



Research Paper

## Family Dynamics In Jeannette Wall's Memoir The Glass Castle

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Glass Castle (2005) – a New York Times bestseller, chronicles the author's unconventional childhood where the children experienced chaotic childhood characterized by persistent poverty and heartbreaking incidents. The agents of the chaos were their parents – two iconoclasts Rex Walls and Mary Walls, very much to readers' bewilderment. The author – now a blue eyed journalist in New York hid her roots for two decades along with her siblings. But when she penned down her genesis, it became a rare touchstone in life writing history. The family presented seems to be a dysfunctional one (as majority of the reviews did) but the 'Family dynamics' it sketches tells a different story altogether. This detached, direct and unflinching account of her rags to riches life is tale of unconditional and unnatural support which gave the children the potency and vigor to fight against all odds. This paper argues this statement by examining the patterns of relating, or interactions, alignments, hierarchical arrangements of the Walls family relying to the concepts of cultural, psychoanalytic studies.*

**KEYWORDS** – culture, dynamics, dysfunction, family, self

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The memoir sheds light to the undisclosed life of the author –Jeannette Walls, a celebrated journalist from the city of stellar ascent, New York. The reasons for her doing become obvious when we turn the pages of the book. 'The Glass Castle' now undisputedly one among the best memoirs in modern era, recounts the saga of Walls Family consists of Rex Walls, Rose Mary Walls, Lori Walls, Jeannette Walls, Brian Walls, and Maureen Walls, the father, mother and their four children respectively. Rex Walls is an eccentric, maverick father figure who chose the life of a wanderer, never submitting himself to someone else's authority and staying close to nature. Mary Rose Walls openly challenges all maternal stereotypes, is a self proclaimed bohemian artist who valued self sufficiency above anything. These two turned out to be parents of unusual caliber which made the children, good cooks at tender ages (at the age of three for the author), taking swimming lessons in dark sulphurous water, sharing their rooms with all kinds of creatures such as flies, lizards to vultures (as their mother didn't want to disturb food chain), experience starvation and so on. On account of all these it is easy to crown The Walls Family as a dysfunctional one. But the description and tone of narration provides a very different picture, on one hand it presents heights of dysfunctionality but on the other it seems to be narrative of unconditional love. In such an aura it is important to bring out the dynamics of Walls Family.

Each family is unique in its own. The dynamics each family presents in general, is the totality of the influences the popular culture of the period offers along with the influences of their individual 'self' and imprints of some unseen unsaid patterns of alignments with family members or extended members. Therefore the kinetics of Walls family is studied on three levels 1. Finding cultural dynamics of the family in its totality. 2. Finding the patterns of their relationship to their own 'self'. 3. Finding the hidden patterns inside family system.

### II. THE CULTURAL DYNAMICS

In general, the Walls family belonged to the American society. A dreamland - a nation that seems to be synonymous with everything and anything humanity aspires for. A world where liberty, hope, democracy, opportunity and equality would find its ideal essence. But the life presented by *The Glass Castle* tells a very different story. It presents a family where 'home' is absent throughout, leading life in the most unconventional and uncivilized nature. The reasons for this 'living culture' can be traced back to the so called Counter Culture phenomena that stormed the soil of America during the 1960s.

The historian Theodore Roszak, in his very influential book *The Making of Counter Culture* identified and described the Counter Culture as the transformation movement constituting a kind of quasi-revolutionary culture in opposition to the mainstream. This hippie-era, sometimes known as the Age of Aquarius, was marked by rock'n'roll music, outrageous clothing, sexual license and illegal drugs. Hippies also turned to Eastern religions such as Zen-Buddhism, which professed that one could attain enlightenment through meditation rather than reading scriptures. Hippies donned ragged jeans; tie-dyed T-shirts, military garments, love beads, and Native American ornaments. Thousands grew their hair out, despite the fact that their more conservative elders saw this as an act of disrespect. "Make America beautiful-give a hippie a haircut" this was their motto. Hippies also rejected conventional home life.

Free speech advocate and social anthropologist Jentri Anders observed that a number of freedoms were endorsed within a Counter Cultural community in which she lived and studied. Freedom to explore one's self, freedom of personal expression, freedom from scheduling, freedom from rigidly defined roles and hierarchical statues and soon. Additionally, Anders believed some in the Counter Culture wished to modify children's education so that it didn't discourage, but rather encouraged, "aesthetic sense, love of nature, and passion for music, desire for reflection, or strongly marked independence". This culture, which Jentri Anders commenting about is what the cultural side of The Walls family is. It sets a system of its own, yielding indirectly to the ocean of Counter Culture and enriching its soul by inventing a culture of their own. Of course, the seeds of the eccentricity must be sown by Counter Culture but it was fertilized by diverse visions, actions and sensibilities of its members. The growth period of Walls family is encompassed in two periods-a period from 1950s to 1970s -a period in which Walls family found its style and completed of first phase of growth. The second period composing the years from 1980s to 2000 can be called a period of deviance.

