my word, and away he comes to my Bed. (p. 166–167)

We can not see him as a seducer, but he is a man, and as well as we all know, men have sexual necessities, this is why after having been drinking one night Moll says:

[...] that I cou'd find in my Heart to discharge him of his Engagement for one Night and no more.

He took me at my word immediately, and after that, there was no resisting

him; neither indeed had I any mind to resist him any more, let what

would come of it.(p. 168)

After this night, Moll becomes his mistress until he gets ill, almost to death. He finishes his relationship with a letter:

I wish you would think of going back to the Bath; I enclose you here a

Bill for 50 l. for clearing your self at your Lodgings, and carrying you

down, and hope it will no surprize to you to add, that on this account

only, and not for any Offence given me on your side, I can SEE YOU NO

MORE; I will take due care of the Child; live him were he is, or taken with

you, as you please; I wish you the like Reflections, and they may be to

your Advantage [...](p. 177)

The decision of leaving Moll is taken by the gentleman himself. He does not remain loyal until the end and changes his mind to the figure of the seducer, which makes us think that he might have planned everything from the beginning.

We find two representative characters of friendship in the novels *Mary* and *The Wrongs of Woman*.

In *Mary*, we find the character of Henry, who is introduced to us as an invalid who is playing the violin and in chapter 12, we are told that: Henry was a man of learning [...] and knew many of the intricacies of the human heart [...] his rational sentiments received warmth from his sensibility [...] he was gentle(p. 27–28). This shows us the perfect portrait of a sensitive man (7).

As Mary's husband hardly appear in the story, because she has been forced to marry him and she shows great repulsion towards him, she turns from bodies and bodily worship to Henry, who is all mind and soul(p. 16). She feels attracted to Henry from the beginning although she tells us that his face is rather ugly(p. 22).

As the novel goes on, physical contacts appear and many references to his sensibility can be found in almost every chapter.

Little by little he begins to assume the role of a husband for Mary, but we find something surprising at the end; Henry dies in her arms, and she is left with the disgust of being with her husband(p. 16).

For us Mary Wollstonecraft shows here the crude reality of women at that time; Mary loses her dear friend and she has to stay with her terrible husband for the rest of her life.

In the case of *The Wrongs of Woman* we find Henry (8) Darnford. The first time he is mentioned in the book we are told that his accents are: manly, and characteristic of noble mind(p. 40).

We also find Maria, the main character, who is married to George Venables, who first seems to be a loving character but who turns into evil and ends up imprisoning Maria in a madness asylum. Darnford appears in this moment: [...] a man who had before rescued her from oppression(p. 93). From this moment this will be his main function. He rescues Maria making her happy.

We find that the end is quite surprising because Darnford is accused of adultery but we do not get to know what happens next because Mary Wollstonecraft did not finish it (9).

A different case appears in *Joseph Andrews*. We find Betty, a maid who is taking care of Joseph who due to the fact that he was robbed and beat up, is very ill in bed. Because of all the time she spends with him, she begins to appreciate him in a very special way, as we see when Mrs Tow-Wouse (the governess) sends her to bring Joseph some beer, but she thinks that tea (although it was more expensive) would be better for him, so she accordingly went and bought him some herself, and attended him with it(p. 53).

Since she spends so much time with Joseph:

Ever since Joseph's arrival, Betty had conceived an extraordinary Liking to him, which discovered itself more and more, as he grew better and better; till that fatal Evening, when, as she was warming his Bed, her Passion grew to such a Height, and so perfectly mastered both her Modesty and her Reason, that after so many fruitless Hints, and sly Insinuations, she at last threw down the Warming Pan, and embracing him with great Eagerness, swore he was the handsomest Creature she had ever seen. (p. 74)

But we find this is not corresponded love since Joseph rejects her because he does not feel any kind of love for her.

As a conclusion, we could say that it was very common to find love in a good friend, even when women did not find it in the figure of the husband.

Failure of marriages

As it happens nowadays, there are many causes that could make a marriage fail.

In *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, chapter XXIX, when Rasselas and Nekayah are debating about marriage, one of the reasons she gives for the failing of a marriage, is the fact that people marry at a very early age:

I cannot forbear to flatter myself that prudence and benevolence will make marriage happy. The general folly of mankind is the cause of general complaint. What can be expected but disappointment and repentance from choice made in the immaturity of youth, in the ardour of desire, without judgement, without foresight, without inquiry after conformity of opinions, similarity of manners, rectitude of judgement, or

purity of sentiment(p. 100)

But this was not the only reason that could make a marriage fail.

Men could easily get divorced by blaming their wives for adultery, saying that they were bad wives or bad mothers, etc.

Denying the validity of the marriage was another possibility men had to get rid of their wives. This can be seen in *Moll Flanders* when Moll marries the Irish man, although their marriage is not valid at all because she is already married. Declaring their marriage irregular on the grounds that it was celebrated by a Romish Clergyman (p. 199), they were easily separated.

