

Since Love by its Very Nature

sober pleasures that arise
- Mary Wollstonecraft

1

Since love by its very nature is transitory,
inevitably succeeded either by friendship or by
indifference (any effort to make it constant
a search for the philosopher's stone),
the most holy bond in society is friendship
and virtue is available equally to both
sexes however much one denies it,
refusing to own up to its tyranny over the other.

2

Feasts delight the heart of man she said
though death and disease lurk in the cup and dainty.
So the heated imagination draws
the picture of love from rainbows, its hand directed
by a mind condemned in this world to prove
its noble origin by panting after
unattainable perfection.
Imagination of this ingenious cast
can give existence to insubstantial forms,
stability to the shadowy reveries
the mind naturally falls into when
realities are she said found vapid:
it can depict love with celestial charms,
dote on the grand ideal object, imagine
a degree of mutual affection
which shall refine the soul and not expire
when it has served as a scale to heaven, and make it
absorb like sacred devotion every meaner
affection and desire, picture lovers in each other's
arms as in a temple, the world shut out.

3

When the loved one ceases to be her lover
will she whose whole life was pleasing him
have sufficient energy to look
into herself for comfort and cultivate
dormant faculties or isn't it
more rational to think that though she would shrink
from an intrigue she would yet wish to be convinced
by the homage of gallantry that she is

cruelly neglected by her distracted lover
and so try to please other men by exciting
the emotions raised by new conquests,
not to gratify her vanity
but her heart, not coquetry but rather
the artless impulse of nature in her and try
in doing her best to please, to forget
the mortifications her love and pride have suffered.