In the light of these external implications, the study about the social-cultural-political life of Walls family can be made in a narrow sense limiting itself to its lifestyle, consumption, social interactions, relations, leisure, transport, neighborhood, public space etc. In reference to Pramod.K, Nayar, "Experience is the corner stone of everyday life. Experience is everyday life-how we experience traffic, clothing, food, and social relations on public transport, the sense of community" (Nayar, 28).

One of the prime reasons for *Glass Castle* brimming with unforgettable stories is the journey of life it exposes, and makes us to experience. Habitat plays an indispensable role in a family's life. It is the adaptation towards ones habitat decides the stability of that particular family. As the Walls Family lead a life of nomadicity this so called stability was nowhere to be found. The life of Walls family was a life of travel; just for the sake of adventure the family conducted innumerable journeys like the hippies. Jeannette named these journeys as doing the 'skedaddle'. In Las Vegas they lived in a hotel. There in a typical hippie fashion, Rex developed a winning method for blackjack and buys everyone vests, cowboy hats and numerous dinners out, the most fun to everyone was in an old west themed restaurant which tops off the evening with a flaming ice cream cake. From there the family performed "the skedaddle" to San Francisco, and ended up being in a brothel. The parents decide they are fed up with civilization and wanted to move back to the desert. Consequently, they head towards south, to a town called Midland in the heart of desert then visiting Blythe, the family went back to their roots to Phoenix, to their grandma's house. There they lived in a fourteen roomed house. Phoenix was filled with gypsies and perverts. Although, the life was weird there, Jeannette felt Phoenix to be the most awesome place she had ever dwelled in. Finally, they moved on to Welch, West Virginia. The place was supposedly covered in a coal mining dust, which made living conditions hard. It is from these hardest of circumstances, the Walls children attained maturity enabling them to transporting their lives to the city of stellar ascent-The New York, deserting their parents. But for Mr. and Mrs. Walls life was always an adventure and remained homeless in rest of their life. The Walls family spent the best part of their life-like nomads, wandering from one place to another. She herself says, we moved around like nomads. We were always doing the 'skedaddle', usually in the middle of night... (Walls, 18).

Transport forms an important part in everyday life. For Walls Family it occupies a much important place, as expeditions were the part of their custom. Majority of their travel was made by the means of a green station wagon called the Green Caboose. But the car, was not just the means of their transport, it occupies much higher position. She says, "We counted eleven places we had, then we lost track. We couldn't remember the names of some of the towns or what the houses we had lived in looked like. Mostly I remembered the inside of cars" (Walls,34). The only permanent address of the family was Green Caboose.

"Life-style is about identity making. Lifestyle is about consumption of specific objects/events. Life style identity us a mode of social interaction, and bestows a degree of individualism" (Nayar, 29).

The life of the Walls Family inside the domestic space can be described as an idiosyncratic version of home schooling. As a precocious three-year old, Jeannette was made to often cook hot dogs herself on the stove top. Numerous animals lived at the Walls; everything from cats and dogs to coyotes and wounded vultures occupied the space. Mary refuses to kill the flies that inhabit the home, reasoning that they are valid link in the food chain and there killing would starve the lizards, which would in turn starve the cats. In a way to conquer

new ways of life, the material wealth of Walls family was also in a state parchedness. She says, "Since we didn't have money for furniture, we improvised. bunch of huge wooden spools, the kind that hold industrial cable, had been dumped on the side of the tracks not far from our house, so we rolled them home and turned them into tables. What kind of fools would go waste money on store-bought tables when they can have these for free?" (Walls, 62)

"Reduce, Reuse, And Recycle"-it is hilarious that Walls family unknowingly followed this eco-friendly way of life. But this deviance from the use and throw culture of Western life, can also be the influence of the widespread Environmentalist movement of the 1960s. Without the amenities of modern life, the Walls family was frequently in awe for the beauty of nature. Especially while living in the Mid West, nature becomes a sort of home for the Walls. Rose Mary also instills within her children an appreciation for animals and nature by refusing to kill or harm it with modern technology.

For major part of the life, Jeannette and her family live in conditions characteristic of poverty .However Jeannette's experience also includes rigorous homeschooling from her parents and exposure to classical literature. Mary often preferred painting to cooking, reasoning that, a painting lasts forever. Therefore, she cooks large amounts of food once a week and the family eats whatever is made ,for breakfast, dinner and lunch. The most common food at the Wall's residence was beans.