Another possibility husbands had, was the wife-sale (*The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800*, p. 35), by which women could be sold like cattle. We can see examples of this uncommon custom in *The Wrongs of Woman*, when Mr Venables wants to sell his wife Maria to a friend of his (p. 62).

As we have said before, men could easily obtain divorce, whereas on the contrary, for a woman it carried many difficulties: A woman, once married, ought to consider the engagement as indissoluble(*The Wrongs of Woman*, p. 157).

Women could only get separated from their husbands if men hurt them:

He can rob her with impunity, even to waste publicly on a courtesan;

and the laws of her country –if women have a country– afford them no

protection or redness from the oppressor, unless she have the plea of

bodily fear[...](p. 159).

As we have seen, husbands and wives had to appeal to these reasons in order to get divorced; but considering the divorce as the separation of bed and board. Because divorce, in the sense of the dissolution of the bonds of marriage, was only possible before 1857 by a private Act of Parliament, and this could only be obtained by a rich man with a good lawyer, as one of Moll's husbands says: [...] is tedious and expensive(*Moll Flanders*, p.191).

## LOVE AND MARRIAGE FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW AS READERS

Whenever a reader comes in contact with a book, it seems clear that his or her own point of view is going to change throughout the reading. Other readers may not share our feelings towards the texts we have chosen, but we think our opinion is as valid as any others could be.

We have decided to include *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* written by Samuel Johnson, because we are shown here the different opinions men had about love and marriage at that time.

It is clear that women had no role in this book, it is just a book to instruct men. We find Rasselas' sister, Nekayah, who is used by the writer to give us the contrary view to that of Rasselas.

We do not agree with this book because it shows marriage from men's point of view and also because the only moment in which we are presented women's perspective about marriage is from a negative point of view. Therefore, we, as women, think that love and marriage are positive things.

Secondly, we have included *Mary* and *The Wrongs of Woman* written by Mary Wollstonecraft, in which the writer tries to show the oppression of women in the hands of men. The two heroines here rebelled against their oppressors who are, in fact, their husbands.

In these two novels there are almost the same characters; we have two husbands who are the representatives of the oppression as well as two lovers who represent passion and affection. This leads us to think that there is a clear dichotomy between love and hate, since the two main female characters have to fight against their husbands with the help of their lovers to find an escape to a new life.

We, as women, feel identified with the heroines as we feel the necessity to rebel against the husband's oppression and reach out to take the new life offered by the lover. We are also identified with the figure of Maria, who is confined by her husband in an asylum, as we are able to feel the claustrophobic atmosphere in which her husband had imprisoned her.

We are now going to deal with *Moll Flanders* written by Daniel Defoe, which is a good example of marriages of interests. Moll is considered the heroine of the novel but as we read the book we come to realise that she is not a real heroine; she is just a woman who tries to survive facing the different adversities she finds throughout her life, just as any human being would do.

Moll's main aim is to obtain money for her living. This is why she has no doubt about selling her body to obtain money. This is also the reason for her to get married so many times and also the reason for her to abandon her children without remorse.

We do not feel identified at all with Moll, as we were with Maria and Mary (*Mary* and *The Wrongs of Woman*), because in this case, Moll lives the life that she deserves, because she behaves more as a man than as a woman, considering that she uses men as men usually use women.

Reading *Joseph Andrews* written by Henry Fielding, we realise that virtue was not only important for women but also for men; therefore we see how Joseph overcomes many difficult texts, in which he has to avoid temptations, in order to preserve his virtue until he reaches his real love, Fanny.

Even though it is not carnal love, we also find fraternal love for his sister Pamela, we are shown this true love in the letters that Joseph writes to Pamela, in which we see that she is his moral support whenever he has a problem.

We find ourselves more identified with Joseph than with other male characters we have seen in other books, because, all in all, he is not as superficial as the rest of the characters and his final goal in life is to marry the woman he really loves, that is Fanny, while other male characters only want to take economical advantage of the women they marry.

We definitely do not find identified with Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* at all, since following the pattern of the 18th century behaviour, he gives more importance to his journeys than to his wife and family.

This book is due to the relevance of the different perspectives of marriages seen at that time. Gulliver gives a prevalent position to everything concerned with his job than to the affective part of his life, that is wife and family. This definitely proves to us that love was not a primary aim in his life.

To conclude, we have tried to explain our impressions and feelings while reading these books and we have not intended in any moment to state or demonstrate any theory but to analyse the misogynist society of the 18th century.

We have to say that we have really enjoyed reading these books because we have come closer to a different

perspective of love and marriage that took place in another century.

## Notes

- We see how little they cared about bastard children born at that time, as she refers to the baby as it.

(2) This idea differs very much with the ones presented in *Moll Flanders*, as Moll is

independent and able to achieve her economical situation.

- Again we find the importance of money in relation with marriage.
- As in the quotation seen above.
- After losing her virtue and seen the elder brother is not going to marry her, Moll clings to this marriage as her only option.
- It was usual to receive one's friend this way.
- Characteristic of the role of the friend.
- Both characters share the same name.
- Both novels have the same tragic ending for the lover.

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Love and marriage

In the 18th century literature

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