The Walls neighborhoods were full of rough and tumble kids from low income families and Rex enjoyed playing with that children. The neighborhood that the Walls have moved in to was one of the poorest in Welch, and the Walls were the poorest family on their street. The Walls family used to spend a lot of time reading, individually and to each other. They kept a dictionary handy and if sometimes disagree with the definitions, prompt a letter to the publisher. Any letter from the publisher defending the definition was met by another letter from Rex, who will write as many times needed to get the last word. "Dad preferred science and math books, biographies and history. We kids read whatever Mom brought home from her weekly trips to library" (Walls,67).As time went on, practices in Walls family also felt changes. The Walls read a lot, but it was not the same as in Battle Hill when they read to each other, now Jeannette says "I never had the feeling of togetherness I'd had in the Battle Mountain when we lay around in the depot with our books" (201).

Apart from reading Walls children also engaged themselves in games."We played red-light-green-light, tag, football. Red Rover or nameless games that involved running hard. Keeping up with pack, and not crying if you fell down . . .he came out to play with the gang, running alongside us, tossing us up in the air, and wrestling against the entire pack without getting hurt. Kids from the Tracks came knocking at the door when I answered, they asked, "Can your dad come out and play?"(Walls,70). Though the Walls family restricted themselves from neighborhood. They never restricted children to their home. Rex had problems engaging with adult ones not with children where he can act like himself, keeping away critical comments of adults.

An area in which Mary and Rex don't see eye to eye was religion. Despite her fierce non-conformist attitude, Mary considers herself a devout catholic. She shuns Catholic schools, saying nuns take the fun out of religion. She treated Ten Commandments more like ten suggestions, and believed in inner mind more than the external. On the other hand Rex was an atheist. He says he espouses science, not superstition. Rex who was incredibly intoxicated loudly refers to Virgin Mary as a Jewish broad and to Jesus as a bastard leaving the public open mouthed. Rose Mary says God understands that Rex is their cross to bear. She says "Don't worry, God understands, He knows that your father is a cross we must bear" (Walls,127). She says God wants people to take charge of their own fates.

Homelessness is the central problem of the book. But the parents homelessness suffered during the later years was solely related to their personal reasons. "Dad missed the wilderness .He needed to be roaming free in open country and living among untamed animals. That was the way man was meant to live he'd say in harmony with wild" (Walls,128).

It can be said that neither the then popular culture nor the Counter Culture of the period can find its exact replica in Walls family. They established a culture for themselves-limiting it to their everyday life and sensibilities. Each Family owns its own style but the routine of Walls family is all the way unique. Their conscious was their own; they never allowed any prejudices or ideologies to play with it. At one point of time it seems that they followed the hippie culture at the same time they presented deviations to it. But the next generation was not able to conform to this fashion and soon they fled towards a world of popularity, stability and status. In 2007, Merry Prankster Carolyn commented, "I see remnants of that movement everywhere. It's sort of like the nuts in Ben and Jerry's icecream.The nice thing is that eccentricity is no longer foreign. We've embraced diversity in a lot of ways in this country.

### III. DYNAMIC SELF

Family interactions play an important role in an individual's physical, mental and intellectual development. The velocity of this process varies from person to person. In *The Glass Castle* each character carries their own 'persona' in spite of being part of almost seemingly same environment. It is because, of the

'self 'each individual posses. The self is defined as the subject of one's own experience of phenomena, perception, emotions, and thoughts. It is his way and level of understanding helps a person to create an identity for one's own. Therefore, for the better understanding of family dynamics each individual must be studied separately.

While most of the characters in the memoir-*The Glass Castle* are compelling and complex, the father figure in the book Rex Walls is the most complicated. He is the father to Jeannette and her siblings, and the son of Erma and Grandpa Walls. He is clearly very smart, well versed in engineering, mathematics and various scientific theories. But he prefers the life of a wanderer, never submitting to someone else's authority and staying close to nature where he feels far freer. This makes him alternately a fantastic dad, as well as an incredibly irresponsible one. It's abundantly apparent that he had failed miserably as a parent, because of his continuous neglect, but it seems that he still tries to bestow knowledge to his children through his psychotic, illogical, perverse and inverted ways. For instance, most parents like to teach their offspring to swim via swimming classes or in some sort of controlled environment, like a pool. Since Rex was anti-anything mainstream, his version of teaching his daughter Jeannette to swim was by throwing her into "The Hot Pot"(a hot spring) having sulphur that burns eyes, water that is too dark to see through and the misfortune of drowning doth drunks and teenagers. According to Freud, the motivating principle in one's life is the pleasure principle, the tendency to avoid pain and to seek pleasure. It seems that the 'pleasure principle' in Rex's life is being eccentric and unusual, with oneself and others. She says, "Same parents worried that their kids might get hit by lightning, but Mom and Dad never did" (Walls,25).

Jeannette's father was highly intelligent and skilled whose positive attributes were thwarted by extreme alcoholism which compelled him to do things such as steal from his children and use Jeannette as a sexual decoy in a bar-room-con. In a psychoanalytic view, addiction is basically a disorder of self regulation. Addict substitutes an imaginary world where he is in complete control, for the real world he feels useless and out of control. For instance, individuals with histories of exposure to adverse childhood environment, alcoholism may be a self medicating way to save themselves from anxiety. In the case of Rex Walls, it is obvious that he experienced a childhood of abuse; from the hands of his very own mother Erma Walls. This becomes apparent when she once claimed to want to mend the brother, Brian's shorts while he was still wearing them, only to attempt to molest him. When he struggled and his sisters interfered, the entire situation turned in to a brawl between Erma and Lori. When Rex came home and heard about the entire story he took Erma's side which is when his character was truly explained."Do you think she ever did something to Dad like she did to Brian?"No one said a thing. It was gross and creepy even to think about but it would explain a lot" (Walls,148) Jeannette conveys. Her presence and actions had such an everlasting effect on Rex, to the point where he ended up becoming a diluted version of her, starting the cycle all over again towards his children.

In psychoanalysis dreams are considered as "the royal road to the unconscious", and it can be interpreted as the ego's "endeavor to satisfy the essential needs of the id without imposing any harm either from the superego or from the external world". In the memoir, glass castle represents Rex's hope for a magical fantastic life which he will provide for his family and there by please his children. Rex lays out plans for the Glass Castle, including detailed dimensions for each child's rooms, but he never actually builds the castle. Consistent with the psychoanalytic perspective, Freud's theory of dreams suggested that dreams were a representations of desires and thoughts and motivations. He wrote, "Dreams are disguised fulfillments of repressed wishes". The dream of Glass Castle foreshadows the dream for a stable life and a feeling of guilt for not being able to provide his children all the comforts. "Dad had worked out all the architecture and the floor plans and most of the mathematical calculations. He carried around the blue prints for the Glass Castle wherever he went, sometimes he'd pull them out" (Walls,28). says Jeannette. The notions of muscularity and fatherhood often troubled him but for the family he was like an energizer as Mary pointed out "Life with your father was never boring"(321). He and his actions was the motivating force and adventures allowed his children to excuse his imperfections until they grew old enough to understand.

Jeannette Walls mother - a free spirited, ditzzy, hippy, eccentric, non conformist, new and age traveler. She valued self-sufficiency above anything-family, children, society all came secondary her priority. She has little compassion for people who complain about their situation, as she believes people have the power to make their lives whatever they want it to be. The theme of self sufficiency descends mainly from Rose Mary, whose upbringing in an incredibly disciplined home leads her to forgo the rules when she became a mother. Her children she insists, must learn how to be self sufficient and strong. They should not rely on society or doctors or anything else to help them through life, it was her policy. "Mom always said people worried too much about their children. Suffering when you're young is good for you. She said it immunized your body and your soul that was why she ignored us kids when we cried" (Walls,31). She struggled to conform her life to conventions .She preferred the carefree and self defined life as an artist, which does not force her to be in an archetype.

According to Jung, archetypes are components of the collective unconscious that serve to organize, direct and inform human thought and behavior. Rose Mary's archetypal notion of being a woman, a mother is

inscribed in a variant form unfamiliar to its ordinary formats. She is perfect to be labeled a metavert –a person free of any compulsion or inhibition with respect to either circumstances or state. In Mary's words, "why do I always have to be the one who earns the money? You have job you can earn money .Lori can earn money too. I've got more important things to do"(Walls,261).As Jung, Rose Mary must be in the phase of individuation- it is the process of the self seeking fulfillment in its area of potential, taking place in the last half of life. While the first half of life is devoted to making one's way and establishing oneself in the life (creation of persona), the first half will be a time of psychological development of moving toward awareness, integration and wholeness. As Jung puts it, through this process a person becomes a psychological individual i.e., a separate indivisible unity or whole. In psychoanalytical point of view, Jeannette Walls's mother can be called a Narcissist- "a state in which a person experience self centeredness arising from the failure to distinguish the self from individual objects" In other words, it is extreme selfishness with grandiose view of one's own talents and craving for admiration as characterized by an over inflated sense of self importance as well as dramatic emotional behavior. "You want to help me change my life? Mom asked I'm fine. You're the one who needs help. Your values are all confused" (Walls,2).

She was confident with herself and asserts the idea that it is Jeannette who needs change. She is inhibited towards changes. Walls's mother displayed her narcissism through ambivalence, treating her children like strangers who have no role in her imaginary world .Unable to see herself as a mother, she prefers herself imposed independence to reality. Her detachment creates a rift between herself and her children who all too often hear the words "it not my fault you're hungry". When Jeannette beg her mother to get a job so that they can buy food, Rose Mary explains that it is more important for her to paint because "it would improve my self esteem". And at times like these, self esteem is even more vital than food "Lack of empathy towards your own blood/relations is also typical for these personas, where Rose Mary Walls remained as a self described "an excitement addict" throughout her life in her own way.

Lori Walls - the eldest of the Walls children was an avid reader and extremely intelligent, but stood a bit apart from the rest of the family. Lori was usually absent from the adventures of Jeannette and Brian, but was cool and calm in the face of crisis. She once took Dad's pistol to defend the siblings from the criminal Billy Deel who was seen with a gun to get revenge on Jeannette for spurning him. "What Lori liked most about Ken and Bob's(the filmmakers who visited her school) description was that the city attracted people who were different. Lori as about as different as it was possible to be in Welch" (Walls,266). "Jeannette describes Lori as, "while almost all other kids wore jeans, Converse sneakers, she showed up at school in army boots, a white dress with polka dots ... The other kids wrote graffiti about her on the bathroom walls. In return she cursed them out in Latin; At home she read and painted late into the night, by candle light or kerosene lamp if the electricity was turned off "(Walls,266). Inspired by two filmmakers from New York who came to Welch as part of a government enrichment program, Lori and Jeannette decide that New York City is where they want to move. They made a plan in which Lori will move in June when she graduate and Jeannette will follow as soon as she can. It was Lori who was instrumental in bringing a turning point in the lives of Walls family. On one hand, Lori was the closest to her mother, whereas relationship between father and Lori was always strained. According to Jung, Shadow is the unconscious part of the ego and receptacle, for that we have for one reason or another disowned or wishes to remain out of sight. The 'artistic talent' of Lori belongs to this category which was inhibited by the ego to accept that there is more to her 'psyche' Here, Lori overpowered her shadow over her 'ego' and conquered her dream.Now,Lori is a freelance artist specializing in fantasy, illustrating calendars and game boards and jackets.

Jeannette Walls is the author, the narrator and the protagonist of the memoir. She is the second eldest of four children. As a youth, she did not find herself attractive. She was very tall, very thin and "somewhat with large protruding teeth". She found strength with in herself to counteract her parent's lack of maturity and substance. She worked hard to bring in money for food before she was legally old enough to hold a job. When she was seventeen, she left home and together with her older sister, Lori and made a life for herself, earning a scholarship. In a word-it can be said that, she was the only person in the family who authentically felt the fire for a better future overpowering all the odds. I wondered if the all fire was related, get me. "I wondered if all fire was related . . . but what I did know was that I lived in a world that at any moment could erupt in to fire. It was the sort of knowledge that kept you on your toes" (40). Jeannette suspected fire to follow her around, becoming a fixture in her life. The first instance mentioned happened when Jeannette was three years old. She was hospitalized for six weeks as her dress caught fire cooking hot dogs. She survived the mishap but her father was offended by the fact that she is wearing bandages soon after having been taken from hospital. Jeannette was back to cooking hot dogs on her own. "You've got right back in saddle. You can't live in fear of something as basic as fire" (Walls,16) advised her father. Having been burned doesn't cause her to have a fear of fire; instead she was fascinated by it. Once, Jeannette's Mom was enthralled by the sight of Joshua tree she sees in desert, she said, "You'd be destroying what makes it special. She said, it's the Joshua tree's struggle that gives it its beauty" (Walls,45). It suggests that Jeannette's childhood was not in vain, and that she would not be the person

she is today without these struggles. She had risen against the lack of empathy in her life. She was attempted for molestation three times in the book during the three stages of her life. All those times she suffered alone, neither her parents nor her siblings were there for emotional backup. The reason for Jeannette's penning down her feelings can be the result of the conflict between her ego and superego. The decision of writing was a reality versus pleasure principle check to her. It is the words of her mother that ignited her collective unconscious. 'Just tell the truth Mom said and that's simple enough' (Walls,2). It is after enough introspections and retrospections she reached the state of individuation. She decided to pull off the mask she has been wearing all these days welcoming her 'self' with open arms.

Brian Walls - brother of Jeannette, Lori and Maureen and the third eldest sibling after Jeannette. Brian was the closest to Jeannette for much of their childhood. They played together, forage for food together and defend themselves from other kids with each other's help. Brian was intensely loyal and innocent, as young child, he hides in the bushes at one point to help Jeannette fight back against three older girls, and from seventh grade onwards he mows lawns to contribute to Jeannette and Lori's escape fund even though he's too young to leave. Later Jeannette helped Brian to New York just like Lori did for her. He is the only one who comes to Jeannette's college graduation, which marks his loyalty for her. Brian struggles with Rex Walls from the very beginning, and doesn't see how Jeannette can look past it. He didn't share his feelings with his Dad by comforting him, but instead mumbled what he was thinking under his breath. He does not have the courage of Lori to confront Rex or the forgiveness of Jeannette to leave the issues alone. Towards the end of the book he became Police Officer and lets Rex stay with him for some time showing how he remains protective and loving towards his family throughout the memoir.

Maureen is the youngest sibling by far and not particularly close to anyone in the family, it seems due to her age difference. She has always been considered beautiful but not very self-sufficient, unlike the values her parents attempted to instill in her. Jeannette writes "Ever since she was a kid, she'd been looking for someone to take care of her". Maureen is fairly static character who takes the role of the one who needs protection and perhaps the most 'normal' of the family, as she spent most of her time with other families. Her relationship with Jeannette brings out Jeannette's nurturing tendencies. Late in the book, Maureen becomes confused and stabs her mother. She is very attractive young woman, whose life consists of short-term jobs and boyfriends that offer no security. She eventually becomes very introverted spending all of her time sleeping, reading, painting nude portraits and chain smoking. Maureen inherited some of her mother's selfishness and some of her father's charm, but is the most enigmatic character in the family. Kohut maintained that parents' failures to empathize with their children and the responses of their children to these failures were 'at the root of almost all psychopathology'. For Kohut, the loss of the other and other's self object function leaves the individual apathetic, lethargic. Maureen, too nothing was different, she was totally a neglected member even from the womb. "I told Mom that Maureen should get professional help, but Mom kept insisting that all Maureen needed was fresh air and sunshine". The so-called caretakers of Maureen failed to empathetically attune to her needs. Jeannette notes that everyone "blamed the others for allowing the most fragile one of us to break into pieces?"

#### **IV. THE DYNAMICS**

Families are systems of interconnected and interdependent individuals, none of whom can be understood in isolation from the system. According to Bowen, a family is a system in which each member had a role to play and rules to respect. Members of the system are expected to respond to each other in a certain way according to their role, which is determined by relationship agreements. Within the boundaries of the system, patterns develop as certain family members' behavior is caused by causes other than family members' behaviors in predictable ways. Maintaining same patterns of behaviors within a system may lead to balance in the family system, but also to dysfunction. The change in roles may maintain the stability in the relationship, but it may also push a family towards a different equilibrium or dysfunction.

The smallest stable relationship that forms the base of the Walls Family is the relationship between the trio-Rex Walls, Jeannette Walls, and Rose Mary Walls. As the Triangle of Bowen this one also has a stable side and an unstable side sharing between the father-daughter dyad and mother-daughter dyad respectively. It is this triad that serves as corner stone of the given family system. In the book Jeannette Walls is that child, recounting her favorite childhood memories spent with her father Rex Walls as some of the best moments of her life, regardless of Rex's obvious irresponsibility and destruction wrought onto other aspects of life. Despite the many instances in which her father failed to protect his children, refused to take responsibility for them, and even stole from them, Jeannette still loved him until his dying day for two reasons: one, for his constant ability to make her feel special, and two, because he is an ever ending source of inspiration. She in her acknowledgment page pays gratitude to her father "for dreaming all those big dreams." (Walls,1). Jeannette continually portrayed Rex as an intelligent and loving father and teacher, describing each and every piece of memory with admiration and contentment. As Jeannette is fulfilling her own dreams step by step even though the Walls children continued to stick together it is evident that in each step she missed her father. In the weeks

following Dad's death, Jeannette finds herself restless and uncomfortable, always wanting to be somewhere else or, especially, on the move. And is unable to see her as belonging in any of them. She writes "I found myself wanting to be somewhere other than where I was. If I was at work, I'd wish I were at home. If I was in the apartment, I couldn't wait to get out it... It took me a while to realize that just being on the move wasn't enough; that I needed to reconsider everything".(Walls,285)

The affectionate level Rex experiences for Jeannette is the same way around. Jeannette was always being his favorite child, as for him it is only feelings of his daughter mattered him. Towards the final part of her life Rex who has been following along her class syllabi by checking the books out from the library, calls Jeannette to discuss her courses. She says she's thinking of dropping out, since she's a thousand dollars short on tuition. A week later, he arrives at Lori's carrying a garbage bag with 950 dollars he won at poker. Jeannette hesitates but he insists until she accepts it. Therefore it can be said that Rex was the pedestal through which she achieved the life she dreamt off.

Rose Mary as a mother was not able to stand the responsibility of providing her family as she is expected to be the dominant nurturing force in the household. She always kept her own needs ahead of all; when she find out the children have eaten the margarine in the refrigerator, she says it is because of her children's selfishness. In relation to Jeannette, as a mother she was always absent. In one particular instant, when she told Mary Uncle Stanley touched her inappropriately Mary's reaction to this was cold and shocking. "Oh, you're probably imagining it"... "Mom cocked her head and looked concerned. Poor Stanley he's so lonely" (Walls,184) writes the author. Instead of providing her offspring at least the warmth of embrace she sympathized with Stanley and offered Jeannette an idealized advice-"she said that sexual assault was a crime of perception, if you don't think you are hurt you aren't".(Walls,184).A number of likely obvious instances rationalize the lack of warmth Jeannette felt for her mother, and it seems that it continued in less velocity in later part of her life as well . She lived in an imaginary world with her own ideals "Life is a drama full of tragedy and comedy, you should learn to enjoy the comic episodes a little more" (Walls, 129) says Mary. As time passed this triangle also faced existential threat following by the creation of another triangle, between Lori-Jeannette-Brian.

Self Reliance is the reliance on one's own capabilities, judgments, decisions and resources. As parents Rose Mary and Rex owns a differentiated self from others. Both of them refuse to accept any help from others to avoid them being a charity case and later on from their own kids. They preferred to be homeless throughout their life as they liked the concept of wild life and homelessness as an adventure. Walls Family System was group of differentiated solid selves each one exhibiting their own versatility. Excuse must be given to Maureen who slaved herself to the norms and mores of the society, always suffering the conflict of values. On the other hand Lori, Brian and Jeannette achieved their own personal versions of dream. A differentiated person will always be aware of oneself and the relationship around her. Taking this fact into account, it must be said that it was Jeannette who owns "a well defined solid self". Jeannette however becomes more realistic, which allows her to create a plan for her future outside of the boundaries her parents values impose.

The marital bond between Rex and Mary was of a love - hate relationship. The more they fight more they came closer. Their relationship goes from love to hate in matter of seconds- (one minute they were fighting and the next they were laughing).Even though they fight and rarely see each other ,Rose Mary refuses to leave her husband and ignores his short comings. She used to say to her kids that he is the cross that God had given them to carry, and forced them to accept him for what he is, she says "Your father is who he is, "Mom said. "It's little late in the game to try and reform him. Humor the man" (Walls,277).According to Mary the life with her husband was never boring. In the case of Rex her first meeting with Mary is his favorite story. The marital bond forms the starting of familial relationships, if it remains unstormed, the family remains. It is union between Rex and Rose that stabilized the Walls family. Mary supported her husband in all his actions sometimes unknowingly, intentionally with silence or violence. However physically far they were they were there for each other for emotional support. He says, "This crazy-ass mother of yours, can't live with her, can't live without her" (Walls, 262).

According to Bowen, the undifferentiated energy toward the grandparents is either resolved or absorbed in the present generation. In the memoir the comfort the children shares with their grandparents is of different magnitude. Of the three, Grandma Smith was special for the children. The positive vibes the children received from this person is the reason. Grandma Smith represents the longing of Jeannette for responsible figure head she could look up to and thus, seek refuge beneath. Grandma Smith set lots of rules with punishments and was very punctual and yet as a young child she loved her seemingly more than her own mother. As a child no one love rules and regulations but for Walls children it was what they needed most- an order. Grandma Smith makes no secret that Jeannette is her favorite grandchild and she loved her grandma for the structure she brought to her. She writes, "But I loved Grandma Smith"... "I even liked all her rules" (Walls, 111).

Maureen turned out to be a different from other siblings. She wasn't around, or old enough when the parents actually had some good in them. She didn't get all the intellectual encouragement the parents used to

give the other three. The parents were too burnt out by the time Maureen was older to instill a love of learning and exploring in her. She remained indoctrinated. Like her mother a self serving "excitement addict" she completely enthralled herself with her absurdity.

"I had been counting on mom and Dad to get us out, but now I knew I had to do it my own" (Walls,221). These words of Lori proves how emotionally far she was from her family, particularly with her parents. Even though we find various instances of this phenomena in the book, the magnitude of this feeling needs attention. Within the text we can see that Lori grew up as a forced outcast. Children rely, learn, and thrive off of one another, but Lori wasn't accepted into any group of kids, mounting her devastation. This devastation and emotional pain of exile grows bigger and bigger inside Lori as the years go by. All her teenage and youth, society never accepted Lori. She was always left behind, bullied or looked down upon although she was brilliant and artistic. Lori was fearful of success because that would bring her attention. In New York City during the initial days Rex, Rose and Maureen moved into Lori's apartment. Meanwhile, Mary had cluttered Lori's apartment with her paintings and does not adhere to the deadlines by Lori to straighten the place up. Without any sting guilt Lori asked them to leave. She justified, "I had a room now, and I had a life, too, and there is no room in either one for Mom and Dad" (Walls, 252) and substantiates the depth of emotional distance.

Bowen said no single piece of data is more important than knowing the sibling position of people in the present or past generation. The siblings of Walls family always had each other as a stable force in their lives. Most of the time, Jeannette, Lori, Brian were left to take care of their parents, their baby sister Maureen and also each other. Through these many hardships, they were able to stick together and forming a solid relationships with one another, shaping their futures. In the triangle, Brian and Jeannette enjoyed a special code. They began their partnership when they were living in Blythe. The camaraderie we see between Brian and Jeannette is unlike any other relationship in the Walls household. Lori, smart and mature has her own share in the triangle. Lori's quick thinking was that saved her and her siblings from Billy Deel's BB gun. As Erma was violating Brian, Lori makes a point of letting her know that this is not okay. "Then they flew at each other, tussling and flailing and pulling hair" (Walls, 147) says the author. Lori stood for her younger brother even though it causes Grandmother Erma to hate her more. When times were tough in the Walls household, Jeannette considered "stuffing food into her purse to take home for Brian" (Walls, 173). Maureen was a sort of "black sheep" in the family. It is the relationship between the siblings that saved Walls family from collapse.

Apart from Maureen, no other members of the family find socialization. They seek society only to fulfill their selfish needs. Society influenced them, but they never let society to overpower them. Rex and Mary perceived society like this—"Mom and Dad liked to make a big point about never surrendering to fear or to prejudices or to the narrow-minded conformist sticks-the-mud who tried to tell everyone what was proper" (102). It is obvious that the Walls family lead a life of non conformity and unconventionality towards societal norms. In A political science class at Barnard Professor Fuchs- one Jeannette's favorite professor —asked if Conservatives or Liberals were right about the cause of homelessness. Jeannette responded that it's neither a result of misguided social programs nor of cuts in those same programs, but that sometimes people refuse to make compromises and choices that would allow them to make ends meet. Professor Fuchs became furious, asking what she knows about struggles of the poor. This devastating episode for Jeannette could have been more easily resolved had she dared to explain how her own family history led to her thoughts. But; it seems that she was unsure to let others know who she is and where she belongs. This mental dilemma was the case with all the four Walls children. They were embarrassed to mouth out their roots and saw it as a hindrance for their success. On the other hand the parents always lived outside society never submitting them towards social norms and values. Their values remained unchanged, it was its dynamics.

## V. CONCLUSION

Leo Tolstoy said\* "All happy families are like; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way". But it seems that this saying went wrong for Walls Family, it was happy and unhappy in its own way. It consists of a band of people who were imperfectly perfect. It broke all conventions and represented a unique bond of love and support beyond human conscious. In an era of nonconformity, the non conformity they presented was of unconditional love and strength of human spirit. The Walls Family seems to be the one where dysfunction is at heights but, the Family Dynamics it presents tells a very different story. It reveals the patterns of relating, or interactions, family alignment, hierarchies, roles that marvel anyone. Jeannette Walls grew up with parents whose ideals and stubborn non conformity were both their curse and their salvation.

Jeannette and her siblings were the ones who overcame the hardships of poverty, lack of support from their parents to embrace their dreams. Seemingly the credit for their success goes to Jeannette who even handedly showed the will power to take the burden of dreams. But in its real sense, primarily it is the lessons of self sufficiency and fearlessness taught by their parents provided them necessary strength. The marital bond between Rex and Mary was the corner stone of the family, in spite of all their flawed images. In an era of sexual liberty, union between these two was the result of unconditional support and love.



Emerson said`\*“it is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude”. The quote justifies the life style and sensibility of the Walls’s. The liberty of human soul was experienced at its best by the parents, within their limits the children also experience so. They lived a life which many dreams to live-experiencing the freedom of human conscience at its fullest. This deeply affecting memoir is a story of triumph against all odds in every possible way and it does what all good books should, it affirms our faith in the human spirit.

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#### Endnotes

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